

Vocation, transformation & hope

A vision for the Church
of England's engagement
with further education



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Foreword

Further Education colleges transform the lives of individuals and train many of our nation's essential workers. Colleges are cradles of innovation and success. They also face acute challenges. *Vocation, Transformation & Hope* offers a positive vision for how the Church of England can contribute to the flourishing of further education and address our church's lack of systematic engagement in such an important part of our educational and social landscape.

In our view, the challenges we face require the willingness to scrutinise not only the way in which the current funding, planning and other systems operate, but the underlying assumptions we make about the wider education system, for example our conventional distinctions between schools, colleges and higher education. In Christian thinking, moments of crisis pose fundamental questions about our nature, our future and our ultimate concerns. They also open up new possibilities for fuller and richer relationships and for transformation, even when that process is painful. The real challenge is therefore not the crisis itself but the nature of our response.

Vocation, transformation and hope are Gospel themes which colleges can identify with and apply to their own mission and values. They also offer the church a way of seeing the sector in a new light, one in which God is already actively present. So, this vision invites and challenges church leaders and others to appreciate the dynamic nature of the sector, its impact upon individual lives and its contributions to society. It encourages churches to affirm and speak up for those who work and learn within further education. And it points to ways in which churches can take practical steps to make these aspirations a reality, especially in a post-Covid world that ponders what 'building back better' might mean and that simultaneously faces acute pressures from the climate emergency, from new technologies, economic disruption, social inequality and global threats to peace and security.

Our Biblical narratives are rich in imagery of the value and dignity of work, the call to life in all its fullness, and the imperative of identifying with and serving the poor and marginalised. Those dimensions of the good news need to reach the institutions where around 2.2 million people study, among whom there are almost twice as many 16-18-year olds as in school sixth forms, and over 100,000 students following higher education courses. And doing that requires us – as Paul did in his day – to use the most up to date ways of doing so.

We affirm that the breadth of further education provision is essential to national productivity as well as individual prosperity and wider social mobility. But further education does not only prepare people for the next stage in their education, or the world of work, or for new careers. It also provides new opportunities and second chances; it is a vital contribution to human flourishing. Putting it like that highlights questions about the purpose of further education to which the Gospel of Jesus Christ provides powerful and distinctive pointers. This Vision cannot paint a finely detailed picture of those responses. Instead, it invites readers to a deeper engagement with further education as part of the church's own vocation, a journey of transformation and a witness to hope.

Vocation, Transformation & Hope stands alongside the Church of England's visions for schools and higher education, *Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good* (2016) and *Faith in Higher Education* (2020). Together, they represent a restatement of the value of education at every level. Each has its distinctive focus. All are inspired by our Christian faith. And this articulation of our Vision for FE also offers a significant challenge to our church – to address its previous disengagement with the sector in much bolder, imaginative and systematic ways. We hope it will also be of interest to those who work, learn and lead in our colleges, to government and sector organisations and to all with an interest in or responsibilities towards FE.

The Rt Revd Dr Tim Dakin
The Bishop of Winchester

1. Further Education Today

‘Over the past 25 years, we have quietly gone about our work producing the people that matter most to our communities – those that build our houses, fix our boilers, our computers and our cars, care for our children and our parents, ensure the planes that take us on holiday are safe and look after us when we get to our destination, cook our special meals, entertain us live and on TV, enrich our lives with their art, cut our hair and make us even more beautiful!’

Ian Pryce, Chief Executive, Bedford College¹

Since those who have been educated outside of FE and Sixth Form colleges are often unaware of their size, scale and purpose, we offer a concise sketch of this vital part of our educational landscape and highlight some of its current challenges.

Purpose. The recent White Paper, *Skills for Jobs: Life-Long Learning for Opportunity and Growth*², sees the main purpose of further education as the production of world-class, skilled employees to drive up the UK’s productivity, thus improving individuals’ life-chances, accelerating social mobility and building more prosperous and cohesive communities.

That approach underpins virtually all the formal reviews of the sector’s purpose³, including those by influential bodies like the Association of Colleges, in its Independent Commission for the Colleges of the Future, asserting that ‘Colleges ... play a key intermediary role, providing strong pathways across different elements of the education system, supporting employers with developing and understanding their future skills needs and in close-to-market innovation. This puts colleges at the very heart of our skills system – playing a central brokerage and interpretive role for people, employers and governments’.⁴

Whilst understandable, given their starting points, such statements of the core purpose of FE generally say little about the nature and dignity of work, of human creativity, of our share in the shaping of our physical, economic and social environment, and what responsibilities we may have for the stewardship of creation. Yet these are central themes to much Christian

thinking, which sees them as fundamental to our relationships with each other and with God. Seen through such a lens, the good news of the Gospel is for individuals, and for communities, and for all creation. To take just one example from the Roman Catholic tradition, in a 2017 letter to the Vatican Conference on Work and Workers Movements, Pope Francis wrote, “According to Christian tradition, [work] is more than a mere doing; it is, above all, a mission.”⁵

So, skills development, social mobility and national prosperity are plainly central to what colleges are for, but their purpose is far wider than this. Colleges play a major role in provision for students with specific education needs and disabilities, for adult literacy and numeracy, for those changing careers and those entering or re-entering the jobs market. Surveys of college leaders have also indicated that Principals and staff see their role as including individuals’ growth as a person and as a citizen, and that attention to core issues of existence, of the good life and of dimensions of the spiritual are also a core part of their institutional purpose and mission.

Scope. The 244 Further Education and Sixth Form colleges in England encompass a stunning range and variety of provision. From small and highly specialist institutions, to large vocational programmes, they are leaders in retail and business qualifications, digital media, advanced engineering, logistics, gaming design, social care training, and much more besides. Along with other kinds of private providers, colleges offer bespoke training to businesses and the public sector, run very large apprenticeship programmes and deliver

basic skills to individuals and companies. Many also have well-developed partnerships with universities and highly specialised facilities for staff in industries ranging from offshore energy to film special effects.

The largest concentration of young adults in most areas is to be found in the local college, along with significant numbers of older adults. With 116,000 full-time equivalent staff, of whom around 57,000 are teachers and lecturers, colleges are among the largest local employers.

Resilience and flexibility

The evolution of FE colleges is a long one, from the pre-Industrial craft guilds, the Victorian Mechanics Institutes and the Technical Colleges of the 1950's to the present structure, largely created by the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act. That Act took responsibility for colleges from Local Education Authorities and established each institution as an independent corporation, with a new funding, planning and inspection regime. It also placed an increasing premium on college capacity to react rapidly to significant change, to become more flexible in their curriculum offer, delivery methods and ability to form effective partnerships.

Since that time, the defining feature of the college sector has been a constant series of structural changes, the most recent seeing a new wave of mergers, under the Area Review process, which have reduced the number of institutions in England from around 450 in 1993 to some 244 today. In *“Sense and Instability: three decades of skills and employment policy,”*⁶ the authors wryly noted that since 1981, there had been 61 Secretaries of State, 28 major Acts of Parliament, and a raft of strategic reviews. Since the Report's publication in 2014, further changes have continued, particularly in respect of apprenticeships and the implementation of the new T Levels, devolution of large budgets to elected Mayors and major changes to the Apprenticeships regime. The scale of constant change and churn led one commentator to quip, *“if you are not confused by it, then you have not understood it.”*

In addition to constant structural change, the other major challenge facing colleges has been their level of funding compared to schools and universities. As the Institute for Fiscal Studies demonstrates⁷, both 16-18 and adult budgets are each £2 billion less in real terms than they were in 2010, down to £5.5 and £23 billion, respectively. In effect, this brought FE funding back to the levels of 30 years ago, although additional funding (£400 million) was provided in 2019-20, as a first step in addressing this long-term decline, along with greater resources for key priorities, such as the introduction of T-Levels. In the medium term, some £2.5 billion will be available from the National Skills Fund and, from 2025, a Lifelong Learning Entitlement will provide access to loans.

The Future and the FE White Paper – as noted above, the newly-published White Paper seeks to address the key issues of sufficient long term funding and capital investment, to create higher standards of qualifications for professional and technical education, to reduce or remove barriers between schools, colleges and HE, to create regional hubs that offer greater effectiveness, to increase the responsibilities of business in framing qualifications and provision and to tackle issues of governance. Whilst understandably constrained by the one-year funding settlement, which has made the proposals less radical than had been hoped, the general consensus is that the White Paper is a step in the right direction.





2. Further Education and the Church: a lost vision and new opportunities

In contrast to its engagement with schools and with higher education, the Church of England has not given anything like the same attention to further education institutions, despite their scale and significance. In part this may be because it has never operated an FE college, chiefly because its original foundations were either schools – and often schools for poorer children, many entering employment in their early teens – or universities (and the teacher training institutions which have since become universities). In fact, no Christian church now operates an FE institution, although a small number of Roman Catholic Sixth Form Colleges retain some features of their original character and ethos.

However, as part of the church's process of cultural re-imagination embodied in the 'Growing Faith' adventure, new and more dynamic and sustainable ways are being found to express its deep concern for children and young people. Indeed, from the outset it was recognised that it would be necessary to extend Growing Faith to encompass institutions, communities and churches that reflected the different relationships in the FE and HE sectors. This Vision, along with its HE articulation published in March 2020, is an important part of that development.

In parallel, the Vision and Strategy Group chaired by the Archbishop of York has identified a key strand in that strategic thinking as creating a church that is younger and more diverse. Turning that strategic ambition into reality necessarily involves actively listening to the voices of children and young people and going to the places where they are. As Stephen Bullivant pointed out in 2018, *With some notable exceptions, young adults increasingly are not identifying with or practising religion... Christianity as a default, as a norm, is gone, and probably gone for good for at least for the next 100 years.*⁸ Yet we know that just under 1.3 million aged 16-25 are enrolled in FE colleges, where the average age of students is 29 and where on average 25% of students are from UKME backgrounds.⁹

So why should the church be seeking to recover its lost vision for FE? We offer three related reasons:

Anchor Institutions and Discipleship

FE colleges represent an important place of education or employment for many existing Christians across the country. A significant contrast with the University sector is that the majority of FE students are local people who then remain local. This relative geographical stability gives churches the possibility of building long-term relationships and a sustained discipleship journey. For churches with a significant number of local students, we believe that this common context for lived faith, can give a focus for gathering and growing disciples that could bear significant fruit.

The Church's role in political and civic life also provides a significant point of contact between the local community, the Church and its leaders and colleges. As one sector leader put it, *"the church is seen as a trusted partner in the community"* and one that can speak up, including at a national and international level on social, economic and educational issues. Whilst many colleges have a regional, national and international importance for given areas, another of the characteristic features of the sector is that the average distance



between home and college is 15 miles, compared to the average of 53 miles for HE students. These are local, anchor institutions, which can powerfully improve the possibility of forming long-term and effective relationships in society as well as with the Church, itself another anchor institution in the community.

Mission and Engagement

The discipleship journey for Christians who are members of FE college communities can (and indeed should) include helping students or staff to be what Christians would call “salt and light” in their colleges: “Christians in FE colleges (students and staff) often need support to be confident disciples in their college context and will certainly need support and resources if they wanted to offer any kind of witness themselves.”¹⁰

FE colleges can provide relational connection for Christians (and therefore the local church) with people representing a demographic (in terms of relative youth, social class and educational pathway) that are often missing in our churches. Colleges can, especially, be a way to engage with what is often a ‘missing generation’ in church and who are those who often remain local after starting work. There is genuine potential here to help revitalise the local church in the long-term.

This is one outworking of a “shift of culture and practice” called for in the report “Setting God’s People Free”, described as the need to “form and equip lay people to follow Jesus confidently in every sphere of life in ways that demonstrate the Gospel [and until this happens] we will never set God’s people free to evangelise the nation.”¹¹

The Common Good

As our overall Vision for Education puts it, our approach is one that is deeply Christian and serving the common good. An important motive for churches who want to live out their calling to “serve the common good”, therefore, is to see colleges as potential collaborative partners in community building. There are many examples of churches coming alongside college leaders to assist with the “Prevent” (anti-extremism) agenda, helping resource Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural education programmes and working to build community cohesion. Churches also offer resources to meet the felt needs of students and staff, from mental health support to work on equality, diversity and inclusion, and in contributing to religious literacy and to building links with other faith communities.

Linked to this as an outworking of the “common good” agenda, is that churches should consider how FE colleges represent a place where the whole notion of what makes people valuable and individuals-in-relationship can be explored, and a richly Christian understanding of human life can be healthily brought to bear. Education is often narrowed down to results and specific definitions of success and failure. Christian theology, however, can challenge that, declaring people as individuals made in the image and likeness of God, who cannot be commodified or quantified. Where colleges are seeking to recognise that students are “whole” people, Christian theology can offer tools to explore and reflect on that.

Given that many students in colleges are focused on vocational preparation for the labour market, they are at a formative point in their lives and need to be equipped with skills that will enable them to work, earn a living and contribute to the economy and wider society. This is often a major transition into an adult self and the formation of an identity, skill set and a working pattern that will shape the decades to come. Such a critical period of discernment, formation and transition deserves the Church’s attention and pastoral support. We will need to develop a social vision and scale of values for the development of a post-industrial society which is heavily dependent on service industries.

Opportunities for the Church of England

To the Church of England and its senior leadership, we pose the challenge of a culture change similar to that already underway through the Growing Faith adventure. That requires seeing its engagement with FE as part of its priorities for children and young people. Its three principal components are deepening understanding; systematically engaging; and helping re-imagine the future of further education. This is a long-term change and not another project or initiative.

A church group of colleges

At a national level, it became clear that one barrier to a greater engagement in FE was the fact that in contrast to the Church’s presence in schools and in HE, it operated no FE institutions. Consequently, in 2019 the Archbishops’ Council priorities included a commitment to develop “...a specific proposal about increasing the Church’s engagement in further education.”¹² That proposal was to create a group of colleges from existing institutions that wished to be part of such a group because they shared its overall ethos, values and approach to education, though – as with community schools joining church Multi Academy Trusts – not necessarily its theological outlook. One factor behind the willingness to consider such a move was the strong link senior leaders saw between our intended ethos and its impact on curriculum, student support and business decision-making. The feasibility of such a proposal is now being carefully examined.



Chaplaincy as outreach and transformation

Whilst the Church has never operated a college, that does not mean that it has had no engagement with FE. Church leaders were often prominent in helping establish the early Mechanics Institutes, which are among the ancestors of the current sector. At a national level, in the 1930s, the Board of Education established a Further Education Committee, although chiefly concerned with teacher training. From an early stage, the Church provided pastoral support and chaplaincy, with its first National Officer for FE taking up their post in the early 1980s. By the 2000s, a thriving network of chaplains was in place, along with a number of regional development officers, thanks chiefly to the availability of government funding for activities that promoted community cohesion, tackled faith-based tension and encouraged diversity.

Whilst financial constraints following the 2008 economic crisis has radically thinned out that network, including the Church-linked charities which supported the work, chaplaincy still actively supports staff and students in FE, though largely now on a part-time or voluntary staff basis. As noted elsewhere, regulatory requirements, such as the teaching of British values, or the Prevent responsibilities of colleges, have also provided other ways in which church communities can and do engage with FE institutions.

Chaplaincy provision is sporadic and heavily dependent on local goodwill – at the last major national survey in 2011, some 89% of FE colleges had at least some form of chaplaincy provision, a figure that has dramatically fallen over the last decade, with only a handful of full-time college chaplains.¹³ A small number of dioceses have a designated officer to support and develop their work in FE, almost all in relevant but wider roles, for example with responsibility for chaplaincy more generally. Although individual staff in those roles are highly effective, responsibility for overseeing the Church's local engagement with FE is not clearly evident, for example among senior diocesan staff, and it is unusual for FE to be part of a diocesan strategic plan, or its approach to mission and social justice.

In this context it is important not to underestimate the extent to which college chaplaincies can be transformational agents within their institution. It is also noticeable that a growing number of dioceses have now integrated their mission and ministry strategies in ways that include chaplaincy as part of that ecology. Additionally, a number of dioceses have made appointments with the specific goal of increasing chaplaincy provision, either in education or more widely: Bath and Wells, Exeter, Oxford, Durham, Lichfield, Liverpool, Manchester, London, Southwark, Salisbury and Winchester have such provision.

In the process of revitalising chaplaincy, there are also important resources on a wide range of issues, including guidance on establishing and sustaining multi-faith provision – the norm in FE and a core part of college values – and evaluating the quality and impact of chaplaincy, to give just two examples. As Theos reported, FE colleges had devised a set of seven different benchmarks by which to assess chaplaincy: Faith, belief and values within the college; Teaching and learning; Pastoral care and spiritual support; Community cohesion and partnerships; Building a multi-faith team; Religious customs; and Student groups.¹⁴ Although now needing updating there are practical and perceptive materials produced by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the National Council of Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education (FBFE) *Multi-faith Chaplaincy: A Guide for Colleges on Developing Multi-faith Student Support* (2007) which still have great value.





3. Vocation

'I think deep down we have to get back to a sense that learning is about people's well-being in the fullest sense of the word. Human beings are well when they feel like they are making a difference or doing something positive and are learning'.¹⁵

David Hughes, CEO, The Association of Colleges

'I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly' (John 10:10)

In Christian thought, vocation begins with God. His wonderfully diverse creation means every person has unique gifts, abilities and motivations. God calls each individual to respond to him in ways that reflect the uniqueness of who they are. Over time, people's responses take a particular shape or pattern, a combination of who people are and what they do. It is often a joyful blend fundamental to someone's identity as, for example, parent, mechanic, nurse, accountant, artist, bricklayer, biomedical technician or musician. This is the essence of vocation; we are called to use our gifts in the service of others and to reflect God's glory.

One of the striking features of further education is that staff often say that their role involves – indeed requires – attention to each student as a person. Beyond preparing people for future careers, further education entails attending to students' aspirations, to their gifts, talents and struggles, to their essential humanity. Further education, in other words, is fundamentally about vocation.

This understanding of vocation means we should have reservations about the historic contrast between 'vocational' further education and 'academic' higher education. Not only can this obscure the understanding of vocation as a calling,



but it also fails to capture the necessary interplay between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’. In both medicine and law, for example, extensive theoretical study is combined with application. Similarly, courses preparing learners for craft occupations require students to assimilate the theory upon which those skills are based. The blend of theory and practice is especially obvious in the case of higher-level qualifications which carry professional accreditation, for instance, in engineering or finance.

Jesus’ words in the Gospel of John point to his own vocation. His work has consequences for us all and provides insights for the whole of life, including the world of further education. We note some of these below at the level of individuals, colleges and wider society.

Participation in further education often comes at the transition into adulthood or after major life-changes. Individuals are equipped with skills to enable them to work, earn a living and contribute to society for the rest of their lives. Although the sector’s explicit focus is upon ‘direct vocational preparation for the labour market’, what is really at stake is the development of wisdom and abilities to enable individuals to make their way in life. This includes economic well-being but much more besides. One important contribution of churches, therefore, is to endorse the business of further education, affirming those who learn within the sector and the careers to which its courses lead. We would also do well to consider the vocational calling of college lecturers, managers, support staff and other professionals, who see their roles as expressions of their own callings.

Christian theology holds the idea of vocation as a particular calling within humanity’s mandate to work. The nature of work has changed radically over the centuries and Christian thinking about work has evolved, too. Our rich tradition sees work as a way in which people can find fulfilment and practise hope.¹⁶ It includes a clear and strong affirmation of the significance and dignity of what we now call professional and technical occupations, as well as the traditional craft skills with which we may be more familiar. The Church of England strongly affirms the importance of colleges in opening up opportunities for people in these fields. In doing so, it asserts the holiness

of everyday life and God’s purposes for all individuals and communities. At a practical level, while educational processes demand assessment rubrics, data, regulation and specific definitions of success and failure, where colleges are seeking to recognise students as ‘whole’ people, churches can offer tools to explore and reflect on what this might mean, providing insights into human frailty, failure, redemption and reconciliation.

The scale and pace of change that faces our society raises questions about what preparation for the world of work means in the 21st century. One analysis concludes, ‘Artificial intelligence, automation, and robotics will make this shift (in the nature of work) as significant as the mechanisation in prior generations of agriculture and manufacturing. While some jobs will be lost, and many others created, almost all will change.’¹⁷ The requirement for higher levels of skill and competence in using new technologies will need to be matched by much greater flexibility about roles and careers. This will demand higher levels of creativity and innovation than many jobs currently require. The coronavirus pandemic has further exposed the fragility of a largely consumer economy and generated new working practices. It has also brought out into the open structural inequalities, among them poverty and discrimination, which also engage the church in its proclamation of justice, the value of the whole person and the whole country and its mission of loving the poor and bringing hope to the next generation. These imperatives are also shared to a large part by those who lead and work in colleges.

The environmental crisis poses another challenge for the sector. Pope Francis has drawn attention to how some jobs harm creation rather than sustain it.¹⁸ The Anglican Church’s ‘Five Marks of Mission’ point to our responsibility to be good stewards of creation. They should impel us to partner with others in our stewardship of our own natural resources.¹⁹ We are also led to ask how we support young people to make good decisions about the vocations they pursue or shape those trades once they have learnt them. Colleges are natural partners given many of the technical and professional staff they train will work in renewable energies, carbon-reduction, automotive engineering, the building of homes and utility supplies.

4. Transformation

Colleges have a core mission of enabling the widest range of people to explore, identify and develop the skills with which to make their way in the world. That includes reaching out to those whose educational or life experience has not enabled them to fulfil their potential, as well as providing equally well for those who are well advanced educationally and professionally. That ambition is not unique to colleges – for example it is found in many universities – but it is a major component in that mission.

In colleges, people experience being valued and so learn to value themselves, and in turn to value the skills and knowledge they are developing, whether aiming at further study (including university entry), employment or the kinds of opportunities offered by apprenticeships. As individuals, they are being formed not only in their skills as potential work roles but are forming their own sense of identity. This is an especially important part of colleges developmental work with young adults at a formative point in their lives.

For colleges – often one of the largest local employers – transformation is not limited to affecting the lives of individuals. Bringing together people from very different communities and backgrounds is a central feature of their life and an important consequence of the way they work, as is self-evident to anyone who has stood in a college foyer during lunch breaks! The Church often has a similar ‘convening power’, that is to say the ability to bring together a wide range of people to discuss, reflect on and generate action in support of some common concern, for example in tackling poverty and disadvantage, or combating racism and hatred. The contribution of colleges to social and community cohesion is already significant and will be even more so if we wish to tackle the divisions that the pandemic and its associated economic and social ills have highlighted.

In this context, transformation inherently involves more than gains secured for individuals, but what we would describe as serving the common good.²⁰ For centuries, the common good has been viewed as central to Christian thinking. It has found renewed currency in our day, often employed in political debate as an exhortation to look beyond

individual advantage to the good of others. Yet there is a tougher and more difficult challenge here for colleges and for the Church: transformation involves challenge to the status quo, including the inherited and human creations of unjust structures and practices. Equality and diversity can simply be slogans or checklist items: for Christians and for many others, they are a mark of social justice and of cherishing people as being made in the image and likeness of God.

Yet the common good is more than a fashionable new banner to wave in encouraging social solidarity. It has deep philosophical and religious roots that give it three distinct senses, as we have already articulated in the Church of England’s Vision for HE. First, the common good is an aim, the good common to a community, whether that be a nation state, sports club or college. Secondly, the common good is a practice, that is, collective activity for a common purpose. Thirdly, the common good refers to the conditions necessary for everyone to fulfil their individual objectives, for example, a society that values free speech is one favourable to intellectual enquiry. This rich and multifaceted conception of the common good clearly shows that it is not a utopian ideal to be imposed by one group on another. That is also a helpful reminder that our vision has throughout a strong social dimension: it involves not only individual flourishing but also the transformation of communities and their structures.

The common good illuminates a wide range of concerns for colleges. Perhaps the most obvious is the fact that staff and students, employers and communities have many competing visions of human flourishing. Colleges provide both a forum

for debate about what is good and true about these visions, and also help learners become more skilled at engaging in these debates in respectful and robust ways. That can take place within their learning programmes, through their Learner Codes, through opportunities to discuss major issues in life, and through the work they undertake and on British Values and Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development (SMSC).

It also acts as a further prompt for college leaders and managers, when ensuring that decisions are taken with reference to the common good of both their own institution and wider society, and not only to the interests of the most powerful. One of the shared values and purposes between FE and the Church is this radical commitment to social justice, although it is also true that how this is embodied is not uniform in scope or effectiveness.

It is also the case that colleges are highly diverse communities, in which it is crucial to nurture dialogue between and within them, in order to offer the hope that it will be possible to live together in other contexts as well. That, for colleges, includes the fact that they recruit extensively from learners who have low prior attainment, are in areas of significant economic and social deprivation or are from groups that other institutions struggle to provide for.

As one instance, people who experience learning difficulties and disabilities rely extensively on college-based provision. This facet of their work is integral to their commitment to the realisation of potential, which in Christian thinking can be understood in terms of redemption, as well as being part of the promotion of certain kinds of community (which are also potentially redemptive in nature).

Colleges, by choice and through necessity, live in a world where all roads lead to partnerships. Employers, local schools, commercial partners, OFSTED, funding bodies, HEI, devolved administrations, regional and local economic partnerships are part and parcel of their work. The Church of England is a significant partner to the sector, not least because of its provision of chaplaincies and pastoral care but also because of its extensive community links and its own commitment to partnership.

It is important not to lose sight of the fact that colleges are part of local, regional and national networks and, increasingly, of global ones, for example in the WorldSkills programme, perhaps previously more familiar to colleagues as the Skills Olympics. The Church is, of course, deeply rooted in its own world-wide family, from parish to diocese to Province to the Anglican Communion, and to other churches and faith bodies.



5. Hope



One of the major changes brought about by the creation of legally autonomous colleges in 1992 – “Incorporation” as it was universally known – has been the continuing impact of that autonomy and the pressures of what is, de facto, a market in learning and skills provision. That market relies upon a funding system that Sir William Stubbs, first Chair of the FE Funding Council, aptly described as “a rationing system with regulatory teeth”.

That context has had a recognisable effect on college culture and priorities. One recent analysis suggests that college leaders, “*experience a policy-driven tension between the two ethics of survival: survival as a financially-viable institution and survival as a representation of the core values of FE.*”²¹ Some would even claim that these tensions make it impossible to do anything more than comply with this form of commercially driven institutional culture. Dennis, for instance, writes that “*colleges persist in a diminished form within a learning economy... [adopting] an ethics of survival*” and, “*the endless banality of college life has corroded the language with which it might be possible to speak about educational purpose, value, utopia, democracy, equity and vision.*”²²

We wholeheartedly reject that pessimism. The pressures are indeed real, but they are not the whole story. Myatt’s research with college leaders indicated that they ‘are clear that spiritual values in their widest sense translate into college structures and processes, and they have a clear view about the space of spirituality, faith or belief issues in their colleges.’ (“*Talking to leaders about spiritual leadership: seeing it through to the shadows*”)²³.

In probing whether spiritual issues were important to college principals personally, and if so, whether they influenced their strategic leadership and behaviours, leaders did identify conflicts and yet also a framework that was strongly values-based and not merely mechanistic and instrumental. This is significant for the Church’s engagement with FE leaders, since it offers a point of connection for dialogue and challenges a sometimes-unvoiced assumption that colleges and those who lead them are indifferent or hostile to questions of values and meaning – whereas in reality, the opposite is likely to be the case.

Colleges are also places which offer a second – or sometimes a third, or fourth – chance to those whose education experience has been disrupted, has been previously largely one of failure or where circumstances have not given individuals a chance to build and display their talent and potential. They are in themselves places of hope, showing that in concrete terms in the successes of their students, of new careers begun, of return to work, of progression to further study and advanced qualifications, of promotion within a company or organisation.

At a point where FE as a sector embodies hope for those it serves and yet also struggles to see the shape of its future, there are rich possibilities for discussion and dialogue between colleges and churches, and indeed between the church and schools and universities too, about this very theme. In the Christian tradition, at the root of our faith are convictions about hope in God's future for the world, in God's on-going love and compassion for all people, and for the whole of creation, and in God's promise of life in all its fullness. They are, in turn, at the root of our dedication to educating for hope and aspiration.

That is because our belief about the worth of each student impels us to work to fulfil their God-given potential, and with special consideration given to those who are disadvantaged. Each is to be understood as respectfully and deeply as possible; to be encouraged to stretch themselves spiritually, morally, intellectually, imaginatively and actively, and to aspire to be well-educated. This involves grasping how one's own fulfilment is inseparably connected to that of other people, the flourishing of families, groups, communities, institutions, nations, and indeed the whole of creation. Hope and aspiration are social as well as individual. Yet, it also means being realistic about how much can and does go wrong.

Jesus and the love he embodies are at the heart of our faith, offering hope that wrongdoing and sin, suffering, evil and death are not the last word about reality. The drama of his life, teaching, death and resurrection reveals the larger story of God's involvement with the whole of creation and history. In the name of this Trinitarian God, we are able to affirm the goodness of life, and to face and find ways through whatever goes wrong with ourselves and with our communities. Jesus inspires both realism about how flawed and fallible we are and a confidence in transformation for the better. Even while involved in much difficulty, disappointment, failure, suffering and even tragedy, our trust and hope in Jesus inspires perseverance, patience, gratitude, openness to surprises, and celebration.

We therefore want learners in all kinds of institutions of further education to experience what it means to live life in all its fullness.

That includes the opportunity to encounter and explore faith and belief in far more than a merely superficial way, and to be aware of the ways in which it is often expressed in practice. We also strongly believe that hope in God's future can stimulate prophetic responses, both critical and constructive, to the present situation. The combining of hope with concrete aspirations for our society, for each college and for each learner is crucial to the continuing health of society and its educational ecology.

We also need the Church of England to reflect on how it looks on or sees the world of Further Education. Looking and seeing are key theological constructs, often associated with those who look but cannot or do not see the Christ who is right in front of them. What might it mean, for example, for God to look at the FE sector, and for God's church to pay it the same attention as it does with other aspects of our society?

Part of that 'looking and actually seeing' process might enable the Church of England to acknowledge that it has not been sufficiently alive to the dynamic nature of the sector, to its transformative impact on people's lives and the social fabric of society. That has led to the Church missing an enormous opportunity in relation to its own mission. It also misses the chance to shine a spotlight on the sector, to recognise and affirm what it does, to encourage and value those who work and learn within it, and to speak up for it with decision-makers, those who form policy and those who influence the sector's development, based on sound and perceptive knowledge about FE and its role and purpose.

Finally, we offer a way for the Church and the sector to reflect on its mission and purpose together. We speak in this Vision about hope, about vocation and about transformation, and we see each of these in relation to the individual, the community and to the whole of creation. Our hope and intention is that it provides a matrix within which we can articulate a role, a purpose and a value for further education that is intentionally different to that produced by more conventional processes and which opens up fresh ways of seeing this extraordinary and often misunderstood and undervalued part of our education system.

6. Sharing the Vision

Vocation, Transformation & Hope shines a spotlight on further education, recognising the sector's huge contribute to society and individual lives, and encourages the church to speak up for it and work with it. Our recommendations, flow from our themes of vocation, transformation and hope. Some are especially relevant for local churches, others for the work of dioceses and others for national policy. All will make a real difference to our support for and work with the sometimes misunderstood and often undervalued part of our education system, the world of further education.

For Local Churches

Churches with an FE or Sixth Form College in the area should be *intentional about welcoming their students and staff*. Churches – individually or in groups like deaneries – should find *creative ways to provide chaplaincy* for their local college.

- All churches should *affirm the vocations of FE college students and staff*, offer pastoral support and pray regularly for them and their work.
- To improve community cohesion, churches should *help FE colleges make links* with other local groups.

For Dioceses

- Each diocese should consider how to support FE and Sixth Form Colleges in creative ways (e.g. could House for Duty posts be a means of providing *chaplaincy* for FE and Sixth Form Colleges? Or could you partner with local colleges to implement the diocesan environmental strategy?).
- Within the next 5 years, each diocese should seek an *active partnership* with each of its FE and Sixth Form Colleges.
- Each diocese should create or revitalise a *local FE network* to link local churches and colleges. We suggest that this network should be supported by a 0.5fte development post (either voluntary or remunerated).
- Each diocese should engage with Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges in its *strategic planning* and an appropriate member of the Bishop's staff should have responsibility for linking diocesan strategy with FE and Sixth Form College activity.





For the Church of England

- The Church of England should *create a FE Colleges Group*.
- FE should be integral to the Church's *strategic planning* to build a younger and more diverse church at both a national and a diocesan level, including investment in missional projects which specifically engage with FE and Sixth Form colleges and expand the principles of Growing Faith for the FE sector.
- The Church should contribute to long-term *policy for learning and skills* by engaging with government, sector bodies and college leaders, particularly over the contribution it can make to the priorities signalled in the FE White Paper.
- The Church should conduct a *survey of FE Chaplaincy* to better inform decision-making and engagement.
- The Church of England Foundation for Education Leadership's networks and programmes should *include FE leaders and governors*.
- Specific targets should be set to (i) deliver accredited training programmes for senior church and education leaders, chaplains, CYP workers and clergy and (ii) significantly increase chaplaincy staffing, especially in FE and Sixth Form Colleges

To Colleges

This vision is primarily addressed to church leaders. But we would encourage other readers to consider the themes of vocation, transformation and hope in their work. For college leaders and Governing Bodies, we hope this vision will encourage you to consider how the Church can contribute to issues such as mental health and wellbeing, assistance in meeting their duties under British Values and Prevent, promoting good relations on campus and the provision of pastoral and spiritual support. In addition, we would welcome partnerships with local churches and dioceses.

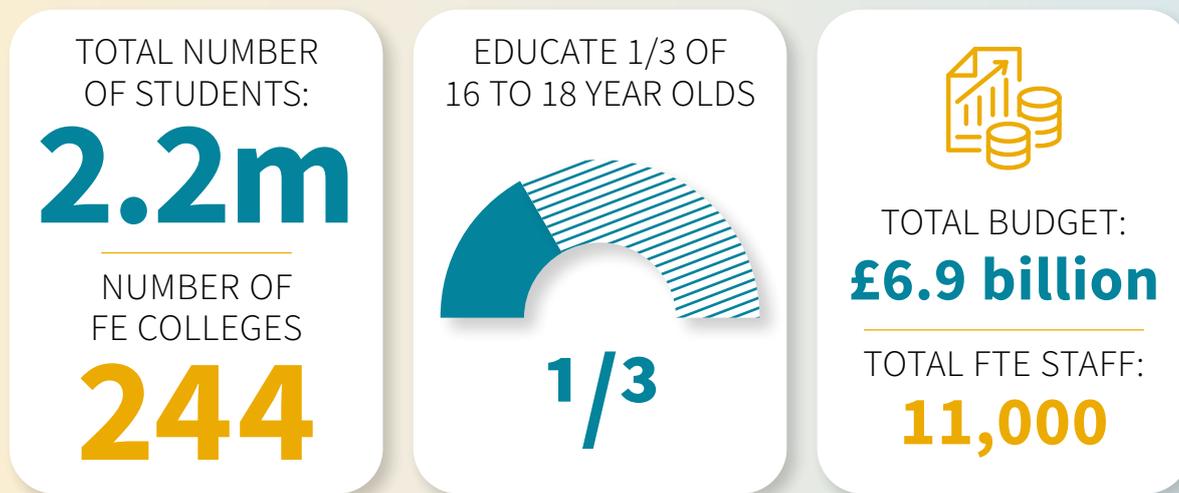
To Government and sector bodies

This vision is primarily addressed to church leaders. But we would encourage other readers to consider the themes of vocation, transformation and hope in their work. For government, this will include the Skills Strategy and the role of FE in meeting contemporary economic and social challenges. We believe the themes shed important light upon the issues addressed by the White Paper on the future of FE, including long-term funding, creating a more flexible and integrated system and greater robustness in governance and leadership for the sector.

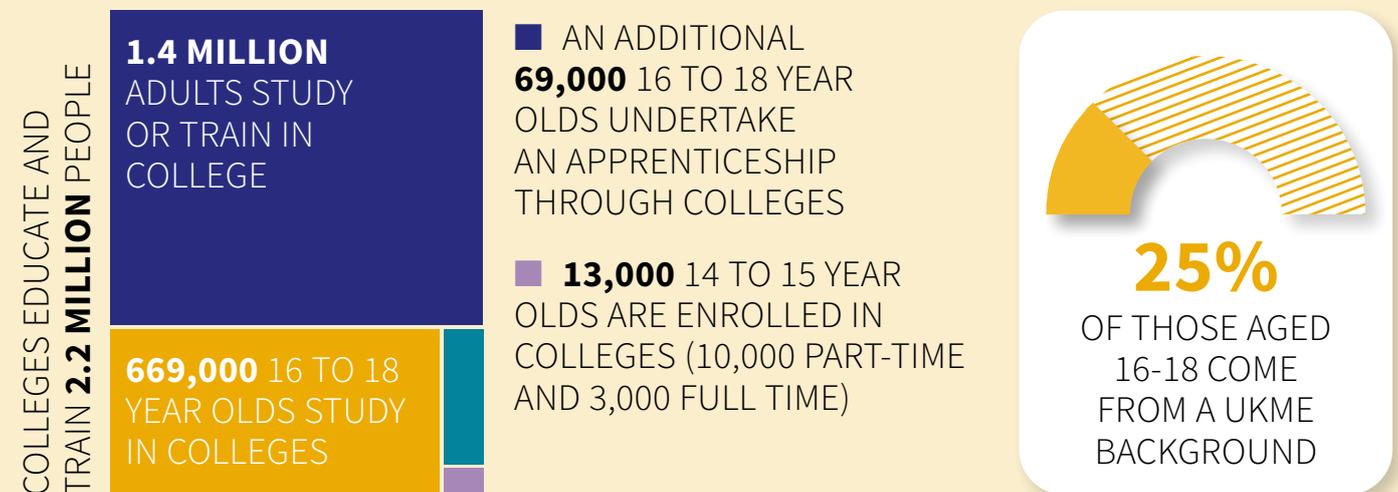
Appendix 1: Further Education Key Facts

FE and Sixth Form colleges educate a huge number and range of people, are richly diverse and have an enormous impact on their students, the economy and society.

THE HEADLINES



FE STUDENTS: RANGE AND DIVERSITY



IMPACT



137,000

STUDY
HE COURSES
IN A COLLEGE



COLLEGES DELIVER
OVER **80%** OF ALL
HNC AND HNDS
AND NEARLY **60%**
OF **FOUNDATION**
DEGREES



17% HAVE A SPECIFIC
LEARNING NEED
OR DISABILITY



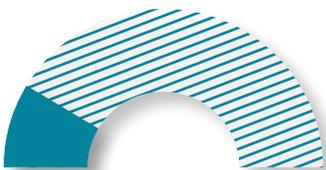
THERE ARE **155,000**
16-18 YEAR OLDS
STUDYING
A LEVELS



NEARLY **650,000**
ARE STUDYING
STEM SUBJECTS



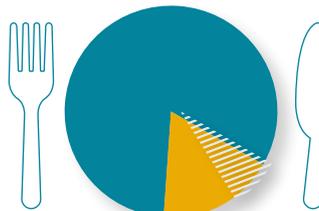
OVER HALF OF ALL
DISADVANTAGED
YOUNG PEOPLE
ENTERING
UNIVERSITY CAME
FROM A COLLEGE



17%

HAVE A SPECIFIC
LEARNING NEED
OR DISABILITY

18% WOULD HAVE
QUALIFIED FOR FREE
SCHOOL MEALS
(compared to 8% in schools)



MOST LIVE LOCALLY:

AVERAGE HOME TO
COLLEGE DISTANCE
IS **15 MILES**
FOR UNIVERSITIES
IT IS **53 MILES**

The figures are all taken from the AoC Key Facts 2020-21 [insert as source at foot of page please : AoC College Key Facts 2019-20.pdf]



Appendix 2: Case Studies



Our vision for education is firmly based on John 10.10 – life in all its fullness. What might that look like in the lives of real people, real colleges, real dioceses and communities? These case studies illustrate the ways in which colleges seek to bring out people’s vocations, help in the transformation of their lives and bring hope and new life. They also give some brief snapshots of ways in which the church seeks to support that task in practice.

Our case studies are not meant to give an exhaustive or complete picture – they are snapshots to provoke reflection and possibilities for response. They are offering what the Faith and Order Commission’s recent resource ‘Witness’ reminds us involves stories of “people who pay attention to the world around them. With ears and eyes shaped by all that they have been learning about God, they look closely at the people and situations around them. They look for the opportunities, the resources, the gifts, the challenges that God has placed in their path. They listen out for the sound of God already at work in the lives of those they meet. They see the work of God, blazing unexpectedly beside their path”.¹

Tara

Tara was a second year Health & Social Care student, aged 17, conscientious with a good record of attendance, popular amongst her peers and always an active participant in class activities.

Around three weeks into term 1 of the 2019/20 academic year Tara suddenly stopped attending classes and was absent for a whole week, stating that she had a migraine. One of her friends approached a member of the safeguarding team: the real reason that Tara was not in College was due to her being involved in an incident within the home. During a heated argument, Mum had pushed and slapped Tara on three separate occasions. And her younger sibling had called the police.

The following investigation showed that the incident was a one off and that the children

came from what is normally a calm and loving environment. However, Mum was feeling the strain of a recently diagnosed illness, and was keeping this information to herself whilst trying to maintain a front and keep the family going. Ultimately, the strain of this and Tara’s refusal to abide by some house rules that Mum had set pushed her over the edge and led to the incident in question.

The College’s role in this was to provide a pastoral contact for Tara and offer a place with the College counsellors. This was implemented and Tara engaged with both aspects of the service. Tara successfully completed her course in 2019/20 and has returned to College for the 2020/21 academic year. Mum is now in remission following a successful bout of treatment and the family are still being supported by the Strengthening Families Team.

¹ Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England *Witness* (Church House Publishing, 2021) page 13



Courtney Paige Mellon

What future do people dream of? For Courtney Paige Mellon it is becoming a nurse to young children through a university work placement at the ground-breaking Alder Hey Children's Hospital, after a work placement.

Courtney Paige said, "I absolutely love working at Alder Hey. It's a brilliant hospital that was designed specifically with children in mind. It is very light, colourful and spacious. There are balloons everywhere, the Disney channel is on every TV screen, and even the reception area has been designed to look like an airport check-in."

Courtney Paige said she found it challenging at first seeing children being brought into theatre for a range of procedures from biopsies and keyhole surgery, to cleft palate correction and dental treatment. However, she gained a great deal of frontline experience before the coronavirus outbreak forced her to study from home.

She said, "I had enjoyed looking after children with special educational needs and disabilities during my college placement and this is an area that I would like to specialise in after I have completed my qualifications. My aim is to become a nurse specialist, but I am currently debating whether to complete my master's first."

Courtney Paige, from Nuneaton, is currently in the first year of a paediatric nursing degree at Edgehill University. She said that her college Level 3 Health and Social Care course provided the best

route into university for her and she would recommend it as an alternative to A Levels.

Courtney Paige said, "I did start A Levels but knew within weeks that it wasn't the right route for me ... I have always wanted to be a nurse from a young age, but I didn't even know it was possible to be a children's nurse. I've had plenty of practice looking after younger children as I am one of nine. I also spent a lot of time with a friend who needed hospital treatment and that experience helped me decide that I wanted to work in a healthcare setting. When I found about the paediatric nursing career path, I knew I was on the right track."

"I really enjoyed the Health and Social Care course and my tutor was fantastic. She was so supportive throughout my studies and I wouldn't have been able to do it without her."

During her college course, Courtney Paige worked one day a week at a special school, helping to support children with wide range of special educational needs including profound, severe and moderate learning disabilities and autistic spectrum condition.

Courtney Paige said, "Although I had a career goal in mind, it was my first steps at college that really set me up well for the future. The college course gave a great springboard into higher education and now I am on track for a career with the NHS. I would love to get a job at Alder Hey in the future because it is such a fantastic hospital and an inspirational place to work."

Diocese of Bath and Wells

Mike Haslam is the diocesan Chaplaincy Development Adviser for Bath and Wells, where over 300 chaplains serve in its schools and colleges, hospitals and hospices, armed forces and police service and other places of work and leisure. Their goal is that every day they are living and telling the story of God's love with sensitivity, generosity and grace. Chaplains listen and look out for everyone, regardless of age, profession or status. They offer hospitality and welcome to people of all beliefs and cultures.

As Mike puts it, "Chaplaincy is a growing ministry and there is endless good news. It is a privilege to visit our chaplains, to listen to them, learn from them, be inspired by them, pray with them and support them.

"Everyone I speak to, from business leaders to headteachers, wants a chaplain for their

organisation. Alongside this, there are more and more people who are feeling called to Chaplaincy as a way to live and tell the story of Jesus with others."

The diocese's investment in Mike's post has seen a significant increase in chaplaincy provision, including that funded by the institutions concerned. As part of the work of strategic advocacy of chaplaincy, Mike gathered chaplains and especially those who chaplains serve to ask them what impact chaplaincy makes. Their testimonies are contained in a new chaplaincy booklet which is available at <https://d3hgrlq6yacptf.cloudfront.net/60638a2c87045/content/pages/documents/chaplaincy-in-covid-times.pdf>. Malcolm Brown, head of Mission and Public Affairs for the Church of England described this booklet as a 'significant contribution' to the wider picture of the ministry of the church through the pandemic.

West Midlands Churches' Further Education Council

The West Midlands Churches' Further Education Council, which is chaired by the Bishop of Wolverhampton, exists to:

- Support colleges in the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students and the training and resourcing of staff in matters of faith and spirituality
- Support churches in valuing FE and lifelong learning as part of their wider involvement in education, and providing resources and training to partner colleges in their work

To fulfil these aims, the Council initiates projects, organises training and networking events and brings together chaplains and others working in further education. It can also assist in brokering partnerships between colleges, churches and other faith communities. Its Chaplaincy Ambassador provides practical and strategic support for churches and FE colleges, in association with the St Peter's Saltley Trust.

The Council's membership is drawn from across the different Christian churches represented in the

West Midlands region, including individuals with years of experience working within the FE and lifelong learning sectors. Rooted in the Christian faith, we enjoy working with and for people of all faiths and none.

In addition to support and training, the WMC FEC provides a wide range of resources and curriculum material for serving FE chaplains and their colleges, including a high-quality series of five short video clips about chaplaincy in FE wmcfec.org.uk/resources/





Lewis Gardner

Lewis Gardner, aged 17, started out creating social media posts at his work placement with a local radio station and ended up interviewing stars from the world of international darts. Lewis, who is on the first year of a course in creative digital media was delighted to meet darts' world number four Rob Cross, as well as former world champions including Stephen Bunting, Steve Beaton and Ricky Evans.

Lewis was successful in securing the work placement after being selected from six candidates and has spent the last six months working there on two mornings each week alongside his college course. He has worked on editing clips for the station's social media feeds and website and researching and writing sports news. Working with presenter Mark Foster, Lewis was pleased to get a chance to read his bulletins on air and have a live chat about the latest sports news.

Lewis said, "I had always enjoyed editing videos for friends when I was at school so when I found out about the creative digital media course, I knew it was the right one for me. I was so pleased to get the work placement, I have really enjoyed the experiences it has opened up for me. The best event I covered for the radio was the Bedworth Civic Hall Darts Masters where I got to meet and interview some great sports personalities.

"I really enjoy the course too. The tutors are nice, and they give us some great challenges, allowing us the freedom to let our creativity run riot. One of our assignments was to create a film based on the title 'Pencil of Doom' which was fun. We also have an imitation module for which we have to recreate a two-minute scene from a film of our choice using the resources available around us. I chose James Bond's 'Skyfall' and we had some fun trying to find a venue that looked like a museum in Los Angeles.

"During lockdown, our tutors are keeping in touch with us regularly and have set us work watching and reviewing films. One of our regular tasks at college was to choose a film from a different genre each week on Movie Wednesdays and it's great to be able to keep that up at home."

Mark Foster said, "Lewis has become a valued and enthusiastic member of the team and is eager to learn new skills. He has a good technical ability and has developed a sound understanding of how a commercial radio station works. He has shown an interest in presenting and news reading and is showing great promise. He has helped us by providing help in planning shows, events and updating the website."

Lewis will be returning to college to complete his second year on the course and hopes for a career in the media.

Paul Barnsley

A police inspector with over 25 years' experience has described how online mental health training set him on the right track after a period of absence from work. He was so impressed with what he learnt that he has encouraged around 30 of his colleagues to sign up for the training.

Paul Barnsley was researching mental health online to help him better understand his own experience and signed up for a qualification in working with people with mental health needs. As he made progress with his own recovery, Paul realised that what he had learnt was going to be highly useful in the workplace. He said, *"The course opened my eyes and, now that I am back at work, I am finding what I have learnt highly beneficial in helping the way I interact with police service users."*

Paul continued, "I believe that it is always important to take a person-centred approach to policing. Simply knowing that someone with autism might respond differently depending on whether they are hypo or hyper-sensitive

makes a difference. Once you know what to look out for, and understand something about different communication styles, it is possible to adapt your behaviour to improve interactions and put yourself in a better position to help."

"I am hoping that, by spreading the word, we will see a real sea-change in awareness and understanding that improves our ability to interact with people who are experiencing mental health difficulties or who have long term conditions such as autism."

Paul said, "I am really grateful to the College and can't thank them enough for the role these courses have played in helping me to recover. I am one hundred per cent better now and my professional life has been re-energised by gaining this new perspective. I would urge others to sign up, whether the subject is directly relevant to their job role or not, because the more we all understand about mental health the better."

Chaplaincy at North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College

The College is one of a small number of institutions to fully-fund its Chaplain, who also works with the schools within the Multi Academy Trust which is part of its provision.

A sense of the approach taken by the College can be seen in the Chaplaincy page on its website, which is both readily accessible and prominent. This reflects the significant role that the Chaplaincy plays in the college community, described by its Chief Executive as 'transformational'.

"The College is home to a diverse and lively community, filled with people from varying backgrounds and worldviews. The role of the Chaplaincy is to care for staff and students. We offer a confidential, non-judgemental listening ear and support. You don't have to be religious; we are here for everyone regardless of faith or belief.

Throughout the year we seek to recognise many of the major religious and cultural festivals. We often do this in the main social areas and all our activities are designed to be fun and open to everyone.

We also provide:

- Enrichment activities
- Religious services
- Tutorials
- Pastoral care
- Charity work
- Responses to tragedy – we are especially here to help anyone who has experienced difficulty, trauma bereavement or loss.

We also have prayer rooms on every campus which can be used by anyone. They are available as a quiet space for reflection and they are equipped with resources for prayer, worship and ritual washing."

Desh Ramji

With the easing of restrictions on competitive sport following the coronavirus lockdown in Spring 2020, Formula 1 teams were at last getting ready to take on the challenge of the 2020 race season. Currently on furlough from his job with precision engineering company MP Engineering, Desh Ramji is hoping to get back to work helping produce the precision parts that F1 teams rely on to get the edge over their competitors.

Desh Ramji, 24, is an apprentice engineer and has recently completed an advanced apprenticeship in mechanical manufacturing. He spent two years working to achieve his qualification attending college on a day release basis and completing projects at work and in the evenings at home. He has already worked on helping to produce parts for the Red Bull team and is pleased that the season is finally able to get underway.

Desh had always been interested in cars and started his working life as a mechanic. He then secured a job with family-run MP Engineering and, having achieved his apprenticeship, is undergoing in-house training to become a 5-axis programmer and, eventually, a production engineer.

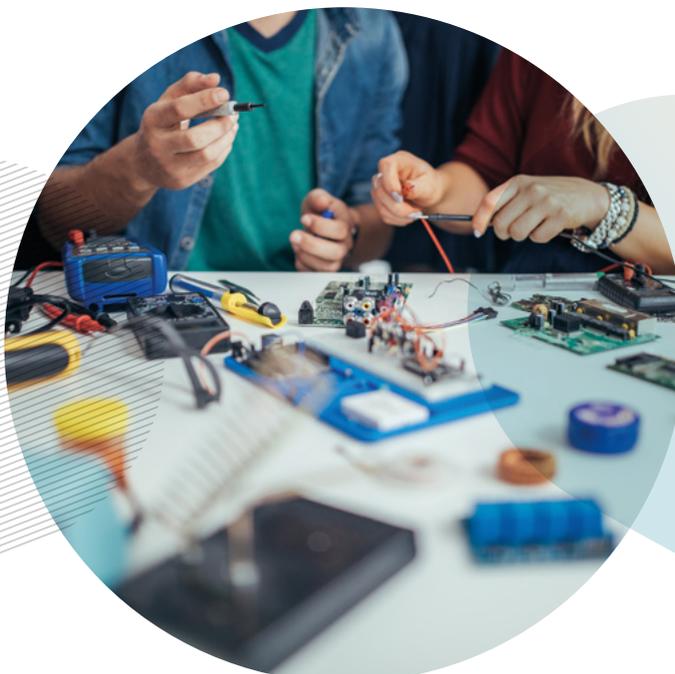
The company provides precision engineering to the motorsport, aerospace and defence sectors and has been working with the college for over five years to train engineering apprentices, enabling

them to acquire high-level skills and secure exciting future careers in the industry.

Jason Poole, production director at MP Engineering said, “Formula 1 teams constantly call for modifications depending on the circuit, the driver and the performance of the car on each separate occasion. After each race, they send us new specifications for aero packages or suspension set-ups, and we need to respond to very short turnaround times with no margin for error.

“Our apprentices are given every opportunity to progress up to the highest level and could ultimately secure a career as a five-axis programmer. Junior production engineers following an apprenticeship work on producing specialised components for Formula 1 motorsport teams. They develop skills including computer-aided design and manufacturing and apply them across a range of live projects.”

Desh loves his job and really enjoyed his time at college. He said, “Each individual project is a challenge and you’re learning something new every day. I also find it very rewarding when I have completed a task that contributes to the success of a big project. The college tutors are very supportive, and I would recommend an apprenticeship as a great route in to engineering.”





Appendix 3: Suggested Further Reading

In contrast to the wide range of introductory material about schools or universities, there is little available about further education, particularly for those who may wish to familiarise themselves with its evolution, structure, range of provision and funding. This short list is intended to help with that familiarisation process.

Ross Goldstone's blog at the British Educational Research Association ([The origins of further education in England and Wales | BERA](#)) gives a succinct history of FE, from the Mechanics Institutes of Victorian Britain to the current structure of autonomous FE corporations.

The Association of Colleges provides a wide range of publicly accessible material on its website, including its annual Key Statistics summaries and the number and list of colleges in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, organised by region ([Key Further Education Statistics | Association of Colleges \(aoc.co.uk\)](#))

For a thoughtful and forward-looking analysis of the potential future role of colleges, their context and what may be learned from across the UK, The College of the Future UK-Wide Final Report from the Independent Commission on the College of the Future (Association of Colleges October 2020) is invaluable.

For a concise description of how the government sees the role of FE and sets out its blueprint for the future, the Executive Summary of the FE White Paper sets out the issues clearly: [Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

One major issue for FE is its relationship both with schools and with higher education: a thoughtful outline of the issues and potential ways of resolving those is the Further Education section in the Augar Review, which forms Chapter 4 of that Review, pages 114-131. (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/805127/Review_of_post_18_education_and_funding.pdf). The following chapter on Apprenticeships is also extremely helpful.

On funding issues, the Education Select Committee's Report [A ten-year plan for school and college funding – Education Committee – House of Commons \(parliament.uk\)](#) helpfully summarises the key issues and the White Paper is, in one sense, a response to those concerns.

In terms of corporate governance, the best short summary is to be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/fe-governance/the-corporation>, which forms part of a comprehensive manual for college governors.

Acknowledgements

This vision document has been prepared by the Church of England Further Education & Higher Education Development Group, chaired by Bishop Tim Dakin. We thank the following for helping shape this Vision, including members of the Development Group: Mrs Tracey Allen, Revd Arun Aurora, Dr Jonathan Chaplin, Revd Dave Crees, Mrs Siriol Davies, Ms Natalie Davison-Terranova, Revd Prebendary Cate Edmonds, Canon Michael Everitt, Ven. Richard Frank, Canon Nigel Genders, Mr Derek Holbird, Revd Dr Jeremy Law, Revd John Lenton, Revd Garry Neave, Revd Canon Professor Peter Neil, Canon Richard Noake, Revd Ysmena Pentelow, Mrs Marion Plant, Revd Dr Jonathan Rowe, Professor Julian Rivers, Revd Dr James Walters, Revd Canon Rowan Williams, Ms Sophie Woollen; and those who generously gave their time to comment on its shape and content. Our thanks are also due to those who provided administrative support to our work, notably Mrs Julia Eden and Ms Grace Loughran.

Endnotes

- 1 Times Educational Supplement (19 April 2018) *FE colleges aren't Cinderella – we're Mrs Brown's boys* www.tes.com/news/fe-colleges-arent-cinderella-were-mrs-browns-boys (Accessed 5 April 2021)
- 2 Department for Education (January 2021) *Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunities and Growth* Command Paper 338
- 3 See, for example, The Sainsbury Report (April 2016) *Report of the Independent Panel on Technical Education*; Foster, A. (November 2005) *Realising the Potential: A review of the future role of FE colleges*; The Augar Review (May 2019) *Independent panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding* Command Paper 117
- 4 Association of Colleges (November 2019) *Report of the Independent Commission for the College of the Future: Progress Report*. For the full report, see Association of Colleges (October 2020) *The College of the Future UK-Wide Final Report* Independent Commission on the College of the Future
- 5 Francis (24 November 2017) *Letter of the Holy Father Francis to the participants in the International Conference 'From Populorum progression to Laudato si'* pres.vatican.va/convent/salsatampa/en/bolletino/pubblico/2017/11/24 (Accessed 5 March 2021)
- 6 City and Guilds Group (2014) *Sense and Instability: Three Decades of Skills and Employment Policy*. There are updated reports documenting policy development in this field published in 2016 and 2019, under the same title.
- 7 Britton, J., Farquharson, C. & Sibieta, L. (September 2019) *2019 Annual Report on Education Spending in England* Institute for Fiscal Studies. A helpful overview of the current financial and policy issues facing colleges is the Funding, Finance and FE White Paper Update produced by Deputy Chief Executive of the Association of Colleges, Gravatt, J. (February 2021) aoc.co.uk/funding-and-corporate-services/funding-and-finance/reports-and-presentations (Accessed 5 March 2021)
- 8 Bullivant, S. (2018) *Europe's Young Adults and Religion: Findings from the European Social Survey (2014-2016) to inform the Synod of Bishops* St Mary's University, Twickenham
- 9 See Association of Colleges (2019) *College Key Facts 2019-20*. aoc.co.uk/sites/default/files/AoC%20College%20Key%20Facts%202019-20.pdf (Accessed 30 April 2021)
- 10 Church of England (January 2020) *The Parish Church and Colleges of FE; Equipping the Church to Look Further*. Report from the FE Project Group of the Church of England Senior Leadership Development Programme (Unpublished)
- 11 Church of England (2017) *"Setting God's People Free"* A Report from the Archbishops' Council General Synod Paper GS 2056, 3
- 12 Church of England (2019) *The Archbishops' Council Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31 December 2019*. General Synod Paper GS 2172A. The relevant goal is headed 'Increasing the Church's engagement in the Further Education Sphere', 22
- 13 See Church of England (2010) *Pushing Further; From Strategy to Action* Church of England Board of Education General Synod Paper GS 1628. This review of the Church's FE Strategy, adopted by the House of Bishops in October 2005 and entitled 'Pushing Further', demonstrates both the significant progress made between 1997 and 2010 and also the growing impact of the austerity measures introduced by the newly elected coalition government which in turn required a major change in the Church's FE strategy.
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