

PRESS RELEASE



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Yeovil College's efforts to help communities beat the recession hit by funding cuts...

Yeovil College is joining forces with Colleges around the country to highlight the impact of a £200m cut to funding for adult students.

Colleges, by far the biggest providers of vocational training in Britain, have been told their 'adult learner responsive' budgets will shrink by 10 to 25% this year.

Yeovil College is fighting on behalf of its students and local communities to make Government aware of the likely impact of the changes and at the very least to have the freedom to manage budgets more flexibly in order to help mitigate against the effects.

Yeovil College Principal James Hampton said *"We are very concerned with the latest figures released from the Government surrounding cuts to the funding available for Adult Learners. Although at this stage it is unclear exactly how these changes would impact on our College, we are working hard to minimise the effect on the students and communities we represent."*

Courses affected across the country include those in construction, catering, care, hospitality, IT, engineering and sign language. * See Notes to Editors below.

Martin Doel, Association of Colleges Chief Executive, said *"At a time when Colleges are helping Britain beat the recession they are facing the prospect of having to cut courses for adults."*

"They understand how tough public finances are, but they don't want to lose high quality courses that are essential to our economic recovery and make a great deal of difference to people and businesses across Britain."

"We are calling on Government to allow Colleges to be more flexible with their funding," said Mr Doel, "so that they can help support these courses where possible by transferring money between budgets – something they are not allowed to do currently."

"Government and its agencies also need to be transparent about the consequences of this decision; if you cut budgets then you must accept that, even with the best will in the world, Colleges won't be able to enrol and teach the same number of students."

"Unlike the current debate about university funding cuts – which will take place in the future – these changes are real and are happening now, and will affect adult student enrolment in the year ahead."

An AoC survey, completed by 147 Colleges, shows that they face an average cut of 16%. Over two fifths (63 of those surveyed) face a cut of more than 20%.

Pat Bacon, Association of Colleges' President and Principal of St Helen's College, said *"These cuts will have an impact, not only on the students and the communities Colleges serve so well, but also on Government's own ambitions for further and higher education."*

"Any suggestion that Colleges can keep the same number of adult students by simply expanding the number of fee-paying places ignores the current economic climate and people's ability to pay."

Alan Tuckett, Chief Executive of the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE), said *"Last week's announcement of the reductions in FE funding for adults comes on top of year after year of cuts. The overall effect of this has been devastating, as Government has shifted funding from provision responsive to local and individual needs towards employer-focused provision."*

"In the week when the negative consequences of inequality have been laid bare, these latest cuts will mean fewer classes for adults with profound and multiple learning difficulties. They will mean the loss of the flexibility to offer customised responses to employers' needs which are not met by the Train to Gain programme. It will mean fewer language classes; larger groups in adult literacy programmes and fewer courses preparing people for higher education."

"In a society facing the challenge of an ageing population, when we need to create a knowledge-based economy where the capacity to learn is critical, and, given the government's ambitions for further and higher education, these short-sighted cuts beggar belief."

Christina McAnea, UNISON's Head of Education, said *"Cuts in adult funding will affect the vital work of Colleges, which have been working flat out to help adults retrain during the recession. "The economic recovery may have begun, but it is very weak and cuts in public spending risk ruining the quality of courses and putting us straight back into the red. UNISON is meeting the FE Minister, Kevin Brennan, and we will be making it clear that the government must think again."*

Shane Chowen, Vice President (Further Education) National Union of Students, said *"Courses for adults have come under constant attack and this year will be the first time where funding for employer responsive provision overtakes funding for adult learner responsive provision. The gap these cuts will make will not only affect our institutions and individuals, but our communities too. A lack of public subsidy will inevitably create higher course costs for those in our communities who need further education most, rendering the sector inaccessible and individuals left out in the cold."*

Notes to Editors:

*The courses affected will differ from College to College. The Adult Learner Responsive budget is a major source of non-HE funding for adults (aged 19+) in Colleges.

- Every year Colleges educate and train around three million people
- Colleges provide 39% of entrants to higher education
- More than half of all Foundation Degree students are taught in Colleges
- Almost half (45%) of all vocational qualifications are awarded via Colleges; 6% are awarded through employers
- The three most popular qualifications taught in Colleges at Level 4 and above are: Accounting: Business, Administration and Law; Health and Social Care

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All press enquiries to Lisa Pyrke, Head of Marketing & Communications t: (01935) 845322
e: lisa.pyrke@yeovil.ac.uk / w: www.yeovil.ac.uk