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From the local management of colleges via incorporation to the present day:

30 Years of changes and impacts in Further Education 1991-2023

EWART KEEP, TOM RICHMOND, RUTH SILVER

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ABOUT THE ORGANISATIONS

The Further Education Trust for Leadership's vision is of a further education sector that is valued and respected for:

- Innovating constantly to meet the needs of learners, communities and employers;
- Preparing for the long term as well as delivering in the short term; and
- Sharing fresh ideas generously and informing practice with knowledge.

The Edge Foundation

The world is changing fast and education needs to keep up. Edge is an independent, politically impartial education foundation which via real world projects, research and policy work, strives to make education relevant to the twenty-first century.

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Dame Ruth Silver

Dame Ruth is the President of the Further Education Trust for Leadership, which is 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.

She was for 17 years the Principal of Lewisham College, a large vocational further education London college serving a diverse and multicultural population, offering inspiring and challenging courses, with widening access into education and onwards to economic life at the core of the curriculum.

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FOREWORD

Dame Ruth Silver

Everyone who has worked in or around further education and skills for any length of time will have been frustrated by the shortness of policy memory in the sector, particularly at the level of policymaking. The churn in political leadership in FE is notorious, and is almost matched by the turnover in the civil service. Further education (including colleges and independent training providers, and encompassing everything from workplace learning and adult and community education to higher-level vocational training and foundation degrees) often serves as a kind of apprenticeship for rising politicians who work briefly with the sector before moving on to other things. Furthermore, most politicians know little of FE when they first encounter it and even those who have some understanding of it have a hard time convincing their privileged, privately educated colleagues in the Treasury of its value and relevance.

With each change at the level of senior policymaking, it seems we have to reinvent the wheel, making our case once again, often defending the sector against either cuts or ill-conceived reforms. Too often, I have attended meetings with politicians and their senior advisers where the policy solution up for discussion is one that has been attempted before, often more than once, and has been found not to work after a fair try. Such encounters are wearying and dispiriting. However, the fault is not entirely theirs. No one has inducted them in the history of FE because FE is not held in sufficiently high regard to be considered to have a history that matters: it does indeed, and this publication is the beginning of recording it. Often, we have been too busy adapting to the latest policy edict to speak with confidence about who we are and what we do. It is important that we help politicians learn if time is not to be wasted, and we are to be able to build on the lessons of the past in creating our future.

This learning is what this report aims to support. It provides a useful timeline of 30 years of policy in further education, from the local management of colleges through incorporation to the present day, while also looking ahead to the next phase of development and the factors shaping the current policy scene. The chronology tells a story of frequent reform, fluctuating policy interest and changing policy actors and influencers. It reflects not only the shifting perspectives and priorities of policymakers in England, but also a sector almost permanently in search of itself, struggling to define its mission and purpose in a context of near-constant reform and regular political upheaval. This is one of the reasons the Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL) was set up: to support colleagues within the sector in defining and shaping FE's sense of identity and direction, rather than waiting for it to be defined on their behalf.

Winston Churchill is reputed to have said that 'the further back you look, the further forward you can see'. This too speaks to FETL's aim to interrogate the current context and the factors that shaped it in order to frame our thinking about the future. You have to be able to look back, to recognize and understand what has gone before and how we got to where we are, in order to see ahead clearly. As the authors of this report note, the purpose here is not to relate the history of further education in England, but to provide a short aide memoire of the main trends and landmarks that have created the innovative and dynamic, but in some respects still fragile sector we know today. As with all FETL publications, the aim is to stimulate discussion and frame subsequent debate and reflection. Given the

challenges we now face – from the economic fall-out from the pandemic to the fast-changing world of employment – we can no longer afford the luxury of disrespecting history.

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

PREFACE: REFLECTIONS ON THE CHRONOLOGY

What follows are some very brief personal reflections on some of the lessons and messages that can be extracted from the chronology. Another commentator would doubtless seize upon a quite different set of issues and concerns.

The first thing that this overview demonstrates quite clearly is a tendency on the part of policy makers in recent times to confuse change with reform. Reform implies improvement and progress, change is just change, often for change's sake. There has been much of the latter, and relatively little of the former, especially if we use subsequent longevity as a gauge for the success of the 'reform'. Essentially, what we have is a set of institutions, funding mechanisms and levels, inspection regimes, regulatory arrangements, programmes, qualifications, assessment systems, and policies that are in constant flux. Pity the poor parent, student, employer or college administrator/manager who has to try and keep up with and make sense of this more or less ceaseless process of adjustment and re-organisation (Lumby and Foskett, 2007), some of which has been incremental but other elements of which have had profound implications for colleges.

This state of constant policy 'motion' in part reflects the transitory nature of the tenure of senior policy makers involved in FE at national level. Both ministers and civil servants move jobs after a relatively short time (18 months to two years is about the norm) and the focus of their work before and after superintending FE may be in an entirely different field of policy (Keep, 2006 & 2009; Norris and Adam, 2017). In some areas, such as apprenticeship, the turnover in policy staff is extremely rapid. This means that policy memory and understanding of what has been tried in the past is often absent (Higham and Yeomans, 2007). Moreover, incoming ministers often want to impose their 'stamp' on policy and to be seen to launch an initiative or institutional change with which they can be associated. Being seen to institute and deliver 'great works' is their ticket to prominence and promotion (Denham, 2015). The result is that longevity is not a noted characteristic of the institutional arrangements that surround colleges in England. The Learning and Skills Council (2001-2010) was at one time the largest (in terms of spending power) quasi-governmental body in Europe. Now it is dust and memories.

The chronology also serves to remind its readers of developments that at the time were seen as 'the next big thing', but are now almost totally forgotten footnotes in history. Examples of these 'ghosts of policy reforms past' include the University for Industry and the FE Guild.

As the author and many others have pointed out on a number of occasions, the level of instability within English vocational education and training (VET) is unusual within the developed world (Keep 2006 & 2009, Norris and Adam, 2017). In most countries, change in the VET system is typically quite slow, measured, incremental in nature and has to be negotiated with other stakeholders, typically including employers, trade unions, educational providers and local/regional authorities (Lyons, Taylor and Green, 2020). This has not been the case in England over the period covered by this timeline.

Rather than seeking to establish and build up durable institutional arrangements we have a tendency to periodically raze them to the ground, scatter the rubble and start all over again with the erection of new, ultimately equally temporary edifices. This makes lots of work for acronym inventors and logo

designers, but it has arguably not been good in helping build up highly capable institutions that can support the complex task of designing and delivering high quality E&T.

Beneath this blinding froth of activity it is possible to detect a number of longer-term underlying structural trends and also elements of continuity – if not in the systems architecture of FE then in its fundamental range of activities and underlying rationale (Bailey and Unwin, 2014). Some of the trends can be described as a long arc, while others are cycles as policy makers identify a problem, respond with new measures which subsequently are either deemed to have failed or to be based on a now-unfashionable formula or ideological proposition and are then replaced as the next 'reform' cycle begins.

The first of these big trends within FE policy has been a gradual swing or long arc, particularly since 2010, towards the creation of quasi-markets and heightened levels of provider competition (for students and thereby for funding) and a reduced emphasis on notions of a system (Keep, 2018). Allied with the shift towards the use of competition and market forces has been a retreat from reliance on targets and attempts to use student number and course planning to 'match' the supply of skills with demand, although the arrival of the Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) heralded in the 2017 Conservative Party election manifesto, and now the creation of the Skills and Productivity Board (SPB) indicate that the pendulum may have started to swing back towards a desire on the part of national policy makers to try to more closely align skills supply with demand in the labour market at a range of levels (national, occupational, local). Whether this implies that there will also be a subsequent reduction in the government's reliance on a 'skills marketplace' is at this juncture unclear. The long-promised but oft-delayed white paper on FE will presumably offer some clues as to the direction of travel on the desired balance between competition and market, and cooperation and a systems approach.

There has also been a long-term drift towards centralisation of power and control, and this is reflected in the identity of those who have crafted the policies that are reported in the chronology. Their identity and power to act exists at and flows almost exclusively from the national level of government, its agencies and various policy commissions and inquiries which the government has sponsored. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the result has been that with each round of reform the Secretary of State and ministers have gradually acquired an ever-greater ability to dictate policy and intervene at a high level of detail. Compared to most OECD countries, particularly those of the population size of England, ours is a very centralised set up (Keep, 2006, Morgan, 2020). For example, there are no social partnership institutions whose assent is required before change can happen, and even the relatively peripheral research and policy advice capacity that formally involved trade unions, employer and other education and training stakeholder members (in the shape of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills – UKCES) was abolished in 2017. It is also the case that over time many of the changes listed in the chronology have seen the autonomy or capacity for independent thought and action in intermediary bodies removed, often by changing the institutional nature of the organisation involved. For example, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) (2001-2010) had its own chair and council and an independent research capacity and some in-house ability to design or at least refine policies and their delivery. Its replacements – the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and the Young Peoples Learning Agency (YPLA) were government agencies rather than intermediary bodies, and the current Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is simply a part of the Department for Education (DfE).

Why has this occurred? Perhaps because education, as a lever for generating social and economic change, is too important to be ignored, particularly in an era in which many other traditional levers, such as a more re-distributive tax policy, are regarded as being 'off limits' (Keep, 2006). The tendency for government to want to intervene in and control education at all levels is now certainly very strong in England. As Shattock and Horvath (2020) demonstrate in relation to higher education, the pressure to brigade it in support of a range of economic and social policy goals has driven governments across

the UK to seek ways to be more interventionist and directive in their dealings with universities. Much the same has been true for colleges.

Within the centralised, top-down English system there is remarkably little capacity for bottom-up policy making, and there are few meaningful feedback loops that enable frontline staff to inform policy makers how their reforms are playing out on the ground. The result is that policy formation in England tends to occur within a fairly tightly sealed national 'bubble' where a limited number of players interact in the design of interventions (Keep, 2006).

The reverse side of this coin has been a steady and cumulatively massive diminution in the role and influence of local government within education generally, a trend only very partially recently challenged by the devolution of the Adult Education Budget (AEB) in areas which have an elected mayor and a Combined Authority. The removal of local authority control of the polytechnics and further education colleges (via incorporation) represented one moment in what proved to be a series of decisive shifts away from local decision making (Morgan, 2020). The process has been characterised as one of delocalisation, centralisation and nationalisation (Bash and Coulby, 1989).

This transfer of policy design and decision-making power away from the local and towards national government has been by no means confined to education and skills – it reflects a general shift in the balance of power and responsibility between the local and the national. In many ways, England has become a single, giant unitary (national) authority, and local authorities are now pale shadows of what they were even in 1991, and often now act merely as the delivery agents for nationally-determined policies. It will be interesting to see how this state of affairs is challenged by any further moves towards devolution within England and by efforts to deliver the government's commitment to 'level up' those localities that have been left behind in economic and social terms over the last 30 years or more. At present it is an open question whether in the educational sphere the arrival of AEB represents the start of a much more general swing back towards an enhanced capacity for local decision-making in education, or whether it proves to be an isolated development that leads no further (Keep, 2018; Morgan, 2020).

A close reading of the chronology indicates that there are some policy themes or issues that remain a constant to national policy makers. The first is the perceived importance of international comparisons in driving reform. Unflattering comparisons with overseas rivals and their VET systems has been a feature of English VET policy debates since the mid-nineteenth century (Keep, 2008) and the National Skills Task Force (NSTF) and the Leitch Review are testimony to the way in which our over-arching policy goals here been framed in relation to catching up and beating competitor nations. The current Secretary of State's pledge to be providing better technical education than Germany by 2030 is simply the latest version of a policy game we have been playing for over 150 years.

Another associated major theme over the period has been a persistent desire to try to create a 'world-class' apprenticeship system that would offer a high quality work-based route for initial education and training of the kind found in Germany, Switzerland and Denmark. Despite numerous inquiries, reports and reforms, this goal remains elusive – in part because the enthusiasm of employers for a larger role for such a work-based route has been and remains fairly muted (see Mason, forthcoming). Much the same can be said for successive government's attempts to revitalise technician training at higher technical/sub-degree level. The creation of a new 'technician class' (as called for in the 2009 white paper Skills for Growth) has led to flurries of policy activity but limited take-up, and hopes for a decisive change now reside with the long-awaited government response to the Augar Review. It is also worth noting that the renewed emphasis on the concept and label of technical education represents policy coming full circle. As Bailey and Unwin (2014) note, for the first half of the twentieth century technical education was the banner under which much of English FE was known. This brings us to another

persistent theme in policy, namely the vexed role of employers. The chronology details a succession of attempts to more closely engage them within the further education system (for example the LSC and 47 Local Learning and Skills Councils [LLSCs] were supposed to be employer-led bodies), and to cajole and/or bribe them to become more directly engaged in VET delivery to help meet the government's aspirations and targets. These policies include, for example, Train to Gain, the employer 'pledge' put forward by the Leitch Review, and more recently the apprenticeship levy. Despite the fact that it is extremely hard to make a national VET system function well in the absence of high levels of employer engagement and input, we still remain a significant distance from achieving this long-standing goal and difficult conversations between government and employers and their representatives lie ahead if much further progress is to be made (see Keep, 2015 and forthcoming).

Another strand or thread that runs through the policies documented in the chronology is the perception of a persistent tension between the social and economic roles of FE and the impact that the social role has on both 'clarity of mission' and also the status of FE colleges. The Foster Review (2005) is the clearest manifestation of an attempt to address this tension, but FE's role as a social inclusion 'provider of last resort' for many learners continues to reverberate against desires for a stronger emphasis on FE delivering higher level technician skills and quality.

A final issue is the status of colleges and their staff and of vocational offerings more generally, especially in relation to a qualifications system in which for young people A levels are claimed to represent the 'gold standard' and everything else to be at best silver or bronze, and in relation to the inexorable growth of a system of mass higher education and the emphasis placed upon degrees and graduates. A key shift over the period covered by the chronology has been one from what was still in 1992 a relatively small, elite HE system to one where mass higher education is now starting to shade into universal HE (Trow, 2007). This raises important questions about the 'space' left for FE and whether moves towards a tertiary education system (involving aspects of FE as well as HE), as is currently being argued for in Scotland (Cumberford-Little, 2020), might not represent a way forward (Independent Commission on the College of the Future, 2020).

In a sense this last point underscores a limitation with the chronology – its focus on FE and vocational learning puts these areas of policy centre stage, but the harsh reality over much of the period since 1991 (and indeed before – see Bailey and Unwin, 2014) is that FE colleges have been seen by politicians as worthy bit-part players on the policy stage rather than the leading actors. The main priorities for policy and for funding have usually been schools and universities. From time to time hands have

been wrung about this, but a major change in priorities has not been forthcoming. This lack of policy salience, coupled with many of the issues raised above, means that much of what has been achieved since 1992 has been undertaken by colleges working around or in spite of national policy and funding constraints.

INTRODUCTION

It is important at the outset to explain what this document seeks to do, and what it is not attempting. A history of Further Education, broadly defined, would be a vast undertaking which we have neither the time nor the resources to construct. What follows is a first step or stage in what may prove to be a much larger and far longer project to work some way towards a better and more coherent historical appreciation of developments in English further education. It seeks to provide a timeline or chronology of the most important, landmark policy reports and interventions since incorporation in 1992. The purpose of this exercise is to provide an aid for reflection upon the myriad of changes and shifts in policy and institutions and to give contemporary policy makers a glimpse into the thinking that motivated their predecessors. In a country where national level government often has a limited capacity for policy memory and where ministers and civil servants move jobs after relatively short tenures, this 'rear view mirror' on policy may be of use in helping policy makers and senior practitioners to see how trends in policy have evolved and to spot and avoid replicating previous dead ends and cul-de-sacs in policy development. Past choices have a way of structuring future possibilities and forewarned is forearmed in thinking about what to try next.

In choosing 1992 as our starting point we are conscious that the world of FE policy did not begin at this date, and a larger-scale exercise will at some point need to go back further and cover developments such as the design and introduction of the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) in the early 1980s, and the 1944 Education Act (Bailey and Unwin, 2014).

The report covers a range of different interventions within policy, but it is by no means encyclopaedic. Some are government white or green papers and the resultant Acts of Parliament. Others are government-commissioned or independent inquiries into aspects of FE, or administrative changes introduced by government and its funding and regulatory agencies. Omitted are a host of reports that either touch upon FE but do not have it as their central focus (e.g. Jason Holt's review of apprenticeships in small firms), or which emanated from think tanks, commissions, and academics.

We also need to be clear that what follows offers a top-down perspective on policy, with the main focus being on how national policies and policy actors have sought to influence what colleges do and how they do it. This leaves unaddressed the significant variations that occur in the impact and enactment of policy at the level of the individual college and its component parts. National policies play out very differently at local level, as colleges choose to engage with initiatives or not, and as opportunities such as the chance of major capital funding for new buildings are distributed differentially according to a range of influencing factors. Policies that at national level look monolithic are implemented differently across space and resultant provision is sometimes a patchwork quilt rather than a uniform blanket.

It is also the case that a considerable volume of change and enhancement happens for reasons other than national policy. In a sense, national policy is one force for change, but its impact on practice is sometimes uncertain and it is certainly not the only force at play. Much that colleges achieve occurs despite of rather than because of the intentions and incentives set by national policy. Colleges are, to some extent at least, masters or mistresses of their own destinies, and they build upon histories and institutional legacies and trajectories that are very varied.

We also need to remember that much of the change is hidden because it is administrative in nature rather than an item of explicit policy and is not recorded in what follows. For example, over time, there have been a myriad of rule changes and administrative adjustments to the funding system for apprenticeships and FE. It would be a huge task to track and record these and most are undertaken with no consultation and announced via administrative channels to those whom they affect. However, despite being arcane and relatively 'hidden', their impact on the policies, priorities, practices and finances of FE colleges are often profound.

The chronology also only looks at the college sector, rather than the wider components of FE such as private training providers, and adult learning services delivered by parties other than colleges. Nor have we tried to cover the whole of the UK. The focus here is England, and the impacts of devolution in the UK will have to wait for another day. Wider international comparisons are also excluded.

With these caveats, over to the reader…

FROM LMC VIA INCORPORATION TO NOW:

30 Years of changes and impacts in Further Education 1991-2023

This paper aims to provide a chronological overview of major interventions affecting Further Education across England from 1991 to 2023. The paper will therefore focus on White Papers, Green Papers, reports and reviews commissioned by central government and changes to legislation and government departmental remits over the relevant period.

This paper assigns 'themes' to each intervention, which are as follows:

- Systems / Structures (A)
- Curriculum / Inspection (B)
- Funding / Monitoring (C)
- Role of Employers / Employment (D)

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
1991	**Department of Education and Science White Paper** ***"Education and Training for the 21st Century: Volume 1"*** ***(Volume 2 covers the related legislative changes)*** • Set out to establish a framework of vocational qualifications that was widely recognised and relevant to the needs of the economy, including the creation of GNVQs (pilots began the following year) • Aimed to promote 'equal esteem' for academic and vocational qualifications and create clearer paths between them for learners • Gave Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) more scope to promote employer influence in education • Wanted to stimulate more young people to train through the offer of a 'training credit' • Sought to promote links between schools and employers and ensure that all young people got better information and guidance about the choices available to them at 16 • Gave colleges more freedom to expand their provision and respond more flexibly to the demands of customers by proposing that sixth-form and FE colleges should be removed from local authority control and 'incorporated' • Proposed the establishment of Further Education Funding Councils (FEFCs) for England with oversight, funding and inspection responsibilities	✔		✔	✔

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
1991	**Department of Education and Science White Paper** *"Higher Education: A New Framework"* • Proposed the creation of single university sector via conversion of polytechnics to become universities • Also called for the replacement of the Universities and Polytechnics Funding Councils with a single Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)	✔		✔	
1992	**The Department of Education and Science** becomes the **Department of Education.**				
1992	*FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION ACT* This legislation implemented the White Paper proposals, including the establishment of the FEFCs and removing FE and sixth form colleges from local authority control as well as creating the HEFCs.	✔		✔	✔
1993	FE colleges and Sixth Form Colleges were incorporated on 1st April.				
1994	Pilots of Level 3 'Modern Apprenticeships' commenced - rolled out fully in 1995, with funding for up to 60,000 16/17-year-olds by 1996-97.				
1995	**The Department of Education** becomes the **Department of Education and Employment.**				
1996	**FEFC - *"Inclusive Learning"*: a report by the Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities Committee** The report, chaired by Professor John Tomlinson, called for a more inclusive FE sector, including an adequately funded, nationally co-ordinated staff training initiative for inclusive learning as well as helping colleges with strategic planning to take account of under-represented groups of adult learners.	✔		✔	
1996	**The Dearing Review –** *"Review of Qualifications for 16-19 year olds"* This government-commissioned report by Sir Ron Dearing made a number of proposals, including: • A national framework of qualifications encompassing academic and vocational courses at four levels (entry, foundation, intermediate and advanced) across the three main 'pathways': A-levels and GCSE; Applied Education' (GNVQ); and 'Vocational Training' (NVQ) • Creating a National Advanced Diploma made up of two full A levels, a full Advanced GNVQ or a full Level 3 NVQ (or equivalent) • The introduction of 'National Traineeships' as high-quality work-based option for school leavers and employees, building on design features of Modern Apprenticeship but focused on Level 2 • Developing 'Key Skills' (Application of Number, Communication, Information Technology) among learners	✔	✔		✔

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
1997	**Kennedy Report -** ***"Learning Works: Widening Participation in Further Education"*** The report proposed an 'Agenda for Change', which included a government campaign to create a 'learning nation', redistributing public spending towards those with less success in earlier learning, establishing 'a lifetime entitlement to education' that is free for young people and those from deprived backgrounds and the setting of new national learning targets and local targets for participation.			✔	
1998	**Department for Education and Employment Green Paper -** ***"The Learning Age"*** • Included two key initiatives: 'individual learning accounts' (ILAs) and the University for Industry (UfI) • Called for an extra 500,000 places in FE and HE by 2002 • Wanted to double investment in basic literacy and numeracy skills • Created various new bodies e.g. Training Standards Council, National Skills Task Force, National Training Organisations and local learning centres	✔		✔	✔
1999	**Department for Education and Employment –** ***"Delivering skills for all: second report of the National Skills Task Force"*** • Proposed a new system of 2 year 'associate degrees' in vocational subjects (later known as Foundation Degrees) • Recommended a new entitlement to publicly funded education and training for all young people between 16 and 25 to acquire their first Level 3 qualification • Wanted to enhance the work based route post-16 by extending 'National Traineeships' to become 'Foundation Apprenticeships' (Level 2) to improve progression to Modern Apprenticeships (Level 3)	✔	✔	✔	✔
1999	**Moser Report –** ***"Improving literacy and numeracy: a fresh start"*** Recommended a 'National Strategy for Adult Basic Skills' with the aim of helping half a million adults a year by 2002. The Strategy had ten main elements, including national targets, better entitlements, a new system of qualifications and more opportunities for adult learning.		✔	✔	
1999	**Department for Education and Skills White Paper -** ***"Learning to Succeed – a new framework for post-16 learning"*** • Provided further details of the new ILAs and the UfI (both launched in 2000) • Proposed the establishment of the 'Learning and Skills Council' for England (along with 50 local LSCs) to deliver all post-16 education and training, replacing the FEFC and TECs • Called for OFSTED inspection processes to apply to young people learning in schools and colleges up to age 19 • Created 'Connexions' – a new structure for advice and support for all young people from the age of 13	✔	✔	✔	✔

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
1999	Education Maintenance Allowances (EMA) were introduced across the UK. These payments of up to £30 a week to students from low-income households if they stay on at school or college were piloted from 1999, and then rolled out UK-wide in 2004.				
2000	**National Skills Task Force –** ***"Skills for All: final report of the National Skills Task Force"*** Put forward a 'national skills agenda' that included the following recommendations: • Free education and training for all young people to age 25 up to their first level 3 qualification • Entitlement for adults to free education and training, including basic skills, to attain their first Level 2 qualification • Encouraging all young people pursuing a non-vocational route post-16 to study broader range of subjects, including English and maths • Ensuring the new 'Foundation Degree' is a flexible vocational programme, linked to National Occupational Standards, for part-time or full-time study • LSC should allow funding to follow the learner to create a level playing field between different types of education and training		✔	✔	
2000	***LEARNING SKILLS ACT*** • Formally created the LSC (which began operation in 2001) and abolished the FEFC and TECs • Established the Adult Learning Inspectorate • Extended Ofsted's remit to include most FE institutions catering for 16 to 19-year-olds alongside the creation of a 'Common Inspection Framework'	✔	✔	✔	
2000	Foundation degrees trialled for the first time before launching formally in 2001.				
2000	Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) announced, which introduced a grant-conferring status to some FE providers (up to £500k) to develop provision such as specialist equipment, buildings or courses to respond to employer demand and deliver bespoke Level 3 training.				
2001	**The Department of Education and Employment becomes the Department of Education and Skills.**				

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
2001	**Cassells report -** ***"Modern Apprenticeships: The Way to Work"*** This government-commissioned report by Sir Ron Dearing made a number of proposals, including: • A national framework for apprenticeships, including an 'apprenticeship agreement' and training plan • Foundation Modern Apprenticeships (ages 16-19) would be at Level 2 and Advanced Modern Apprenticeships (ages 16-24) would be at Level 3 • Apprenticeships would be made up of a technical certificate, NVQ Level 2 or 3 in the relevant occupation and Key Skills at an appropriate level • The new technical certificates were intended to ensure in-depth technical knowledge (later abolished in 2006) • There would be an entitlement to a Modern Apprenticeship place for all 16-17 year olds with 5+ GCSE passes at grades A*-G		✔	✔	✔
2001	The Department for Education and Skills launched their 'Skills for Life' strategy, which included a target of improving the skills of 2.25 million adults by 2010.				
2001	**Cabinet Office / Performance and Innovation Unit –** ***"In Demand: Adult Skills for the 21st century"*** A report to government that declared tackling basic skills had to be the top priority: • Long-term aim should be ensuring all adults have the opportunity to achieve a Level 2 qualification • In the longer term, change had to focus on raising demand for workforce development from both employers and individuals through developing a demand-led system that empowers individuals and employers (e.g. considering placing purchasing power directly in their hands) as well as helping employers to develop business strategies that drive up demand and tackling the barriers of time and money facing many individuals • Also need to increase the supply of high-quality workforce development that was responsive to the needs of both individuals and businesses through 'capacity building and comprehensive audit and inspection procedures'	✔		✔	✔

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
2002	Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) - employer-led organisations that covered specific industries - were introduced, supported and funded by the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA). The SSCs replaced the National Training Organisations at the time. There were 25 SSCs in total (later reduced to 19) that covered around 90% of the UK workforce. SSCs were given four goals: • reduce skills gaps and shortages • improve productivity, business and public service performance • increase the opportunities to develop the productivity and skills of everyone in their sector; and • improve learning supply through the development of apprenticeships, higher education and national occupational standards.				
2002	Employer Training Pilots (ETPs) were launched in England in September 2002 to provide low-skilled workers with free, or heavily subsidised, training to achieve basic skills and a first level 2 qualification.				
2000	**Department for Education and Skills Green Paper –** *"14-19: Extending Opportunities, Raising Standards"* This government-commissioned report by Sir Ron Dearing made a number of proposals, including: • Proposed a new 'matriculation diploma' (overarching award) for all to aspire by age 19 based around existing national qualifications e.g. GCSEs, A-Levels, Modern Apprenticeships • Wanted greater flexibility at 14-16, with compulsory elements restricted to English, Maths, Science, ICT alongside citizenship, RE, PE, careers education, sex and health education and work-related learning) • More vocational qualifications would also be available at 14-16 including vocational GCSEs • Called for a 'fast track' for high achievers e.g. omitting GCSEs and moving straight to AS-Levels in some subjects • Envisaged closer collaboration between schools, colleges, training providers (different collaborative arrangements to be tested in 14-19 Pathfinder projects)	✔	✔	✔	

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
2003	**DfES/HMT/DTI/DWP –** ***"21st Century skills – realising our potential – individuals, employers, nation"*** This relaunch of the National Skill Strategy included the following changes: • Giving employers greater choice and control over publicly-funded training (based on ETP pilots) • Free tuition for any adult without good employability skills to get the training they need to achieve a Level 2 • Increasing support for Level 3 skills in areas of sectoral or regional skill priority • Piloting an 'adult learning grant' to give weekly financial support to adults studying FT for their first full Level 2 qualification, and for young adults studying for their first full Level 3 • Strengthening and extending Modern Apprenticeships as well as removing the current age cap of 24 • Making qualifications for adults more flexible by dividing them into units and introducing a credits framework to help learners and employers package the training programmes they want, and build up a record of achievement • Helping colleges build their capability to offer a wider range of business support for local employers		✔	✔	✔
2004	**Tomlinson report -** ***"Final report of the working group on 14-19 reform"*** • Proposed a compulsory 'core' consisting of 'functional' subjects (maths, ICT, and communication skills) for all students plus 'wider activities' such as work experience, paid jobs, voluntary work and family responsibilities • Wanted to replace GCSEs, A Levels and vocational qualifications with a new single modular diploma at four levels: entry, foundation, intermediate and advanced • Sought to replace coursework with a single extended project • Students should be provided with transcripts of their achievements	✔	✔	✔	
2005	**Department for Education and Skills White Paper -** ***"14-19 Education and Skills"*** • Rejected the main Tomlinson recommendation for a unified multi-level diploma system • Instead proposed the development of 14 lines of 'Specialised Diplomas' to provide a ladder of progression of broad vocational qualifications throughout the 14-19 phase through collaborations between schools and colleges, alongside some modifications to GCSE and A Level specifications		✔	✔	

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
2005	**Department for Education and Skills -** ***"Skills: getting on in business, getting on at work"*** This follow-up to the National Skills Strategy had several 'core strands': • Working in partnership with employers to enhance skills by putting their needs and priorities centre stage through the National Employer Training Programme (which subsequently became Train To Gain) • Giving employers a stronger voice in shaping the supply of training through Sector Skills Agreements, Skills Academies and Regional Skills Partnerships are the key levers • Better information and guidance for learners and helping all adults gain the functional skills of literacy, language and numeracy and develop wider employability skills • Developing capacity among universities, colleges and training providers to deliver benefits to employers and individuals, including 'greater contestability' to reward those institutions that best meet the needs of customers		✔	✔	✔
2000	**Foster report -** ***"Realising the Potential: the future role of FE colleges"*** Highlighted numerous concerns about FE (lack of clear purpose, insufficient attention to quality, poor national image, not responsive enough to employers and learners). Proposed the following changes to address these issues: • Developing financial incentives to steer students onto courses valuable to the economy • Strengthening learner advocacy at national and local LSC level and college level • Streamlining qualifications and learning pathways • Greater collaboration among local providers to ensure they operate in the best interests of learners • Using specialisation to improve results and value for money through a 'Hub and Spoke' approach to delivery • Less centralisation and moving towards greater self-regulation • Simplified inspection through the merger of the Adult Learning Inspectorate and Ofsted • An improved inspection methodology that focuses on learner experience, value for money and the coherence of the locality's learning offer and impact • Investing in the next generation of college and national leadership	✔	✔	✔	✔

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
2006	**Leitch Review of Skills –** ***"Prosperity for all in the global economy - world class skills"*** This landmark report called for significant changes to the skills system: • Increase adult skills across all levels • Route all public funding for adult vocational skills in England through Train to Gain and Learner Accounts by 2010 • Strengthen employer voice, including the creation of a new 'Commission for Employment and Skills' • Increase employer engagement and investment in skills and deliver more economically valuable skills through 'reform, relicensing and empowerment' of SSCs • Launch a new 'Pledge' for employers to voluntarily commit to train all eligible employees up to Level 2 • Increase employer investment in Level 3 and 4 qualifications in the workplace by extending Train to Gain • Increase co funded workplace degrees • Develop a new universal adult careers service and a network of employer-led Employment and Skills Boards	✔		✔	✔
2006	**Department for Education and Skills White Paper –** ***"Further education: Raising skills, improving life chances"*** Introduced reforms to "renew the mission of the FE system": • FE providers to develop specialisms as well as toughening the criteria for becoming CoVEs • Extending National Skills Academies, including national sector-based networks of providers led by these NSAs • Strengthening the role of FE colleges in providing HE • Learner Accounts would be trialled to help people gain Level 3 qualifications • New entitlement to training to Level 3 up to age 25 • Train To Gain would be extended up to Level 3 • Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) would be set up to oversee teaching and learning in FE and implement a new Quality Improvement Strategy as well as a minimum CPD requirement for all staff • New delivery models encouraged, such as federations, partnerships and trusts • LSC to strengthen its regional capacity but also streamline its work to reduce burdens on colleges	✔	✔	✔	
2006	Train To Gain' launched with the intention of delivering vocational training to employed individuals in the UK, primarily those aged 25+ who did not already have a full Level 2 qualification				

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
2007	*FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACT* The objective was to improve the responsiveness and quality of the provision of FE and in doing so raise participation in FE and tackle skills gaps: • Restructuring the LSC to operate at a regional rather than a local level • Expecting the LSC and FE providers to consult with learners and employers when planning their policies • Enabling FE colleges to seek ability to award their own foundation degrees • Allowing the LSC to intervene in the management of unsatisfactory FE providers in certain circumstances • Requiring all principals to achieve a leadership qualification	✔	✔	✔	✔
2007	**Department for Education and Skills Green Paper –** ***"Raising Expectations: Staying in education and training post-16"*** Government announced plans to require all teenagers to remain at school, in a college, in work-based learning or in accredited training provided by an employer up to the age of 18 (planned to come into effect in 2015). Participation had to be full time for young people not in employment for most of the week, and part time for those working more than 20 hours a week.		✔	✔	
2007	**The Department of Education and Skills becomes the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS).**				
2008	**DCSF/DIUS –** ***"World-Class Apprenticeships: Unlocking Talent, Building Skills for All"*** • A new National Apprenticeships Service (within the SFA) would take end-to-end responsibility for delivering, coordinating and promoting the apprenticeships programme in England (including the National Employer Service for large employers) • National completion certificates would be issued to apprentices at the end of their training • 'Apprenticeship Agreements' would clarify employer and apprentice expectations • More flexibility introduced within apprenticeship frameworks • Created public sector targets for apprenticeships	✔	✔		✔

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
2008	**DCSF/DIUS consultation:** ***"Raising expectations: enabling the system to deliver"*** Following the prior announcement that funding for 16-18 participation would transfer to local authorities, this consultation proposed further changes to the organisations responsible for funding and delivering provision: • Through 'strategic commissioning', local authorities would be expected to cluster together in sub-regional groupings reflecting travel-to-learn patterns to commission provision for young people, with local authorities also having the power to expand strong (and cease weak) 16-18 provision • A new Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) would have responsibility for overall budgetary control and for 'securing coherence' if agreements could not be reached locally • There would be progressive devolution of power and authority to the sub-regional level • A new Skills Funding Agency (SFA) would ensure that public money is routed 'swiftly, efficiently and securely' to FE Colleges and providers following the purchasing decisions of customers (increasingly Train To Gain and Learner Accounts) • The SFA would also lead the development and management of the new England-wide 'adult advancement and careers service'	✔	✔	✔	
2008	***EDUCATION AND SKILLS ACT*** Raised the minimum age at which a person can leave education or training to 18 for those born after 1st September 1997, with an interim minimum leaving age of 17 from 2013. Included statutory adult learning entitlements for free education up to Level 2 and for Level 3 for those under the age of 25 (entitlements removed in 2010).		✔	✔	
2008	SSDA was replaced by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) - a non-departmental public body that provided advice on skills and employment policy to the government and devolved administrations.				
2008	The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) was formed to combine the Centre for Excellence in Leadership and the Quality Improvement Agency to develop and improve FE and skills provision across the sector.				
2009	**The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills** becomes the **Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.**				

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
2009	**Department for Business, Innovation and Skills White Paper –** ***"Skills for Growth"*** • Updated the 2003 Skills Strategy (21st Century Skills – Realising our Potential) and responded to various UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) policy documents • Called for the creation of a new 'technician class', with 75% of the 18-30 age cohort to either be going through higher education or an apprenticeship or technician training (at Level 3 and above) • Proposed a new 'traffic light' based Performance Management System for FE that moved beyond qualification achievement to cover student satisfaction, completion rates, inspection reports and labour market outcomes at the level of individual courses		✔	✔	
2009	***APPRENTICESHIPS, SKILLS, CHILDREN AND LEARNERS ACT*** • Provides for a statutory framework for apprenticeships and created a right to an apprenticeship for suitably qualified 16 to 18-year-olds • Dissolved the Learning and Skills Council and replaced it with the YPLA, local authorities and the SFA • Transferred the responsibility for funding education and training for 16-18-year-olds to local authorities • Created Ofqual as the new regulatory body for qualifications • Formed legal basis for the separate designation of sixth form college corporations	✔	✔	✔	
2010	**The Department for Children, Schools and Families** becomes **the Department for Education.**				
2010	**Department for Business, Innovation and Skills –** ***"Skills for sustainable growth"*** • Train To Gain closed down and replaced by some co-funding at Level 2 for SMEs • Only basic skills and first Level 2 and 3 qualifications to be fully funded from 2013/14 • New loans (based on HE student loans already available) intended to fund courses at Level 3 and 4 • Adult apprenticeships expanded and Level 3 was now the goal for learners and employers with progression available up to Level 4 • Every adult to be offered a 'Lifelong Learning Account' to provide access to the new FE loans and other forms of financial support • A new all-age careers service would provide clear and transparent information to all learners • Support for the development of leadership and management skills, particularly in SMEs	✔	✔	✔	

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
2011	**Wolf Review –** *"Review of Vocational Education"* In this report commissioned by the DfE, Professor Alison Wolf proposed some major changes to vocational education and 16-19 provision more broadly: • Funding should be on a per-student basis post-16 (bringing it into line with pre-16 education) • Institutions should provide coherent 'study programmes' for 16 to 19-year-olds rather than being funded on the basis of individual qualifications • English and maths should be a required component of study programmes for those who did not pass their GCSEs in these subjects • Poor-quality qualifications should be stripped out of performance tables for schools and colleges • Accountability system should also be changed to remove perverse incentives (e.g. schools and colleges steering young people into 'easy' qualifications that do not offer progression) • Subsidies for employers to take on apprentices and provide greater access to the workplace for 16-18 year olds		✔	✔	✔
2011	**Department for Business, Innovation and Skills –** *"New challenges new chances: Further education and skills reform plan - Building a World Class Skills System"* • New National Careers Service to be launched in 2012 • Proposed an independent commission on adult education and vocational pedagogy • New roles for governors working closely with other post-14 educational providers and local stakeholders such as local authorities and LEPs to develop delivery models that meet the needs of their communities • Confirmed plans to scale back or cut funding for numerous bodies including LSIS, the UKCES and Ufi/Learndirect	✔	✔	✔	

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
2011	*EDUCATION ACT* • YPLA to be abolished and its functions and duties transferred to the DfE • SFA to prioritise funding apprenticeships for certain groups (e.g. 16 to 18-year-olds, care leavers, young learners with disabilities) • Colleges now allowed to borrow money to run their provision without having to first gain permission from a national agency or local authority • Removal of the duty on post-16 providers to "promote the economic and social wellbeing of an area" • Removal of the need for post-16 governing bodies to have regard to possible future staff and students when arranging their provision • DfE given the power to intervene directly in providers deemed to be 'failing' or mismanaged	✔	✔	✔	
2012	**Lingfield report –** ***"Professionalism in further education: Final report of the independent review"*** The final report from Lord Lingfield's independent review made recommendations on the professionalism of teaching staff in the FE sector: • Vocational role of FE should be regarded as having primacy over community learning • Power over professional standards should be placed in the hands of employers and Ofsted to ensure that training and CPD is of a suitable standard • The profession should also be deregulated as it should be up to employers to decide what is appropriate for their staff and organisation		✔	✔	

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
2012	**Department for Business, Innovation and Skills –** ***"The Richard Review of apprenticeships"*** This government-commissioned review outlined a new vision for apprenticeships in England: • Apprenticeships should be targeted only at those who are new to a job or role that requires 'sustained and substantial training' • 'End-point assessment' should replace continuous ongoing assessment to ensure that the focus is on the outcome of an apprenticeship (what the apprentice can do when they complete their training) • Assessment must be independent i.e. not influenced by any financial incentives • Recognised industry standards should form the basis of every apprenticeship • All apprentices should reach a good level in English and maths before they can complete their apprenticeship • The purchasing power for investing in apprenticeship training should lie with the employer • Employers and government should be jointly responsible for safeguarding quality		✔	✔	✔
2013	**Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning –** ***"It's all about work"*** This review by Frank McLoughlin recommended that vocational teaching and learning for adults had to have a 'clear line of sight to work' if it was to help individuals, businesses and communities, and put forward the following proposals: • The vocational education and training system should be a 'two-way street' based on genuine collaboration between colleges, training providers and employers • Every vocational curriculum area in a college or training provider should have at least one employer sponsor • Updating occupational expertise should be a priority for vocational teachers and trainers • A new scheme called 'Teach Too' should enable working people to teach their occupation a few hours a week • A 'core and tailored' approach to vocational qualifications (a nationally specified core, and a tailored element to meet local demand) would give employers real influence in shaping programmes		✔	✔	✔

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
2013	**Department for Business, Innovation and Skills –** ***"Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills"*** • Professionalism of FE would be raised by a new FE Guild and the introduction of 'Chartered Status' for providers • If a college fell below minimum performance standards, a new 'FE Commissioner' would review the situation and then advise ministers on what interventions were required (e.g. the new 'administered status') • Reaffirmed the 'employer-led' agenda for apprenticeships • Created a new Traineeship programme for young people aged 16 to 24 who have little or no experience of seeking or being in work • Outlined plans for two types of Level 3 vocational qualifications for 16 to 19-year-olds: Applied General Qualifications and Occupational Qualifications • SFA would remove public funding for vocational qualifications with low levels of usage • Confirmation of a more streamlined funding system for adult skills		✔	✔	✔
2013	**Department for Business, Innovation and Skills –** ***"The future of apprenticeships in England: implementation plan"*** Confirmation of the main aspects of the new apprenticeship system, including the rollout of 'trailblazer' projects to write the new employer-designed standards, independent end-point assessment, grading for apprenticeships and withdrawing all existing 'apprenticeship frameworks' by 2017/18.		✔	✔	✔
2013	**UKCES –** ***"Review of Adult Vocational Qualifications In England"*** This review led by Nigel Whitehead wanted to ensure vocational qualifications were 'rigorous, relevant and recognised': • Ofqual should require new vocational qualifications to be developed in partnership with employers • Awarding organisations should require training providers to engage with local employers • New design principles would help promote a clear identity for vocational qualifications	✔	✔		✔
2013	LSIS is closed down and replaced by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF – formerly the FE Guild)				
2013	The Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL) – an independent think tank that aimed to strengthen and develop the leadership of thinking about the FE system – is established as a charity.				

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
2015	**Department for Education and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills –** ***"Reviewing Post-16 Education and Training Institutions"*** T o reflect the declining 16-19 population and government's desire to reduce spending, a programme of 'area-based reviews' was announced. The aim was to ensure each area had the right capacity in 16-19 provision to meet the needs of students and employers, with the end goal of having 'fewer, often larger, more resilient and efficient providers'.	✔		✔	
2015	**Department for Business, Innovation and Skills –** ***"English Apprenticeships: Our 2020 vision"*** This strategy document outlined the government's plans for improving the quality and quantity of apprenticeships to reach a target of 3 million apprenticeship starts by 2020: • Apprenticeships would be available to learners of all ages across all sectors of the economy • A new Digital Apprenticeships Service for employers (rolled out in 2016) would allow them to select an apprenticeship, choose a training provider and pay for the training • Statutory targets of 2.3% for public sector bodies with a workforce of 250 or more in England would be introduced to make sure they employ their fair share of apprentices • The new 'Institute for Apprenticeships' (IfA) would oversee the design and delivery of apprenticeships • Funding for apprenticeships would be placed on a sustainable footing through a levy on employers set at 0.5% of an employer's pay bill over £3 million	✔		✔	✔
2016	**The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills becomes the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.**				

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
2016	**Lord Sainsbury –** ***"Report of the Independent Panel on Technical Education"*** This report from an independent panel led by Lord Sainsbury called for a new approach to technical education: • The technical pathway for learners should consist of an employment-based (apprenticeship) and college-based training route, with the latter requiring 'a high-quality, structured work placement' • A single framework of standards should cover both apprenticeships and college-based provision • A common framework of 15 routes should be established which encompasses all employment-based and college-based technical education at levels 2 to 5 • The remit of the IfA should be expanded to encompass technical education at levels 2-5 • Technical qualifications at levels 2 and 3 should be offered and awarded by a single body or consortium under a fixed-term licence, with the IfA maintaining a register of qualifications at levels 4 and 5 Alongside the publication of the Sainsbury Review, the government published their ***'Post-16 skills plan'*** that promised to deliver the recommendations in the Sainsbury review.	✔	✔		✔
2017	The UKCES was closed following the earlier withdrawal of government funding for its work.				
2017	The IfA formally became operational alongside the new apprenticeship levy in April 2017.				
2008	***TECHNICAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION ACT*** • Introduced an insolvency regime for FE and Sixth Form Colleges, meaning that suitable protections would be available for students to minimise or avoid disruption to their studies should their college be affected • Extended the remit of the IfA to cover college-based technical education in addition to apprenticeships from 2018 onwards (IfA was also renamed as the "Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education")	✔	✔		✔
2017	The Education Funding Agency and SFA were merged to create the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) that sits within the Department for Education.				
2017	***Plans for establishing 'Institutes of Technology' were published by the DfE,*** with applicants able to bid into a £170 million fund to 'establish high quality and prestigious institutions which specialise in delivering the higher-level technical skills that employers need across all regions of England'. The first 12 successful bids were announced in 2019.				

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
2019	**Dr Philip Augar –** ***"Independent panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding"*** This independent submission to the government's review of post-18 education called for a major overhaul of the structure and funding system for HE and FE, including: • Rationalising the FE college 'network' • Dedicated capital investment of £1 billion for colleges • A first free full level 2 and 3 qualification for all learners • Reversing the cut to core funding for 18-year-old learners • Simplifying the ESFA funding rules • Providing an indicative adult education budget (AEB) over several years rather than using annual allocations • Investing in the FE workforce as a 'priority' • Giving FE colleges a protected title like that afforded to universities • Introducing maintenance support for level 4 and 5 qualifications	✔	✔	✔	
2019	The AEB was devolved to six mayoral combined authorities and the Greater London Authority to allow them to make decisions about the allocation of the AEB to support the needs of residents aged 19+ and local economic priorities.				
2020	**'Plan For Jobs' – July 2020** The Chancellor announced measures to combat the impact of the pandemic on young people and the education system, including: • £2,000 for each new apprentice that businesses hire under the age of 25 (in addition to the existing £1,000 payment already provided for new 16-18 apprentices and those aged under 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan) – later raised to £3,000 • £111 million to triple the scale of traineeships in 2020-21 and a new £1,000 bonus for employers for each trainee (eligibility criteria also expanded to those with Level 3 qualifications and below instead of Level 2 and below)				
2020	**'Build Back Better' – September 2020** Following the Augar Review, the government announced several new measures: • A 'Lifetime Skills Guarantee' to give adults without a full Level 3 qualification the chance to take free college courses valued by employers (funded from the £2.5 billion 'National Skills Fund') • £1.5 billion for college capital investment • An entitlement to flexible loans allows courses to be taken in segments to boost opportunities to retrain • 'Skills Bootcamps' offering flexible courses of 12-16 weeks to give people the opportunity to build up digital skills (later expanded in new funding rounds in 2021 and 2022 to cover other sectors such as construction, engineering and green skills)				

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
2020	**Independent Commission on the College of the Future –** ***"final report"*** This UK-wide report, which followed an 18-month consultation, called for long-term education and skills reforms and extra investment to address current and future skills gaps and transform life chances for every adult, including: • Providing grants and loans that allow college students to live well whilst studying to bring down barriers many adults face to further study and training, particularly those on low incomes, in precarious employment, and for those who require retraining or upskilling opportunities • Establishing a new service through 'college-employer hubs' to give businesses a one-stop shop for upskilling current employees, finding the skilled workers they need and supporting innovation • Rebalancing and integrating the whole post-16 education and skills system in each nation with a 10-year strategy for how colleges can deliver what each nation needs and redressing funding inequity where it exists ***A separate report for FE colleges in England*** was published shortly after this UK-wide report.	✔	✔	✔	✔
2021	**Department for Education White Paper:** ***"Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth"*** • Increasing employer involvement and tailoring provision to local needs through 'Local Skills Improvement Plans' (LSIPs) created by employers and employer representatives along with colleges and training providers as well as establishing 'college business centres' • New intervention powers for the Education Secretary if colleges are "not delivering effectively or where local providers are unable to deliver the skills priorities for that area" (including potential changes to governing bodies or college leadership) while also trying to "empower weaker colleges" to address problems earlier • New approval system for higher technical qualifications (levels 4/5) based on employer-led standards • Confirmation of a 'Lifelong Loan Entitlement' (LLE) to provide the equivalent of four years of post-18 education in FE or HE (from 2025) • Outlined plans to reform FE accountability to focus more on outcomes and also raised possibility of a multi-year funding settlement for colleges • New national recruitment campaign for teachers in FE and encouraging stronger two-way relationships between employers and colleges to share staff and expertise	✔	✔	✔	✔

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
2021	Eight Chambers of Commerce chosen to lead pilots of the new LSIPs, backed with £4 million of government funding, with the aim of making colleges align the courses they offer to local employer needs				
2021	The Department for Education confirmed plans to make A Levels and T Levels the main further education qualifications at age 16, with funding for any overlapping post-GCSE options (e.g. BTECs) set to be removed from 2024.				
2022	**Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities:** ***"Levelling Up"*** Confirmation of various commitments from the 2021 Comprehensive Spending Review and FE White Paper: • Investment of £3.8 billion in skills planned by 2024-25 • Local Skills Improvement Plans • A Lifetime Skills Guarantee • Skills Bootcamps • A new UK-wide £560 million 'Multiply' programme to improve adult numeracy Also included a new government target: "By 2030, the number of people successfully completing high-quality skills training will have significantly increased in every area of the UK. In England, this will lead to 200,000 more people successfully completing high-quality skills training annually, driven by 80,000 more people completing courses in the lowest skilled areas."	✔	✔	✔	✔
2022	**Government response to the 2019 Augar Review** Three years after the Review was published, the government announced plans to: • ***Reform Higher Education student finance***, including freezing tuition fees at £9,250 until academic year 2024/25 and aligning the student finance for higher technical qualifications at levels 4 and 5 with the support available for degrees (level 6) • ***Consult on details of the new LLE***, including its ambition, objectives, and coverage	✔		✔	
2022	***SKILLS AND POST-16 EDUCATION BILL*** • Formally created LSIPs and confirmed involvement of employer bodies • Increased role for the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education in technical qualifications • Confirmed the introduction of the LLE • New intervention powers for the Education Secretary plus provisions for the insolvency regime for FE providers • Schools required to give post-16 providers the opportunity to speak to pupils about technical qualifications and apprenticeships	✔	✔	✔	✔

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
2022	**Consultation on new FE funding and accountability systems** Based on the proposals in the 2021 FE White Paper, ***the government is consulting on reforms to both the funding and accountability system for colleges***. These reforms include: • Making funding "simpler and more effective" through a new single 'Skills Fund' for each college to replace the multiple existing funding streams (e.g. Adult Education Budget, Community Learning) • Moving towards multi-year funding settlements for colleges • Introducing an accountability system that is "focussed on outcomes", including a new 'Skills Measure' that publicly shows the percentage of learners who move into employment or higher-level learning after their course • Asking colleges to set out how they are meeting local skills needs in new 'Accountability Agreements' • Enhancing Ofsted inspections so that they consider how well colleges are responding to skills needs / LSIPs The government is expected to respond to their consultation in early 2023.	✔	✔	✔	
2022	**The Office for National Statistics reclassifies FE colleges in England as belonging to the public sector** FE colleges and their subsidiaries will now be part of central government and subject to the framework for financial management set out in 'Managing public money', guidance on senior pay and other central government guidance. Colleges borrowing from private sector sources is also likely to become more difficult in future. ***The government aims to produce a draft new 'college financial handbook' by autumn 2023 for consultation***, with a final handbook scheduled for publication in March 2024 ahead of implementation in August 2024.				
2023	**Deeper devolution** New devolution deals signed with the Greater Manchester and West Midlands Combined Authorities, which offer more flexibility over skills funding and new responsibilities for aligning careers provision with the skills system in addition to their existing control over the AEB. There are now 10 areas with 'mayoral devolution deals' in England, with three new areas expected in 2024 – York and North Yorkshire, East Midlands, and a new Combined Authority in the North East.			✔	✔

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
2023	**New FE funding and accountability systems** Based on the proposals in the 2021 FE White Paper, ***the government published its response to two consultations on funding and accountability.*** The package of reforms include: • A new single 'Adult Skills Fund' in each area to replace multiple existing funding streams (e.g. AEB, Community Learning, Free Courses for Jobs) • Moving to a multi-year funding approach within each Spending Review period so that colleges and local areas can plan ahead more effectively • Introducing a 'Performance Dashboard' focused on outcome measures, including a new 'Skills Measure' that shows the percentage of learners who move into employment or higher-level learning after their course • Asking colleges to set out how they are meeting local skills needs in new 'Accountability Agreements' • Enhancing Ofsted inspections so that they consider how well colleges are responding to skills needs / LSIPs	✔	✔	✔	
2023	**Lifelong Learning Entitlement** Previously called the Lifelong Loan Entitlement, ***the initial legislation required to implement the LLE gained royal assent.*** The LLE is set to be rolled out from September 2026. Further legislation and consultations are expected during 2024.	✔		✔	
2023	**Advanced British Standard** The government released proposals for the Advanced British Standard (ABS), a new Baccalaureate-style qualification for 16 to 19-year-olds. The main components of the ABS are: • Clearer options - bringing together 'academic' and 'technical' subjects, thus replacing A-levels, T-levels and other vocational qualifications such as BTECs • More teaching time - students will get at least 1,475 hours over two years (around 15% more than at present) • Greater breadth - encouraging a broader range of knowledge and skills • A core of maths and English - all students studying both subjects until age 18 The ABS is supported by an initial funding boost of £600 million over two years to help improve the recruitment and retention of teachers in shortage subjects, support students who do not get a standard pass in maths and/or English at age 16 and improve the quality of maths teaching. The ABS was later shelved by the new Labour government in 2024.	✔	✔	✔	

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
2024	**Rapid Level 3 review** The new Labour Government pauses the removal of funding from certain Level 3 qualifications due to happen in August 2024. It then launches a rapid review to examine the planned reforms to Level 3 and below qualifications. The review reported in December 2024 and concluded that 70 per cent of the courses earmarked for defunding will continue up to 2027.		✔	✔	
2024	**Curriculum and Assessment Review** The Government launches a review into curriculum and assessment, as committed to in their 2024 manifesto. The review looks at curriculum, assessment and qualifications pathways across all key stages, seeking to identify 'most significant and pressing issues' and address these through 'evolution not revolution'. The call for evidence closed in November 2024 and further stakeholder engagement is expected in 2025 with a final report that same year.	✔	✔		
2024	**Foundation Apprenticeships** The Prime Minister announces that new Foundation Apprenticeships will be introduced to help prepare young people for apprenticeships, as well as shorter apprenticeships in certain sectors.	✔			
2024	**New inspection report card introduced** Government announces that single-word Ofsted judgements will be scrapped immediately for schools (and for colleges in September 2025) and will be replaced with School Report Cards in September 2025.		✔	✔	
2024	**Skills England established in shadow form and publishes first report** *Skills England: Driving growth and widening opportunities* The new DfE arms-length body will be responsible for: • Providing an authoritative assessment of skills needs, carried out by Skills England Analysis (formerly the Unit for Future Skills). • Identifying priorities for and shaping technical education to respond to skills needs. • Working with Mayoral Combined Authorities, Employer Representative Bodies, and other regional organisations to align national and regional systems with each other. • Feeding back to DfE on skills challenges and progress addressing them. The CEO and Board are expected to be appointed in 2025.	✔			✔
2024	**IfATE (Transfer of Functions etc) Bill introduced** The Bill formally dissolves IfATE and transfers its functions to Skills England. Gained Royal Assent 2025	✔			✔

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
2024	**Get Britain Working White Paper published** Policies announced include: • Coordinated support at a regional level to help people aged 18-21 who are unemployed or off sick finding a job or training, as part of the Youth Guarantee. Pilots will be trialled in eight mayoral authorities across England from Spring 2025. • A Youth Guarantee Advisory Panel, shared between DfE and DWP, will be set up to ensure that young people's voices are at the heart of these reforms. • Jobcentres in England will be merged with the National Careers Service to create a new national jobs and careers service to more effectively align employment support with skills and careers.	✔			✔
2025	**Changes to functional skills requirements for apprenticeships** The government scrapped the functional skills exit requirement for apprentices over the age of 19.				✔
2025	**Funding changes for Level 7 apprenticeships** From 2026, government funding for Level 7 apprenticeships will be limited to those under 22.			✔	
2025	**Skills England leadership and board announced** The CEOs of Skills England are formally announced, along with the membership of its independent board. Skills England publishes its ***skills assessments of its ten priority sectors***, its ***assessment of priority skills to 2030***, and its ***analysis of AI skills needs***.	✔			
2025	**Foundation Apprenticeships rolled out** First foundation apprenticeships available in construction, digital, social care, and engineering and manufacturing. They are aimed at 16-21 year olds and come with a £2,000 employer incentive.	✔			✔
2025	**First Technical Excellence Colleges announced** The first group of Technical Excellence Colleges in construction are announced.				
2025	**Skills England moved to DWP** As part of the September 2025 reshuffle, responsibility for post-19 education, skills (including Skills England), and all-age apprenticeship are moved from the Department for Education to the Department for Work and Pensions. The Minister for Skills straddles both departments.	✔			
2025	**Prime Minister scraps 50% university target,** replacing it with an ambition to get two-thirds of young people in higher level learning, including technical qualifications and apprenticeships.	✔			

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
2025	Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper Policies include: • A new approach to college improvement, overseen by the FE Commissioner, including new regional improvement teams to ensure colleges meet local skills needs. • Exploring the potential of skills passports, developed by Skills England, to be able to demonstrate skills, competencies, training, and work experience in a standardised way. • New 'apprenticeship units', short courses to be funded through the Growth and Skills Levy from April 2026, in artificial intelligence, digital, and engineering. • Greater FE/HE collaboration, with all Level 4+ training under the remit of the Office for Students and FE colleges given awarding powers for Levels 4 and 5. • New legislation will be introduced to allow university fees to rise automatically with inflation, contingent on meeting quality standards set out by the OfS. • Measures to reduce NEET rates, including piloting auto-enrolment in a default provider for those leaving school at 16 without an education or training place.	✔	✔	✔	✔
2025	Curriculum and Assessment Review Final Report Recommendations include: • New V Level qualifications to be rolled out from 2027 to replace the suite of technical and vocational qualifications available at Level 3. DfE accepted but did not agree that large qualifications should be retained. • A new 'stepping stone' post-16 English and maths qualification at Level 1 for those who don't achieve a grade 3. To be consulted on in 2026. • Slimming down GCSE content and reducing exam volume by 10%. • Scrapping the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) performance measure, but retaining the EBacc 'bucket' for Progress 8 (the latter was not accepted by DfE and a consultation will be launched on its proposed reform to Progress 8). A new national curriculum will be published in 2027 for delivery in Autumn 2028.	✔	✔	✔	
2025	**Level 3 and Below Review launched** Consultation launched on the introduction of V Levels, as well as two new post-16 pathways at Level 2 – one designed to progress to further study and the other to employment.		✔		
2025	**Reform to apprenticeship assessment** Revisions to apprenticeship assessment plans were introduced, so that apprentices are assessed on only a sample of knowledge and skills, while employers are responsible for testing behaviours.				✔

Date	Description	A	B	C	D
2025	**Changes to apprenticeship funding** In the Autumn Budget, the Chancellor announced changes to apprenticeship funding, including: • Fully funding all apprenticeship training for under-25s in SMEs. • Removing the 10% top-up to levy-payers' accounts. • Reducing the expiry window for levy funds from two years to 12 months.				
2025	**Expanding the Youth Guarantee** The Budget also included an £820 million funding package for the Youth Guarantee, to cover: • A government-backed jobs guarantee for young people on long-term benefits, due to be rolled out in six regions from Spring 2026. • An expansion of Youth Hubs to cover every local area. • A new Youth Guarantee Gateway providing specific support to young Universal Credit claimants to find local work and training opportunities. • Funding for 150,000 additional work experience placements and up to 145,000 Sector-based Work Academy Programmes.	✔			✔
2025	**Launch of the Milburn Review** The government commissions former Health Secretary, Alan Milburn, to lead a review into supporting young people into employment, education or training, due to report in Spring 2026.	✔			✔

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