



2013–14  
Impact review

“

The 157 Group is a collection of dynamic and forward-thinking colleges that will play a key part in improving the skills base of the nation. I know that my predecessors have had very productive relationships with the 157 Group and our initial meetings suggest that my experience will be no different.

**Nick Boles MP, Minister for Skills and Equalities**

“

I had excellent discussions with members of the 157 Group while developing the ideas that became my *Robbins Rebooted* pamphlet. I am clear that FE colleges, led by inspirational principals such as those in the 157 Group, can play a major role in building a future system based on high-level technical skills.

**Liam Byrne MP, Shadow Minister for Universities and Skills**

“

Further education colleges have a central role to play within a reinvigorated skills system in England, and our recent work with the 157 Group has demonstrated the sector's commitment to this. It has been a pleasure working with the group to drive change and fresh thinking, and to receive support from colleges for much of our own work.

**Michael Davis, Chief Executive, UKCES**

“

We were delighted to be part of last year's annual reception and saw first-hand just how influential and well-respected the 157 Group is within the further education community. As an organisation key to the economic regeneration of north London, we know just how important our relationships with 157 Group member colleges are, and it is good to know that the organisation continues to advocate for meaningful relationships between colleges and employers.

**Nikki Kelly, Head of Employment, Education and Community Development, Tottenham Hotspur Foundation**

“

It is reassuring to know that we have in the 157 Group a trusted and confident source of advice and challenge – our joint work on the governance of teaching and learning was a successful project from which we both learned a lot and we look forward to another positive year ahead.

**Matthew Coffey, Chief Operating Officer, Ofsted**

“

The 157 Group has been active in the development of education and training policy and in its delivery. I look forward to seeing the results of more of your work and to staying in touch with your wider thinking on the development of our education and skills strategies.

**Martin Donnelly, Permanent Secretary, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)**

“

Employers across the country persistently report that progress is held back because of skills shortages and gaps. Employers cannot exploit the benefits of the economic upturn without a competent, adaptable workforce. Colleges cannot meet the needs of learners, businesses or the wider community without focusing on this core issue. The work of the 157 Group, alongside UKCES and Gazelle, has highlighted this critical issue this year, and I know 157 Group principals are keenly addressing it in their localities.

**John Cridland, Director General, Confederation of British Industry (CBI)**

“

Further education is, rightly, taking centre stage in the run-up to next year's election, as the nation considers what should be done to ensure we have the skilled workforce we need. Colleges are critical to that work and we have been very impressed with the nature of the pieces commissioned by the 157 Group this year – always thoughtful, but with practical ways forward. I am sure the role of colleges will gain ever greater recognition through its work.

**Ann Mroz, Editor, TES**

“

The Foundation had fantastic support from the 157 Group this year on our Leadership Conversation. Combining innovative methodology with an extensive reach within the sector, the findings of that project will be extremely useful to our planning. It is good to know that the 157 Group is there to contribute thoughtful insight as we take our place in the sector improvement landscape.

**David Russell, Chief Executive, The Education and Training Foundation**

“

As the general election approaches, it is important that organisations across the world of further education come together to deliver key messages about the future of education and skills. We are pleased to have been able to do this in a high-profile way with the 157 Group this year, through activities in parliament and at party conferences. We are forming a strong coalition for the future.

**Martin Doel, Chief Executive, Association of Colleges (AoC) and David Hughes, Chief Executive, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (Niace)**

## Acknowledgements

The 157 Group would like to thank all those whose photos appear in this review, especially the learners at colleges throughout the UK.

# Contents

The 157 Group	4
Introduction	5
Influencing policy	6
Influencing policies	8
Influencing debate	10
Our colleges	12
Leading thought	16
Leading practice	18
Practice and profile	20
Our partnerships	22
Our members	23



# The 157 Group



## Who we are

The 157 Group is a consortium of influential further education colleges. Our member colleges:

- are large, with a combined turnover of over £1.5bn, impacting over 670,000 learners, employing 37,000 staff, engaging with over 31,000 employers and contributing £15bn a year to their local economies
- focus on high-level vocational and technical qualifications, including apprenticeships, that lead to employment, and providing pathways to success at this level for all
- are strategic leaders in their locality to ensure an effective skills system that:
  - responds to the needs of local communities and businesses
  - provides a clear line of sight to the world of work for young people and those who are unemployed
  - enables maximum skills development for young people and adults
  - stimulates local economic growth and job creation
  - creates meaningful partnerships with schools, universities, local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) and other stakeholders
  - encourages entrepreneurship, resilience and strong leadership.

The 157 Group aims to represent our members and colleges more widely in:

- policy influence
- thought leadership
- practice improvement.

We work in partnership with other colleges, employer umbrella organisations, thinktanks, national and regional bodies involved in education, the government and its agencies, and we aim to ensure that the practitioner voice is heard loud and clear in policymaking circles.

The 157 Group is financially autonomous, supplementing value-for-money membership fees with project-based income and corporate sponsorship secured on the basis of our high reputation.

## How we work

Our mechanisms of regular meetings and workshops enable our members, at different levels in their organisations, to react and respond to policy decisions, to share their own practice and decisions and to influence future policy decisions in a proactive and visionary way.

157 Group principals meet three times a year for a business meeting and twice a year for two-day reflective workshops. Each of these provides an opportunity to share reactions to recent developments, before engaging in peer support and improvement at the highest level.

Five of our principals are 157 Group directors, and they work with other members to establish the key priority areas for the 157 Group in each academic year. In 2013–14 we continued our focus on vocational teaching and learning, employer relationships and strategic local leadership.

The 157 Group directors for 2013–14 were:

- **Peter Roberts**, chair (Leeds City College)
- **Sarah Robinson OBE**, vice-chair (Stoke-on-Trent College)
- **David Byrne**, treasurer (Barnet and Southgate College)
- **Stella Mbubaegbu CBE** (Highbury College Portsmouth)
- **Amarjit Basi** (Cornwall College).

Senior staff from our member colleges replicate this approach in 10 strategic networks, which meet once a term. They cover:

- business development
- community development
- curriculum and higher education
- human resources and organisational development
- international development
- management information systems
- marketing
- policy
- teaching and learning
- technology and innovation.

# Introduction

In my introduction to last year's impact review, I referred to what felt like a 'whirlwind' of policy initiatives during the previous 12 months. I hardly imagined that, one year on, the whirlwind would still be blowing – some may say it feels more like a hurricane now.

We have seen the implementation of new programmes of study and traineeships for young people; reform to GCSEs, A levels and vocational qualifications; the raising of the participation age; and requirements to study English and maths. We have also seen proposals to reform apprenticeship funding, to bring employers centre stage in our skills system, and major changes to the accountability system and the data that will be needed to back that up. We have a new FE commissioner and changed approaches to intervention and governance, as well as increased competition from academies, university technical colleges (UTCs) and free schools. And we have seen significant cuts to funding, for the fourth year in a row.

Meanwhile, the peer group of principals in the 157 Group, of which I am a part, has grown ever stronger in its maturity and its willingness to meet head on the challenges we face. We are also resolutely determined to take advantages of the opportunities, and believe that colleges which successfully change to meet the competing demands of reform and constraint – the need to do 'more for less' – have the chance to be key players in reshaping our skills system and to help create the future landscape.

While understanding the good intentions of much recent policy development, we recognise our role in ensuring that any unintended consequences are mitigated. We all want young people to be able to develop the skills that will make them not just employable but successful, economically and as citizens. We all agree that adults should be able to upskill for better or more secure employment. And we believe that the UK needs a transformed education and skills system that offers only the highest-quality provision, one that can be called truly 'world-class' and in which every individual can fulfil their potential.

Our vision places colleges at the centre of this new world – at the heart of their local skills 'ecosystems'. It focuses on developing high-level technical skills for meaningful and sustained employment for all, and a shift towards seizing opportunities to innovate and to support industry; developing specialist curricula focusing on employability skills; rethinking our existing business and staffing models; and embracing the advantages of technology in our delivery of the skills agenda. We fully support calls for greater decentralisation of funding and policymaking and firmly believe that local economies will become stronger if left unfettered by micromanagement from the centre.

I believe that this impact review demonstrates the forward-thinking approach for which the 157 Group has become renowned.



Through our relationships with local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) and emerging combined and city authorities, we have demonstrated the economic potential of high-quality colleges in every community across the country. Through our work on sector leadership and teaching and learning,

we have offered support to many facing up to the realities of change. And through our honest and open dealings with politicians, officials and other influencers, we have gained trust and the ability to shape in subtle ways the future landscape in which colleges can continue to flourish.

It has been a privilege to serve a second year as chair of the 157 Group. I am very clear that our aims are twofold: to work together as a supportive group of professionals to improve our own understanding and practice; and to lead the way in the development of policy that improves the education and skills system for all.

Our distinct voice ensures that we have impact, nationally and regionally. As a group of large colleges, engaged in all aspects of the education and skills world, we are strong players in our regional economic growth strategies, often serving populations more deprived or disconnected than the national average. Collectively, we can offer insights and thought-provoking messages that galvanise others to recognise the true worth of our further education colleges.

As I hand over the reins, I would like to thank my fellow members for their inspiring commitment and support, and the 157 Group central team for their hard work, under Dr Lynne Sedgmore's stewardship, to secure our influence. I am confident that we will continue to have a powerful voice and a meaningful influence on the future of this country for many years to come. The work outlined in this impact review gives us pride and much to build on.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Peter Roberts'. The signature is fluid and stylized, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

**Peter Roberts, Chair of the 157 Group  
and Chief Executive of Leeds City College**

# Influencing policy

We gauge the impact of our policy influencing work by the extent to which we are able to secure engagement with key groups of people.

These include principally:

- Politicians and their staff
- Policymakers and officials
- Others with influential voices – such as thinktanks and employer organisations
- The media – especially beyond the further education sector press
- Organisations that share our values and beliefs
- Our own members and staff across the college world.

We aim for these groups not simply to know of our existence and our policy positions, but, increasingly, to seek out our views, to represent them positively in public and even to advocate their adoption on the national stage.

We believe that this impact review demonstrates the significant influencing role that we have played during 2013–14.

## Our manifesto for further education and skills

Late in 2013, we published *Our manifesto for further education and skills*, in which we made five key requests of policymakers.

We called for **stability** – a theme echoed in our first article on the influential Politics Home website. While new initiatives have continued, there was a noticeable shift in tone from politicians such as Vince Cable MP and Matthew Hancock MP in summer 2014, with a desire to highlight the good work of existing FE colleges and to acknowledge their important part in the delivery of education. We believe that the establishment, for example, of a Behavioural Insights project to look long term at adult motivation to study is an acknowledgement that skills policy needs to be thought about in a holistic and more long-term way. What is more, our call chimed with many others in the educational world, for example, when the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA), in its report, *Schools with Soul: A new approach to Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education*, suggested a policy moratorium for the next year. Policy debate, increasingly, is about the government doing less, and, in this sense, it seems our call has hit the zeitgeist.

We called for an **equitable and fair approach to accountability** post-14 and are pleased that Ofsted has announced the introduction of separate grades for school sixth forms, and is also now consulting on a single inspection framework across the whole of education. The government's reform package to accountability measures across the pre and post-16 sectors brings some much-needed consistency to the approach for vocational and academic programmes, and it is good to see that Nick Boles MP, minister for skills and equalities, has a specific brief to work towards self-regulation in his Department for Education (DfE) and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) portfolios.



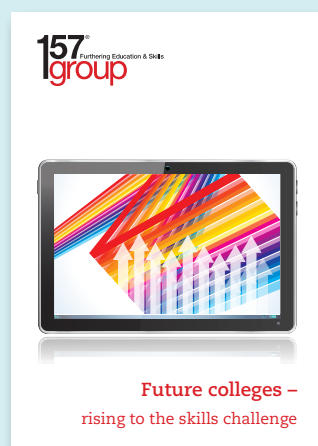
We called for a **coherent approach to strategic employer engagement** and have been joined in that call by influential organisations such as the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB). Many LEP areas have now sought the active engagement of colleges in the formulation of their skills strategies. *A new conversation: Employer and college engagement*, a report published jointly with the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) and the Gazelle Colleges Group, set out a vision for such relationships, and was launched in May 2014 with full support from Matthew Hancock MP, then skills minister.

We called for **autonomy for college principals** and have heard encouraging support for this proposition from ministers and the opposition alike. In August 2014 the BIS publication, *College Governance: A Guide*, set out a clear vision for colleges operating as social enterprises, but signalled that more needed to be done to bring this about. Government Trailblazers are developing an approach to the curriculum design of apprenticeships that will involve much more local input, and debate in the educational world is increasingly about the extent to which national qualifications frameworks can really deliver success; we have led discussions on this topic with, among others, awarding organisations and Ofqual.

We called for a **durable funding envelope** – perhaps our most ambitious ‘ask’ in these times of austerity. While this has proved hard to secure, we do believe that the high-profile debate in the government about the extent to which FE is bearing more than its fair share of educational cuts is representative of a strong desire to secure some future stability in terms of government funding.

Many fed back to us about the demands in our manifesto, noting specifically that we should offer more detailed evidence of the potential for FE colleges. Our members, in particular, wanted an even more visionary statement of what colleges could deliver.

## Future colleges – rising to the skills challenge



We are pleased to have launched what we hope will be a key document in shaping the future role of FE colleges. We believe that colleges should be at the heart of the skills system, as leading social enterprises bringing together employers, schools, universities and others in a truly responsive way that is focused on the future employability of learners.

This think piece sets out the remarkable achievements of colleges so far in boosting the numbers of apprentices; in developing programmes that lead to higher-level skills; in securing a rise in literacy and numeracy rates; and in offering support to businesses for workforce development.

We have called for future governments to make four commitments in terms of education and skills policy: to stable structures; to equal treatment; to the freedom to innovate; and to predictable funding. With these commitments as a backdrop, we believe colleges can drive practice in a way that leads to a truly responsive, self-improving and world-class skills system.

The report has attracted the support of UKCES, which welcomed the report's focus on the importance of collaboration between employers and education providers, highlighting the benefits of collaboration to employers, allowing them to address the skills challenges they face; and to colleges, in ensuring their provision prepares people for work.

We will be working hard to secure further endorsement for this approach from politicians and as the 2015 general election approaches.

## Partnership

The 157 Group has always sought to influence policy on behalf of all colleges and we have been able to do this more powerfully this year through our partnership with the Association of Colleges (AoC). On critical policy issues, such as the level of competition in higher education, the financial sustainability of colleges and the annual report of Ofsted's chief inspector, we have worked with AoC to brief government bodies and select committees. We also presented joint oral evidence to the Office of Fair Trading and to the National Audit Office.

With AoC and the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (Niace), we hosted a successful parliamentary lunch with Adrian Bailey, chair of the business, innovation and skills select committee, and several high-profile employers and parliamentarians. Significant partnerships resulted from that event and participants were impressed with the level of debate stimulated.

We continued our partnership with AoC and Niace in a series of fringe events at the political party conferences. Focusing on the school curriculum, we took the opportunity to demonstrate that further education has valuable opinions not just about the post-16 world, but also about what goes beforehand. Senior politicians from the three major parliamentary parties debated issues as wide-ranging as character and resilience and fair funding. Attendance was superb, and the presence of speakers from organisations including the CBI, FSB, Policy Exchange, RSA and the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) demonstrated genuine engagement with the topic.

## Across the political spectrum

We have continued to build on our relationships with key policymakers, working closely with the skills ministers, Matthew Hancock MP and his successor Nick Boles MP, who have attended our annual reception and principals' meetings, and whom we have met regularly to discuss key issues and the concerns of members.

This year we have also forged especially strong links with the new Labour team in education and skills. Our principals met Tristram Hunt MP, Liam Byrne MP and their teams, who subsequently sought specific briefing on issues including the potential for college higher education provision and the nature of Ofsted's approach to further education and skills.

We were invited to review much of the work of the *Husbands Review of Vocational Education and Training*, which has contributed directly to Labour skills policy.

Patrons from each of the main political parties support our work in the House of Lords and we continue to work with politicians from all sides to ensure that future policies benefit the whole of the further education sector.



# Influencing policies

We understand that as well as influencing the overall policy-setting agenda, it is important to adopt strong positions on key individual policies and to influence their formulation and their implementation.

## Thinkpieces from principals

During the course of 2014, several 157 Group principals have written articles and blogs offering their specific solutions on issues such as vocational provision for young people and unemployed people, higher education and college accountability. A regular series has appeared on the Politics Home website, which is run and promoted by Dods Political Monitoring and is the second most-read website in parliament.

When ministers, opposition spokespeople and senior officials want to understand more about colleges, they routinely ask the 157 Group to arrange visits to some of those principals whose opinions have been featured. Member principals also report success in working with local politicians and business people to increase the profile of college activity, using work by the 157 Group as a basis for their discussions.

## Economic influence

A key policy area of focus for us this year has been the critical role that colleges play in bringing life and growth to local economies. We supported the production of a series of studies evidencing this impact in 2013, and the story was taken up by the *Guardian* and by the local press in areas as far apart as Cornwall, Northern Ireland and West Yorkshire.

On the basis of this work, we were asked to speak at The Work Foundation's Skills for the Future conference and at the national Inclusion conference on youth unemployment. Other organisations that have actively engaged with us to inform their own thinking about future skills solutions include the Centre for Social Justice and Policy Exchange.

We believe that, for the true economic potential of colleges to be realised, we need a new approach to the way in which educational and business leaders engage with one another. Therefore we welcomed The Education and Training Foundation's active engagement with us following the publication of our report, *A new conversation: Employer and college engagement*, to ensure that our ideas inform a future programme of sector support in this area.

## Cutting funding for 18-year-olds

When the Education Funding Agency (EFA) announced an unprecedented cut in the rate of funding for 18-year-olds in December 2013, the 157 Group was proud to be a part of the most vocal coalition of opposition that many in the FE sector can remember. Our protestations were published in the *Guardian* and *TES*, and led to a Westminster Hall debate on this issue, during which several MPs quoted directly from 157 Group submissions.

After significant pressure, the government announced measures of 'mitigation', while not repealing the decision completely, but we continue to press for a review of this decision on the grounds that it will affect the most disadvantaged people in a disproportionate manner.

When the government later announced that large A-level programmes were to receive additional funding, we drew a direct comparison between the two policies and the national media coverage was sympathetic to our stance.

## Challenging where appropriate

Our policy-influencing role is largely a supportive one – colleges have long been renowned for providing solutions to perceived problems. But we do not shrink from challenging where the direction of travel is simply wrong.

We believe that colleges have the infrastructure to deliver on skills policy without the wasteful use of public funding to set up new institutions. Our call for a rethink on the predominance of the university technical college (UTC) model received much attention during summer 2014 and it is interesting to note a shift in tone among many towards one where colleges are seen as instrumental in ensuring the success of all technical provision.

When the Department for Education (DfE) announced that it did not intend to conduct any research into the impact of colleges as part of its annual research programme, we protested – and were immediately reassured that the omission had been an 'oversight'. And our questioning of the use of the term 'elite colleges' in the national policy debate proved prescient when the proposed new specialist institutions were renamed 'national colleges'.





## Adult funding

With ongoing financial pressure, the impact of funding decisions on adult learning in colleges has been disproportionate. Amid concern that there was not enough protest, we wrote an open letter to the *Guardian* and others calling for a new approach that looked at higher education and further education funding in the round.

Aside from prompting an immediate reaction from many in the higher education community, this has led to our developing fruitful new partnerships with organisations such as University Alliance, whose new proposals for student funding have stimulated much discussion about future models of higher education funding.

Moreover, when the business secretary alluded to a new approach to the allocation of funding across higher education and further education in his speech at Cambridge University in March 2014, and proposals emerged that began to treat the two sectors much more equitably, we understood that our point was beginning to be heard.

## Influencing implementation

We are proud to be a 'go to' organisation for those charged with implementing policy. Senior officials in BIS held a full-day meeting with many senior figures from our member colleges to seek their input on policies ranging from further education loans to careers guidance, and reported that the day had been "very productive".

Among the issues on which we have had significant input to the government this year have been English and maths; apprenticeship funding reform; accountability proposals; and the communication of vocational qualifications reform. We have also been directly engaged in a number of high-profile policy initiatives around, for example, study programmes and careers 'inspiration', to ensure better understanding of them by the sector.

We were asked to present directly to ministers and senior officials during the review of enterprise education, the meetings of the FE Learning Technologies Action Group (Feltag) and the ministerial review group on traineeships.

Many of our proposals can be seen reflected in the final versions of government policy communications and we have gained a reputation for being particularly astute at pointing out the 'unintended consequences' of implementation proposals.

# Influencing debate

We believe that a high level of policy debate focusing not just on specific policies, but also on the values and objectives of our skills system, is critical to ensuring that we build a coalition of organisations, including employers and colleges, that can be charged with generating success for current and future generations. This year, we have developed a reputation for challenging opinions and positing a new view of the way forward.

## On the making of policy

Policy consultations are an important element of the democratic process. The 157 Group always ensures a thoughtful contribution on topics of interest to colleges. However, evidence showed that relatively few colleges themselves were engaging with the process, so we took action.

With the aid of a *How to ...* guide, we have supported and encouraged far more of our member colleges to respond directly. Our reinvigorated network of senior managers with an interest in policy has led to a much more collaborative approach to the formulation of 157 Group policy positions, and also enabled senior managers, as well as principals, to influence our thinking.

A group of senior managers spent a day with BIS officials in June 2014, discussing ‘on-the-ground’ impacts of policy decisions, and in September senior leaders from the 157 Group were asked to meet officials leading proposals to develop a broader set of outcome measures against which to measure college performance. It is excellent to have officials keen to engage directly with us in this way.

We have also challenged what we perceive as an increasingly ‘closed’ approach to these formal consultations from the government itself. Since our concerns were covered in *TES*, senior officials have shown their interest in discussing improvements to the process.

## On the future of skills

We have engaged this year in a wide range of conferences and summits to highlight the contribution of colleges to the skills debate.

We ensured an active role for further education in the Great Education Debate, led by the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL). A group of our principals were able to contribute the distinct voice of further education to this work, which will result shortly in a significant report.



At a City & Guilds roundtable discussion opened by the Princess Royal in her capacity as president, our contributions were reported as “among the most coherent and visionary”. A number of other influential organisations have sought to engage with us this year.

We are pleased to be a key supporter for the 2015 Skills Summit, which will bring together powerful political figures and educational managers.

We continue to strive to engage college staff in influencing policy and are planning a practitioner-led event in early 2015 to develop frontline views on policy changes that can help inform political thinking ahead of the election.

## On the future of HE

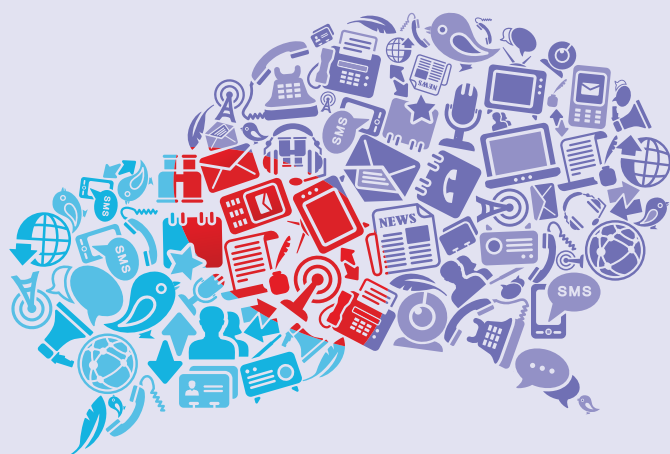
We were delighted to be invited to give oral evidence to the influential cross-party parliamentary Higher Education Commission as part of its inquiry into the future sustainability of the higher education system. As the only college organisation represented, we were able to present a powerful vision for the ways in which more flexible delivery of higher education in college settings could contribute towards closing the skills gap.

This theme has been revisited in a number of media pieces during the latter part of 2013–14 and is building up a powerful body of support, including in the university sector.

## Online

The 157 Group Twitter account has more than 3,500 followers, and we have sparked considerable debate by highlighting some of our policy discussion papers, which now appear on our website.

Topics covered include the future of apprenticeships, vocational qualifications reform and the devolution of funding to LEPs. More than 500 senior staff in 157 Group member colleges can engage in discussion via our online intranet and national networks. This input is invaluable when we are presenting views at a national level. Our executive director has nearly 2,000 followers and is considered a leading spokesperson by FE twitterati.



## In the media

We have developed stronger relationships this year with the *Guardian* and *TES*, while maintaining our strong association with *FE Week*. We have regularly been asked to contribute to online debates and printed articles about key issues, and are pleased to be able to secure sympathetic and challenging angles for our key points of view.

We have secured national coverage for opinion pieces about Labour and Conservative policy plans for further education and skills, on the expansion of the UTC network and on college provision for under-16s.

Several of our themes have been picked up by media outlets beyond the education world, such as when our piece on the funding discrepancies between sixth forms and colleges led to a Twitter debate on the *Guardian*'s main feed.

We have also challenged misconceptions, most recently when a piece in the *Guardian* suggested that colleges were not delivering employment-linked courses. Our robust response garnered much praise from the online community.

## On others' thinking

We were pleased to have our contribution to the thinking of the Labour party acknowledged in Liam Byrne's introduction to his *Robbins Rebooted* pamphlet – following several meetings between our principals and the shadow team.

The permanent secretary at BIS took the trouble to write to the 157 Group this year praising our active engagement with education policy setting and delivery. He highlighted in particular two of our key themes – leadership and employer engagement – as being ones on which he would be keeping a close eye.

A sign of real influence comes when others not only seek our views but ask to reproduce them. This year, the Skills Commission, in its report *One System, Many Pathways: Forging consensus on 14–19 education and training*, made extensive use of our work on the transition of young people from education to work. We were quoted in the Centre for Social Justice's landmark report, *Closing The Divide*, having contributed to its thinking as part of the Breakthrough Britain II project.

We have also been cited in blogs from Policy Connect on vocational education, and in work by the influential Behavioural Insights Team, which is closely linked to the Cabinet Office. Our work on the challenges for colleges in delivering Stem (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects was cited in Professor Bill Lucas's publication for the Royal Academy of Engineering, *Thinking Like an Engineer*, in which he examined the implications for education of the engineering skills gap.



# Our colleges

**Barnet and Southgate College** delivered a sector-based work academy for the opening of Holborn Premier Inn in June 2014, following a collaborative selection process between Premier Inn, the college hospitality team and Jobcentre Plus. The two-week course concentrated on students' employment skills in preparation for a guaranteed one-week placement and interview. The curriculum was planned with the Holborn operations manager, and the Premier Inn operations team were invited to attend workshops and contribute to assessment decisions. As a result, the college has been asked to deliver training for new hotel openings at Kings Cross and Edmonton. Premier Inn has also delivered an employment and progression route workshop to full-time students and plans to endorse more of the college's curriculum portfolio in 2014/15.

**Bedford College** sponsored Central Bedfordshire UTC, building upon the college's reputation for its 14–16 work (evidenced by receiving 'outstanding' from Ofsted in two consecutive inspections) and after managing a project for Bedford Free School to achieve its target recruitment of 400 within two years. The college's Brundtland Building became the first project of its kind in the UK to be given the BREEAM Excellent award for sustainability, which is not just for showcasing low-carbon and re-use options, but also for the associated sharing of knowledge and expertise, and a building's impact on local communities. Sustainability is now embedded in the college's construction courses, to meet employer demand.



**Belfast Metropolitan College's** Titanic Quarter Campus hosted the WorldSkills UK Squad Selection this year, where 40 of the UK's most talented apprentices and learners battled it out over three days of intense competition, in the hope of securing a place in Squad UK for WorldSkills Sao Paulo 2015. This was the first time this stage of the competition had been held in Northern Ireland and the college was delighted to have the opportunity to host this prestigious event. This competition gives students a valuable opportunity to show their talent and test themselves against their peers.

**Birmingham Metropolitan College** received the AoC Beacon Award for Employer Engagement, in recognition of its focus on equipping its students with the right employability skills for the local economy. The college has continued to grow its employer links through the expansion of its Professional Services Academy into the Black Country and Kidderminster. Luke Robinson won the Outstanding BTEC Performing Arts Student of the Year award 2014 and is continuing his acting studies at Newman University.

**Blackpool and The Fylde College** was recognised as an 'outstanding' provider, following an inspection in late 2013. Ofsted rated the overall effectiveness of provision, along with outcomes for learners, quality of teaching, learning and assessment and effectiveness of leadership and management as 'outstanding'. In addition, the Quality Assurance Agency awarded the college more commendations than any other university or higher education establishment in the UK to date.



**Chichester College's** successful year began with furniture apprentice George Callow winning a gold medal at WorldSkills 2013. In April, the college received an overall 'outstanding' grade from Ofsted, with all four core areas graded 'outstanding'. Of the subject areas inspected, eight were rated 'outstanding' and two 'good'; reflecting a total college commitment to learning. Winning the AoC Beacon Award for Staff Development recognised the impact of the college's 'Licence to Observe' programme on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

A performing arts student at **City and Islington College** secured a leading role in the hit BBC series, *Waterloo Road*. Armin Karimaghahi, 18, from Edmonton Green, said, "I took the course at City and Islington College and my passion for acting just grew and grew. I have learned so much from my teachers, who are not just teachers but friends. They are very inspiring, calm and provide you with the whole package to pursue a career in the industry."



# Our colleges



**Coleg Cambria** was awarded the prestigious Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education, for helping the £24bn aerospace industry to take off in the UK. Since it was set up in 2002, the college's Centre of Excellence for Aerospace Development has trained more than 5,000 learners.

The **College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London** received 'outstanding' and 'good' ratings from Ofsted, became London's top-performing college for success rates and student satisfaction, and was awarded the **matrix** Standard and the Investors in People quality standard. The college's excellent record of providing inclusive education was demonstrated by the exceptional learning outcomes of students who won silver at WorldSkills, at the Hairdressing Awards and as London Regional VQ Learner of the Year.



Duchy College Rural Business School, part of **The Cornwall College Group**, was presented with a Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education by HM The Queen in February 2014. It is the first land-based college to receive the award, which recognises the college's role in promoting prosperity and skills in the south-west farming community.



**Derby College** has been awarded two major accreditations that recognise the quality of support to students. First, Career Mark has been awarded across all the college's sites in Derby and Derbyshire. Career Mark measures good practice in a number of areas – management, curriculum, information, guidance and outcomes in helping young people develop lifelong career management skills. The college has also been awarded the **matrix** Standard, a national quality standard for student advice and support services.

In 2013 Martin Compton, from **Ealing, Hammersmith & West London College's** professional development team, worked with the awarding organisation OCN to write a level 3 six-credit teacher training course that develops teachers' skills using web 2.0 technology, helping meet the government's Feltag target of having 10 per cent of teaching resources online by 2015/16. This course had an internal take-up of 70 teachers and has since been taken up by other London colleges. As well as being the only web 2.0-focused, accredited training course available, it pioneered online portfolios instead of paper-based ones, which has since elicited interest from the University of Westminster.

In the year of its 50th anniversary, **Highbury College Portsmouth** continued its focus on enhancing employability. Initiatives included the co-location of programmes with local and regional businesses; the expansion of higher-level apprenticeships; the rapid response to retraining BAE Systems employees; and the award of the NEF National Investor in Innovation Standard. Ben Piper won the Outstanding BTec Business and Enterprise Student of the Year award 2014 and is continuing his studies at the college with a degree in business management.

# Our colleges



A standout achievement for **Hull College Group** was the development of the HCUK 14–16 College in Hull and Goole. The initial intake of 90 pupils was the largest in the country and, after receiving the best possible results in its Ofsted monitoring visit, HCUK 14-16 College has recruited a further 200 students for this academic year.

The Duke of York visited **Leeds City College's** new Printworks Campus on Tuesday, 4 March 2014 as part of a wider tour during National Apprenticeship Week. The prince, whose portfolio includes education and skills and entrepreneurship, officially declared the campus open, as well as meeting staff, students and apprentices and touring the college's vocational facilities.

**Leicester College** introduced e-governance in 2013–14. A dedicated governance intranet site was created, providing access to all papers, briefings and other governor support information. Governors have also been given tablets so that they can access papers electronically in meetings, which saves time and uses fewer resources than needed to support a paper-based system. Study programmes were enhanced by the introduction of a framework for personal professional development (PPD) to support the delivery and development of learners' employability skills. The programme was developed in collaboration with the Federation of Small Businesses and the Chamber of Commerce in response to the needs of employers and skills shortages.

In November 2013, **Newham College** sealed a new partnership with a Westfield Stratford City restaurant, Café Football. The owners, Gary Neville and Ryan Giggs, held a question and answer session with more than 400 students. The college finds apprentices while Café Football supports an education charity supported by the college. The restaurant also sells a 'World Cup' pie, made by students.

In the past 12 months **North East Scotland College** has won four national awards for its collaboration with the University of Aberdeen and Robert Gordon University to establish the North East Scotland Shared Data Centre. At the JISC RSC Conference, the college was awarded an ITech Award for its Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) project and was presented with two gold awards at the Colleges Scotland Marketing Awards. The college also received the President's Award from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) for achieving 11 consecutive gold awards for safety.



Adrian Burrows enrolled on **St Helens College's** foundation degree course in game art, aspiring to pursue a career in this competitive industry. After graduating from college, Adrian went on to produce games for Warner Bros, creating art for popular computer games including Lego Marvel Super Heroes and Lego City Undercover.

Independent research undertaken by the Economic Modelling Specialists Intl (EMSI) showed that the economic impact of **Stoke-on-Trent College** in the regional economy is around £537.8m a year. The college achieved a 'good' grading from Ofsted, which noted in particular note the way the 'Stoke Approach' delivers the attitude, mindset and employability skills essential for work in the real world. A further £22m has been invested in new campus developments, opening in 2015. There were also national and regional competition successes across the college, with wins in the WorldSkills UK competition, the Royal Opera House Design Challenge and the AHT National finals for hair and beauty.



# Our colleges



Forget the Brazil World Cup – **Sussex Downs College** has its eye on WorldSkills, Sao Paulo 2015, following the success of its brickwork department. Louis Wilkinson has made the UK WorldSkills squad, with the hope of making it to Brazil next year. Brickwork student Antoine Coevoet was named Learner of the Year in the South East in the VQ Awards. The college's work in the local community was also praised: 'Prepare for Battle', a three-day festival of theatre, music and dance, celebrating the 750th anniversary of the Battle of Lewes, was rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted.

**The Manchester College** launched a '50 in 5 campaign' to celebrate National Apprenticeship Week, pledging to place 50 local young people in jobs in five days. The campaign was a success, with the first apprentice of the week being employed at Rio Ferdinand's 'Rosso' restaurant. This generated positive coverage for the college and apprenticeships on television, radio, print and online.

Jasmine Welsh, an apprentice from **The Sheffield College**, won the 2014 Outstanding BTEC Apprentice of the Year (16–18 years) award. Jasmine is an apprentice with Norton Creative, a creative and digital media company backed by The Sheffield College. She is completing a level 3 creative and digital media apprenticeship and will study graphic design at Sheffield Hallam University. The awards were announced in London in July. The winners, their family, friends and nominators attended a parliamentary reception in the House of Lords, hosted by Baroness Sharp.



**Trafford College** student Matt Holmes celebrated receiving one of the highest learning accolades in recognition of his achievements, as part of Adult Learners' Week. Matt, who has cerebral palsy and had an arm amputated when he was a baby, overcame significant difficulties to embark on a supported internship scheme at Trafford General Hospital. His contributions included saving £13,000 worth of medicines that had been lost in the system, and producing a short film to help train others new to the department.

One year after achieving an 'outstanding' Ofsted grade, **Walsall College** has received further local and national recognition this academic year in the form of the Education Award at the Insider Midlands International Trade Awards; an Investors in People Gold Award; an AoC Beacon Award for Outstanding Improvement of Leadership; the AoC President's Award; and the *TES* Further Education Provider of the Year Award.

**Warwickshire College's** successful year across all six centres included a gold medal for horticulture students at the RHS Malvern Show; Kate Ingles winning a Fitness Instructor of the Year award; and UK Skills gold medal for florist Zoe Rowlinson. Olympic medallist Zara Phillips MBE officially opened the college's innovative Equine Therapy and Rehabilitation Centre.

Success at **West Nottinghamshire College** began with the college's principal and chief executive Asha Khemka OBE being made a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire (DBE) in the New Year honours list. Students continued to excel, with Melissa Jackson being named as the East Midlands' regional VQ Learner of the Year and a 'best ever' outcome at this year's SkillBuild competition. Throughout the year the college has played host to a range of guests, including the skills minister, Matthew Hancock MP, and Lord Karan Bilimoria CBE, founder of Cobra Beer.

# Leading thought

A core part of our mission is to stimulate the thinking of others, in policy circles and in further education itself. Having seen how much of our policy work has influenced others, here we focus on the ways in which we have led the development of thinking and thought leadership in the sector.

## Employer relationships

In May 2014, following a year-long consultation with sector leaders and employer organisations, we published *A new conversation: Employer and college engagement*. Working with UKCES and the Gazelle Colleges Group, we posited some radical changes to the ways in which college principals and employers should see and develop their strategic relationships with one another – in order to improve credibility and to ‘raise the game’.

The report was launched with the full support of Matthew Hancock MP, then minister for skills, and the director general of the CBI, John Cridland CBE, who put his name to the foreword. It generated much debate in the sector about whether we have the capacity to work differently with employers and, more importantly, prompted responses from many small business leaders.

Several 157 Group colleges took the report as the basis for staff development sessions, asking themselves fundamental questions about whether their business models were strong enough to enable strategic relationships to be formed. 157 Group principals shared their own responses to the paper at a summer seminar, and are supporting one another to respond in ways that are appropriate to their local areas.

Very importantly, the paper has informed the work of The Education and Training Foundation in this critical area – with our key themes being incorporated in further work to engage employers and also in the Foundation’s leadership programmes.

## The governance of teaching and learning

The role of governors in holding colleges to account for the quality of their teaching is a very important one, and we were delighted to be invited to work with Ofsted to produce a thought-leading document on this issue. Following our successful practitioner-led model of participation, we brought together more than 40 governors and college leaders to examine their key issues of concern.



The resulting publication, *The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment by governors*, highlighted the need to focus on human relationships, as well as on structural and process issues. It received widespread coverage in the educational press and was accompanied by a dedicated webpage containing practical tools offered for sharing by those involved in the project.

Within a month of its publication, at least four 157 Group colleges had organised training events for their governors and staff, using the document as the catalyst for their reflections. The document has also contributed to the thinking of the AoC Governors’ Council, and in September 2014 we led, with Ofsted, a dedicated training seminar for more than 25 leaders and governors, in partnership with the Westminster Briefing organisation.

## Spiritual leadership

A theme running alongside much current educational policy debate is the need for education to be as much about producing ‘rounded’ individuals with ‘soft’ skills and ‘strong’ values as it is about delivering knowledge and practical skills. Earlier this year, the influential All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Mobility published its *Manifesto for Character and Resilience*, and organisations including the RSA, the CBI and the British Chambers of Commerce have all highlighted the need for a greater focus on what is known in education as SMSC – social, moral, spiritual and cultural – education.



We believe this has implications for those who lead our education system above all else, as they offer direction in terms of leadership and management, and curriculum delivery, and in their own behaviours. Our contribution to this debate took the form of a publication, *Talking to leaders about spiritual leadership*, published in July 2014 with the National Council of Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education (fbfe). The report included interviews with 11 leading college principals and was well received.

In September 2014, we were delighted to receive the support of the prestigious Culham St Gabriel's organisation to organise a day-long seminar with leaders and practitioners on the strategic future of SMSC in further education. Twenty-five key influencers from the worlds of education, religion, politics and social change came together to debate and shape the SMSC agenda in the context of employability and active citizenship. More than 15 organisations are now actively engaged with the 157 Group and with one another to promote and develop our approach to the broader curriculum.

## Professionalism in further education

We continued our series of thought-provoking seminars with the Institute for Learning (IfL) and the Institute of Education (IOE) in which we examined the changing nature of professionalism in further education. Over the course of four seminars, which brought together leading academics and current practitioners, we considered the implications on a global, national, institutional and classroom level, and the resulting publication, *Professionalism in further education*, was published in October 2014.

Our work with IfL and the IOE on professionalism and teaching and learning has taken place over three years, involving practitioners from more than 50 colleges and provoking debate about subjects ranging from lesson observations to teacher training and professional development. Attendees at our events have formed ongoing practice improvement partnerships, and policymakers who took part have commented on the knowledgeable and high level of debate.

During 2013–14 we have also continued our positive alliance with City & Guilds and the Centre for Real-World Learning at the University of Winchester. Following the publication in 2013 of *Pedagogic leadership: Creating cultures and practices for outstanding vocational learning*, we offered workshops on this topic at national conferences and a number of colleges have revised their leadership and management frameworks in response. Our work in this field has attracted international interest – with requests to support training and development of teachers and leaders from as far away as Romania.



I think we have laid the foundations for some exciting work ahead. On several occasions we have brought together potentially disparate groups – from trade unions to vice-principals, from practising teachers to researchers and consultants – and we have, despite engaging in some healthy debate and disagreement, enabled them to form a collective view of how professionalism might evolve into the future.

Professor Ann Hodgson, Co-director of the Centre for Post-14 Research and Innovation at the Institute of Education (IOE)

## Into the future

We have established good relationships with many organisations keen to advance the leadership of thought in the skills system – including The Education and Training Foundation, the new Further Education Trust for Leadership and several charitable and private concerns.

We are pursuing a number of other exciting partnerships for joint working in 2014–15.

# Leading practice

We are especially proud of our impact on, and reflection of, good practice in individual colleges. We have noted how many of our policy and thought leadership activities have been led by members of our well-established networks. This year we are pleased to have been able to drive forward work across the sector in the critical area of leadership development.

## The Leadership Conversation

The Leadership Conversation aimed to establish a knowledge base from which The Education and Training Foundation can develop a professional and career framework for leadership and management in the further education sector.

The project, which ran from December 2013 until July 2014, had a number of related strands of activity, but we ensured that synergies were maximised across areas and that activities were planned and implemented in a coherent manner.

Key activities included:

- **A dialogue to identify the attributes required to be an excellent and effective leader**

From this, the Sector Perspective on Excellent Leadership was developed and is now being used to inform further work of The Education and Training Foundation to support leadership improvement and development in the sector. It also acts as a useful tool for teams and organisations across the sector to review and self-assess their leadership as well as to support effective recruitment and talent management strategies. A scoping of the range of development activities that education and training providers currently use to develop leadership skills among their staff and an assessment of gaps in current leadership development opportunities has led to recommendations of how such gaps could be addressed.

- **The implementation of a virtual brainstorming exercise to seek views and contributions from across the sector on the future changes and challenges facing sector leadership**

This innovative exercise enabled more than 750 individuals to engage with the project, making it the largest virtual brainstorming exercise to have taken place in the English education and training sector to date. A wealth of ideas and contributions were collected and this provides a valuable springboard for further exploration and discussion. We have supported the Foundation to explore the detail of these contributions, stimulating debate about additional activity.

- **The development of 12 video think pieces to stimulate discussion and debate about key leadership issues among organisations and in the sector**

These include a range of contributors across the sector, from students to senior leaders. All videos are easily accessible on the project website, which was developed to provide regular updates on project progress:

[www.157group.co.uk/practice/leadership-conversation](http://www.157group.co.uk/practice/leadership-conversation)

The project established a number of valuable groups, which have made significant contributions to activity and progress, including a large and active steering group, with wide representation from across the sector; a sector task group providing constructive input and feedback on project findings; and an international academic advisory group to feed back their observations on project ideas and developments.

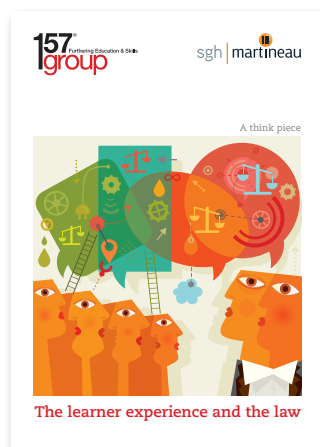
This innovative approach to seeking expert academic input was intended to ensure that project developments, initially created from sector expertise, were also informed by highly regarded and respected academics from around the world, thus enabling the project to compare its findings to world-class and leading-edge theory and practice. A video was produced of group members' insights into leadership and their views on how they feel leadership in the sector needs to adapt in order to respond to future challenges. We hope that this approach to bringing academic rigour to our findings and recommendations will be a model that can be repeated in future work.

The full recommendations of the project are now being translated into action by The Education and Training Foundation, and the 157 Group remains very involved with the planning of that future work. The Leadership Conversation's wide sector partnership is keen to maintain the crucial dialogue on leadership improvement and development and to make progress with further work in this area.



## The learner experience and the law

Based on specific requests from members, we commissioned leading legal firm SGH Martineau to work with us to produce a short guide to the legal aspects of colleges' engagement with learners.



Covering areas such as admissions policies and complaints, the guide received national coverage in *TES* and the *Guardian*, and was widely shared by members of our networks.

Feedback from college managers ranged from those who found it a useful checklist to ensure they had everything in place to those who had had something of a revelation

and radically revisited their policies and procedures as a result. Our aim is always to make publications useful to those who work in colleges, in order to benefit ultimately those who matter the most – our learners.

## Other initiatives

The 157 Group has been an active supporter of many other initiatives this year. In conjunction with the Department for Education, we produced and uploaded to YouTube a short series of videos highlighting good practice in the implementation of study programmes for 16 to 19-year-olds, featuring several of our member colleges. These videos have received more than 350 views across the country.

We also worked very closely as part of steering groups this year for a number of projects funded by The Education and Training Foundation, including the reframing of professional standards; staff support programmes for traineeships and apprenticeships; community learning leadership; and the use of learning technologies. We are committed to being a full partner in Foundation activity that will benefit the whole sector; to bringing expertise where we feel we can; and to learning from others for the benefit of our own members.



# Practice and profile

We believe that further education colleges play a very significant role in their local communities and economies and that it is important to harness and celebrate this role. The 157 Group has helped facilitate a number of activities during 2013–14 aimed at improving practice and strengthening the reputation of our sector.

## Celebrating success

The success of our members is a key reflection of our impact and this year we were able to celebrate the award of the Queen's Anniversary Prize for FE to **Cornwall College** and to **Coleg Cambria**, while **Walsall College**, **Chichester College**, **Birmingham Metropolitan College** and **Coleg Cambria** all gained AoC Beacon Awards.

As well as institutional success, many individuals among our membership were recognised in the Queen's honours lists. We were especially pleased with the award of a damehood to **Asha Khemka OBE**, principal of West Nottinghamshire College (*below*). All five damehoods awarded in further education since the founding of the 157 Group have gone to 157 Group members.



In addition to this, 157 Group members receiving honours this year included:

- **Sacha Corcoran MBE**, deputy director at City and Islington College (*above right*)
- **Joan Carberry MBE**, family learning coordinator at Belfast Metropolitan College
- **Neil McLean CBE**, chair of governors at Leeds City College
- **Susan Ward MBE**, head of skills for life at Highbury College Portsmouth
- **Roberta Austin MBE**, centre manager for Build Up at Blackpool and The Fylde College.

And **George Callow**, the student from Chichester College who won gold at the 2013 WorldSkills competition in Leipzig, was awarded a BEM.

The 157 Group is proud to have sponsored two *TES* FE Awards in 2014–15, both won by colleges that are not members of the 157 Group: Bournville College and Forth Valley College. 157 Group members featured highly on the list of *TES* awards, with **Hull College Group** and **Ealing, Hammersmith & West London College** among the winners and **Walsall College** (*opposite*) winning the coveted 'Provider of the Year' award. We are working with *TES* again this year.

We are also pleased to have sponsored annual student bursaries as part of the Helena Kennedy Foundation's work, for the last three years. This year's winner is Halima Kangahe from **City and Islington College**, who will be studying human geography at Kingston University, thanks to 157 Group sponsorship.

## Success supporting others

Several 157 Group colleges have developed very strong reputations in crucial areas, and have this year led conferences and workshops for others to learn from their work. Among them:

- **Hull College** led a national workshop on the impact of colleges on local economies and a national conference on working with 14 to 16-year-olds



- **Chichester College** led a national conference to share the leadership experience that led to the college receiving an 'outstanding' grade from Ofsted
- **Walsall College** worked with renowned academic Dr Matt O'Leary and others to pilot and share innovative approaches to lesson observations.





Our teaching and learning network of senior staff has taken inspiration from the work of **Walsall College** and organised a number of peer support partnerships. Members have gained practical teaching tips from one another, especially on ways of including technology in the classroom more effectively, and approaches to the management of quality and performance among teaching staff.

## Supporting learners

The primary influence of the 157 Group upon learners is through our impact on the thinking and practice of individual members and our advocacy of learner-centred policies at the heart of the government. We are pleased to be publishing alongside this impact review the latest in our series of *Learner voices* – focusing on the vital contribution colleges make to increasing employability skills, particularly in land-based and agricultural sectors. We believe these case studies, compiled in partnership with Landex, make a powerful case for the responsiveness of further education and the success of students. We look forward to welcoming the learners featured at our annual reception.

While much debate continues about what can be done to improve careers advice and guidance, the 157 Group has this year taken some practical steps to support learners:

- First, we have published, in partnership with the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) and the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), a 'good practice brief' against which schools and colleges can assess their own careers provision
- Second, we have contributed to the practical guide to apprenticeships produced by the successful website [www.notgointouni.com](http://www.notgointouni.com).

Through work such as this, we are able to ensure that more young people can hear about the opportunities available to them through FE. Many of our ideas and our critique of policy decisions on careers, in *Information is not enough* (2012), are now being articulated by others.

## Technology

Having played a role in the ministerial review of technology in further education that produced the Feltag report, we, in partnership with City & Guilds, have gone one step further with a series of events for FE practitioners, which have created space for them to think radically about the use of technology to support teaching and learning.

Our Think Out Loud club launch, at the Science Museum, was attended by more than 30 people, and prompted some very thoughtful debate. We followed this up with a second event, with City & Guilds, focusing on the digital classroom, again aimed at practitioners and leaders. We support the need to use technology in learning in an innovative way, but understand that teachers, in particular, need support and time to think about the ways in which they can use technology to its best effect. Our Think Out Loud club will continue to provide further opportunities in 2014–15.



Our own use of technology continues to evolve. During 2013–14, our own website was redesigned and relaunched, with more space for member discussion and interactive content. We have taken part in online webchats and debates in support of leadership development and supported, for the second year running, the important Education Innovation show in Manchester.

# Our partnerships

We continue to believe that it important for us to form strategic partnerships with those who share our values and goals.

We are especially proud of our strategic alliance with City & Guilds, the Centre for Real-World Learning at the University of Winchester, IfL and AELP. This alliance has provided a forum for us to advance thinking and practice around vocational education. For 2014–15, we have a busy agenda of Alliance activity, involving practitioners in policy debate and undertaking action research on vocational pedagogy.

“The Alliance brings together a group of like-minded, passionate organisations to change perceptions. Through research, practitioner engagement, leadership development and thinkpieces, we believe we can be a powerful force in developing the standing and quality of vocational education in the UK. The 157 Group, as a founder member of the Alliance, enables us to work with some of the most innovative practitioners in FE.”

Professor Bill Lucas, Centre for Real World Learning

We are grateful to our other partners for their support this year.

## Links in further education and skills

- Association of Colleges (AoC)
- Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP)
- Association of National Specialist Colleges (Natspec)
- Gazelle Colleges Group
- HOLEX
- Institute for Learning (IfL)
- Landex
- Mixed Economy Group of colleges (MEG)
- National Council of Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education (fbfe)
- National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (Niace)
- The Education and Training Foundation
- Third Sector National Learning Alliance (TSNLA)
- Women's Leadership Network.

## Academic links

- Institute of Education (IOE)
- International academics within our Leadership Conversation project
- The Centre for Real-World Learning at the University of Winchester
- Warwick University.

## Corporate sponsors

- City & Guilds
- Eversheds
- Google
- Hay
- IBM
- Notgoingtouni.com
- OCR
- Oculus
- Prospects
- SGH Martineau
- Wickland Westcott
- WPM Education.

## Policy links

- Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)
- TL/AMiE
- BELMAS
- BIT
- Centre for Social Justice
- Centre Forum
- Chambers of Commerce
- Confederation of British Industry (CBI)
- Department for Education (DfE)
- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)
- Dods Monitoring
- Education Funding Agency
- Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)
- Higher Education Funding Council for England (Hefce)
- ICAEW
- National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)
- National Union of Students (NUS)
- Ofqual
- Ofsted
- Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)
- Policy Connect
- Policy Exchange
- Politics Home
- Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)
- Skills Funding Agency
- The Work Foundation
- TVET UK
- UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES)
- UK Trade & Investment (UKTI)
- University Alliance
- Westminster Briefing.

## Project partners

- Yoho Media
- Shoshin Partnership
- Fountain Park.

# Our members

The 157 Group is a consortium of the most influential further education colleges in the UK.

Our members are:

- Barnet and Southgate College
- Bedford College
- Belfast Metropolitan College
- Birmingham Metropolitan College
- Blackpool and The Fylde College
- Chichester College
- City and Islington College
- Coleg Cambria
- College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London
- Cornwall College
- Derby College
- Ealing, Hammersmith & West London College
- Highbury College Portsmouth
- Hull College
- Leeds City College
- Leicester College
- Newham College
- North East Scotland College
- St Helens College
- Stoke-on-Trent College
- Sussex Downs College
- The Manchester College
- The Sheffield College
- Trafford College
- Walsall College
- Warwickshire College
- West Nottinghamshire College.

One of the key elements contributing to the reputation of the 157 Group in vocational teaching and learning is the unique nature of the trusting and professional relationships that our principals share. They debate key issues in an open way, but are also not afraid to share problems and find collective solutions. Our group of principals is regularly refreshed with new arrivals, and this year we have welcomed:

- **Andrew Cleaves** at Birmingham Metropolitan College
- **Garry Phillips** at Ealing, Hammersmith & West London College
- **Di Gowland** at Newham College
- **Lisa O'Loughlin** at The Manchester College
- **Sue Georgius** at Warwickshire College.

## Get involved

- by following us on Twitter @157Group and @157lynne
- by visiting our website [www.157group.co.uk](http://www.157group.co.uk)
- by contacting us on [info@157group.co.uk](mailto:info@157group.co.uk)

We are always keen to find like-minded organisations who want to:

- explore partnership working on our key policy themes
- hear from our members at principal or network meetings
- support our messages.

## Valete

It is with great sadness that we report the deaths this year of two former 157 Group principals. We pay tribute to their dedication and to the significant contributions they made to their colleges, to their learners and to further education.



**Grahame Moore OBE** was principal of Stoke on Trent College from 1997 until his retirement in 2009. Before that, he was principal at Stratford-upon-Avon College for more than eight years. He was chair of the 157 Group for 2008–09, and is remembered as a collaborative leader who put the learner at the centre of all he did.



**Paul Head** was principal of the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London from 2009, and its predecessor, the College of North East London, from 2002, having worked in higher education for 15 years. Sector leaders described him as an exceptional man, with profound integrity, and an outstanding principal.

**Contact us**

The 157 Group Limited  
P O Box 58147  
London  
SW8 9AF

[www.157group.co.uk](http://www.157group.co.uk)  
[info@157group.co.uk](mailto:info@157group.co.uk)

**Publisher**

© 157 Group, November 2014.  
Published by the 157 Group.  
Publication reference 157G-125  
All rights reserved.

**Author**

Andy Gannon, director of policy, PR and research,  
157 Group

**Chair**

Peter Roberts

**Executive director**

Dr Lynne Sedgmore CBE

**Our patrons**

Lord Victor Adebawale CBE  
Sir Andrew Foster  
Prof Sir David Melville CBE  
Baroness Sharp of Guildford  
Baroness Perry of Southwark  
Sir Michael Tomlinson CBE  
Baroness Wall of New Barnet