

The  
College  
of the  
Future

# People, productivity and place: a new vision for colleges

A vision for the college of the future, accompanied  
by a collection of short essays and case studies  
about the civic role of colleges

July 2020



The Independent Commission on the College of the Future is kindly supported by:



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# About the Independent Commission on the College of the Future

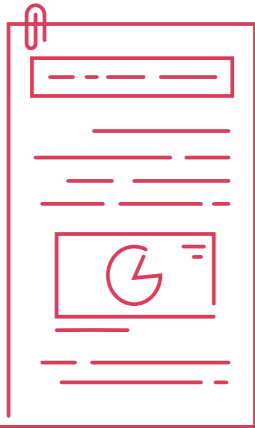
The Independent Commission on the College of the Future is asking two simple but fundamental questions:

- 1 What do we want and need from colleges in 10 years' time?
- 2 What changes are needed in order to achieve this?

At a time when seismic shifts are happening across the UK – from the impact of COVID-19, to demographic change, climate crisis, technological revolution, and the changing demands of the labour market – these are important questions. The pandemic has accelerated the need for change. It is clear that colleges can and must be at the heart of meeting these challenges.

The Commissioners – chaired by Sir Ian Diamond – are holding roundtable and workshop events with a broad range of individuals and organisations across the UK. They are supported by an expert panel, who are feeding in throughout the process.





# Contents

06

Foreword

Sir Ian Diamond, Chair of the Independent Commission on the College of the Future and the UK's National Statistician

08

The Commission's vision for the college of the future

10

Renewing the civic engagement agenda

Professor Ellen Hazelkorn, Managing Partner, BH Associates

14

Colleges are critical to the civic agenda

Lord Bob Kerslake, Chair of the Board of Governors, Sheffield Hallam University, Chair of the Civic University Commission, and Chair of the Civic University Network Advisory Group

16

We have a shared responsibility to all our young people

Geoff Barton, General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders

18

Building meaningful collaboration between colleges and universities

Mary Curnock Cook OBE, Education non-exec Director

20

Stepping up on diversity and inclusion: leadership in challenging times

Dame Ruth Silver, President of the Further Education Trust for Leadership

22

Colleges supporting the dual mandate of business development and social inclusion in Northern Ireland

Damian Duffy, Director of Development, Belfast Met College

28

How colleges empower a civic mindset

Carla Ford, President 2019-20, Edinburgh College Students' Association

30

The opportunity to build sustainability into our sector

Billy Currie, Head of Corporate Services, Dumfries and Galloway College

32

How an embedded civic ethos will make the sector resilient to future crises

Dr Norman Crowther, National Official Post 16 Education, National Education Union and independent researcher

36

Civic driven leadership: the importance of collaboration

Yana Williams, Chief Executive, Coleg Cambria

40

'Jenga' style collaboration for the health and social care sector

In Buglass, Vice Principal for Innovation, Planning and Performance at Edinburgh College

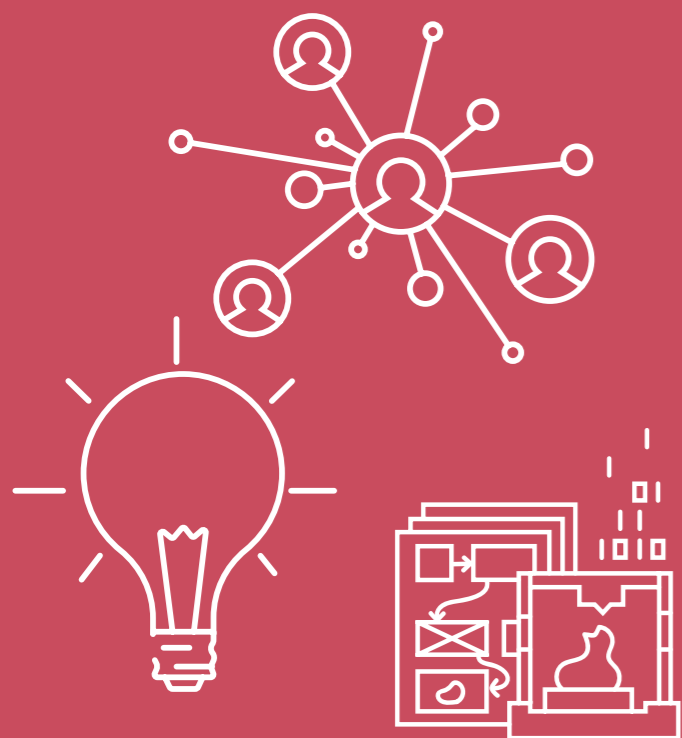
44

Next steps

# Foreword



Sir Ian Diamond, Chair of the Independent Commission on the College of the Future and the UK's National Statistician



Colleges transform lives every day across the UK and have always played a vital civic role. We've seen examples of colleges at their very best this year in response to the ongoing crisis and preparing for recovery. From doing their utmost to ensure continuity of learning, to manufacturing personal protective equipment (PPE) and

working with community organisations to provide food for the vulnerable, colleges have been doing incredible things to support their students, staff and communities. They are showing why colleges are so important and what civic duty means at a time of crisis.

But colleges have not just stood up and been counted for their communities during this crisis. They have been at the heart of their communities for many years – although this has not always been recognised as much as it should – and they will be in the future.

Colleges are central to the health of all our communities in the short, medium and long-term. In the next few months, colleges will be central to providing the skills essential to promote an economic recovery at pace; and in the medium and long-term they will offer their communities a haven to gain, refresh and increase skills. These skills will help increase local and national productivity; promote inclusivity and social cohesion; and enhance wellbeing. And colleges do this peopled by many dedicated and brilliant staff.

The civic nature of colleges is rooted in their work. They are by their very nature of and for their communities, and college leaders and staff will invariably talk about this role as at the very heart of what they do. Yet, it appears that this has not always been sufficiently understood, incentivised or coordinated.

That is why I am delighted to share in this report our vision for the college of the future. This sets out its

mission, the urgent need to reaffirm the role that colleges play in the education and skills system, and the beginnings of describing how we can achieve it, as we work towards our final report with recommendations this autumn.

*In short, the college of the future will empower **people** throughout their lives with the skills they need to get on in life, support better **productivity** and innovation of businesses, and strengthen every community's sense of **place**.*

It is the intersection of the public good that colleges do for people, productivity and place that makes the mission of colleges civic. However, we are clear that colleges, as anchor institutions, are too often under-utilised in truly delivering on these strategic aims. They can help us meet the need to urgently transition to a net zero carbon economy, respond to demographic shifts and changes in the world of work, and to address endemic social inequalities.

In the collection of essays that follows, a fantastic group of authors explore the civic role of colleges throughout this challenging time and beyond, and what we can learn to better realise this role in the future across the four nations. We sometimes have to ask ourselves the

challenging questions to learn and transform, and I'm pleased that these pieces do just that.

Colleges should feel immensely proud of their work throughout this crisis. The case studies throughout this publication show just a taste of their inspiring work.

It is crucial that we best set up our colleges to meet the challenges of the future and achieve the vision we set out – delivering for people, productivity and place. I look forward to continuing this conversation as we discuss how to do just that.

*Professor Sir Ian Diamond FBA FRSE FAcSS became National Statistician in October 2019. Sir Ian previously served as a non-executive member of the UK Statistics Authority Board from June 2018 to August 2019. Sir Ian was Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Aberdeen from 2010 to 2018. He was previously Chief Executive of the Economic and Social Research (ESRC) Council and, from 2004 to 2009, Chair of the Research Councils UK Executive Group.*

*Before joining the ESRC, Sir Ian was Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Southampton, where he had been for most of his career. Sir Ian was formerly Chair of British Universities and Colleges Sport, Chair of Edinburgh College of Further Education, Chair of Plan International UK and a Board member of UK Research and Innovation. He chaired the Welsh Assembly Governments of the Higher Education Review for Wales reporting in 2016.*

# The Commission's vision for the college of the future



## What world will the college of the future help to create?

The college of the future will be central to driving a fairer, more sustainable and more prosperous society.

## What is the mission for the college of the future?

For **people**, colleges will be a touchpoint for everyone throughout their lives as the world changes. Flexible and blended learning and guidance will empower each person to get a job, progress in their career and be an active citizen.

For **productivity**, colleges will provide strategic advice and support for employers to drive business change, innovation, and future workforce planning.

For **place**, colleges will have the resources and funding to play an even greater role in fostering healthy and connected communities.

## How will the college of the future achieve this?

Change is needed to unlock the full potential of colleges – for people, productivity and place. No college can do this alone. To achieve this vision colleges of the future will have a clear and recognised position in the education and skills system.

Colleges will work collaboratively with each other and across the wider education and skills system in new ways. This will enable them to together lead the way in stimulating and responding to the needs of people, employers and communities.

Governments across the UK will be there to support, with relationships built on trust and a shared destiny.

**It is only then that colleges will be empowered to deliver for people, productivity and place.**

## Next steps

Taking this forward will look different in each of the four nations. While there are common challenges and opportunities for colleges across the four nations, the recommendations that will be made in our final report will be distinct and particular to the policy and political contexts across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Our final report with recommendations for how to build the college of the future will be published this autumn.

We want to continue to hear from as many voices as possible as we design the college of the future.

Join in the conversation:

[@collegecomm](https://twitter.com/collegecomm)  
[#collegeofthefuture](https://twitter.com/collegeofthefuture)

[www.collegecommission.co.uk](http://www.collegecommission.co.uk)

Get in touch with Commission Director, Lewis Cooper: [director@collegecommission.co.uk](mailto:director@collegecommission.co.uk)



# Renewing the civic engagement agenda



**Professor Ellen Hazelkorn,**  
Managing Partner,  
BH Associates

## Why civic engagement is more important than ever

Like in many countries, the origins of further education colleges across the UK can be traced to vocational education in the 19th century. Over the decades, colleges have played a critical role providing routes from school to work, to further training/retraining

or to university. Preparing learners of all ages and backgrounds for the world of work, in partnership with employers, is embedded in their DNA.

The civic mission of colleges is not a new idea. So, why does its civic engagement agenda need renewing now?

First, society and the labour market have

changed dramatically over recent decades and will continue to be transformed by the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Social, economic and personal success requires people having the knowledge and entrepreneurial attitudes, skills and competencies enabling creativity and critical thinking, initiative and independent action.

Second, because people are living longer, it is vital to expand learning opportunities to cater for re-skilling and up-skilling requirements for mature learners in the labour force or for those wishing to (re)join. This is especially important for women after childbirth or rearing. Learning throughout life is a necessity, not an option.

Third, economic projections suggest the COVID-19 pandemic will lead to a deep recession in the UK, as elsewhere, with long-lasting impacts on the labour market and (un)employment. Impacts across sectors will be highly uneven. Regional disparities, which had left many communities behind from earlier recessions, are likely to widen.

Given their strong roots in their communities, colleges are particularly well suited to help them navigate what will certainly be challenging times.

## What are colleges good for – not just what they are good at?

Civic engagement refers to: learning that is useful beyond campus walls and service that directly benefits the public. Colleges can:

- *Develop learning pathways through which people of all abilities, ages, ethnicities and talents can be guided to reach their full potential and contribute their skills, energies and commitment to wider society throughout their lives.*
- *Foster place-based approaches, building on assets and resources available that can strengthen their opportunities for sustainable development and growth.*
- *Be a resource for innovation, helping to diffuse smaller scale innovation processes and development across different vocational fields, e.g. business administration, child education, construction, design, tourism and IT.*
- *Build and generate absorptive capacity by helping develop skilled graduates to be able to apply and synthesise knowledge across all technological areas and help renew competences in traditional sectors.*

Ultimately, democratic societies require an engaged citizenry.



## What does the COVID-19 crisis tell us about the civic role colleges play?

Working individually, and increasingly as part of clusters of educational providers and with employers and civil society, colleges around the world are responding to the pandemic. Attention has focused on the speed with which learning moved from the classroom to online. But colleges have done much more. Here are just two examples:

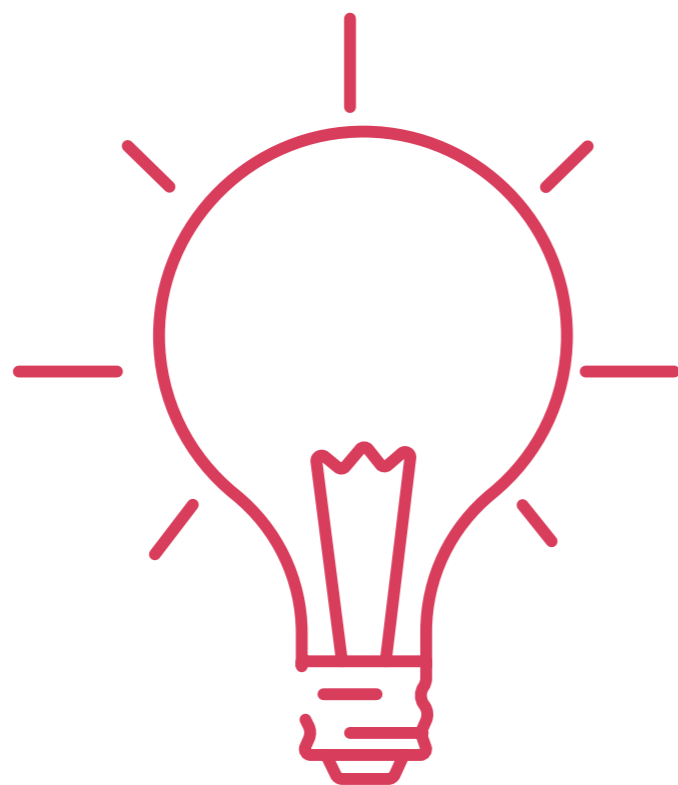
- In the US, [Kennebec Valley Community College \(KVCC\)](#), Maine focuses on place-based and value-added education, which reflects the desires and aspirations of the local population. It responds to the workforce needs of the region and works hand-in-hand with

the state to address and support its workforce strategy. As it relates to COVID-19, KVCC has used its own farms and kitchens to distribute food to people. It created internet hot spots for rural and/or low-income students who have no or poor-quality home internet access. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) from their nursing and allied health programs was quickly gathered and distributed to hospitals in need, and students and staff made PPE using 3D printers.



## Renewing the civic engagement agenda

In Ireland, [Regional Skills Fora](#) (RSF) were established as part of the [National Skills Strategy](#) to ensure more structured collaboration between colleges, universities and employers. In response to COVID-19, the Dublin Fora created a special hotline for employers, and online training. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the various education institutions will offer learning certificates and articulation agreements to help repurpose people's skills (as distinct from "starting afresh") and targeted initiatives to help vulnerable industries.



### Learnings for the future

A lot has been said and written about how both colleges and universities have shown considerable flexibility and adaptability in response to the pandemic. But, how do we embed these learnings?

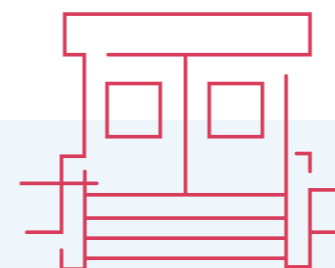
One key feature has been the importance of collaboration between colleges, universities and relevant stakeholders responsible for economic development, innovation and growth policies – because impactful solutions extend beyond the colleges. The goal is to encourage clusters with the

capacity and capability to "think outside the box".

Another aspect has been the importance of an enabling policy framework and good governance arrangements to underpin these collaborative platforms. This helps build communities of trust based on partnership.

In all these - and many other ways, colleges can strengthen their civic mission in order to actively empower people, boost productivity and strengthen place.

*Ellen is joint Managing Partner at BH Associates Education Consultants. She is Professor Emerita, Technological University Dublin (Ireland), and Joint Editor at Policy Reviews in Higher Education. Ellen is a member of the Commission of the College of the Future. She served as policy advisor at the Higher Education Authority (Ireland). She has written reports and led reviews for governments, universities, OECD, EU, UNESCO, and has been a member of various university and government boards.*



### Opening the doors for a community response

**Langley College** has unlocked the doors to its teaching kitchens, to allow the One Slough Community Response team to store and make food for the vulnerable and those self-isolating in Slough. College staff turned out to support the effort which saw volunteers preparing breakfast, lunches and hot meals for over 200 people in the community which were then distributed by Slough Outreach. Alongside providing access to their kitchen facilities, Langley College has also been designated the One Slough Community Response Hub. The college is being used to sort, store and dispatch food throughout the community and is the base for a Virtual Call Centre.

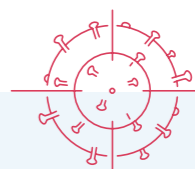


### Keeping students connected

**Fife College** delivered nearly 300 devices to students in order to support remote learning during the coronavirus outbreak.

Delivered while adhering to social distancing rules, laptop devices were dropped off at the homes of college students across Fife. The vital equipment is also being delivered to Fife College students who live further afield, including those in Edinburgh, Tayside, Clackmannanshire and Perth & Kinross.

Staff are making the deliveries as part of the College's commitment to ensure students still have the opportunity to learn during the coronavirus pandemic.

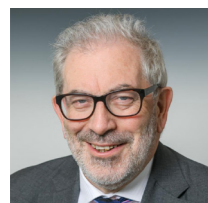


### Supporting the community during COVID-19

**Borders College** responded to the wider Borders Community needs and made available, for use by the NHS, college buildings and vehicles if required along with personal computers for broader NHS use. In addition, they operated a pharmacy home delivery service across the Scottish Borders in conjunction with NHS Borders. The college also loaned high-end care beds to the Louisa Jordan Hospital. Staff also manufactured face visors for use within the community.



# Colleges are critical to the civic agenda



**Lord Bob Kerslake, Chair of the Board of Governors, Sheffield Hallam University, Chair of the Civic University Commission, and Chair of the Civic University Network Advisory Group**

Our colleges and universities are part of the fabric of our communities. They are places which are not just in their communities, but are formed out of, shaped by and for their communities. Now, as communities face unprecedented economic and social challenges in the wake of COVID-19, this civic role of colleges and universities has arguably never been more important.

For too long, however, further education has been under-valued, under-funded and under-loved by government. In a recent HEPI [pamphlet](#) I co-authored with Professor Sir Chris Husbands and Natalie Day of Sheffield Hallam University, we argued that the higher education sector is enhanced by a strengthened further education sector, and that colleges needed a

more equitable and stable funding supply in order to ensure a more vibrant and comprehensive post-18 education system.

There are some positive signs, with recent positive injections for FE Colleges, but there is still some way to go to address this imbalance. As we await the Skills White Paper and the long overdue response to the Post-18 Education and Funding Review (the Augar Review) in England, it feels timely for colleges themselves to reflect on their future through this Commission and to be ambitious about their role in the economic and social recovery.

In this, I welcome the sector's efforts to reflect on, and to amplify what colleges bring to their communities and to the public good,

and how this might be developed. I led the [Civic University Commission](#) which challenged universities to re-shape their roles and responsibilities to their communities. The Commission's findings highlighted the importance of active engagement with a civic vision and strategy, ensuring a proactive rather than passive approach. Unsurprisingly, I would argue that a similar exercise of strategic reflection would be valuable to our friends in colleges as well.

The Civic University Commission provided a much-needed mirror for universities to reflect more honestly on their role and responsibility to their region. At Sheffield Hallam University, where I chair the Board of Governors, we found that to be truly

civic, we needed to be more positive and proactive in our local partnerships, particularly with the further education sector, to ensure a more connected and coherent local educational ecosystem. This means ensuring that both college and university partners are involved in trusted, honest conversations about regional education and skills needs. It also means working together to drive higher levels of participation and skill formation, with greater ease of navigation for students.

This is something that we are proud to be doing already, with The Sheffield College and others, as part of our collective commitment to serving the economic, educational, and social needs of South Yorkshire. We also recently announced the establishment of a Regional Skills Council to drive connectivity and collaboration across the region working with universities, further education colleges as well as business and government representatives. Through the network we will work together to confront the significant skills challenges in our region with ingenuity and innovation and to promote more locally focused partnerships to navigate and address skills shortages and educational disadvantage.





## Colleges are critical to the civic agenda

We at Sheffield Hallam were also very pleased to be awarded the honour of leading the [Civic University Network](#). The Network will work to support the growing civic university movement by sharing best practice, developing a peer review scheme so that universities increase their civic impact, and connecting universities with other sectors, including further education, so that we can work more effectively together in our localities.

For colleges, as for universities, the longer-term challenge will be to ensure that this civic role is hardwired into the fabric of institutional cultures, outlooks and collaborations, as well as the system that they operate in. There is much that universities and colleges could do together as part of this civic mission, alongside schools and other anchor institutions, including the NHS and local authorities. Given the significant economic and social turbulence ahead, it is vital we do. This is important for our immediate recovery, but also to ensure we are best able to face some of the longer-term challenges, such as climate and demographic change, which will remain long after COVID-19 has passed.

I am a passionate supporter of a new vision for post-18 education in the UK. Strong Further Education and Higher Education sectors working together in the best interests of the learner.

*Lord (Bob) Kerslake is Chair of the Board of Governors for Sheffield Hallam University. He also chairs the UK2070 Commission into city and regional inequalities as well as recently leading the UPP Foundation's Civic University Commission. Before joining the Civil Service, Lord Kerslake received a knighthood for his services to local government, spending eight years serving the London Borough of Hounslow and then a further 11 years leading Sheffield Council.*



### Collaborating with universities on innovation

#### The Teesside University College Partnership (TUCP)

delivers a shared vision of driving regional economic growth and productivity through providing seamless pathways of employer responsive education and training across the Tees Valley. Through working in genuine partnership, Teesside University, Darlington College, Hartlepool College, Stockton Riverside College and Redcar & Cleveland College have established an innovative networked approach to the delivery of higher-level skills, ensuring that the location and nature of provision directly responds to regional industry needs. This is underpinned by shared strategic decision-making through the TUCP Board, comprised of senior representatives from all partners.



All TUCP institutions have mobilised resources to support the region through the COVID-19 pandemic, including direct support for the NHS and local businesses. Through the post-pandemic recovery, the TUCP will play a key role in the provision of skills development and training across the Tees Valley, in direct alignment with economic recovery plans of the Tees Valley Combined Authority, through strengthening progression pathways from levels 1-7 across key sectors.

*"The TUCP energises innovation across the Tees Valley. Drawing upon the distinctive expertise and facilities of all partners, the TUCP drives the higher-level skills agenda across the region."*

Professor Mark Simpson, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning & Teaching), Teesside University

# We have a shared responsibility to all our young people



**Geoff Barton, General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders**

If we were asked what we want for young people, it is likely that we would all say something very similar. We would talk about providing them with a range of opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge according to their aptitudes and interests. So that when

they step out into the wider world they do so with confidence, as well as the right qualifications for their chosen route in life.

It is sad then that when it comes to the all-important decision over what path to take at the age of 16, there

is too often a disconnect between schools and colleges, although we are part of the same sector. Colleges perceive a reluctance, among some schools at least, to expose their students to the proud prospectus offered in further education. Some schools harbour a suspicion that some courses in further education don't live up to their billing.

And this disconnect is further fuelled by the competitive nature of our education system, the bums-on-seats fact that each student equals a unit of funding. The perverse nature of this incentive is obvious.

If all this is making you feel uncomfortable, my apologies. We all know that these are the factors that sour the relationship between schools and colleges, rights and wrongs aside. By exposing them to the light we may perhaps take a step towards addressing them.

The Baker Clause in England was such an attempt of course, but it does not appear to have reset this relationship in the way that was intended. It reminds us that legislation is a blunt instrument – and that encouraging a wider behavioural change and culture of trust is absolutely central to improving collaboration.



So, we have to look at a different way of doing things. And perhaps in the wake of the coronavirus emergency, as we think about how we can address the social divide that the crisis has so starkly exposed, we have an ideal moment in time.

From our work in ASCL, we have seen a growing interest from school and college leaders in their respective organisations and a willingness to work more closely together. That sense of collaboration can and must come from the sector. But it would work better still if it were recognised by the accountability system, and if the manifest shortcomings in funding were addressed.

The Independent Commission on the College of the Future is looking at the concept of the 'civic role'

of colleges, building on their tradition of service to their communities in the widest sense. To me, this seems like something that should be a shared responsibility across all providers. A joint mission to translate into practice an ideal that must surely be right – that we collectively do the very best for young people.

This is close to the heart of ASCL following our work on identifying solutions to support what we have termed 'the forgotten third'. That is the third of young people who, each year, leave school at the age of 16 without at least a Grade 4 GCSE in English and maths. Improving the prospects of these young people seems to us to be key to improving social justice. And a more collaborative system within each of the four nations of

the UK, in which schools and colleges always work together, feels like an important step along that road.

*Geoff studied English and Linguistics at the University of Lancaster, then trained to teach at Leicester University. From 2002 to 2017 he was headteacher of King Edward VI School, Bury St Edmunds, a 11-18 school of 1650 students. He is a Founding Fellow of the English Association and patron of the English & Media Centre. He was a longstanding member of ASCL Council, founding chair of its Pedagogy Committee, and a 'Leading Thinker' for the National Education Trust. He was elected as General Secretary of ASCL in April 2017.*



# Building meaningful collaboration between colleges and universities



**Mary Curnock Cook OBE,**  
**Education non-exec Director**

Much has been written about the potential and desirability for better collaboration between colleges and universities, perhaps most thoroughly and recently articulated in Philip Augar's [Independent panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding](#). Amongst other things, his review fillets

the structural and funding disparities between higher education and further education and calls for a rebalancing away from the 'over-education' of some graduates and towards more FE delivered sub-degree technical education. Some want to see the role of FE more clearly demarcated while [others](#) see further

education colleges more directly as a route to more, not less, higher education, "delivering mid-level vocational skills and working in partnership with others to widen access to higher education". These and other contributions all have merit.

Universities, facing existential financial risks from the fall off in international and domestic recruitment as a result of COVID-19, have been warned by government that [restructuring and mergers](#) are more likely to be on the table than more cash. But experience of structural collaboration between universities and colleges is limited and those who have merged have had to jump many hurdles. Colleges and universities have different cultures, governance, and funding; they answer to different regulators and quality assurance regimes, and to different ministers within the UK Government's Department for Education. So, in the COVID-19 and immediate post-COVID-19 environment, mergers are unlikely to deliver the urgent solutions needed and will take up valuable leadership capacity which could perhaps be better directed at more immediate and practical interventions.

With renewed interest in civic mission for both colleges and [universities](#), and a new emphasis on

place-based policy, there are several ways in which colleges and universities can work together to the benefit of students. The tone from the top will be vital here and governing bodies of both types of institutions should be setting clear objectives to deliver meaningful collaborative interventions. Ideally, college Principals and university Vice-chancellors should have ex-officio or observer status on each other's boards to generate real familiarity with the respective missions, challenges and opportunities for both. Mutual understanding and respect are prerequisites for meaningful collaboration.

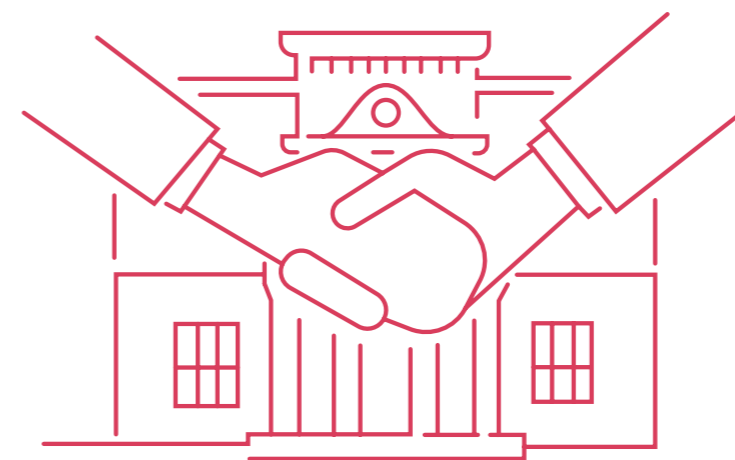
For students, exposure to and involvement with their local university that is visible and integrated into their experience will help break down barriers to progression and raise aspirations. Generous sharing of student facilities, support and

activities together with more permeable use of teaching professionalism and capacity across institutions could do much to support students' success. As Professor Dave Phoenix, Vice-Chancellor for London South Bank University, recently merged with Lambeth College, put it in an [article for HEPI](#):

*"We aim to provide a genuine choice for learners between technical, vocational and academic pathways. At the same time, we can focus on the needs of individual students, ensuring that each one can build the portfolio of skills, experience and qualifications they need to achieve their ambitions. The model requires recognition of the importance of each sector – schools, further education, higher education – to people and place and regards each entity as a specialist in its own right. Not better or worse, but different."*

There are clear challenges and tension points too – including how we work to expand provision of higher technical education without this coming at the expense of degree-level study. We must be assertive in challenging the ugly trope of 'over-education' – we need far more education and training available for people at all levels and all ages, not less. Years of progress to democratise higher education is at risk if this debate becomes a 'zero sum' game.

If we are to succeed in creating a tertiary education ecosystem that works for students, it requires universities and colleges to work harder on the complex interdependencies that could unlock more and faster progress, especially in the post-COVID-19 era when education and skills will provide vital underpinning to social and economic recovery.



*Mary is a non-exec Director on several education boards including the Open University, the London Interdisciplinary School and United Learning. She also chairs the Dyson Institute and the Access Project. She was formerly CEO of UCAS.*

# Stepping up on diversity and inclusion: leadership in challenging times



**Dame Ruth Silver, President of the Further Education Trust for Leadership**

those who perpetuate it. I see many people wondering whether and how things can really change. This is positive, but unless we can find constructive channels for people to express their desire for a better, fairer and more just world, this moment of hope will yield to still more frustration, still more hopelessness.

There is a challenge here for us all, and a responsibility. It will be felt acutely by college leaders who must reflect on how they and their institutions and staff can contribute to making positive change happen. This is a challenge that goes beyond leadership as it is normally construed, beyond the normal day-to-day business of being a chief executive and principal. It demands what I term leadership, a kind of far-sighted sensitivity to the here-and-now challenges faced by your community that transcends the task-oriented activity essential to running a complex organisation. Like 'citizenhood' and 'parenthood', leadership conveys a deep sense both of relatedness and of open-ended, future-focused concern.

I was struck, in the context of these thoughts, by a video [message](#) from Dr Paul Klotman, President of Baylor College of Medicine,

in Houston, Texas, that for me really demonstrates what I mean by leadership in these difficult times. What impresses me is the clarity of his messages for the students, for his community, for his profession and the politicians in their midst. And, of course, for George Floyd's family. He walks forwards and towards the fullest implications for his – and our – roles as leaders in such grave situations. I appreciate the roundedness of his connection not only to his prestigious college and its community, but also to the wider world, in particular his welcoming of this dimension of his civic leadership as a component part of his 'leadership'.

He recognises not only the wide societal ramifications of what has been happening on the streets of America, but also the relevance to his profession and the work of his institution and, very crucially, how very personally people have felt and responded to the death of George Floyd. He does more than offer his understanding, but identifies with these feelings and expresses his heartfelt solidarity and support:

"There are areas of life where you need to step up, where you need to intervene, and part of the problem is that we have to recognise those moments when you have

to stand up and take a position and defend people ... the hardest thing that we witnessed is that no-one stepped up for George Floyd ... and the terrible thing is he actually asked for help ... and no-one stood up to help him."

This is a challenge for his students, but, as he also recognises, it is a challenge for him as a leader, and for his profession and its connectedness to the wider life of his society, too. Actions are important, and it matters that our actions convey leadership. We all have a responsibility to 'step up', to look outwards and connect our work to the context in which it and the lives of students unfold, even if that means making ourselves profoundly vulnerable. We cannot – and should not – lead as though seismic events taking place in the world are somehow not relevant or do not impinge on our institutions.

This is especially true for leaders of organisations that espouse values of diversity and inclusivity. But it is true, really, for all leaders, in whatever context they lead. We all need to ask what we can do and how we can change to 'bring light where there are societal issues of systemic discrimination, systemic racism', to again quote Dr Klotman.

Developing leadership capacities across the education and skills systems of the four nations is central to our taking forward the college of the future. The Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL) will be exploring this future-facing concept in the weeks and months ahead and would very much welcome thoughts from you on what it could come to mean for us.

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*Dame Ruth is the President of the Further Education Trust for Leadership, an independent think tank focusing on the leadership of thinking in the FE and skills system. Ruth was a member of the recent joint Royal Society and British Academy review group on their report, 'Harnessing educational research' published October 2018, and was for 17 years the Principal of Lewisham College. Ruth has held a very wide range of positions, including as co-chair of the APPG Skills Commission, chair of the UK Government's National Taskforce on the Future of the Careers Profession and chair of the Scottish Government's Commission on Widening Access to Universities.*



It feels like times are changing. People are on the streets protesting the tragic death of George Floyd, statues are toppling and historic injustices are being confronted, by some of us at least. There is hope but there is also despair and dismay, particularly where injustice is so entrenched as to go unnoticed, even among



# Colleges supporting the dual mandate of business development and social inclusion in Northern Ireland



**Damian Duffy, Director of Development, Belfast Met College**

Colleges' understanding of their role and contribution to the growth and prosperity of the economy in Northern Ireland is driven by a fundamental commitment to a dual mandate supporting both economic (business) development and social inclusion. This is mapped out in the regional FE Strategy "FE Means Success"<sup>1</sup>. The real secret for an effective "civic" model in Northern Ireland is a clear understanding that colleges provide a public service and are funded to do so.

Colleges are embedded in their communities and can provide a unique insight and practical understanding to support economic development and social inclusion. Colleges in Northern Ireland are seen to have a key role in working with the business community, not only support skills and employability, but also to underpin the work which enhances business development and innovation.

The Department for Economy provides core funding to colleges to support businesses with advice, mentoring, support for upskilling/reskilling through programmes such as Assured Skills, Skills Focus and Innovateus. This

<sup>1</sup>: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/further-education-means-success>

approach is supported by the governance model, where colleges are classified as Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) which locates colleges closely with the Department of Economy as a delivery agent and in shaping and influencing core Departmental policy. Crucially, at the same time, colleges support better connections to the business community by having a recognised seat at the table for joint consultative groups, City Deals, Curriculum Hubs

and collaborative groups – sharing information and facilitating employer engagement.

The success of this commitment to a civic-public service model is the transformative impact of a unique "not for profit" Service Level Agreement with Northern Ireland Prison Service to take over responsibility for Learning and Skills provision across three prison sites. The motivation from the outset

was to deliver better outcomes for prisoners and their families and an acceptance that colleges could bring the expertise and deliver a shift change in one of the most challenging prison environments in Europe. This work was recognised with recent comments from Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons in England and Wales in June 2020 stating:

"Outcomes for young men at the Secure College were



## Working strategically with the Department of Economy and businesses during COVID-19

Since the onset of the pandemic, the colleges have worked with the Department of Economy, CBI and other business agencies to support the reconfiguration of the main Skills Focus programme to offer 100% funding for short-course programmes for furloughed and recently unemployed workers. Colleges have also helped shape a digital solutions framework, which maps out a range of opportunities for all key stakeholders to work more closely together to deliver remote solutions to meet the needs across the region.

Angela McGowan, CBI Northern Ireland Director commented: "In respect of digital skills, we have worked closely with the FE Colleges and other stakeholders through the CBI's Digital Working Group to address the skills gap in Northern Ireland. The FE Colleges and CBI have also collaborated closely on the delivery of these skills through the City Deal and have connected through the CBI 'People and Skills Network' to bring together Human Resource managers from industry and the FE sector on a regular basis".

## Colleges supporting the dual mandate of business development and social inclusion in Northern Ireland

dramatically better than at comparable prisons in England and Wales. In light of this, we recommend those with responsibility for designing and delivering custodial services for young adults, should study the findings of this report carefully”<sup>2</sup>.

The understanding that colleges are vital to economic and social development is shown in the role that colleges play in the Belfast Region City Deal. They bring their expertise to support the development of a skills and employability proposition as part of a £1 billion Treasury funding package. Working on a collaborative basis with local councils, CBI and other business development agents, we have been determined to ensure that the City Deal can deliver the jobs and economic outputs with a socially inclusive approach to job creation and skills driven by colleges.

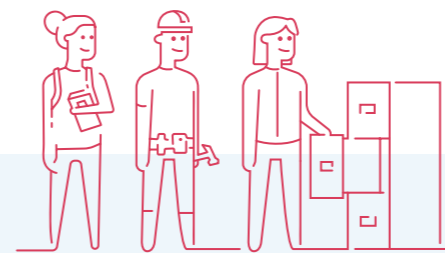
The close conversations with employer groups across Northern Ireland allow colleges to develop solutions which are truly responsive to the needs of the business and deliver a much closer alignment meeting and stimulating demand for skills solutions.

<sup>2</sup>: <http://cjini.org/TheInspections/Inspection-Reports/2020/April-June/Unannounced-Inspection-of-Hydebank-Wood-Secure-Col>

Recognition of the importance of the dual mandate for FE colleges will continue to be key to supporting a socially inclusive economic recovery. Reflecting on these priorities will also help colleges make more balanced decisions around curriculum and involvement in projects which deliver positive impacts across society, rather than a narrow transactional focus on revenue generating activities.

Undoubtedly the change in status of FE Colleges to NDPBs in Northern Ireland, although associated with significant additional obligations in terms of public sector accountability, has been key to underpinning and reinforcing the public service ethos and building collaborative networks which allow innovative solutions to support learners, employers and communities. The current efforts can be further reinforced in future by building even closer partnerships with Government Departments, Councils and key development agencies. By working together, we can develop and deliver local Skills and Employability plans that meet the needs of employers to support inclusive growth.

*Damian was appointed Director of Development at Belfast Met in 2010 and has worked on issues related to skills, business and economic development in the UK, Ireland and internationally for 28 years. He has been instrumental in leading the College to a number of national awards for employer engagement, culminating with the Queen’s Anniversary Prize in 2019 for creating unique solutions to deliver a digital talent pipeline. He is a Director of the Northern Ireland Centre for Competitiveness and an adviser for the Belfast City Region Deal on Skills and Employability. Damian has also led on the reform of Prison Learning and Skills in Northern Ireland and is a member of the Project Monitoring Committee for the EU PEACE Programme. Having worked as a lead adviser for the EU Commission URBACT programme Damian also has a keen interest in supporting the integration of migrant communities working to create new models to test approaches which enhance social inclusion.*



### Transferring skills during COVID-19

**Truro and Penwith College** worked with Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and NHS Kernow Clinical Commissioning Group to deliver funded online training aiming to assist hospitality workers without sufficient employment to transfer their skills to understaffed Cornish care homes. The online training was funded through the college’s ESF REACH Cornwall project and offered free of charge as part of its Connected College programme. As part of the session, the REACH Cornwall team invited one of Cornwall’s largest care organisations to speak directly to participants about vacancies, and also sign-posted to other health, social care and voluntary organisations looking for additional staff and volunteers.

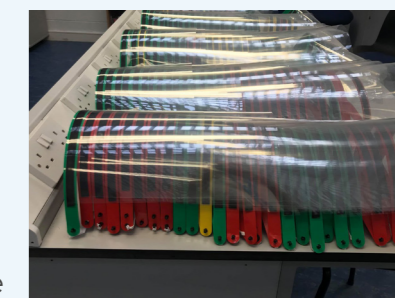


### Innovating to help keep the health and care sector safe

**North West Regional College (NWRC)** produced 1900 face guards at its Product Design Centre (PDC), which were delivered to medical and care staff in the local community during the COVID-19 pandemic. The team at the college’s state of the art campus in Limavady also produced a number of aerosol boxes, which mitigate infection risk to health professionals during intubation procedures.

PDC Manager Philip Devlin said: “We are fortunate to have staff that are willing to be innovative and we came up with a modified Computer Aided Design (CAD) to utilise a laser cutter to rapidly speed up the process that has seen us increase production speed tenfold.”

The college’s Business Support Centre has also developed a range of more than [20 online training programmes](#) that are available to businesses and their employees. These are 100% funded via the Skills Focus programme.





# How colleges empower a civic mindset



**Carla Ford, President 2019-20, Edinburgh College Students' Association**

Every year as we welcome new students to Edinburgh College as part of welcome events, we are met with people of all ages and backgrounds, who come to college to change their lives, to gain knowledge and skills that allow them to flourish. College gives people the opportunity to break the cycle of deprivation and it gives them the chance to understand and engage in the world around them as active citizens, while receiving a transformational education.

At Edinburgh College Students' Association we are set up as a charity running social events, campaigns and activities, but mainly we support and facilitate student representation with

more than 500 Class Reps elected every year. Students who take on these roles gain an extra level of life skills and understanding of civic life through training and engagement. Not only do the Class Reps receive opportunities to influence change. More often than not, these students become student leaders, representing the student voice where it really matters.

This year, more than ever, we see the importance of learning activities both inside and outside the classroom and the impact this has on the resilience and confidence of students when something unexpected comes their way. Currently, we are not just facing the challenges

posed by the normal student environment which include funding, mental health, and caring responsibilities. We are operating in an environment where everything has changed quickly and substantially. This change doesn't only affect those students already enrolled at college, but it's a lasting change for those planning their futures and who were hoping to start on their new path in August. We see this as an opportunity not just for colleges but also students' associations to redefine themselves within the world of representation, ensuring we keep innovating the ways in which we engage with students and continue our evidence-based approach.

While it is not always recognised, Students' Associations are among the best cheerleaders for any college. We speak to students every single day, we attend external events and publish communications almost daily directed straight to students. The future of colleges is utilising every aspect of partnership between colleges and students' associations. The current health crisis has brought out some of the best of college partnerships and has highlighted the areas of the student experience that really carry value for the students and what happens when you unexpectedly remove the physical frames of their education.

We have been working as partners with Edinburgh College to develop a positive and continually improving student experience both while operating online, but also in advance of easing of restrictions and the new academic year starting. Our data-driven process has been vital in our continued ability to provide clear and prompt feedback from students about their online learning experiences and concerns for the future, straight to college groups and committees. In recent years, we have been exploring the student sense of belonging while at college, which has sparked further conversations about what students expect from their college experience and how we can match those expectations. The ability to produce these reports

built on qualitative and quantitative feedback and direct student opinion makes the case for properly-funded and partnered Students' Associations, ensuring they are utilised to their full potential in producing a coherent student experience.

Students' college experiences are often short, intense, and ever-changing. Students' Associations remain the constant, but with the added ability to be nimble, dynamic, and, most importantly, living within the student experience. At Edinburgh College we have developed a mature, respectful relationship between students, the College, and the Association, which is focussed on harnessing the energy and ambition of our current cohort of students,

whilst always keeping one eye on the next generation. In a world where everything has changed and everything keeps changing, this partnership approach is more valuable and essential to the success of the sector than ever before. If we are truly positioning ourselves as a key driver of the economic and societal recovery, this must remain our central principle – working together to make students' lives better; now and in the future.

*Carla is from Edinburgh and worked as a PA for 10 years in the financial and legal sector while bringing up her 3 children, before returning to education to fulfil her goal of becoming a Midwife. After her year as ECSA President she is off to Napier University to fulfil her dream of studying Midwifery.*



## Training our key workers

**Halesowen College** Health and Social Care student Abbie Checketts is helping to look after and care for the residents at a residential home. Abbie is currently working at The Cedars Residential Home in Stourbridge while studying for her Level three in Health and Social Care at college. The 17-year-old from Wollaston is continuing her studies at home while working to care for the residents. Gill James, from Halesowen College, said: "Abbie is our future NHS who are keeping the country going in these very difficult times."

# The opportunity to build sustainability into our sector



**Billy Currie, Head of Corporate Services, Dumfries and Galloway College**

“Climate change and sustainability are at the heart of what we do”...how many organisations can truly say that? Here at Dumfries and Galloway College we can proudly say this having embedded climate change action into our College way of life since 2014.

As a college, we don't just see sustainability as another target we have to achieve each year. We believe in the need to take action for the benefit of



our local communities, for our region which thrives on attracting people to its clean and beautiful tourist attractions, and ultimately for the long-term sustainability of the College as an organisation. There is no greater civic mission than this, acknowledging that what we do can have an impact on others and on the world, preserving it for future generations.

The recovery from the impact of COVID-19 must be a green one, with sustainability embedded in the reset of our society and economy. The pandemic has fundamentally changed the way our sector operates, and there is little chance of returning to “normal” anytime soon. We must embrace this opportunity to build sustainability into our sector.

We are in a good position to take this forward, having worked to build the foundations of our own progression to carbon net zero by implementing a climate change action plan over the last 5 years. This plan set out our aims and measures to help reduce our emissions year on year until 2020. The end goal was a 20% overall reduction, we achieved a 30% reduction.

For colleges to achieve real impact on climate change, collaboration has to be a central principle, both internally in each college and with our partners. From early

on in our work we set up a sustainability committee, a mix of staff and students who met to review projects that had been implemented. This has now evolved into a climate emergency group, still a mix of staff and students, but with a more focussed view on climate change using 4 key pillars:

- **Education:** *The cornerstone of our purpose as a College is to educate those who come through our doors. Our members look at how we can embed sustainability and climate change into our curriculum.*
- **Innovation:** *Members with expertise actively seek potential innovations that are emerging which would bring benefit to the College. These innovations may be technologies to help reduce our emissions or projects aimed at providing more sustainable solutions to existing processes.*
- **Operations:** *Members look at day-to-day issues for immediate implementation. Waste reduction, power down campaigns, sustainable travel campaigns and clothes recycling campaigns are all examples that have emerged through this.*
- **Funding:** *Our members actively seek funding opportunities to allow us to implement projects and campaigns.*

By working as a group we are able to do more together. We have the power of collective thought, expanded networks and subject expertise combined with a passion to make a real difference for our students, our College and our region.

Clear leadership is always needed for climate change efforts. Our Principal and CEO, Joanna Campbell, has embedded climate action into our strategic plan, Ambition 2025. By doing this, Joanna has shown that the College provides a commitment which is led from the very top of the organisation, something which is of the utmost importance when setting out any vision. To enhance that even further, our Principal, Chair of our Board and Student Association president have signed a climate emergency charter.

Our collaboration doesn't stop internally. We collaborate with our sector and region to go further and achieve wider impact.

Through the EAUC, the College is part of a small institutions sustainability network which provides a forum for Scottish FE and HE institutions to discuss sustainability actions, organisational progress and also to benchmark our reporting submissions annually. This network is

vital as it provides a support mechanism for College leads and an opportunity to share best practice.

We lend our skills and expertise to the College's wider community, too. The local economic development group have worked with us on a number of projects in recent years, with the College playing a leading role in utilising our network of people who have the sustainability skills and knowledge to provide strategic advice to our business partners.

A collaborative approach between all sectors is the only way we can really tackle climate change and drive a green recovery out of the pandemic. Our sector has a civic role to play to truly adapt to the future challenges our planet faces.

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*Billy has been at Dumfries and Galloway College for over 4 years, joining from a private sector energy efficiency background. He is a local man and has a great passion to make his region the best in Scotland when it comes to education.*



# How an embedded civic ethos will make the sector resilient to future crises



**Dr Norman Crowther, National Official Post 16 Education, National Education Union and independent researcher**

During the current COVID-19 crisis the willingness and adaptive solutions taken up by the education and welfare systems to meet the challenge have been demonstrable and evident. But, so too, were their starting points. The issue of capacity in both cases was a cause, rightly, of concern. If we are to reaffirm the central civic role and value of our colleges, we need to start with a challenging and self-reflective look at the position we start from. This reflection allows us also to imagine and work towards a future where colleges are truly able to be at their rightful place – recognised, funded and empowered to act as civic anchors in every community.

## NEU survey snapshot

A snapshot survey of NEU post-16 members across England, Northern Ireland and Wales, conducted in the early weeks of the crisis, certainly raised serious challenges – many of which speak to wider issues in the existing systems. A central theme was the level of inconsistency in approach and response across colleges within these three nations. While we found that in some cases safety was not only a priority but determined every decision, in others, we found few protocols and late decision-making. College leaders

have described regulations and advice that was all too often inconsistent or unclear. This certainly permeated to the experiences of staff during the early stages of the lockdown.

An immediate and critical issue for colleges was the move to remote learning, which was fairly predictable considering the nature of the pandemic. Again, this all too often revealed longer-term under-investment in digital infrastructure, resources and digital skills and was compounded by the same inconsistency in approach across the system, which for staff at times added up to the impression of making it up as you go along.

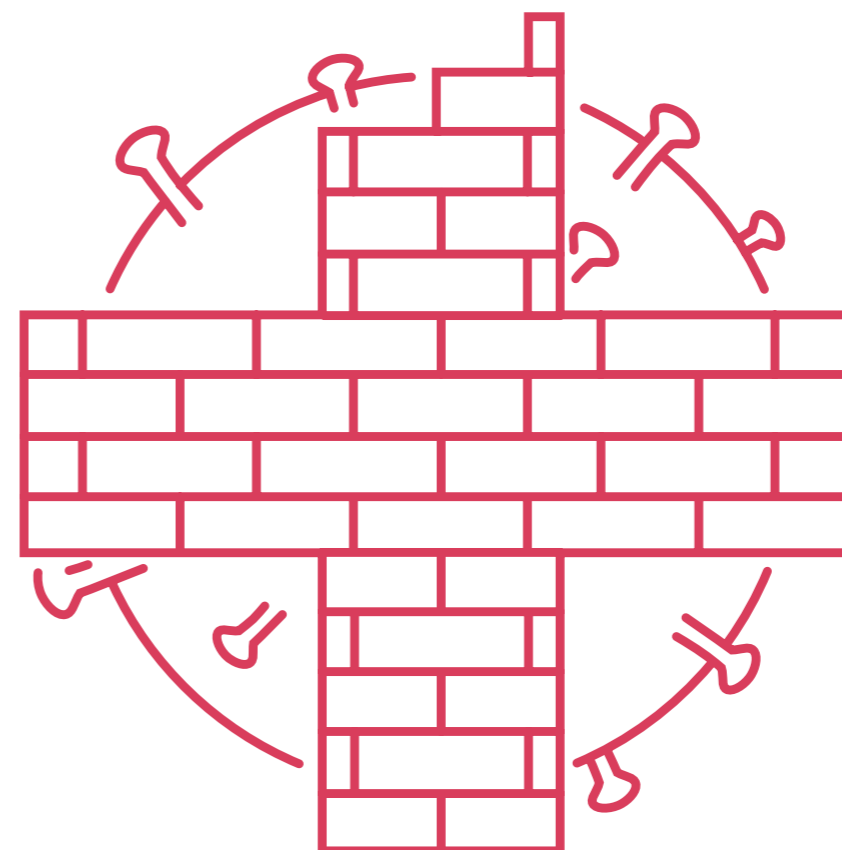
## What the pandemic revealed about FE

A crisis reveals what a system has or does not have at that particular juncture and we were found wanting for many reasons. Here, the NEU survey reveals two particular issues. Firstly of insufficient funding, and secondly, an insufficiently systemic approach to our college system in England. In England, colleges have faced ten years of austerity that has left them with a survivalist and short-term focus, rather than being centred on teaching and learning for students and CPD for staff. And the challenges in funding exist in different ways across the devolved nations, too.

So, the question is: What could it have looked like? And more important still – how do we ensure our college systems across the four nations are set up to play their fullest possible role as civic anchor institutions in times of crisis and more generally.

## Away from voluntarism

For too long, the voluntaristic system of further education has convinced many that its good acts are based in such an ethos, that its outcomes follow from it and that its purpose is modelled on it. I do not think that is right. If it were, then the weaknesses we have been left with would



## How an embedded civic ethos will make the sector resilient to future crises

not have been so evident: competition is not a civic virtue; vested interest is not a civic virtue, even good will alone is not a civic virtue. We have forgotten notions of civic duty and how to mediate interests which underpin social agreements and partnerships and that culminate in a civic ethos (what, I think, Busemeyer might call 'an ethos of mediation').

You need a founding concept of the public realm that a civic ethos works within. It cannot, for example, work within the realm of the market and unfettered competition. It needs political framing and legislated structures to work within. With the pleas for a more systematic and integrated college sector – within a wider, holistic education and skills system – and a need for better pay and CPD for staff, we need to frame a civic ethos in legislation and a new settlement in the sector.

### How an embedded civic ethos will make the sector resilient to future crises – and do more for people and their communities

For further education to match up to such a vision of embedding a civic ethos it will need the following

actions taken within each of the four nations. Together, this will enable us to achieve real civic value, and to meet future crises with greater coherence:

- *Colleges as an adequately funded national resource with a public duty to serve each region; with a regional presence as great as universities, the collective of schools and the NHS.*
- *College systems that prioritise collaboration as part of their ethos and honour it as a given (legislated for in other countries).*
- *Co-production to be at the core, with staff as experts in the field of education, and with researchers feeding into that co-production to enable true synergy based on evidence and inquiry.*
- *A national contract for teachers and support staff for their public duty.*
- *Collective bargaining machinery that rewards the public duty of education professionals.*
- *Policy formation that is quasi-independent of government control – with educationalists, stakeholders, and trade unions being a check and balance on how the partnership goes forward (legislated for in other systems)*

With such premises we would have had:

- *Staff with expertise (for example) in digital, and who are properly supported and resourced.*
- *Learners, individuals, communities, and businesses accessing their regional college network or hub for advice on digital, learning, CPD or future changes to work practices.*
- *Shared resources that are open and established for those who needed initial engagement strategies.*
- *Learning, leisure and advice, skills and life development for all in clear pathways and institutions*

With all of that we can have the ultimate aim: coherent systems which allow for educational and skills-based responses to challenges and crises as they arise, with learning and safety at the heart.

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Norman oversees NEU ATL Post 16 section strategy and member support (eg 'researchmeets'). He has played a key role in developing the 'Networking the Networks' research portal for the FE sector (with the LSRN) and the NEU employer's engagement tool funded by ULF (Transformer's Project). He has co-authored 'The Logic of Incorporation' which analyses the impact of creating autonomous FE colleges in 1992 and a chapter on the FE Workforce in 'The Coming age of FE?' (ed. Ann Hodgson 2015). Norman was the lead author of 'Principles of Further Education' an unpublished account of a series of expert seminars on Further Education hosted by ATL (NEU) and 'Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain'.

# Civic driven leadership: the importance of collaboration



Yana Williams, Chief Executive, Coleg Cambria

I have always upheld the view that in education – particularly the FE sector – leaders should endeavour to do the right thing, put their local communities and employers first, treat their staff with kindness and respect and work in partnership to achieve this.

Collaboration and civic duty focus the mind on what really matters to the students, apprentices, employers and parents who look to the local

college for support and guidance, careers advice and opportunities. It ensures curriculum design is derived from a genuine understanding of what is needed, what will help and what will make regions prosper. A college must be agile to change rapidly to demands, acting proactively and communicating clearly and honestly about what it is doing.

Having worked in both the English and Welsh sectors it is easy to see how system changes at a national level can support this. In England, the ability to develop local, career-focused technical higher education provision addressed the issues of upskilling and reskilling local people in local jobs. This enables colleges to help people progress in their careers, whilst delivering full time 14-16 provision provides real opportunity for those students who found some of the constraints of school had a negative impact on their education.

In Wales, the consolidation of colleges means they focus on delivering what is important to their local communities rather than competing for enrolments. Regular access to different income streams support projects at pace so that local and national issues such as mental health can be quickly addressed to offer targeted support.



COVID-19 will have an impact on the whole education system and the traditional structure of the year. It will also have an effect on mental health. It will lead to businesses closing and inspire new businesses to open. It will change attitudes. And it will require people to reskill and upskill.

Colleges cannot simply look at what they used to do and modify it. They need to be proactively looking to the future, to be a better version of themselves. As a result of our historic battle to use finite resources to support people who need us most, we find ourselves in a perfect

position for us to respond to the education and skills fallout from the pandemic.

Collaboration and local investment will undoubtedly be our starting points, working together with our voluntary, public, employer and educational partners to support people of all ages and backgrounds to provide the solutions to their problems. This will not just be noticeable now but will have an impact on people's lives and behaviours for many months and years to come.

Fundamentally, we need to take a partnership approach.

This will allow us to see where the best practice is, taking those ideas and applying our own enabling culture. The better we respond to showing our 'can do' attitude the more those who doubted us will look to us for support, advice and problem solving.

This often happens despite the systems we operate in, not because of them. Yet, now of all times, it should be irrelevant which of the four nations a college sits in, what limitations the unique funding system has and what strategies foresaw. This is about leaders getting into local and regional



## Civic driven leadership: the importance of collaboration

communities, understanding the challenges, tackling the concerns and the barriers, and offering solutions. Something the college sector has always been brilliant at.

It is clear from the current situation how vital the public sector, communities, kindness, support and compassion have all been, and how they are seen as the cornerstones of what is helping people navigate this situation.

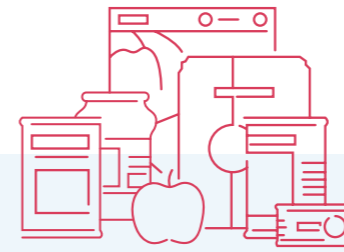
My view is that colleges can be an important cornerstone moving forward. But as we look to the future, we must create policies and cultures across the UK that enable leaders and colleges to be even more of an integral part of their communities. This will empower them to better understand and respond to their needs by collaborating with those best placed to provide a future plan that truly focuses on people.



### Keeping the community active

**Grŵp Llandrillo Menai** are enrolled on the Active Ambassadors Programme and have been working hard to support their local community during the COVID-19 outbreak. They are providing support through various means including collecting shopping, making time to work at local supermarkets and using technology to connect virtually so as to keep in touch and to spread positivity. Ambassadors are also supporting GLIM Rygbi to design a weekly Wellbeing Calendar for all staff and learners, helping everyone to keep mentally and physically healthy during this difficult time.

*Yana Williams became Chief Executive of Coleg Cambria in January 2020. She was educated at both primary and secondary school level in Mold, and completed her A level studies at the former Deeside College. An alumnus of Cardiff Metropolitan University, her first teaching role was at Knowsley Community College in Liverpool. She later moved to Runshaw College in Lancashire before re-joining Deeside College in a management role, overseeing the curriculum in a wide range of areas from construction to catering. It was then on to a Vice Principal role at Blackburn College and later Hugh Baird, Liverpool where she was CEO/Principal for 8 years.*



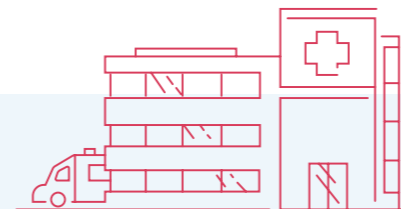
### Driving the sector's response to food poverty

In March 2020, **London South East Colleges** launched FE Foodbank Friday to support its local communities during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. When college sites had to close, a virtual fundraising platform was quickly set up so proceeds could be donated to foodbanks across Bromley, Bexley and Greenwich.

Following the launch of FE Foodbank Friday, 32 other FE Colleges from around the country joined the campaign. They set up their own fundraising pages and donated the money raised to local foodbanks, meeting demand where it is most needed.

To date, over £42,000 has been raised collectively. When campuses re-open the campaign will continue, with foodbank collection bins put in every college for people to donate provisions in the more traditional way. The campaign went far and wide, it was endorsed by well know celebrity chef Prue Leith, and was also chosen by the Department for International Trade to be included in their GREAT INSPIRATIONS promotion. A wide reaching Great Britain campaign showcasing all four corners of the nation.

FE Foodbank Friday is very much part of London South East Colleges' civic response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout its 100-year history, the College's mission has always been to support its communities, promoting social mobility and aspiration via high quality education provision. Having recently won the Queens Anniversary Prize for its commitment to high quality technical and vocational education and positioned itself as a social enterprise, the College is focused on building community wealth and creating social value with fundraising initiatives like FE Foodbank Friday being a key part of this strategy.

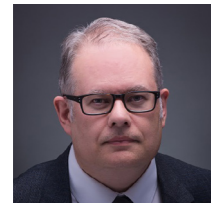


### Supporting the NHS

**St David's College** has donated its supply of safety goggles and disposable gloves to the local health board providing practical support to the NHS during the COVID-19 outbreak. St David's College Science department has also been 3D printing protective face shields, that have been donated to the local pharmacy. Also, a number of healthy and able support staff who aren't able to complete work online are amongst the NHS Volunteers, and the College has encouraged individuals to help where possible.



# 'Jenga' style collaboration for the health and social care sector



**Jon Buglass, Vice Principal for Innovation, Planning and Performance at Edinburgh College**

The pandemic has shown the importance of the health and care workforce. Yet, this is a sector that has an urgent need to fill skills gaps. Colleges have a big role to play in strengthening the current and future workforce, and in improving wider determinants of health. At Edinburgh College, we are learning lessons about how to do this in a collaborative and blended way.

The region's health and social care workforce is projected to need to grow by 9% over the next decade. This growth is faster than the national workforce and the region's overall economy. Colleges working together, and with the wider education system and health and care sector, can recruit, train, and reskill the workforce needed to support a healthy population. A

significant collaborative response is needed, and we can learn from and build on work in other sectors.

At Edinburgh College, we embarked on building more strategic and sustainable relationships in a new collaborative framework through the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal. This deal put skills firmly at the centre of this proposition and presented a new opportunity to address the skills needs of the region with a mechanism for funding that incentivises collaboration. It resulted in a collocation between four colleges to pool resources, investing in staff development, and co-creating and enhancing over 20 new courses in the space of six months. It allowed colleges to work flexibly with partners and to test out new thinking to respond in an agile way, whilst being driven by inclusive growth and employer demand.

Of course, colleges are just one piece of the skills puzzle. We are also working with local universities, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier University, Heriot-Watt University and Queen Margaret University, as well as the Datalab, local authorities, Department for Work and Pensions, Employability and Skills leads, the third sector, Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council.



In the key regional sectors of Data Driven Innovation (DDI) and Housing, Construction and Infrastructure (HCI), research has enabled us to identify in detail the specific skills needs of relevant employers. We developed a 'Jenga' model to build progression, with the collective aim of building the new offer and avoiding duplication from the beginning. This involved matching skills needs with the skills offered through a coherent analysis of the college offer, the courses offered through Schools College Partnerships (SCP) and the collective offer

of universities through to postgraduate programmes. This built an understanding of the resource required and how to collaborate with different partners to achieve it.

The health and social care sector must now be a priority. We are approaching key partners in this sector and across education and skills to collaborate with to achieve our ambition of meeting the skills needs to keep our population healthy.

We also have an opportunity to learn from our pace of change in using technology to engage with new

and existing cohorts of learners. The Edinburgh College 'Future Proof 2025' curriculum has been working towards an ambition that all courses are built around a core of project-based and 'work-integrated' learning, developing the meta-skills that employers need. This would enable both the development of data literacy and greater experience through simulated work environments through virtual reality. For example, in areas such as dementia care, students can benefit by developing resilience through experiential deep learning to gain confidence before placement.

This is clearly an area where colleges and universities can and must collaborate. The newly formed Advanced Care and Health Centre (ACRC) at the University of Edinburgh allows us to develop the collaboration between tertiary institutions, where research, development and innovation will directly translate into skills delivery innovation by the College sector.

Colleges have shown their resilience, agility and capacity to innovate and collaborate during the pandemic. Frameworks like the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal must be catalysts for ensuring that we have the skills needed to recover. I am excited for Edinburgh

## 'Jenga' style collaboration for the health and social care sector

College to lead and help build partnerships to respond to the economic recovery needed in the Health and Social Care sector, amongst the many others. Now is the time for the education and skills sector to come together, learn from this challenging time, and collaborate for the public good.

### Building the 'Jenga tower' in health and social care

1. Mapping the regional curriculum together from SCQF levels 4-12
2. Identifying the gaps in provision using employer input
3. Identifying the resources required to fill the gaps and deliver new courses
4. Identifying where staff skills gaps are and supporting the requirements
5. Ensuring there is an 'inclusive growth' dimension to all work undertaken, with particular focus on opportunities for the hardest to reach, for example with shorter entry points to courses with regulatory requirements
6. Creating different routes to employment, for example dual qualifications in Childcare and Health and Social Care to work across sectors
7. Building inspiration activity for schools' college partnerships, in order to develop the young workforce, avoiding youth unemployment, especially for those furthest to reach
8. Building capacity for the use of new technologies in skills development

*"Imagine, too, colleges in new, symbiotic, relationships with business, industry, the third sector, and across the wider public sector, where they are delivering relevant transformative upskilling and reskilling throughout an employee's career – and beyond work for an active retirement; where the system encourages and supports business and college co-investment and co-production; and where colleges can drive greater economic growth by more direct engagement with businesses to support step change improvement in performance and productivity."*

[The Cumberford-Little Report](#)

Jon is the Vice Principal for Innovation, Planning and Performance at Edinburgh College. Jon has recently written the Edinburgh College Digital Strategy 2020/25, which aligns with the Scottish Government's Digital Strategy, '[Realising Scotland's full potential in a Digital World](#)'. Jon is currently a strategic lead for the [Digital Skills Partnership](#), and an Associate Assessor for Education Scotland. Most recently, he has been working as a strategic lead for the regional Colleges within the [Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal](#), developing the skills curriculum for Data Driven Innovation.



### Creating the future health and social care workforce

The College Merthyr Tydfil, St David's Catholic Sixth Form College Cardiff and Coleg Gwent have come together to work on a fantastic Health and Social Care project which will be ready to launch in September 2020. Working together closely, the colleges will hold a Health and Social Care Fayre which will provide students with the chance to gain knowledge and to understand more about the opportunities available to them in this sector. The event will feature a number of different companies, highlighting the breadth and variety of jobs available.



# Next steps



This collection of essays and case studies shows that colleges are at the heart of their communities – civic institutions empowering **people**, supporting **productivity** and strengthening the **places** in which they sit. The coronavirus crisis and the pace of change it has necessitated has affirmed once again that colleges are driven by a central civic mission.


Yet, we know that current policy incentives and funding mechanisms across the UK – to varying degrees – have not unlocked the full potential of what our colleges can offer. Renewal and reaffirmation of the role of our colleges is critical if colleges are to support social and economic recovery and meet an array of long-term challenges, from climate change to the fourth industrial revolution.

Our vision for the college of the future provides a foundation from which to build on in each nation. It's clear that we have a unique opportunity to take this forward. While there are common challenges and opportunities for colleges across the four nations, the recommendations that we will make in our final report will be distinct and particular to the policy and political contexts across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

The themes explored in the essays in this publication reflect many of our discussions from a wide range of events and conversations across the four nations since our launch in Spring 2019. We hope that this facilitates and provokes more ideas as we work towards publishing our final report in the autumn.

We want to continue to hear from as many voices as possible as we design the college of the future.

Join in the conversation:

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The Commission is kindly supported by nine organisations, without whom our work would not be possible. Thank you to: Association of Colleges, City & Guilds, ColegauCymru, Colleges Scotland, FETL, Jisc, NCFE, NOCN and Pearson.

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