

The Parliamentary Review

EDUCATION SERVICES

2019

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The Rt Hon Theresa May MP

Prime Minister

British politics provides ample material for analysis in the pages of *The Parliamentary Review*. For Her Majesty's Government, our task in the year ahead is clear: to achieve the best Brexit deal for Britain and to carry on our work to build a more prosperous and united country – one that truly works for everyone.

The right Brexit deal will not be sufficient on its own to secure a more prosperous future for Britain. We also need to ensure that our economy is ready for what tomorrow will bring. Our Modern Industrial Strategy is our plan to do that. It means Government stepping up to secure the foundations of our productivity: providing an education system that delivers the skills our economy needs, improving school standards and transforming technical education; delivering infrastructure for growth; ensuring people have the homes they need in the places they want to live.

But it also goes beyond that. Government, the private sector and academia working together as strategic partners achieve far more than we could separately. That is why we have set an ambitious goal of lifting UK public and private research and development investment to 2.4 per cent of GDP by 2027. It is why we are harnessing artificial intelligence and the data revolution; leading in changes to the future of mobility; meeting the challenges of our ageing society; and driving ahead the revolution in clean growth. By focusing our efforts on making the most of these areas of enormous potential, we can develop new exports, grow new industries and create more good jobs in every part of our country.

Years of hard work and sacrifice from the British people have got our deficit down by over three quarters. We are building on this success by taking a balanced approach to public spending. We are continuing to deal with our debts, so that our economy can remain strong and we

can protect people's jobs, and at the same time we are investing in vital public services, like our NHS, where we are increasing funding annually by an average by 3.4 per cent in real terms: that is £394 million a week more. In return, the NHS will produce a ten-year plan, led by doctors and nurses, to eliminate waste and improve patient care.

I believe that Britain can look to the future with confidence. We are leaving the EU and setting a new course for prosperity as a global trading nation. We have a Modern Industrial Strategy that is strengthening the foundations of our economy and helping us to seize the opportunities of the future. We are investing in the public services we all rely on and helping them to grow and improve. Building on our country's great strengths, we can look towards a new decade that is ripe with possibility. The government I lead is doing all it can to make that brighter future a reality for everyone in our country.

“Our Modern Industrial Strategy means government stepping up to secure the foundations of our productivity: providing an education system that delivers the skills our economy needs, improving school standards and transforming technical education”

The Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP

Secretary of State for Education



If you had asked me in 2017 where would I most like to work, I would not have hesitated: education. Nothing is more important than helping children to discover a love of learning and to leave school happy, well-rounded and with all the qualifications they need for whatever they want to do. That is what England's 450,000 teachers are devoted to.

I have spent my time as education secretary visiting as many nurseries, schools, colleges and universities as possible and seeing for myself the contribution offered and challenges faced by our early years professionals, teachers and lecturers. They are the ones in the frontline of our drive to improve education for every child.

My mission is for every child to have a world-class education and the chance to fulfil their potential, whatever their background. Thanks to the hard work of heads and teachers, we've made huge progress.

Since coming into government in 2010, 1.9 million more children are being taught in good or outstanding schools – representing 86 per cent of pupils compared to 66% per cent in 2010. Since the phonics screening checks were introduced, 154,000 more six-year-olds are on track to become fluent readers, and we have seen the attainment gap narrow by at least ten per cent at both primary and secondary level.

We have reformed GCSEs, creating a new gold standard in qualifications, and A-levels now better prepare students for university. Record numbers of disadvantaged 18-year-olds are now going to university for full-time study.

These are real tangible achievements that we will build on as we continue to improve the education that every child receives.

But in providing that education, I know that the most important factor is the person at the front of the classroom. I want this to be a profession which draws the best, most gifted and committed teachers and then develops and keeps them.

However, it's clear too many teachers are having to cope with a workload that makes huge demands of them before they even set foot inside the classroom. Working with Ofsted, we are challenging excessive and unnecessary marking and data collection, as well as reforming our accountability system to make sure good schools are not burdened by multiple inspections and multiple demands for data. This will free up teachers to do what they came into the profession to do: teach.

In the past, a child's chance in life too often depended on the postcode lottery. Education is too important to be left to that kind of chance and I am determined that all parents will be able to find a first-rate school on their doorstep. This includes helping great schools expand, opening new free schools where they are needed and helping our best academies to work with schools in some of the country's most disadvantaged areas.

One of the most important ways government can improve education is to give great schools the freedom to innovate and, then, to share their ideas and best practice. I'm pleased this year's *Parliamentary Review* gives a platform to some brilliant and innovative schools.

I look forward to continuing to work with this whole sector so we can make sure every child, in every classroom, can fulfil their potential.

“One of the most important ways government can improve education is to give great schools the freedom to innovate and, then, to share their ideas and best practice”

The Parliamentary Review

A message from Lord Pickles and Lord Blunkett

The ability to listen to and learn from one another has always been vital in parliament, in business and in most aspects of daily life. But at this particular moment in time, as national and global events continue to reiterate, it is uncommonly crucial that we forge new channels of communication and reinforce existing ones.

With ongoing fractures in Westminster, the reverberations of which are being felt across the country, it is essential that politicians have a firm understanding of the challenges with which British organisations must contend; and that leaders in both the public and private sectors are aware of the difficulties faced by those working in all levels of politics, from local government to the national arena.

This is why *The Parliamentary Review* combines political content with stories from a wide range of organisations – small and large; new and old; those at the peak of their powers and those who have peaks to surmount. It is why these stories seek to inspire and challenge all who read them.

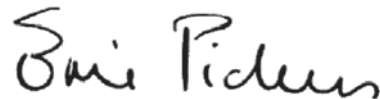
And it is why we, as former Labour and Conservative cabinet ministers and current members of the House of Lords, feel it is important to put aside our political differences and work together to ensure these stories are given the platform they deserve.

In this publication, you will find an insightful take on the past year in politics from the BBC's Andrew Neil and a concise rundown of key events in industry and parliament. Most importantly, you will be able to read in-depth accounts from the individuals and organisations who make *The Parliamentary Review* what it is.

In this edition, a number of contributors discuss the future of vocational training and how qualifications can adapt to the benefit of students. Others took the opportunity to extol the benefits of both inclusive SEND provision and a greater focus on wellbeing in education. It is our great honour and pleasure to have helped provide the platform for these insights to be aired. We hope that you find these articles – which begin on page 11 with a piece from OnwardsandUpwards.com – as thought-provoking and informative as we do.



Rt Hon The Lord Blunkett
Co-chairman, The Parliamentary Review



Rt Hon The Lord Pickles
Co-chairman, The Parliamentary Review

Economy thrives while politics divides

It's been nearly three years since the country voted to leave the European Union, but Brexit continues to hang over British politics like an all-encompassing dark, brooding cloud, discombobulating established relationships and upturning traditional verities wherever we look.

Social class no longer largely determines how you vote in the UK. The latest polls suggest the Tories now enjoy a lead among working-class voters. They've always won a chunk of working class votes – Disraeli called them his “Angels in Marble” – but never a majority.

As for Labour, even under its most left-wing leader ever, it now garners considerable support among the professional middle classes, especially in the major metropolitan conurbations.

The reason for this psephological seachange is Brexit. If you voted Leave, you are now more likely to vote Tory; if Remain, Labour.

Brexit is now *the* dividing line within Labour and the Conservatives. It splits the cabinet and shadow cabinet, backbenchers of both parties and their voters in the country. The Tory divisions are more obvious to see because they are the governing party and make big news. But Jeremy Corbyn has managed to lose 103 frontbenchers, often through Brexit-related resignations, which doesn't quite have the impact of Boris Johnson or David Davis walkouts, but must be something of a record nevertheless.

Brexit has also induced something of *rigor mortis* on both frontbenches. For nearly all of the past parliamentary year, cabinet ministers and leading Labour spokespeople have been unable to answer the simplest questions on our post-Brexit

state when it comes to the customs union, the Irish border, immigration policy and the single market. Only recently, with the Article 50 deadline looming, has some clarity emerged – and not always. I believe this widespread prevarication has added to voter disillusion.

Just as important, nearly all non-Brexit matters have been swept into a Brexit-induced Bermuda Triangle. This is understandable. But it has added to the gulf between parliament and the people.

The impact of Brexit on the parliamentary process has been generally unpredictable and often amusing. Left-wing Remainers now speak of the House of Lords as a bastion of democracy. Right-wing Leavers sound increasingly like peasants with pitchforks, determined to bring the whole edifice of the upper house tumbling down.

Jeremy Corbyn, who's spent his political career railing against the iniquities of the market economy, now poses as the champion of business (up to a point). Brexiteer Tories regularly mutter anti-business sentiments in unprintable language.

Overarching all this turmoil and uncertainty, as I explained in

The Parliamentary Review previously, is the resurgence of the two-party system in England, another consequence of Brexit. At the 2017 general election, the Leaver Right collapsed into the Tories and the Remainer Left flocked to Mr Corbyn's Labour party. It is beyond strange that the two main parties should be doing so well when many regard them as weaker, less talented and more divided than they've been in living memory. But they got easily over 80 per cent of the English vote between them in 2017 and all polls since suggest that is the new *status quo*.

The fundamental parliamentary fact in this post-referendum era is that there is no majority for what hardliners on either side of the Brexit divide would like. So, when it comes to determining the eventual shape of Brexit, parliament is very much in the driving seat, as the government has found out the hard way. The problem is it's not sure what parliament wants that shape to be.

Business might despair at what it sees as an increasingly dysfunctional political system. But it should take comfort from the fact that economics and politics are, for the moment, going their separate ways. No matter how much you might think politicians are mucking it up, the economy in general and business in particular continue to defy them.

I have thought for sometime that business and the economy are in much better shape than established opinion would have it. There were signs in 2018 that this was indeed the case. But, by the time you read this, you'll have a much better idea if I'm right. Keep your fingers crossed – not for my sake, but for the country's!



Neil believes the two-party system is the new *status quo*

Review of the Year

T levels: reform of vocational qualifications underway



Damian Hinds said T levels would “equip students with the skills required for the jobs of tomorrow”

Governments have sporadically tackled the academic–vocational divide in England and Wales for decades, usually with little success.

The latest attempt was given a higher profile this year by Theresa May, the prime minister, who said the new T-level qualifications would help the UK to compete globally and would be “a vital part of our industrial strategy.”

The technical post-GCSE qualification is intended to have equal status to A levels and according to the education secretary, Damian Hinds, would equip students with the skills required “for the jobs of tomorrow”.

The first courses will be taught from September 2020, initially in construction, digital, and education and childcare.

A further 22 courses are planned and will be introduced in stages from 2021.

T levels are being piloted in named institutions: the first 54 were announced by the government – with some controversy – as four currently offer no technical education at all. The deputy chief executive of the Sixth Form Colleges’ Association, James Kewin, commented: “Technical education is a minority pursuit for most sixth-form colleges, but we do have some members that are significant deliverers and they were surprised not to feature in the pilot.”

The DfE said it was working closely with its chosen providers to ensure they would be ready, with a professional development programme for both teachers and leaders from spring 2019.

In a major speech, Mrs May expressed her high hopes for T Levels: “Everyone should be able to have access to an education that suits them, but we know that for those that don’t choose to go to university, the routes into further technical and vocational training can be hard to navigate.

“That’s why we’re making the most significant reform to advanced technical education in 70 years to ensure young people have gold standard qualifications open to them whichever route they choose.”

Government provides £350 million extra special needs funding

A funding package for children with special educational needs and disabilities was announced by the government – but local authorities and headteachers said it was not enough.

In December, the education secretary, Damian Hinds, said councils would get an extra £250 million to support children and young people with complex SEND. He also announced

an extra £100 million to create more specialist places to give families more choice about where their children are educated. The Department for Education also promised all “high-quality bids” to create special free schools or alternative provision would be approved.

The announcement came weeks after *The Observer* warned of a “crisis in funding” for children with SEN, with council overspending trebling in three years, money pulled from overall schools’ budgets to cope with children’s needs and legal action threatened against councils considering cuts.

“We all want the very best for our children,” said Mr Hinds, adding: “We want them to attend a school that supports them to thrive, go on to higher or further education or training, find

a job that’s right for them, and to live happy and fulfilled lives.”

The Local Government Association warned of a potential funding shortfall of £1.6 billion by 2020/21 even with the new money.

“We are pleased the government has listened to our concerns and will provide an emergency injection of desperately needed money to tackle this crisis,” said Anntoinette Bramble, chair of the LGA’s Children and Young People board, adding: “While the funding will help, councils are reaching the point where the money is simply not there to keep up with demand.”

The organisation wants a national review of provision, and mechanisms to ensure costs are shared equitably between schools, councils and health and social care.

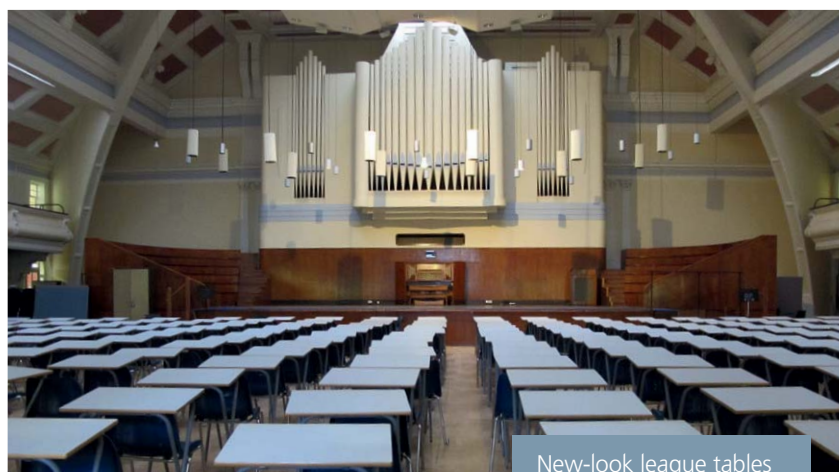
Progress 8: do parents understand new-look league tables?

The concept of accountability has increasingly underpinned the English school system since league tables were first introduced in 1992.

The original idea was that parents should use the tables to compare their local schools when choosing where their own child should study. The first simply outlined schools’ GCSE or SATs results, and were refined over the years as politicians became concerned that schools were “gaming the system” by putting pupils in for qualifications which attracted higher scores.

Educators were also unhappy about tables which simply reflected how well students had done in external exams, without any reference to the amount of progress they had made, and value-added versions were produced, informally at first.

In 2016 secondary league tables began to use two new measures, Progress 8 and Attainment 8. This was not without controversy: secondary heads have



New-look league tables judge schools on more than GCSE and A-level results

pointed out that Progress 8 can be skewed by the performance of just a few “outlier” students whose personal circumstances can make them particularly hard to reach, and that like its predecessors, the measure tends to penalise schools in white working-class communities.

However, in 2018 it turned out that there was another fundamental problem: under a third of parents of secondary school children had heard of

Progress 8 according to a Department for Education survey.

It's not hard to see why parents might be confused when the secondary league tables are published each January.

Attainment 8 is a measure of pupil performance in eight subjects, with a double weighting given to English and maths plus three English baccalaureate and three other approved qualifications. The higher the average score, the better the students are doing.

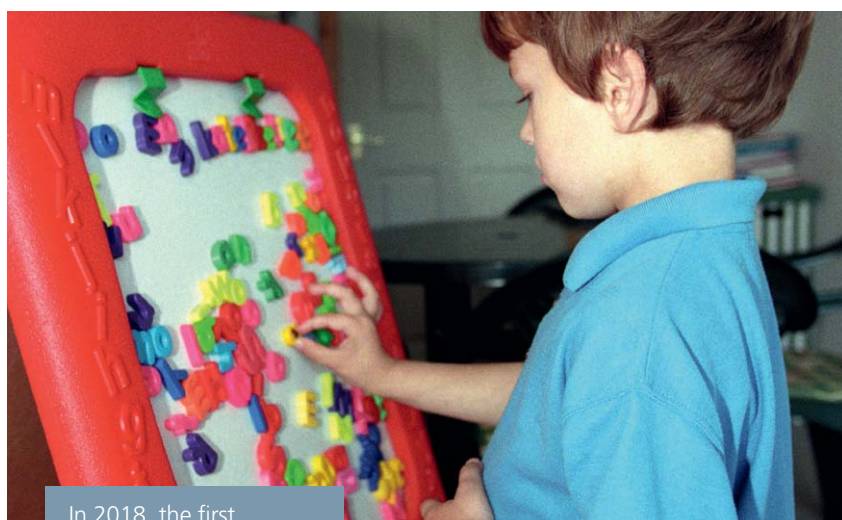
Progress 8 is even more complicated, comparing each student's Attainment 8 score with others who got the same

results in their end-of-primary SATs tests five years earlier. The idea is to measure how much progress the students have made in their secondary school.

A school's Progress 8 score is usually between -1 and +1. The former means students achieved one grade lower than similar pupils nationally, and the latter indicates one grade higher.

That means a school is doing fine if it scores 0 – the average Progress 8 score of secondary schools is 0. Those below -0.5 are not achieving the minimum standard expected by the government, while those with +0.5 are making well above the expected level of progress.

Synthetic phonics generation get their SATs results



In 2018, the first generation of children to go through education using synthetic phonics received their SATs results

It was a controversial move in 2007 when the government made it a requirement for schools to teach reading using "synthetic phonics" rather than any other method.

The phonics approach teaches children to decode words using sounds rather than recognising whole words. In synthetic phonics, words are broken up into the smallest units of sound – phonemes – which can be represented by several letters: for instance, the "ough" sound in dough. From their earliest weeks in school, children are taught around 40 phonic sounds and the letter combinations which represent them.

The change came about after a programme in Clackmannanshire, Scotland, left children taught using this method 3.5 years ahead in reading and two in spelling at the end of their primary years.

Two years after the programme first began in England, reading standards in seven-year-olds remained unchanged on the previous year, with the Department for Children, Schools and Families, now the DfE, quoted as saying that phonics was never intended to be a quick fix.

By 2012 the government had introduced phonics tests for six-year-olds, to ensure they could "decode" words using the new method a year before taking their first curriculum tests at seven.

In 2018, the first cohort of children to go through primary school since the introduction of synthetic phonics took their year 6 SATs tests. While what is expected of 11-year-olds has changed over the years – with tougher tests introduced in 2016 – the initial results showed that almost 90 per cent of those who passed their phonics test at the age of six had reached or exceeded the expected standard in reading at 11.

Overall, 64 per cent of children met the expected standard in reading, writing and maths, with girls doing better than

boys and maintained primary schools outperforming sponsored academies and free schools.

Growing anxiety about children's mental health

Official plans to tackle a mental health crisis among children and young people were repeatedly criticised for being inadequate in 2018.

It was a high-profile issue throughout the year, culminating in an announcement in October by Theresa May, the prime minister, of an annual government review of children's mental health, starting in autumn 2019.

The review was intended to highlight trends and issues in young people's mental health, using existing data collected by the Office for National Statistics, plus information on children's physical health and academic attainment. As part of this, the Department for Education would give new guidance to teachers to help them "voluntarily" measure student health.

The government hoped schools would use this "state of the nation report" to inform their own policies, with Mrs May saying it would give children's mental wellbeing the priority "it so profoundly deserves."

Earlier in the year, the government had announced £300 million plans for hundreds of mental health workers to be trained to work in and near schools from the end of 2019, initially in "trailblazer" areas.



The government hoped schools would use this "state of the nation report" to inform their own policies

Children's charity Barnardo's said this would leave hundreds of thousands of children without the help they needed, with only a quarter of the population reached during the next few years. The charity was also unhappy about a four-week target waiting time for children to see a mental health specialist: they should be seen in days, it said.

The NSPCC – which found the number of primary pupils needing counselling had risen by a third to almost 19,000 in three years – was equally concerned, saying: "We need swift help for all our pupils, in every school. Not just those chosen to trailblaze."

NHS figures showed the number of girls under 18 being treated in an English hospital after self-harming had almost doubled in 20 years to 13,463.

University admissions under scrutiny

New figures revealed how demands made of sixth-formers seeking university places have changed in recent years, raising concerns over the effects of changes in the system.

Figures released by the university admissions agency UCAS at the end of 2018 – when record proportions of

English and Scottish 18-year-olds were accepted onto courses – revealed a rise both in unconditional offers and the number of students admitted with C and D grade A levels.

A third of 18-year-olds received unconditional offers in 2018. The bulk – 68,000 – were open unconditional offers,



Recent figures showed a rise in both unconditional offers and the number of students admitted to university with A-level C and D grades

which had risen from just 3,000 in 2013. The other 21,000 were offers which became unconditional if the student nominated that university as their firm choice. The rise happened after the cap on university recruitment was lifted.

Acceptance rates for students with C and D grades have risen more slowly, with 84 per cent of the 44,000 students who achieved three Cs or lower getting a place, up from 79 per cent five years ago. Over 80 per cent of those with three Ds or the equivalent were accepted, with the proportion of applicants missing their predicted grades also rising.

School and college leaders are worried about the rise in unconditional offers, which they fear encourage sixth-formers to work less hard for their exams. However, UCAS figures show that students with unconditional offers are only slightly less likely to reach their predicted grades than those with conditional offers.

Damian Hinds, education secretary, said he found the rise in unconditional offers “disturbing” and that the Office for Students might issue regulations about their use. “This report shows that many students could be distracted from the final year of their schooling and achieve A level grades lower than they are capable of,” he said.

The universities themselves are concerned about the rising acceptances for students with lower A level grades. Clare Marchant, chief executive of UCAS, said: “While an individual student’s potential to succeed on an undergraduate course could have been shown during an interview, through a portfolio, or personal statement, universities and colleges must be mindful of accepting applicants with lower grades.”

Schools aren’t substitute parents, says Ofsted

Society should not expect schools to become a panacea for all its ills, Ofsted chief Amanda Spielman warned when launching her annual report in December.

Education institutions, she said, do not exist in isolation from their local areas and should be a central part of our communities.

“But being part of a community means being very clear what your responsibilities are and about what issues, however important, should only be tackled beyond the school, college or nursery gates. Through our inspections and research, we are seeing increasing evidence of a blurring of the lines of responsibility,” she said.

While schools should identify risks to children, and make referrals to other

agencies if necessary, going beyond that not only risked a distraction from their core purpose, but also putting “too strong an expectation” on non-specialists to deal with issues that should be dealt with by those with knowledge and expertise, she said.

These issues included childhood neglect, knife crime and childhood obesity. Ms Spielman said that a quarter of children were overweight or obese when they started school, rising to over a third by the age of 11. “Again, the easy – and dare I say it lazy – solution is to put responsibility for tackling obesity on schools. But our research this year found that there was no real difference in obesity rates between schools that took great steps to tackle obesity and those that didn’t.”

It was part of schools' core purpose to teach children about healthy eating and exercise, and to get them out of breath in PE lessons, but they could not take over the role of

health professionals or parents, and the answer to the obesity crisis lay in the home, said the chief inspector, adding: "Parents shouldn't abdicate their responsibility here".

GCSE results up despite tougher exams

2018 was the big year for Michael Gove's exam reforms and hundreds of thousands of 16-year-olds when 20 of the biggest subjects moved over to his new GCSE system.

The reforms include harder exams with more content and more papers to sit, with coursework cut dramatically and a new 9-1 grading system.

Announcing the most significant change in the English exam system since O levels were replaced in the 1980s, Michael Gove, then education secretary, said the "more demanding, more fulfilling and more stretching" exams would help the UK better compete internationally. The changes included the removal of most non-exam assessments – from 25 per cent of a candidate's marks to none in chemistry and biology, and from 60 to 25 per cent in modern foreign languages.

Maths, English language and English literature were the first subjects to be examined under the new system in 2017, with about 2,000 pupils gaining 9s in all three subjects. The new 9 is equivalent to the top half of the old A*, with 8 straddling lower A* and top-end As. The C grade – a pass – has been replaced by a 4, but a 5 is also described as a "strong pass" by the Department for Education.

The wellbeing of the teenagers taking the new exams sparked concern. Geoff Barton, general secretary of secondary heads' union ASCL, said: "We are worried about the impact on the mental health and wellbeing of young people caused by these reforms and it is our view that such a substantial set of changes as this should have been introduced in a more managed and considered manner." Schools, he said,



GCSE exam results improved in 2018, the first year of the new format

had provided students with "extensive pastoral support" to cope with their stress despite extreme funding pressures.

In the end there was the first rise in seven years in the proportion of GCSEs awarded passes, from 66.4 to 66.9 per cent. Four per cent of entries got grade 9, 700 students got all grade 9s, and while girls continued to do better than boys, the gender gap narrowed slightly as boys performed a little better.

Exam regulators ensured the overall pass rate and proportion of those getting grade 7 and above remained comparable to previous years to prevent the "guinea pig" cohort being disadvantaged. This meant the pass marks in some subjects were very low, with 21 per cent getting a grade 4 in maths at one exam board.

The introduction of the new GCSE grading system has been just one of the many markers of a period of transition for education as a whole. Representatives from across the country remark in the following articles about the changes in the sector and offer their thoughts on what policymakers should do going forward.

OnwardsandUpwards.com



A teaching assistant and student at Pendle Community High School



Director Mark Robinson

OnwardsandUpwards provide a tailored performance management system that tracks the progress of learners in a variety of schools, especially those with SEND pupils. Originally designed to assess the progress of larger organisations, the model has been adapted to track and collate learner progress. They collaborate closely with each user to tailor the model to their requirements and have a strong relationship with Pendle Community High School and College, who have assisted further developments to ensure the system effectively meets the needs of SEND pupils. As national curriculum levels have been stripped back and curriculums have become more individualised, they are developing a universal scale for comparison between schools. Mark Robinson founded the company and explains their change of focus.

When we were established in 2004, we were constructing a real-time performance management system that was designed to be flexible enough to be used by any organisation, no matter their size. At its heart was a strategy map that showed the highest goal of the organisation. The concept of our Escendency system was to connect everyone involved with this highest purpose and allow the organisation to assess their progress towards this goal in real time. The original goal would be broken down into second-level strategic objectives, which would then be further subdivided. Each objective would be weighted in terms of its overall contribution. Eventually, these subdivisions could be measured in the real world through performance indicators. These web-based indicators were assigned to people in the organisation,

FACTS ABOUT ONWARDSANDUPWARDS.COM

- » Director: Mark Robinson
- » Established in 2004
- » Based in Lancaster
- » Services: Performance tracking systems for learners
- » No. of employees: 6 in core team, with outsourced associates
- » No. of clients: 55
- » onwardsandupwards.com

“Every school is unique, every learner is unique”

which gave them the ability to self-manage, as they could constantly see their own progress. Beyond this, they could also assess their contribution to the wider organisation as a whole.

A change of focus

While we were doing this, we were approached by a school specifically for SEND pupils. Current school management information systems are built around whole classes and the age-related expectations of the national curriculum. In an SEN environment, there is a much greater need to monitor individualised progress, in terms of not only academic achievement but also social, emotional and behavioural development, working towards independence and employability.

Special schools have tried to do this by acquiring several different commercial systems to cover these areas, supplemented with in-house spreadsheets. The result is high cost and hours of senior teacher and management time interpreting systems that don't talk to each other. They cannot get a “real-time” overview of each learner's progress against their respective expected “flight paths” or indeed the whole school performance or any cohort in-between.

Without knowing how learners are doing in real time, it is impossible to know what to focus on next to close the gap towards expected progress.

The technological challenge was to create a holistic, customisable database system that could be mapped to the exact needs of each school's curriculum and individual learning outcomes at an affordable cost. This was not a trivial task and had never been done before.

The knowledge did not exist in any one place and was not understood by any one individual. We had to carry out research, consulting a myriad of different schools across the UK and then mapping their answers against ongoing and future changes in SEN assessment and government analysis requirements. This then, in turn, had to be measured against worldwide available development frameworks and database technologies that could be utilised to provide a comprehensive solution, securely hosted, at an affordable annual cost.

The major progress that has been made is the ability to provide a customised system for each school that would, if designed and built individually, cost many tens of thousands of pounds each and so be unaffordable for a special school. Every school is unique, every

Pendle Community
Headteacher Chris
Lingard with Deputy
Head Jenny Bayliss

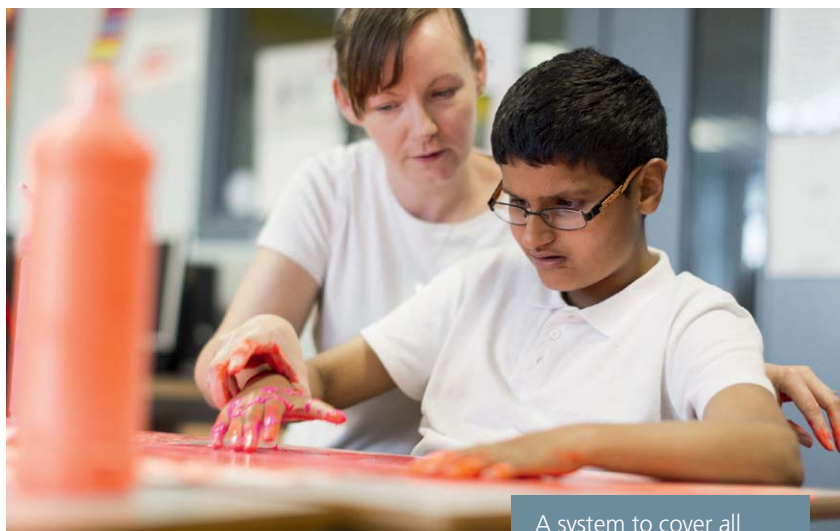


learner is unique. Our new generic cloud-based system, OnwardsandUpwards.com, is upgraded centrally and includes support and ongoing upgrades.

Removing rigid curriculum structures

The biggest uncertainty was to establish if it was even possible to create a single system and database design that could meet the needs of the full range of special schools. Such schools have an infinite number of curriculums and learning outcomes and widely differing rates of learning, starting points and future expectations. The other uncertainties were financial. It was unclear whether it was possible to create a system at a price that would recoup the development costs over time with an annual subscription cost that the market could bear.

During the course of 2016, the needs of a wide range of special schools, catering for all types of SEN at all ages, were sought by us from across the UK. We created a technological system and database design and married it to the most advanced cutting-edge development frameworks available in the world. Many design iterations were tried and tested by our “beacon” schools, such as PCHS, whose critical feedback has led to further refining of this process to maximise overall impact. As national curriculum levels were abolished, we created a new national database of state-of-the-art learning outcomes to be shared by all OnwardsandUpwards.com schools to save “reinventing the wheel”. We currently have 56 special schools and one mainstream school using OnwardsandUpwards.com Version 20. Over 250 schools are needed to cover ongoing operations. The system is now ready for a national roll-out, and there are virtually unlimited international sales opportunities, as systems like this do not exist anywhere else in the world.



A system to cover all areas of the curriculum

The need for schools to work collaboratively

While individualisation can be a benefit, schools need to collaborate more. Schools that are working in an identical manner are working independently and could benefit from conversing with one another. To help to achieve this, we have inserted a library of learning outcomes checklists within the system and have asked users to contribute their own. Permission can then be sought to borrow these lists. This allows schools to access any best practices performed by similar institutions.

The other challenge we face is ensuring that schools are utilising a holistic system, uniting different metrics of pupil progression. Different assessments must interact to give a full picture of progress while saving each school time and money. We are collaborating closely with our users to help them to achieve this.

We have been working with over 50 schools in the past year to refine our model and ensure that it functions at the highest possible level. We hope to increase our current volume of users and ensure that each of our users has a model that allows them to track, identify and improve learning outcomes for all of their students.

“We created a technological system and database design and married it to the most advanced development frameworks available in the world”

GSS Training



Managing Director Kerry Jones



GSS Training's future; Liz Thomas (left) and Emma McMullen (right)

FACTS ABOUT GSS TRAINING

- » Managing Director: Kerry Jones
- » Established in 2006
- » Based in Manchester and Runcorn
- » Services: Training
- » No. of employees: 8
- » Over 3,000 people a year receive GSS training
- » www.gsstraining.co.uk

GSS Training are committed to ensuring safety standards across a number of industries, originally specialising in the engineering construction sector. Providing training courses to over 3,000 delegates a year, they promote the benefits of health and safety, food safety, and soft skills training, such as conflict management and mental health awareness. Managing Director Kerry Jones helped to re-establish the GSS ethos in 2006 and explains how they structure their courses and their worries for the sectors they work in.

Decades ago, words like “medical facilities”, “safety”, “hygiene” and “welfare” were anathema to the engineering construction industry. We are immensely proud of the work our company has done to change this. When General Site Services, shortened to GSS in the 1970s, was founded by John Morris Jones, the primary aim was to improve safety, pay and welfare for workers in our industry. In 1977, as recognition for his achievements in the field, he gained an OBE for services to the construction industry and became chairman of the National Joint Council for the Engineering Construction Industry.

As a family, we have passionately continued this legacy for a number of decades, providing training and consultancy services. Our staff have a long history of providing effective training, consulting and coaching in a variety of fields, including health and safety, neurolinguistic programming, the environment, and hypnotherapy. We were formed in 2006 to continue and expand this work. The company was formed by me and my husband Glyn, and we are based in Manchester and Liverpool.

We have a wide range of clients spanning many industries, including construction, food, fuel and the public sector. Though we have two dedicated training facilities, we train in many places across the country and in Europe. A large proportion of our work concerns safety passports, which are a way of managing the health and safety of contractors, ensuring that the same message has been given to all contractors before they enter the site.

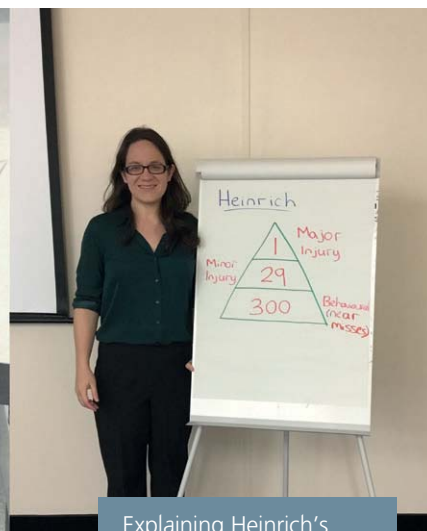
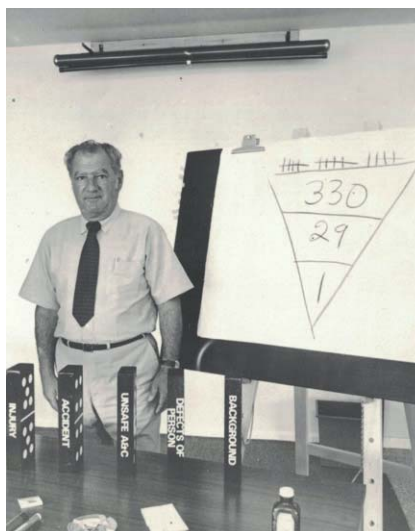
However, safety passports do not exclusively concentrate on health and safety. The food industry passports that we give to clients such as Kellogg's, Nestle and KP inform our delegates of the need for rigorous food safety and hygiene standards.

For a small company, we believe that we operate on a far higher level than our size would suggest. For 15 years, I have sat on the Petroleum Retailers National Steering Group alongside organisations such as Tesco, Shell and BP. We have also contributed to courses for the aggregates industry ran by the Mineral Products Qualification Council. We continue to work closely with the Client/ Contractor National Safety Group to promote best practice in engineering construction.

Attempting to engage everyone

The ultimate goal is that everyone, no matter which industry they work in, ensures the safety and wellbeing of themselves and everybody else, including the public.

One of the main challenges is communicating this message in an inclusive way that engages everybody. Course attendees can range from company owners to lower-skilled workers, so designing a programme that suits each member is especially challenging, as well as rewarding.



Explaining Heinrich's Triangle – GSS Trainer early 1970s (left), Emma at GSS Training 2018 (right)

For some, a lack of motivation can be a factor. Unless the individual believes there will be a personal benefit to the learning, such as improving their ability to gain and maintain employment, they are likely to arrive at the course with trepidation.

We anticipate that learners will feel nervous when coming to something for the first time. For those delegates with poor literacy or those who have not taken a test in a while, this can become a much bigger problem. All of our tutors are recruited not just on the merits of the qualifications necessary to deliver the courses but also, often more importantly, on their interpersonal skills. We only employ tutors with the ability to engage with delegates to ensure an enjoyable training experience.

“We have a wide range of clients spanning many industries”



Old style field toilets, pre-GSS Training



Left: Kerry and Glyn Jones with Emma McMullen and Liz Thomas
Right: GSS Training exhibiting at the bi-annual aggregates industry event



In addition to our wider provision, we run internal courses, including neurolinguistic courses, which help our tutors to deliver a better experience for the delegates. These courses focus on communication and representational systems, allowing us to pick up indicators of individual learning styles and tailor our delivery to meet the needs of the individual and the group.

All of this helps us to establish an early rapport with learners. Then, after identifying learners' levels of experience, we can design our anecdotes to make them relevant to all.

Delivering courses to over 3,000 delegates a year

While health and safety is not always seen as the most engaging subject, we use all the skills in our tutors' arsenals to ensure that delegates are engaged. We deliver this training to over 3,000 delegates a year, and the best evidence for engagement is that our clients come back to us time and time again.

Working within industries where it is not normal to talk about how you feel or to show weakness, we have expanded our portfolio of courses to include soft skills such as conflict

management, as well as stress and mental health awareness. These courses have been expanded into many industry sectors beyond our traditional offering, such as office-based and service industries.

We will be offering environmental management courses within the next 12 months, as the issues surrounding the planet and how industry contributes to global climate change urgently have to be confronted.

Ensuring the continued success of the company

Within the company, we are proud of promoting women in industries that are usually dominated by men. To ensure the future of our company, we are actively running a mentoring programme with our daughter Emma. We are training her to think strategically and to plan for and manage business risks. Emma is a highly qualified young woman with experience in the construction industry, and she will be taking over the running of the company with her partner Liz in the next five years.

The future will be a test for us, for the industries we work in and for the country and its relationship with the EU. Many of the heavy industries are struggling to recruit young workers, the next generation who will move these vital industries on, with young people seemingly being seduced by soft skills careers.

Most people seem to know that construction has this issue, but it extends far beyond that. Quarrying, for example, is struggling at the moment with widespread negative perceptions that it not a first choice for a young person seeking a career path. If we do not address these issues and promote recruitment in these industries, then our infrastructure, flood protection and homes are at risk.

“The ultimate goal is that everyone, no matter which industry they work in, ensures the safety and wellbeing of themselves and everybody else”

The Royal College of Emergency Medicine



The emergency department's role is to stabilise patients quickly and transfer them to wards



Chief Executive Gordon Miles

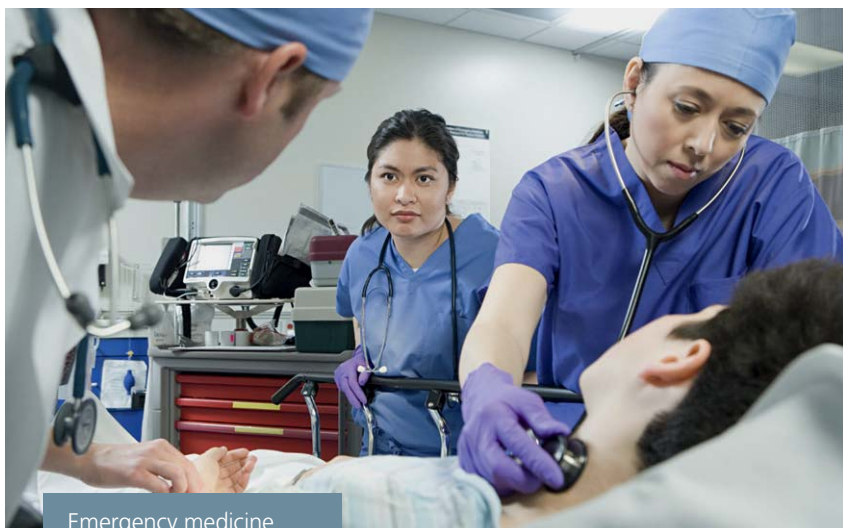
The Royal College of Emergency Medicine is the single authoritative body that speaks for the medical specialty of emergency medicine in the UK and around the world. It works to ensure high-quality care for patients by setting and monitoring standards of care in emergency departments, as well as providing expert guidance and advice on policy to relevant bodies on matters relating to emergency medicine. Chief Executive Gordon Miles explains the formation of the college and their belief in the importance of the four-hour standard for emergency care.

Headquartered in London, we aim to advance education and research in emergency medicine. We are responsible for setting standards for training and administering examinations for the award of fellowship and membership of our college, as well as recommending trainees to the General Medical Council for their Certificate of Completion of Training in Emergency Medicine.

Established in 2008 by Royal Charter, we were granted the title "Royal" in February 2015, having previously being known as The College of Emergency Medicine. We are a relative newcomer in the medical college field and have grown rapidly in the past 10 years. We now number over 7,500 fellows and members working in the UK and internationally. We work to represent both the medical specialty of emergency medicine and the interests of patients.

FACTS ABOUT THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF EMERGENCY MEDICINE

- » Chief Executive: Gordon Miles
- » President: Dr Taj Hassan
- » Established in 2008
- » Based in London
- » Services: Expert advice, guidance, examinations and standard-setting in emergency medicine
- » No. of employees: 44
- » No. of members and fellows: 7,500
- » www.rcem.ac.uk



Emergency medicine focuses on the diagnosis and management of acute and urgent illness and injury

“From these humble beginnings in Leeds in 1967, this medical specialty has flourished around the world”

What is emergency medicine?

Emergency medicine is defined by the International Federation for Emergency Medicine as “a field of practice based on the knowledge and skills required for the prevention, diagnosis and management of acute and urgent aspects of illness and injury, affecting patients of all age groups with a full spectrum of undifferentiated physical and behavioural disorders. It further encompasses an understanding of the development of pre-hospital and in-hospital emergency medical systems and the skills necessary for this development.”

This specialty was formed just over 50 years ago in the UK, when nine emergency physicians formed our predecessor organisation. From these humble beginnings in Leeds in 1967, this medical specialty has flourished around the world.

Patients come because they need treatment or are worried they have symptoms that need urgent attention



Increasing pressure on NHS emergency departments

The field is fast-growing and dynamic. The pressures faced by NHS emergency departments are significant, and demand has risen over time. Despite this growth, a similar percentage of the population are visiting emergency departments each year as they always have. In essence, the pressures are twofold: a growing and ageing population. This latter aspect affects the type of patient arriving at emergency departments, as treating the frail elderly, who often have complex co-morbidities, is a significant part of the work.

Readers will be no strangers to headlines about NHS emergency departments struggling to see, treat or discharge patients within four hours of their arrival. Over time, performance has reduced, reflecting the pressures experienced. Given this, it is natural for policymakers to look for alternatives, and great efforts are often made to find ways of preventing patients coming in. This is often misguided and tries to tackle the wrong end of the problem.

Hospitals are operating at close to full capacity

Patients come to emergency departments because they need treatment or are worried that they have symptoms that may need urgent attention. Signposting alternatives for those who have minor conditions is one thing, but the real demand and pressure come from those with complex medical needs. Dealing with patients with trivial complaints relatively quickly is not the issue; it is those who are very ill or injured and need hospital beds who are the major concern.

This is one of the key challenges. The emergency department's role

is to stabilise patients quickly and then transfer them into the hospital wards. Due to the fact that hospitals are operating at close to full capacity, whereas guidance from the National Audit Office states that 85 per cent bed capacity is the maximum, queues form and emergency departments often have to hold patients on trolleys, providing “corridor medicine”. This is known as “exit block”, where the exit from the emergency department is blocked due to inadequate hospital bed capacity. There is pressure across the system, and insufficient social care capacity slows down the release of patients from hospital, which only adds to this pressure.

To try to combat this, we are working with the NHS to expand the workforce. It takes time to train emergency physicians and advanced care practitioners, but that work is underway. It will actually be paid for by savings from the spending on locum or temporary staffing. The pressure will remain while that training takes place, but the funding settlement on the NHS will start to help in 2019. To make further progress to improve patient flow through the system, we are calling for an increase in acute beds by 5,000 and more resources for social care.

Protecting the four-hour standard

We are concerned that the relentless pressure on the system might cause some to question whether to abandon the four-hour standard. Our view is clear: patient care must be maintained, and the system must focus on the quality of that care. Emergency physicians remember the very difficult situation that preceded the introduction of this standard, when public opinion was of the view that the queues of patients in emergency departments were unacceptable. We do not want to see a return to that.



Those who are seriously ill or injured and need hospital beds are the main concern

There are opportunities to do more to develop ambulatory care, create more medical assessment units and help patients to better understand where best to attend. In recent years, the development of major trauma centres has had a beneficial effect.

My views chime with those set out in our document *Making the Case for the Four-Hour Standard*, which argues: “The Royal College of Emergency Medicine takes the view that it would be a mistake to conclude that a high degree of compliance with the four-hour standard is not possible. On the contrary, the available evidence suggests that with the right level of investment, these targets remain valid practical objectives that improve patient care”.

I trust that in the search to be let off the hook, decision-makers at the top of the NHS and government don’t give up on a measure that studies have shown reduces patient mortality.

“Our view is clear: patient care must be maintained, and the system must focus on the quality of that care”

Ascentis



Phil Wilkinson, CEO



IDL Literacy – helping children with dyslexia

FACTS ABOUT ASCENTIS

- » CEO: Phil Wilkinson
- » Established in 1975
- » Based in Lancaster
- » Services: Leading UK exam board
- » Winner of the Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB) Awarding Organisation of the Year
- » Largest access validating agency for access to HE qualifications
- » www.ascentis.co.uk

Founded in 1975, Ascentis is one of the UK's leading educational charities, transforming the lives of around 170,000 people every year through its range of qualifications and specialist software. Ascentis works closely with colleges, schools, independent training organisations and universities to design cutting-edge qualifications to enable people to progress to further study, higher education and employment. Their specialist software programs, called Indirect Dyslexia Learning, support school pupils with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and dyscalculia. CEO Phil Wilkinson explains that the key to their success is a clear vision and a caring and ambitious culture that is shared by committed, passionate and talented staff.

Our organisation started life as The Open College of the North West (OCNW) in 1971 – a small unincorporated association of colleges and universities with a handful of staff. I joined as CEO in 2001 and I set about transforming the business from an unregulated regional accreditation body into one of the UK's leading regulated awarding organisations, also known as exam boards. Within a year OCNW was operating across the UK, providing a range of educational qualifications regulated by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (now Ofqual) and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

Following a period of steady growth, I took the decision in 2009 to break OCNW away from the university that was hosting it, in order to set it free as a fully

independent legal entity. This involved incorporating the organisation into a company limited by guarantee and achieving formal charity status from the Charity Commission. In order to underline these structural changes, I rebranded the organisation as Ascentis. This rebooting of our company resulted in significant growth in our level of charitable activity and associated income and staffing, leading to our relocation to much larger offices.

With the qualification side of the company now doing so well I wanted Ascentis to expand its range of charitable services. I was very impressed with a particular software intervention program – Indirect Dyslexia Learning (IDL Literacy) – which was used in schools to help children with dyslexia, so I arranged for that activity to be absorbed into Ascentis. I invested heavily in the development and promotion of IDL Literacy and quickly established a customer base of 2,000 primary and secondary schools.

In 2016, I became aware that an educational charity operating in the southwestern region, AptEd, was unfortunately struggling, with very weak finances. Concerned that the services provided by this charity would be lost if it was forced to close, I absorbed the services through an acquisition of the company. This was a very challenging process but ultimately extremely worthwhile as it preserved the services, now an integral part of Ascentis' charitable activity, for the beneficiaries – schools and colleges and their learners – in the southwest. Ascentis is now worth nearly £5 million and we are a significant employer in the Lancaster area. It has been an exciting journey and in recognition of our work we have been awarded the accolade of "Awarding Organisation of the Year" by the Federation of Awarding Bodies.

A simple but effective approach

The past ten-year period has been very challenging for educational charities like ourselves and the customers that we serve – particularly the further education sector – as a result of severe funding reductions and constant policy changes. However, while many of our competitors have shrunk or closed, Ascentis has continued to thrive. The key to our success is simple.

The correct strategy: we don't try to do everything. Instead we focus on the areas in which we can truly be the best. For our qualifications, that means Access to Higher Education, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Teacher Training and Short Online Qualifications in areas such as understanding British values and mental health. For our specialist software this means solutions to help children with dyslexia and dyscalculia.

“We don't try to do everything. Instead we focus on the areas in which we can truly be the best”

Ascentis centres across the UK





The senior leadership team

“We are currently experiencing the most successful period in our entire history, helping more learners than ever before to improve their life chances”

The best people to implement the strategy: this starts with the culture, which, at Ascentis, is defined as a strong desire to help people coupled with an equally strong desire to be ambitious and competitive. This culture is constantly reinforced. As CEO I am supported by a talented leadership team, a wider management team and a growing base of staff, moderators and external verifiers.

The impact of Ascentis

Every year we help more than 130,000 people to work towards educational qualifications, to enable them to progress to employment or further study, including higher education. For example, our ESOL qualifications enable learners to demonstrate that they have good speaking, writing, listening and reading skills in English. Not only does this help improve their everyday life but it's also an effective way to show employers the student's language skills and is a boost to their CV. Around 50,000 people every year study towards an Ascentis ESOL qualification.

Our Access to Higher Education qualifications prepare learners for study at degree level. They are designed for people who would like to go to university but who left school without the qualifications they need.

Many of the learners come from very disadvantaged backgrounds. Around 6,000 people every year study towards an Ascentis Access to Higher Education Diploma and go on to secure employment in a wide range of professions.

Every year we help in excess of 40,000 school pupils in around 2,000 schools with our IDL Literacy dyslexia intervention programme, which typically results in pupils' reading and spelling ages increasing on average by around ten months after just 26 hours of use.

Looking to the future

Ascentis is currently experiencing the most successful period in its entire history with an annual growth in our level of charitable activity of approximately 20 per cent. In the future we plan to provide our qualification services to an increasing number of schools, colleges and independent training organisations across the UK, helping more learners than ever before to improve their life chances. We will support regional post-16 skills and adult education strategies such as “Skills for Londoners” so that we can target our resources to maximum effect.

We will provide a new software solution – IDL Numeracy – to schools to help pupils with dyscalculia. We will then expand our provision of all IDL products to schools overseas, focusing on opportunities in the Middle East, Australia and New Zealand so that we can help to improve the lives of people with dyslexia and dyscalculia on a global scale.

We will continue to develop our strategy in line with the business environment in which we operate and strive for continuous improvement, being prepared to adapt quickly to new challenges and opportunities. In this way we can continue to help as many people as possible with our wonderful charitable work.

Bridge Training & Development



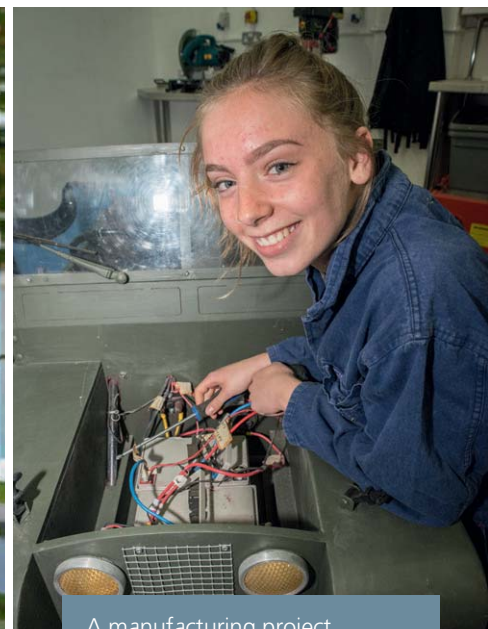
Headteacher Sue Hornby and Managing Director Neil Hornby

Bridge Training and Development is an independent special secondary school established in 2007. Starting with two staff and five post-16 trainees on an allotment, the school now has 29 staff on two sites, and in June 2017 was graded “outstanding” in all areas by Ofsted. The majority of its intake have challenging learning needs, many from the care system and some with ASD. As less than half of the staff team come from a teaching background, they naturally think out of the box and have learnt to be unafraid of following our instincts. Managing Director Neil Hornby and Headteacher Sue Hornby say the journey from a small charity to independent school has been challenging, but that evolving in this way has allowed time to establish a school that doesn’t look or feel like any other.

Emotional wellbeing before education

Our way of working has always been rather back to front. Educational attainment is always secondary to emotional wellbeing and development.

Our primary aim is for our young people to develop faith in themselves, hope for a more positive future and, most of all, to learn to love themselves and those around them. Any educational qualifications they achieve are always secondary to these aims.



A manufacturing project enabling cross-curricular learning

FACTS ABOUT BRIDGE TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

- » Headteacher: Sue Hornby
- » Managing Director: Neil Hornby
- » Established in 2007, attained independent school status in 2016
- » Located in Hanley Swan, Worcestershire and Malvern, Worcestershire
- » Services: Independent special school for students aged 11 to 19
- » No. of students: 40, 10 part-time
- » No. of staff: 29
- » Pupils with EHCPs: 100 per cent
- » Ofsted: “Outstanding” in all areas, June 2017
- » bridgetraininganddevelopment.org.uk

“Our primary aim is for our young people to develop faith in themselves, hope for a more positive future and most of all to learn to love themselves and those around them”

A practical curriculum

Having started as a provider of City & Guilds land-based qualifications, the Bridge has remained rooted in a practical curriculum. Pupils are more engaged when they can see the practical outworking of their learning. They also thrive on being given responsibility such as caring for animals or driving the tractor.

The curriculum also includes social learning and personal development. Students are individually mentored and can opt in to CBT sessions, anger management or communication skills. A range of art, craft and music activities are used to develop emotional literacy and safe expression.

Ofsted remarked that “without exception, the inspector saw outstanding teaching, learning and assessment throughout the inspection which reflect the quality of teaching and learning over time. As a result, pupils make outstanding progress, academically and socially, from their starting points.”

The most significant learning takes place outside of the classroom

Most children at the Bridge experience extremely high levels of anxiety. Anxiety, and the sense of not coping or of not being “good enough”, can cause a great deal of suffering and shame. In an attempt to minimise this, the school day is as predictable as possible; unstructured times are kept short and are heavily supervised; and it is made acceptable for a child to leave their lesson if they need to. Indeed, it is outside of the classroom that the really important learning takes place. Support staff will attune to a child’s emotional state, validate their feelings and together find a way to reflect on the problem and learn from it. Children are supported to develop coping strategies that reduce their anxiety and help them to regulate their emotional state. We believe giving young people the emotional language to understand and communicate their struggles is foundational to success, not just at school but in the workplace and in wider relationships.

Giving students responsibility grows self-esteem



Workplace-based sixth form

We have transferred our 16-19 provision to a workplace-based model. Our purpose-developed business centre is staffed by successful business people who have brought their businesses under our roof, supported by a team of careers tutors.

In year 12, the students work in their chosen business area, be it catering, manufacturing or retail. This offers an excellent opportunity to acquire work-relevant skills. The careers tutors work alongside the students, giving them the opportunity to reflect on their practice and supporting them with the softer skills such as communication and travel training. In year 13, the trainees will be on work-based experience in the local community, supported as required.

Changing the working culture locally

We aim to be a vehicle for changing the working culture locally. The National Autistic Society records that just 16 per cent of adults with autism are in full-time work. We recognise the skills and attributes our young people have to offer in the workplace; however, the biggest barrier to employment is understanding and acceptance. Our two-year programme aims to give the young people the opportunity to learn to cope in these situations as well as offering training and support for employers who take them on for work experience or as employees.

In our early days as a charity, we were grateful for the generous support of volunteers. Twelve years later we still value the contributions our volunteers make. The wider community wants to be a part of something that is changing their town for the better. Several local churches in particular



Catering for the local community develops work-relevant skills

have offered generous financial support for projects we deliver.

Future plans

Ofsted said: "Leaders believe their mission to be 'changing people's lives'. This is exactly what happens at the school."

We are keen to change lives and attitudes, not just at the school but at home, in our local communities and workplaces. Supporting the young people after they leave is important to us, and many drop in to see us several years after leaving to share their successes in life or ask for support. We would like to see a youth café in our local town, partnering with the community: a place at which young people can safely meet, receive support and guidance and gain work experience. Through the café a youth counsellor could offer help to the wider youth of the town as well as our school. If we believe learning is lifelong, shouldn't support go beyond school too?

“The wider community want to be part of something that is changing their town for the better”

Buzz Learning



Founder Therese Timlin



Our premises

FACTS ABOUT BUZZ LEARNING

- » Founder and Manager: Therese Timlin
- » Founded in 2004
- » Based in Ashington, Northumberland
- » Services: Training for SEND users
- » No. of employees: 13
- » www.buzzlearning.co.uk

Buzz Learning are an independent special school and college based in southeast Northumberland. Originally delivering training programmes for young people who were not engaged in education or employment, they have since specialised in serving the needs of children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities. They work closely with parents and local authorities to meet the needs of each of their learners and ease the transition between education and adulthood. Founder Therese Timlin explains the story of the company and the challenges they face.

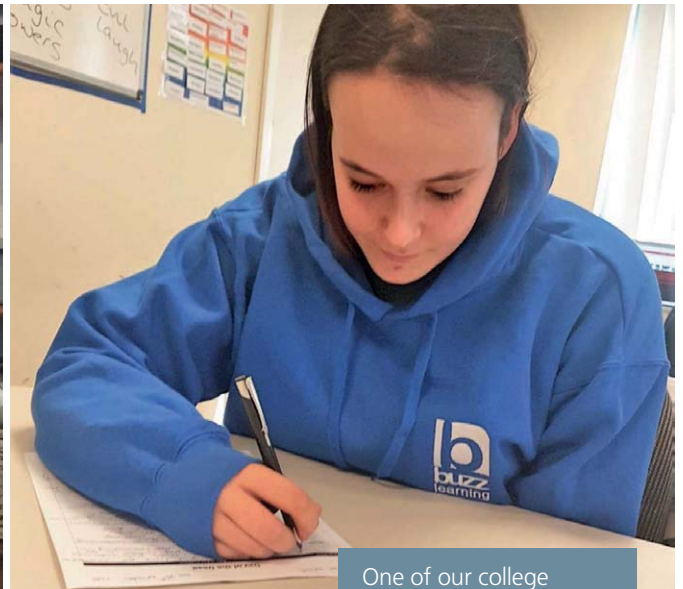
Returning to the northeast after a long period working in education in both southern England and the United States, I noticed a significant decline in the state of the local area. While I had already observed this trend when returning home during my university studies, I was shocked to see how much worse it had become. This decline was mainly characterised by high unemployment and an ensuing loss of hope, especially among young people.

My father had worked in the coal industry while I was growing up and, at that time, the area was relatively prosperous. The loss of the mining and other industries in the north east, and the failure to invest adequately in alternative trade and commerce, led to generational unemployment and low aspiration among many sections of the community.

Back in the northeast having worked for a number of local training providers, I felt that there was a desperate need for a new provider that could work effectively with those young people who were deemed hardest to help. It was essential that such a service instilled self-belief and hope, and I felt the obligation to meet that need.



Adam, one of our original Ability learners



One of our college learners

I set up the company to provide young people with the best opportunities possible. I have been fortunate to have had very strong support from the start from a close colleague, Margaret Castro, joined soon after by Jan Lowery. Together, we have built up a dedicated and exceptional team, who contribute massively to our success. We strongly believe that each person has a wealth of potential, regardless of their starting point in life. Our mission statement, underlying all that we do is: "Be all you can."

Focusing on supporting those with special educational needs and disabilities

In the company's early days, we worked with young people who were not in education, employment or training, otherwise known as NEETs, and we enjoyed great success. Since 2011, our user base has slowly changed, and we now work exclusively with young people aged 13-24 who have SEND. This change was prompted by a joint project we created and delivered, initiated in response to an Ofsted survey and funded by Northumberland County Council. Ofsted had studied the progression of people with learning difficulties above the age of 16 and found that

the transition for these individuals from post-16 education into adulthood was not fully effective and that schools, local authorities and other agencies did not work together sufficiently well to ensure that the young people were adequately prepared for this change.

Our project, which we named Ability, took into account the findings of the Ofsted survey and aimed to improve the transition into adulthood for young people with SEND. Ability was such a success that it became part of our prime contract with the Education Funding Agency the following year. We have now found our niche working successfully with SEND learners. Each of the young people we teach has differing and individual needs, and we work hard to find and use the best strategies to prepare them for adulthood.

Achieving independent special school status

Our most recent development has been achieving independent special school status with the Department for Education. This means that we can now work with children with special educational needs who are aged 13 and over in our new school. The school is in its early stages, but we are determined to make it a success.

“It was essential that such a service instilled self-belief and hope, and I felt the obligation to meet that need”



Ian Lavery MP with some of our school pupils

“It is my sincere belief that if senior government ministers were to visit providers like us, they would gain a more realistic understanding of the reality of education and the services we provide”

We are known locally as “the small, friendly school and college”. We do not aspire to become a large provider, and we are not motivated by profit. Our aim is simply to do the best that we can and serve the local area in the most effective way possible.

Developing our staff to increase efficiency

One of the main challenges we face is ensuring that our staff team are equipped to work as effectively as they can within an often stressful sector. This involves providing all staff with time away from the classroom or office to update their skills and reflect on their learning and maintain their wellbeing. This is an essential but costly process, made increasingly difficult by reduced funding.

Like other providers of education dependent on the public purse, our progress and development are hindered by the constant cuts to the education budget. Local authorities in our area are also under constant pressure. Individual staff members do the best that they can within the constraints of funding but sometimes, despite their best intentions, they are reactive rather than proactive and this subsequently affects our business’

efficiency. It is my sincere belief that if senior government ministers were to visit providers like us, they would gain a more realistic understanding of the reality of education and the services we provide and so would be better placed to allocate funding properly. Our local MP, Ian Lavery, knows our provision well, understands the difficulties we face and is a constant support.

We are also heavily reliant on Ofsted inspectors’ understanding of our provision during inspections, as the grades awarded impact on others’ opinions of our provision and the contracts we can apply for. It is essential that inspectors have a sound awareness of the needs of our learners and the specific issues that they face. Fortunately, this has been the case during our last few inspections, and this has been paramount in enabling us to improve.

Looking forward, we plan to continue to develop our practice and engender aspiration and success in the young people we work with. By adhering to our central principles and making sure we maintain the high standard of service we offer, I am confident that we will be able to serve the local community for many years to come.

ECP Limited



Some of the training team from Education Child Protection



Sue Manning, Director

Education Child Protection was established in 2002 and provides specialist courses for anyone who works with children. The company has secured many contracts nationwide, including the delivery of training on behalf of various local safeguarding children boards. Operating under a system that stresses the importance of engagement, relevance and accuracy, they provide a highly effective and compelling service. Sue Manning left her role as an Advisory Teacher for Child Protection to establish the company and has been personally involved in the training programmes they offer since their inception.

Over the last 18 years, I have worked as a child protection trainer. As I have learned the intricacies and complexities of this role, I have developed three priorities that I apply to every session. Whether it is for early years workers in a small nursery in Blackpool or for 250 undergraduates at the Institute of Education in London, they remain constant. This is my ERA system. This involves the crucial consideration of three aspects: engagement, relevance to the role and accuracy of information.

I made a conscious decision in 1999 not to follow the obvious career path into becoming a headteacher. I was extremely passionate about my role as a pastoral deputy with responsibility for child protection. I was always highly vocal with my local authority about shortcomings in the training of teachers. I was amazed

FACTS ABOUT ECP LIMITED

- » Director: Sue Manning
- » Founded in 2002
- » Based in Bassingbourn, south Cambridgeshire
- » Services: Specialist training courses for anyone working with children
- » No. of employees: 5 permanent employees and 12 associate trainers
- » www.ecplimited.com

“For most of the 15 years I had been a designated safeguarding lead in schools, I had received very little instruction. It was usually assumed that it would be picked up on the job”

Sue Manning lecturing undergraduate trainee teachers at Middlesex University



when I was invited to apply as an advisory teacher for child protection. The more I considered the potential difference I could make in this role, the more I realised that I could not turn the opportunity down, despite a substantial drop in salary. I have never regretted that decision.

I subsequently took the risk of setting up my own consultancy. This awarded me the complete freedom to take my training wherever there was interest or need. I was extremely lucky that a local authority in London brought me in within weeks. For most of the 15 years I had been a designated safeguarding lead in schools, I had received very little instruction. It was usually assumed that it would be picked up on the job.

When I went to my first child protection conference, I had no idea what to do or say. Working in London at the time, in an area of deprivation, I was bombarded with many extremely serious cases to manage within schools and with external agencies. My determination carried me through to do the very best to keep young people safe from harm.

Eventually, as a DSL, I attended training by the amazing Yvonne Coppard in Cambridge and was enthralled by the oratory powers of this wonderful head of service. She was down to earth, essentially human and acknowledged the complexities of management in the crucial role of keeping children safe. She was never patronising and was also very funny, lightening the subject in an appropriate manner and making everyone relax. This was a major contributing factor for me taking the job.

Leaving frontline work, I missed working with children, so I volunteered for Childline as a counsellor and went into schools with the Childline Schools Service for several years. I also trained as an adult counsellor for NAPAC and spent one day per week for a year with this wonderful service. Essentially, I wanted to get the broadest possible understanding of the growing diversity of child protection and to feel as grounded as possible in my own knowledge.

Professionals who work with children are child centred, so it is often incredibly traumatic to be doused in uncomfortable, challenging and heartbreaking issues.

Rule one: engagement

I use PowerPoint but always endeavour to make it visually stimulating. It is a highly visual and pacy experience, aiming to keep even the most fidgety delegate interested. I sincerely believe that the time and effort it takes to produce a memorable visual experience are entirely worthwhile.

For variety, I use voice recordings from my team and the children I work with. I have opinion-sharing activities and utilise quizzes where delegates walk around the room to keep them active.

I have run DSL training where they put together a presentation on a topical child protection issue. I allow them to be as creative as they dare. I have had songs, poems, raps, news reports, role play and diary entries. Years later, I have had school leaders reflect on these experiences – a testament to their impact.

Rule two: relevance

Attendees will disengage if they do not believe that the course is relevant to their role. Every course is tailored to their sector. I have trained schools, nurseries, churches, hospices, swimming clubs, charity workers, GPs, prison staff, social workers and refuse collectors. Our work reaches out to all sectors of society.

Rule three: accuracy

All courses must contain the most recent and accurate information from current statutory guidance and legislation. There is no room for error on this. We now operate with three directors: me, Luke Brent-Savage and Nicole Williamson.

Luke, heading up our exceptionally busy online team, is well known in his field. This includes broadcasts for the BBC in which he gives advice on child protection. Hearing the passion from Home Secretary Sajid Javid about his mission to make tech giants take more responsibility for the safety of children online is music to our ears. As young people have more exposure to changing advancements with apps, games and social networks, it is imperative that we stay aware of these changes to ensure the safety of children.

As well as performing inspirational delivery of all courses in child protection, Nicole is also our safer recruitment specialist. She has recently worked in conjunction with the Brook



ECP Directors Sue Manning, Luke Brent-Savage and Nicole Williamson

Service on a special project looking at the sexual exploitation of young boys. We are incredibly proud of the response to the innovative training that resulted from this partnership. As a company, we use around 12 highly experienced staff to deliver our courses.

We promote work that responds acutely to the issues raised and the needs of the local demographic. Our *modus operandi* is mindful of promoting social cohesion for our client base, whether it is a school, nursery, football club or faith group. We encourage designated staff to act as champions within local communities, and we see this as best practice in working together to safeguard children. This also shows a willingness to understand how our diverse nation operates.

During Margaret Thatcher's stewardship, the 1989 Children Act was, and still is, fundamental to our practice. The central mantra from this act is "the welfare of the child is paramount." This is as relevant today as it was then.

“We encourage designated staff to act as champions within local communities, and we see this as best practice in working together to safeguard children”

Redcar & Cleveland Training Centre



Susan Wheatley, Quality Assurance Manager



Directors Gail and Stuart Laing

FACTS ABOUT REDCAR & CLEVELAND TRAINING CENTRE

- » Directors: Stuart and Gail Laing
- » Quality Assurance Manager: Susan Wheatley
- » Founded in 2010
- » Based in Marske-by-Sea, Redcar
- » Services: Alternative education for construction and motor vehicle engineering
- » No. of employees: 8
- » www.redcarandclevelandtrainingcentre.co.uk

Redcar and Cleveland Training Centre offer a variety of vocational programmes, targeted at adults and young people over the age of 13. Most of their users are sourced through a referral system, often working with students who have been excluded from mainstream education. The company aim to promote the celebration of vocational skills, as they feel that academic pursuits are the only attributes praised in today's climate. Quality Assurance Manager Susan Wheatley tells *The Parliamentary Review* more.

From our base in the northeast of England, we offer alternative, vocational education in the construction and engineering sectors. We usually work with young people who have been excluded from school. This can be challenging, but we are very successful in the work that we do. Beyond vocational training, we also offer our users social development. Most individuals we work with are provided through a referral system, and we rely on schools for both funding and these users.

Looking beyond the academic

I have been working with young people for over 30 years. A recurring theme has always been the false perception that if individuals are not good at exams, they are not skilled. Many of them do have the attributes employers are looking for, but often this is not communicated. Beyond this, these skills are not developed or celebrated. As an organisation, we try to remain solution focused and make

reasonable adjustments for each individual, as well as maintaining an ethos of genuine care.

Stuart and Gail have created a flat, open and creative culture, providing employees with a sense of safety and wellbeing while creating a policy where everyone looks out for one another. This level of trust has led to independent staff members, helping the company to grow and the team feel that their voices are heard. This level of freedom and empowerment creates confident workers and improves morale. Directors Stuart and Gail give direct access to the team, which has proved to have a great impact in shaping the company.

Valuing vocational skills

Trying to tease out the capabilities of our users is usually met with stony silence or a blank expression. Carrying out task analysis on simple things, like making a cup of tea, highlights just how many qualities we have that we do not realise. Despite this initial reticence, it often turns out that most of our users have had part-time jobs, played sport or have interesting hobbies. They did not realise that those experiences also gave them transferable skills to help to make them become employable in a lot of areas. Developing the attributes of young people is vital to try to reduce the skills gap that is affecting so many industries across the country.

Many of the users we work with initially think that valuable qualities are just academic things, like being good at maths and English. As a society, we are not encouraging young people to value what they are good at. I appreciate that this is a generalisation and that there are some great initiatives and wonderful teachers doing this, but it is not happening enough across the board,

and square pegs are still being forced into round holes.

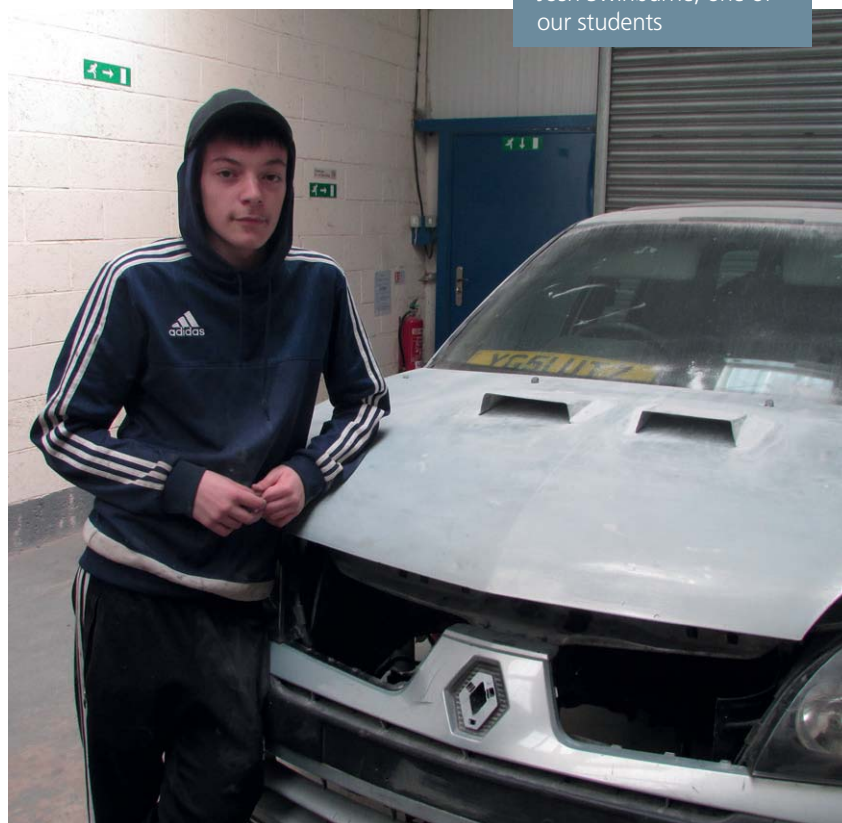
Teachers are not to blame, as they are judged on exam performance, which is fed by constantly focusing on academic results. They are not the whole story, especially when it comes to being employable and valued. Across wider society, we do not celebrate those who are practically skilled.

Emotional intelligence plays a key role in balancing academia with social proficiency, which is often seen as a soft skill. In my line of work, being comfortable with people is one of the most important requirements, and there is nothing soft about it. If someone chooses a vocational route, they do not get the same respect in society as someone who follows a purely academic one. We celebrate A-level results but not BTEC, City and Guilds or NVQ results.

I see this divergence even within my own personal experience. As a parent, I have the capability to advise and guide my children, both of whom are

“Developing the attributes of young people is vital to try to reduce the skills gap that is affecting so many industries across the country”

Josh Swinburne, one of our students





Stephen Kemp having just started training



Stephen having just completed a chimney stack, incorporating corbeling

“If someone chooses a vocational route, they do not get the same respect in society as someone who follows a purely academic one”

different and have differing skillsets. One is more creative, writes music and chose to follow in his grandfather's footsteps into the army. My other son sat his A levels but did not want to go to university, so I encouraged him to get a good apprenticeship. After two years, he was employed as an analytical chemist, working towards his degree. He is now a STEM ambassador and visits local schools, teaching the importance of believing in your abilities.

Sadly, not everyone gains the same level of support or guidance. Providing this level of support is central to what we do. We meet the user where they are and look at their individual needs. We aim to emphasise their strengths and empower learning through raising their aspirations.

Too small for government funding

Josh Swinburne acts as a perfect example of the services we offer. He was referred to us when he was a year 10 pupil, at the age of 14.

After completing his qualifications, Josh was sent out for some work experience, working for a local mechanic. The garage, Briems Motors, were hugely positive about his contribution, a representative saying: “I have found Josh to be an asset to my company: he has excellent timekeeping and did not have a day off during his time with me. Josh has very good mechanical skills and good knowledge of the motor trade.”

We face many challenges ahead. Foremost among these is that we are too small an organisation to receive independent government funding, so we rely on schools to buy into our provision. We are expanding our curriculum to support learners with their maths and English, a direct request from several local schools. Unfortunately, a lot of local training providers have closed due to funding issues, but there will always be a need for alternative education. We will continue to strive to inspire, support and encourage our young workforce for the future, giving them skills to be proud of.

GQA Qualifications Limited



CEO Mick Clayton

Incorporated in 2002, GQA Qualifications Limited is an awarding body working across the glass, construction and printing industries. Based in Sheffield, their mission of “Quality through Qualifications” is gaining traction, and registrations have increased year on year. GQA was set up by the glass industry in order to improve quality levels within the manufacturing, processing and installation of glass and related products, which they achieve by providing robust, industry-specific knowledge and competence qualifications. CEO Mick Clayton elaborates.

At GQA, we aim to work in fields that we have good access to knowledge and experience, enabling us to discuss specific issues and qualifications with both approved centres and employers. We are approved and regulated in all four UK nations, and we intend to maintain this national coverage, despite the divergence of regulatory requirements at the national level.

Our service

In our early years, cash flow was always an operational priority. By developing and successfully implementing a series of strategic plans, we have managed to increase and diversify income streams while remaining true to our mission and employer base.

GQA qualifications are delivered through 80 centres, which are made up of a mix of training providers, FE colleges and employers, which all have access to our tailored registration, certification and e-portfolio system. These centres receive site visits by external quality advisors, although sampling and support are increasingly provided through the online system. Our approach to centre monitoring is one

FACTS ABOUT GQA QUALIFICATIONS LIMITED

- » CEO: Mick Clayton
- » Incorporated in 2002
- » Located in Sheffield
- » Services: Accredited qualifications
- » Regulators: Ofqual, CCEA, SQA and Qualifications Wales
- » Qualifications issued: 80,000
- » Turnover: £1 million
- » www.gqaqualifications.com

“Without engaging in appropriate CPD the workforce cannot hope to maintain competence let alone develop the knowledge and skills needed to adapt to changing business and client needs and make use of the latest technology and materials”

of providing advice, support and guidance to all within the assessment and verification process, in addition to a regulatory compliance provision.

Qualifications are very much the currency of competence for those operating in the fenestration, glass, glazing, construction and print industries, with many employers and employees understanding achievement and what is required.

Developing industry standards

As a people development organisation, we were heavily involved in the development of the fenestration industry minimum technical competencies in 2011. These were approved by the government as a minimum level of assessment and were intended to provide a stepping stone to a fully qualified workforce. In practice, this has proved to be a difficult journey, and it is interesting to note that the government's Industrial Strategy for Construction 2025 report highlighted that “multiple entry points, a plethora of qualifications, a wide variety in the quality of training provision and complicated funding options can overwhelm and confuse businesses and individuals.” It would be difficult to argue against that statement five years later on.

It was encouraging to have the fenestration-linked associations and

federations involved in the development of the MTCs, in full agreement that the MTCs should be the starting point of each individual's lifelong journey, helping to create the qualified workforce needed by employers.

The same document highlights: “Without engaging in appropriate CPD the workforce cannot hope to maintain competence let alone develop the knowledge and skills needed to adapt to changing business and client needs and make use of the latest technology and materials.”

Some schemes already have qualification achievement built in. When qualification-based schemes such as these become part of normal procurement and contracting processes, quality will inevitably improve. This applies to both public- and private-sector procurement. Industry feedback shows that while glass and supporting structures may be manufactured to the highest possible standards, incorrect installation causes significant problems. It is an industry imperative that quality is driven down into the aftersales sector. This not only raises the brand perception of manufacturers and installers but could also prevent tragic incidents from occurring in the future.

The glass and fenestration sector in the UK is characterised by a small number of large manufacturers supported by a larger number of first-tier customers, which sell on to the many thousands of SMEs and individual installers and fabricators. The manufacturers and first-tier customers are extremely supportive of using qualifications to ensure quality. The vast majority of industry employees work for SMEs or are self-employed. Although some do access qualifications, most will only do so if mandated. There is a real need for regulatory intervention to help the industry to raise both quality standards and, more importantly, safety standards.

Dave Naylor (NW)
receives GQA Award



Advocacy for qualification-based schemes

We have been gradually building up a consensus of opinion throughout the sector that supports qualification-based schemes. Some employers have even had their own internal training and assessment schemes accredited to give them the consistency and confidence they are looking for in their workforces.

This approach is very different to the current trailblazer or “standards-based” initiatives for apprentices. After three years of widespread frustration, the reform of fenestration apprenticeship schemes is still in its development phase, and it is far from certain whether there is widespread employer support for the reform. Furthermore, existing competence qualifications offered throughout the four nations for the same sector may soon become confusingly different due to the different nation approaches to the use of national occupational standards for qualification development.

A possibly unintended consequence of the new arrangements is that if qualifications are updated in England, they will no longer attract funding support. This will effectively prevent centres from offering them, removing choice for employers and the opportunity to improve employee practices and approaches.

We want to bring the right people development initiatives to the industry. The skills that already exist need to be recognised and perhaps honed to improve practice and knowledge. We want to get the right products in place to train the next generation of fabricators, the latest installers and future surveyors.

We offer more than 100 industry-related qualifications. Our approved centre network covers the whole of the UK and provides glass, glazing, fenestration and construction



We need to get the right products in place to train the next generation of fabricators, installers and surveyors

qualifications to help the industry to improve. Qualifications are key to training, retraining, personal recognition and ongoing compliance. We continue to lobby industry to place qualifications at the heart of not just schemes such as CSCS but as part of the improvement of the industry as a whole.

» CASE STUDY

Nationwide Windows Ltd is a vertically integrated manufacturer and installer of PVC-U and aluminium windows & doors to the public and private sector, with particular expertise in social housing, education and new build.

In 2016, Nationwide became the first fenestration manufacturer and installer to become a GQA approved training centre, meaning they are able to deliver assessment and training in-house under GQA's guidance. Approved following the successful audit of their technical competencies, processes, facility, equipment and health and safety, Nationwide delivers a plethora of nationally recognised qualifications to its workforce 'on the job'.

The aim is to enable Nationwide to deliver a best in class qualification programme, offering all employees the chance to gain qualifications, such as NVQs, through their everyday work. The result is skilled and professional staff and installation teams who understand the Nationwide culture and deliver exceptional service.

David Naylor joined the team as an employed trainer and assessor to manage the training programmes from the outset. The success of the centre saw Nationwide awarded as an organisation who is 'Making A Difference' in the delivery of training in 2017.

To date there have been 36 successful candidates across all levels of the business delivering qualifications such as: L3 Surveyor NVQ Update, Level 3 Fenestration and Surveying, Level 2 Award for Fenestration Installation Competency Update, Level 3 NVQ in Survey and Installation and Level 3 Surveying and Fenestration Installation Update

Scion Mastery



Director Inga Neaves



FACTS ABOUT SCION MASTERY

- » Director: Inga Neaves
- » Established in 1993
- » Located in Belgravia, London
- » Services: Academic career planning, guardianship and holistic tutoring
- » Started off as Angloslav Education, catering primarily for students from Eastern European countries
- » www.angloslav.co.uk

The United Kingdom has a long and proud history of culture and academic excellence and it is for this reason so many people come to the UK from abroad to study. For over two decades, Scion Mastery, formerly Angloslav Education, has helped nurture the next generation. A scion is an inheritor, not of wealth, but of learning – and each of their students embraces the responsibility to achieve the best possible education and harness their innate ability. Director Inga Neaves tells *The Parliamentary Review* more.

Our raison d'être

Graduate students from prestigious schools and elite universities are better educated, better trained and better prepared for achievements and success than ever before. Modern scion leads structured, supervised and fully organised skill-enhancing activities, live. There is a generation of students who are extraordinarily bright, morally earnest and incredibly industrious.

This generation is entering the workforce without challenging themselves and with a responsibility to carry the world on their shoulders. We believe children ought to be more in control of their dreams and aspirations, exposed to real life as early as possible, preferably from the age of nine.

As parents we push and discipline children, letting them fall and raise themselves, in order to give them the chance to achieve more. Often, we might not see the

result of our investment for 20 to 30 years, but we know that it is the right thing to do. Authentic parenting is an art: of loving support without being a dictator, yet there is no institute for parenting. Our multidisciplinary approach allows us to stay creative and dynamic while collaborating with parents, students and schools to create a pyramid, at the apex of which lies success.

Spotting passion, nurturing talent

It is necessary to identify aptitudes and genuine interests in children – traits that can be apparent as early as age six. Talent and passion on their own do not lead to an interesting and fulfilling life. Using a uniquely tailored approach, we inspire each individual and guide them through their career confidently, giving them the ability to fully master their skills. At the heart of our approach lies an open, secure environment that gives our clients and students confidence to express aspirations, ideas and concerns in pursuit of their vocation.

After identifying what success means for individuals, we take them through the important stage of elimination: eliminate who you are not, and you will have a better chance to find out who you are. The next step is to set a personal protocol that consists of tradition. Regardless of age, we encourage our clients to expand their horizons, fulfil their potential, embrace new experiences, celebrate achievement and take responsibility for their future.

A constant awareness of change

An Oxbridge degree is not a guarantee of financial and social success, but nor is dropping out of university and leaving home at 15. To be able to

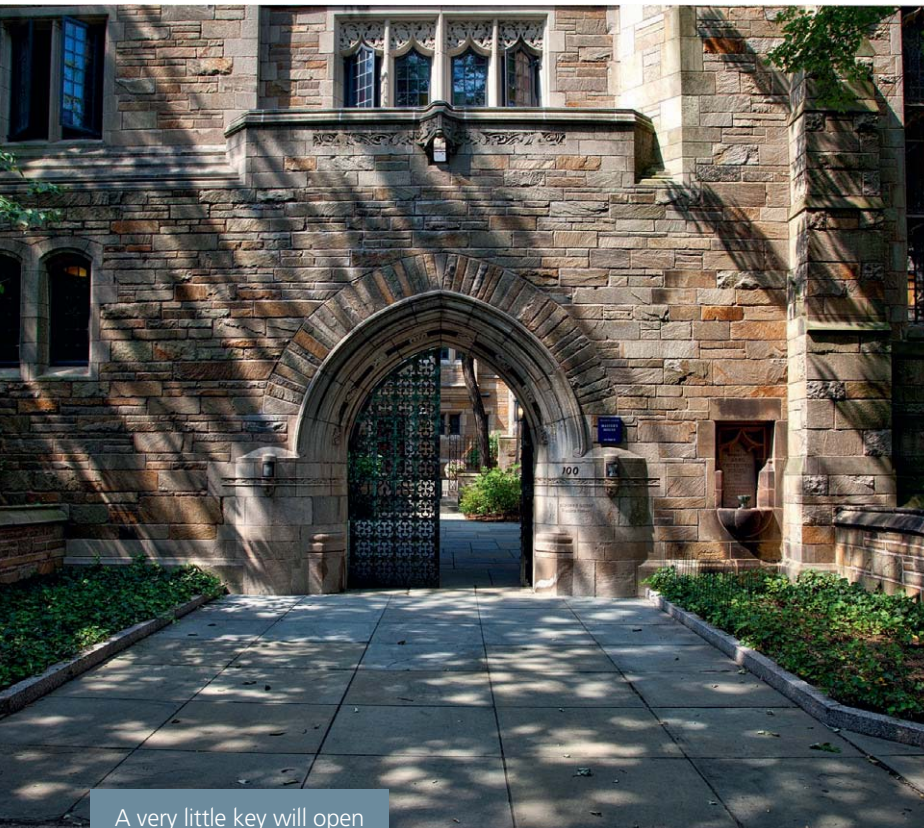
help our clients to remain afloat in a rapidly changing world, we carefully monitor trends in the job market and education before these patterns become widely accepted as a norm. A bachelor's degree is becoming the standard education level. Top companies have created their own tests and interview processes, whereby much emphasis is placed on the skills a candidate already has and intends to acquire.

School and an undergraduate degree are a great place to start. Each activity that you choose to participate in, each role you embark on and opportunity you take will have some benefit, whether in the form of income, skill development, experience or geographic location. Every activity we offer to our clients focuses on developing skills and pursuing opportunities with joy and excitement.

The educational reforms of 2015 have made many aspects of the examination system more rigorous and difficult. Academic coaches act as mentors in an adult world. They know their subject well and understand that decision-making and functional skills are important in achieving high marks in exams. Academic coaches teach our students executive function

“An Oxbridge degree is not a guarantee of financial and social success, nor is dropping out of university and leaving home at 15”





A very little key will open
a very heavy door

“We ensure that our students understand the limitations they have in the job market if their knowledge of technology only extends as far as playing computer games”

skills such as: how to discover the time needed to be ready for the exam, how to break a long journey into smaller parts, how to identify an opportunity cost and how to stay focused and alert. We teach students to be responsible for their actions at all times.

The digital revolution is opening up a great divide between a skilled and wealthy few and the rest of society. Last year we saw a rise in demand for web CVs as a part of the job application process. We ensure that our students understand the limitations they have in the job market if their knowledge of technology only extends as far as playing computer games. We match the student's ability and personality to an appropriate way for them to acquire technical skills, whether individual, online or a boot-camp type of education.

We've created a range of activities that accurately emulate real-world scenarios. Those who engage in these are much better equipped to participate in the professional world.

Such efforts can also be of value where intergenerational wealth risks breeding complacency in its successive heirs. Being an indispensable pillar of a successful life, it is incumbent upon us to impart such knowledge. The ability to read financial statements, understand a salary structure, budget and plan will be a huge boost in almost any career.

Post-Brexit

The prospect of leaving the EU does not seem to have affected foreign interest in attending schools and universities in Britain, despite fears to the contrary in some circles. Indeed, we continue to see reinforced positive attitudes in our clients towards the British education system. Multicultural British society is filled with energy and enthusiasm and provides endless opportunity. London is a capital of the financial and high-tech industry, art and philosophy, government and education. Many parents have high ambitions for their children and they want them to receive a world-class education in an increasingly internationalised world, a world in which borders are becoming ever less consequential.

We are planning to expand our existing provision, both geographically and in terms of the range of our offering. Ultimately, we believe that everyone has a special talent within them that can be developed. Our strategies are neither easy nor quick, but they are exciting, thorough, sustainable and conducive to a life of accomplishment and satisfaction. The degree to which we are successful in this pursuit is reflected in the fact that many of our clients are intergenerational and are attracted via word-of-mouth recommendation. This is a trajectory along which we expect to continue.

New Acropolis



World Philosophy Day 2017



Chair Sabine Leitner

New Acropolis are an educational charity with the aim of promoting the renewal of philosophy in the “classical tradition” and a rediscovery of the timeless values that have guided humanity throughout history. They work in the fields of philosophy, culture and volunteering to provide – what they call – an “education for head, heart and hands”. Chairing this organisation is Sabine Leitner, who tells *The Parliamentary Review* more about the value of New Acropolis.

Why philosophy?

Many of the problems facing humanity today – social, environmental, moral and spiritual – will not be solved long term with more technology or money alone. They are problems created by ourselves and a way of life that is the product of our thinking, that is, our “philosophy”. In order to create a future that resolves these problems, the solutions must include or, indeed, be rooted in an inner development of our thinking and collective values – that is, a change in our philosophy. How can this be achieved? This question has inspired us and guided our activities for more than 20 years.

What is philosophy in the classical tradition?

At New Acropolis, we understand philosophy in its classical sense as *philo-sophia*, meaning “love of wisdom”: the discovery of wisdom through a practical and active

FACTS ABOUT NEW ACROPOLIS

- » Chair: Sabine Leitner
- » Founded in 1996
- » Located in Highbury and Islington
- » No. of trustees: 9
- » No. of students: 50, from all walks of life, aged between 18 and 70
- » 600 participants in our courses, talks and events every year
- » www.newacropolisuk.org

“Wisdom is knowing how to act, knowing what is ‘good’ and knowing which ends are worth striving for”

attitude to life rather than something purely intellectual or contemplative. Wisdom is knowing how to act, knowing what is ‘good’ and knowing which ends are worth striving for.

What do we do?

We work in three areas: philosophy, culture and volunteering. Our approach pursues two goals: the development of the latent potential within the human being through education (from the Latin *educare*, to train, and *educere*, to draw out, to bring forth) and the renewal of culture, the soil in which human beings develop.

Our philosophical activities are centred around ongoing weekly evening classes for adults (around 600 hours of teaching a year). Our syllabus is based on the comparative study of the major systems of thought of Eastern and Western traditions. The purpose is to make the vast heritage of human wisdom accessible to all and to draw inspiration for our own actions from the universal ideas that have stood the test of time.

We organise about 20 public events a year, such as talks, courses and

workshops, where we invite guest speakers from a wide range of fields, including philosophy, psychology, medicine, economics, science and ecology.

We also stage public “happenings” to promote broader philosophical conversation. Last year we organised an event in front of the National Gallery on the theme of Philosophy and Art to celebrate UNESCO’s World Philosophy Day. We find at these events that many people really appreciate the opportunity for philosophical conversation and the chance to explore their values and ideas. We always encounter surprising insights and heartfelt human exchanges. Since 2013, we have been publishing a digital bimonthly magazine on a range of relevant topics covering philosophy and culture.

Why culture?

We understand culture as the ‘soil’ in which individuals can find all the nutrients they need to flourish. Culture is education in the widest sense of the word because it transmits values and provides us with forms through which we can express these values. We transmit to our students the value of culture and encourage them to think what kind of culture we need to create in order to bring out the best in the human being. To support this, we organise visits to museums and trips to sites of cultural and historical interest in Britain and abroad. We revive traditions and celebrations to enable us to reconnect with nature and human history in a profound way.

Why volunteering?

Our programme of studies is designed to provide an education that develops not only our mind but also other human faculties such as love, compassion, imagination,

Public talk at the New Acropolis centre, Islington – “Immanuel Kant: Certainty in an Uncertain World”



perseverance, willpower and creativity. Volunteering helps to develop these key faculties and forms part of our philosophical training, and we encourage our students to become active and involved in community projects.

Our own volunteering projects include helping with the planting and maintenance of the public garden in front of our school. For the last nine years we have been helping to organise a garden volunteering day every month, which also brings together neighbours and other Londoners. This has created a much stronger community within our neighbourhood and a good co-operation with Islington Council.

We also transformed a derelict space at the back of our premises into a garden and created a bee sanctuary, as bee populations are under serious threat in the UK and elsewhere. Currently we have two beehives, which are managed in a bee-centred way, with the idea of providing a home for bees rather than obtaining honey. Every year we open our bee sanctuary to the public under the auspices of “Open Garden Squares Weekend”, attracting hundreds of visitors who are attended to by our volunteers and receive talks about the bees.

For several years, we supported a local homeless project run by the Union Chapel Margins charity, and this year we have started to put our gardening skills to use with another local charity which works with isolated elderly people in Islington. Our school of philosophy itself offers many volunteering opportunities as it is run entirely by volunteers.

Philosophy is the foundation of the future

How can we measure the success of our work? We think the success of our



Volunteering day at Compton Terrace Gardens, Islington

work is visible in the changes within the people who attend our classes. We further believe that our kind of holistic and practical philosophical education awakens a clearer sense of purpose and a greater sense of responsibility, initiative, respect, courtesy, generosity and tolerance of differences. It can produce a profound transformation within the individual, which in turn can lead to new ideas and transformation in society.

All our activities were achieved with an annual budget of around £30,000 and no salaried roles. Our work demonstrates that a shared vision, an attitude of co-operation and good will can achieve as much as, or more than, material resources. Our belief is that we need to cultivate human potential and non-material resources in our society so that we can resolve the problems we are currently facing and prepare a better society for the next generation.

“Without commonly shared and widely entrenched moral values and obligations, neither the law, nor democratic government, nor even the market economy will function properly.”

– Václav Havel

“We understand culture as the ‘soil’ in which individuals can find all the nutrients they need to flourish”

NLP Academy



"Telling isn't learning,
experiencing is" –
Michael Carroll



Dr John Grinder, co-creator of NLP
in action at the NLP Academy

FACTS ABOUT NLP ACADEMY

- » Director: Michael Carroll
- » Established in 1996
- » Based in Croydon
- » Services: Communications training
- » No. of employees: 6
- » The leading centre of NLP excellence
- » www.nlpacademy.co.uk

The NLP Academy, founded in 1996 by Michael Carroll, is a leading provider of training in neurolinguistic programming. In the mid-1990s the standards in NLP were much poorer than they are today, and an injection of quality and best practice was urgently required to take NLP beyond psychology and allow it to be viewed as an effective business strategy for enhanced communication. Michael tells *The Parliamentary Review* more.

Is there such a thing as ethical persuasion when all persuasion is designed to manipulate? The general idea of persuasion is to align the thought processes of the persuaded to match the ideas presented by the communicator. To that extent, business, politics, fashion, religion and social movements share a common denominator: they seek to engage people through various communication systems to buy into their ideology. In the current political and social arena, the public are swimming in a turbulent ocean of highly manipulative messages all designed to convince and influence. The question is, is the bombardment ethical?

NLP explained

Neurolinguistic programming was originally developed in the 1970s at the University of California, Santa Cruz, by Dr John Grinder and Dr Richard Bandler, as a human communication system used by orators, business leaders and politicians to convey their messages in a style that is remembered for the right reasons. The basis of NLP is to communicate in a way that engages multiple senses in the listener and thus a greater portion of brain activity, so the concepts conveyed remain with the recipient long after the original communication.



Michael and Dr John Grinder

In terms of brain activity, multisensory experiences are remembered with greater ease. You remember the poignant lines from a great movie, the musical highlights from superb concert, and the action points from an important sporting event because these events are highly sensory orientated and evoke emotions that attach themselves to the experience. With NLP, public speakers communicate in a way that paints vivid pictures in the mind, using tonality to connect to the resonant part of the brain, while evoking good feelings in the people they are engaging with.

If you consider great orators such as Kennedy, Clinton, Obama and, closer to home, Blair, their messages hit the spot for specific scientific reasons. By contrast, less charismatic speakers are not connecting their message to people, even with highly crafted content. The style of the communication in these cases does not open neural pathways to stimulate emotional attachment.

Creating a new standard

From the inception of the business, I was keen to set high standards in the field of NLP by utilising the best practice methodologies which I had learnt during my previous career in business. To achieve this objective, we teamed up with NLP co-creator John Grinder with the clear goal of developing a global standard for the different levels of NLP courses on offer to the public. The first action was to rewrite and update the certification courses for changing demographics of people wanting to learn NLP. The field was moving from being considered alternative, with a “hippy” style, to delivering courses to the senior businesses and organisations, which can be applied across different communication approaches.

To make a difference in any field of endeavour, it is important to make the practices available in the field to the masses in a user-friendly and easy-to-use fashion. For example, there are very few households in the UK

“If you consider great orators such as Kennedy, Clinton, Obama and, closer to home, Blair, their messages hit the spot for specific scientific reasons”



"All our great traits become limitations, if overused, they take away choices of other options"
– Michael Carroll

“Our benchmark programme is aptly called Love Public Speaking”

without a home computer. From the age of eight to 80, people are using computers, smartphones and tablets as a part of their everyday life. This is such a substantial change in just 25 years, when computing was just for techies. There are many examples of best practice in the world of computing where businesses changed the perception of the public in how they embrace the technology.

To make a product more accessible to the public, there has to be a clear need to be fulfilled, and the solution to that need has to be relatively easy to grasp and put into practice. A “need” in the world of business or politics will include an immediate problem and an immediate solution. In terms of communication, public speaking is an essential skill to success and therefore a need that most people from all professions will want to fully satisfy. There is well-known saying in NLP: “You don’t get what you want in business; you get what you communicate.”

Engaging with NLP

There are many people in the business, political, educational and social arenas who in their public

speaking activities are getting dire results, because their message comes across as flat. To fully engage an audience, it is important that the speaker can read the audience as a collective, as well as accurately interpreting the influential people within the group to build rapport. It is important that the speaker structures their content in a way that is remembered using language that resonates with the different personality types inherent in any group. An excellent public speaker knows how to use tonality to embed the message and use body language to further enhance the power of what is being communicated. Neuro linguistic programming provides public speakers with strategies to fulfil the essential elements for presenting.

Best practice, essentially, is utilising a methodology or system that is simple to implement and easy to replicate. In the case of public speaking, NLP certainly ticks the boxes for best practice. The NLP Academy, since its inception, has developed various courses to provide those who speak to the public or private audiences with the skills to be successful. Our benchmark programme is aptly called “Love Public Speaking” in which participants learn skills to build confidence, how to structure material and strategies to hone verbal and non-verbal messages, building charisma in the individual and also the presentation. The Love Public Speaking course, in a relatively short period of time, transforms any presenter from the novice to the seasoned speaker.

Is there such a thing as ethical persuasion? The job of a public speaker is to persuade; the ethics are inherent in the character of the speaker, not the speech itself, and I am sure the readers of *The Parliamentary Review* are of sound character, so happy persuading.

Pericles



Five friends that Pericles works with



Co-founder Paulamaria Blaxland-de Lange

Pericles provides supported housing, work, adult education and therapy for adults with complex needs. It is one of many organisations of its kind around the world which, although different, share an ethos and world view. It was founded in 1997, in response to an advertisement placed by West Sussex social services. WSSS was looking for housing opportunities in the community for people who had been living in mental health hospitals, many for an extended period of time. Co-founder Paulamaria Blaxland-de Lange tells *The Parliamentary Review* about the Pericles journey.

Soon after getting started, it became clear how challenging it could be for a person with complex needs to integrate into the community and how rare it was for them to experience true inclusion. As Professor Hans Reinders once said, “the law can open doors but not hearts.”

We found, however, that many adults were not only capable of community involvement, they were also able to initiate it; they wanted to learn new skills, do meaningful work and find friends. They became interested in their surroundings. They had needs that prompted the development of new skills while requiring a collaborative environment that encouraged all concerned to learn together.

To create an appropriate environment, we needed carers to stop judging, open up, learn to listen and understand, be tolerant and overcome prejudices. Development had to be viable but, first and foremost, truly needs-based.

FACTS ABOUT PERICLES

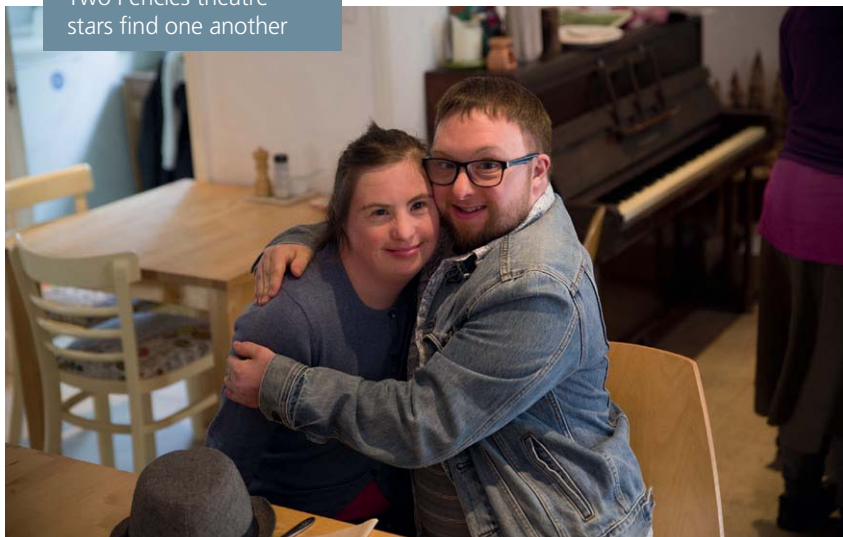
- » Co-founders: Simon and Paulamaria Blaxland-de Lange
- » Founded in 1997
- » Based in East Grinstead, West Sussex
- » Services: Support for adults with complex needs
- » No. of staff: 10 full-time, 7 part-time and 5 full-time volunteers
- » Opened Hoathly Hill Gardens in 1992 and Sharp-Thorne Organic Café in 2002
- » Initiated Pericles Theatre Company in 1999
- » Pericles Woodland Projects began in 2002
- » Joined Mid Sussex Wood Recycling Project in 2014
- » www.pericles.org.uk



The Tale of the Pig, raising awareness of homelessness

“To create an appropriate environment, we needed carers to stop judging, open up, learn to listen and understand, be tolerant and overcome prejudices”

Two Pericles theatre stars find one another



Local partnerships

This ethos has driven our growth and development. When a new tenant or student joined, new areas of work, learning and therapy were often added and new partnerships formed: with community farms, recycling projects, colleges, small businesses and other care providers.

Hoathly Hill Gardens was started in 1992 to provide fresh produce for the table of the local elderly lunch club, by way of using bio-dynamic care of the land. This complements trainees' skill development and environmental awareness. Fruit preserves soon became a speciality.

Ten years later, this success allowed us to open Sharp-Thorne Organic Café. This now provides training and work in all aspects of hospitality for youngsters and adults with learning needs as well as volunteers and apprentices. Not only does the café serve fresh, local and responsibly grown food; it has also become a successful social hub for members of the local community.

Pericles craft workshops and the arts curriculum

For many hundreds of years, handcrafts were a significant element of societal development. Since industrialisation, preserving their status has been

recognised as an essential part of British heritage. More recently, however, their educational and therapeutic benefits have been the subject of neuroscientific research into brain development. The sense of achievement provided and the level of discipline required to make something that is both useful as well as beautiful also play their part. The Pericles craft workshops provide a wide variety of successful activities for those who take part.

Much has been written about the benefits of the creative and visual arts, music and poetry, either artistically, developmentally or as therapy. Our work with these has seen this discussion become realised.

Pericles Theatre Company was initiated as a millennium project in 1999; its work integrated artists with complex needs into professional theatre and partnered with Vasile Nedelcu's Atelier Theatre. It won the Best Family Show of the Year award at the Brighton Fringe in 2015.

Inclusion, independence and choice

Three concepts have dominated social care over the last decade or so: inclusion, independence and free choice.

Inclusion is the buzzword of the three, and a fantastic concept. It is, however, often not enough. As long as we feel we can include, we can also exclude. Unfortunately, the latter often forms an attitude that many people with a difference encounter out in the world, and creates difficulties for many of the adults we work with.

Independence is also a word much used and is important. But who is really independent? Are we not all inter-dependent? This is the basis of life. We recognise that everyone has something to contribute – every single little thing we receive or do is dependent on others. This drive for “independence” is not always as rewarding as it may seem.

Choice is the last of these concepts. Often, however, those with needs find only a pre-determined answer to what their choice should be in a given case. This is the result either through a lack of availability of real choice or funding, or through the most recent prescribed social paradigm or preference. Choice, however, surely means being able to choose to live in town or a village, with others, alone or in an intentional community, working in a shop, in a cafe or on a farm, in a theatre company or a workshop, to name just a few. At Pericles, we develop and provide all of these choices, because this is what our adult students want to work with and experience.

Artificial intelligence – the future of care?

Although computers can help with facilitated communication, no machine can teach anyone the art of conversation based on an open heart, an open mind and an open will; many children and adults with complex needs depend on this every single day.

No machine will provide the feeling of gratitude that a smile can give, or the beauty of a unique, individual creation. AI will be unable to prompt the encouragement to create a warm and welcoming home environment for others, or to forgo something for the sake of another.

Changing perceptions

Some people with a learning difficulty choose to live and work together, often not to feel judged, assessed, in need of care or thought of as a burden; our world view defines how we look at each other and naturally feeds into how we treat others. We give names to differences and conditions; while they are informative, they can also be divisive and do not provide insight into the individual themselves.



Sasha helped to make these props for the theatre

Social care is relationship-based, and it moves beyond disability or difference. The more we are able to facilitate this change, the more successful we will be in our work.

There are many people around the world who are now trying to do just that, and who see in Rudolf Steiner, Karl König, John Ruskin and others inspiration to develop new social sciences, in theory and in practice. For many of them, meditation is integral; it can inform what we do, widen our hearts and drive us to think outside the box.

“Our world view defines how we look at each other and naturally feeds into how we treat others”

» FURTHER SUPPORTING READING

- » Aric Sigman's *Practically Minded: The Benefits and Mechanisms Associated with a Craft-based Curriculum*
- » The Institute of Medicine's *Genes, Behavior, and the Social Environment: Moving Beyond the Nature/Nurture Debate*
- » Nicanor Perlas' *Humanity's Last Stand*
- » Arthur Zajonc's *Meditation as Contemplative Inquiry: When Knowing Becomes Love*
- » Otto Scharmer's *Theory U*
- » Roger Nelson's work on the Global Consciousness Project
- » The works of Professor Hans Reinders, John Ruskin and Aonghus Gordon
- » www.hoathlyhilltrust.org.uk/projects/pericles-theatre-company

Stages



Jeanette Felton, Managing Director



German student on a retail placement

FACTS ABOUT STAGES

- » Managing Director: Jeanette Felton
- » Established in 2000
- » Based in Brighton and Hove
- » Services: Arranging unpaid work experience programmes for EU students
- » No. of employees: 5
- » We work closely with German vocational colleges and other European business schools and universities
- » www.stagesuk.com

Jeanette Felton, the managing director of Stages Ltd, has been arranging unpaid work experience programmes in the Brighton area for EU students for almost 20 years. She and her company have since serviced the needs of thousands of students looking to enhance both their language skills and career opportunities and developed a thriving business. Jeanette has been encouraged to excel in her work by the sheer volume of young people coming from Europe to embrace the vast range of opportunities for travel and work in the UK. She discusses Stages more widely and the uncertainty they currently face.

I started Stages in 2000 when I saw an increasing demand for a work experience programme in the UK, but I had been otherwise involved in European initiatives as early as 1996. Working as an exporter to the EU has been an exciting, challenging and culturally enriching experience, and learning from other cultures and sharing common values has been honestly inspirational.

Supportive at every level

Successfully managing a team has been one of my biggest challenges over the past 19 years. With the right training and the right people, however, everything has fallen into place. Our staff know the work they are doing is important and understand their responsibilities. An internal appraisal system enables us all to consider areas for improvement, and we continually review our systems and processes to drive efficiency.

We employ a clear management structure to ensure that communication between both staff and students remains straightforward and constant – there is even one

manager handling our emergency phone 24 hours a day.

We have an extensive selection of values, which we outline in our mission statement. They include:

- » Creating an encouraging and welcoming environment
- » Supporting our customers by listening and trying to solve problems
- » Courtesy and patience
- » Respecting diversity
- » Building confidence
- » Trust and honesty
- » Flexibility
- » Working as a team
- » Continuous improvement

Choosing the right situation

Our best practice starts with the buying process. An honest description of what students can expect is important. Managing expectations is always challenging – we spend a lot of time communicating with our students to ensure that we can deliver according to their needs, and that they are appropriately prepared for life in the UK. This process includes:

- » Sending detailed documents outlining what to expect. These describe cultural differences such as British office culture and life in an English home
- » Skype interviewing to check language proficiency
- » Ensuring that CVs are representative of the student's skill set
- » Obtaining police checks if appropriate for the placement

We do not accept all students onto the programme, only those who we believe can be offered a placement that suits their needs. This maintains our high standards and reputation as a quality provider.

Students are monitored and evaluated throughout the process to ensure its success. We find that most young people we place become far more confident in themselves, and far more understanding of the workplace. This serves as a great foundation for their future work in UK industry.

Supply partnerships

Our two biggest supply partners are placement companies and host families. Maintaining a quality relationship with these two is vital if we are to secure repeat business. We select the former based on the level of support we feel they can offer the students. Their line managers keep us informed of any problems and a full and ongoing evaluation takes place. Only the most engaging and encouraging of organisations are selected.

Building a trusting relationship with our host families is also fundamental. We have agreements in place that guarantee our students receive good care.

Police checks are a prerequisite ahead of placement, and continual monitoring and evaluation takes place

“We employ a clear management structure to ensure that communication between both staff and students remains straightforward and constant”

Two European students on a placement at Volks Railway





The Stages team

“We find that most young people we place become far more confident in themselves”

» TESTIMONIAL

After continued success in her placement, one of our German students said: “If it wasn’t for your support, I wouldn’t be a pre-school English teacher now. I decided to pursue my dream, and am currently managing classrooms of ten to 15 children aged between three and five. It’s unbelievable that I could do this because of my volunteering work at the school in Brighton and my improved English. Without your help, I wouldn’t have grown so much and enjoyed my time to the fullest.”

during their stay. After the placement, families are awarded a star rating based on student feedback, and if we do not deem the standard to be acceptable, the accommodation is removed from our supplier list.

Beyond these two, we believe that building a strong, long-term relationship with our European partners is also of paramount importance as they sell the programme directly to our students.

We also collaborate directly with German university vocational colleges, supporting their apprenticeship schemes, alongside other universities and business schools across Europe.

Changing attitudes and the Brexit deal

In managing an SME working closely with other European countries, we have naturally encountered a host of challenges. Understanding the business practices of different nations is fundamental to our continued success; we have found that areas such as payment terms and timescales for communication vary wildly. Nonetheless, in the face of such issues, we have continued to operate successfully.

There is one issue, however, that cannot be so easily dealt with.

Our ability to continue as an industry leader will be determined by the outcome of the current Brexit negotiations. Overseas work and study programmes must be allowed to continue if the UK is to remain an attractive destination for European students.

Without the right kind of deal with the EU, our future will become immeasurably difficult. We are presently operating successfully, but our terms and conditions have recently been rewritten to include a huge Brexit clause in the event of no deal.

Financially, no deal or agreement with regards to the customs Union and single market would be a massive issue. Tariffs, including VAT on work and education programmes, are likely to make all of our courses considerably more expensive to sustain.

We’re also concerned about our work with prospective students. Planning for every eventuality when we’re so dependent on Europe is incredibly difficult. We must get this deal right.

Doing what we can, while we can

Irrespective of the uncertainty surrounding our future, we feel that our work has added real value to the many English language programmes in the UK.

Many of our students remain in the UK beyond their placements and attend a British university. Many continue to work in the UK, bringing their skill and fostering understanding.

No matter what the next year may hold for Stages, we remain dedicated to providing the right opportunities for our excellent students. Cross-cultural exchange is so important if international business is to continue to thrive.

IBS Office Solutions



Forward-thinking



Managing Director
Caleb Southwell

Based in Henley-on-Thames, IBS Office Solutions have successfully implemented cost-saving print solutions to the education sector, supporting schools and colleges in the UK to provide the most economic and user-friendly devices for teachers and pupils alike. They help meet the growing demands of education and enable in-house production of valuable learning resource data. Through their own team of trained DBS-checked engineers, IBS Office Solutions directly service in excess of 2,000 Sharp multi-functional copiers, printers and scanners. They also provide print management solutions so that schools can adapt to the changes in technology and teaching (such as “bring your own device”, Mobility Print and Follow Me Print). Describing all of this in greater detail is Managing Director, Caleb Southwell.

FACTS ABOUT IBS OFFICE SOLUTIONS

- » Managing Director: Caleb Southwell
- » Established in 2006
- » Based in Henley-on-Thames
- » Services: Supply and support of photocopiers, printers and scanners to the education sector
- » Number of employees: 22
- » www.ibs-uk.net

Sources of pride for IBS Office Solutions

Many things distinguish IBS Office Solutions. In addition to our proactive approach to reducing our carbon footprint, we are proud of being: an appointed “Sharp Centre of Excellence”; Sharp’s largest distributor in the South of England and a PaperCut-accredited reseller specialist.

Equally worth pointing out is the speed with which we respond to our client’s needs – our call-out times are well under four hours and remote IT support comes within the hour.

“Many of our clients recognise the value of getting the right balance between cost and quality of service”

Over the past 15 years, we have grown from a home-based operation, to now employing over 20 staff and occupying new premises of more than 3,000 square feet. Our success over this time is founded on the principles of not being a faceless operation. We provide a human approach to our clients, so we fully understand their requirements at all times. From half past seven every morning, of every working day of the week, we are at the end of the phone to assist, guide and support our schools.

Testifying to our success

- » “The office at IBS and their team of engineers are always quick to answer and respond to our calls. When required, an engineer is often on site within two to three hours after the call is logged.”
- » “IBS are always my first point of call for copying and printing service discussions; I am then able to compare service and costs against other suppliers but have found none to beat those offered.”

A wide range of solutions



IBS Office Solutions’ unique approach

At IBS, we are committed to the provision of regular training for all employees, such that they can meet the growing demands of our clients. We also provide training for all teachers and reprographic staff during installation and throughout the year as required. In tandem with this, we ensure ease of use, which in practice means a customised user interface that reflects the requirements of each school. Additionally, we have an account manager for each region of the UK, all overseen by the senior engineering manager. Also important to us is that we conduct a regular review of our minimum service call procedures and policies.

Another distinguishing feature of our company is the extent to which we are proactive. At any time during the day we can remotely monitor our clients’ hardware and consumable needs. During the school holidays we visit and complete preventative maintenance calls, thereby preparing the equipment efficiently for the start of each term.

The “SEE-SAW” approach

Many of our clients recognise the value of getting the right balance between cost and quality of service. This is why our retention and renewals of client contracts is in excess of 98 per cent. Those returning after three years or less have experienced poor support from contracts based purely on price. The lower-priced providers often install inappropriate equipment for the schools and do not allocate sufficient time to implement print management systems effectively, which hampers schools’ abilities to save costs and minimise the environmental impact. As a result, these framework-based contracts don’t always deliver the financial savings they portray.



Production print

Adapting to change

Our admin team are dedicated to ensuring our policies and procedures satisfy the ever-changing climate of the education sector. This includes:

- » DBS checks for all customer-interfacing employees
- » Engineers carry a company ID and DBS license
- » GDPR: residue of data on equipment hard drive

All equipment that is returned at the end of contract have their hard drives reformatted. Our latest range of products has a function called a Data Security Kit, which overwrites the hard drive after every copy and print with military-graded encryption.

UK copier market

Over the past few years, there have been numerous acquisitions in the UK copier market, whereby the resellers have become larger than the manufacturers. In response, the Japanese manufacturers have increased their direct sales activity through framework contracts and

by undercutting their own dealer network, which they fund directly from the factories in Japan. This issue has been compounded by the manufacturers acquiring a number of the larger resellers in the UK. There are now limited UK companies which can compete with the manufacturers' pricing. The knock-on effects include:

- » Decline in local employment
- » Diminishing margins
- » Decline in the quality of after-sales service
- » Decline in potential cost savings
- » Increased downtime of equipment
- » Environmental impact due to engineers driving further, causing greater carbon emissions

Stay in the race

We at IBS Office Solutions will continue to be proactive in our approach of offering high standards of service support, customer liaison and general administration. We will endeavour, with the support of our suppliers and employees, to offer best value but without compromise.

“Best value but without compromise”

OMS



Managing Director Clive Ormerod



OMS' head office and main training centre in Leicester

FACTS ABOUT OMS

- » Managing Director: Clive Ormerod
- » Founded in 1998
- » Based in Leicester
- » Services: Training and consultancy
- » No. of employees: 14 full-time; 30 associates
- » 30 per cent increase in sales in 2017/18
- » ISO 14001 and ISO 9001 certified
- » Constructionline Gold accredited
- » www.oms.uk.com

It's rare for a business to meet its full potential, says Clive Ormerod, Managing Director of OMS. Recognising this, he and his company offer solutions to just this problem by providing consultancy and training services. By way of support, guidance and advice, they improve businesses' performance and help them to remain compliant. Bolstering this effort is over 20 years of experience in advising and training companies of all kinds across the UK. Although they're not the only service of this kind, they are keen to point out that there is no "one size fits all" approach. It's for this reason they focus heavily on providing innovative solutions that cater to businesses' exact needs.

Where businesses struggle

Upon founding 20 years ago, we realised that many companies are, quite understandably, lacking in efficiencies. This is not for reasons of incompetence, but rather because they are in the fray of day-to-day business demands. It's often difficult for companies to pause and reflect on what exactly they can improve on, which is where we come in. We decided that we could offer companies the time and resources necessary to explore areas of potential improvement in an exhaustive and comprehensive way. Hence OMS was born.

Put otherwise, we provide consultancy and training services to the highest possible standards – be this on matters of health and safety, human resources, compliance, quality assurance or even the environment. Key to these efforts is making sure we understand the specific requirements and aspirations of businesses. No two organisations are the same, which makes it especially important for us to offer solutions that reflect this great variety.

The clients with which we work can range greatly in size and nature, from small businesses to large and highly recognisable multilayered organisations – both public and private. All of this is made possible through our core team of consultants and trainers, as well as a national network of specialised associates who offer a vast wealth of expertise and have behind them many years of experience. This team of specialists, in turn, is drawn from a wide range of backgrounds in the world of enterprise, all of which is brought to bear in matters of specialist, bespoke advice. Ensuring that we get the composition of the team right – bearing in mind the wide variety of different skills and experience that is required – is a crucial part of our operations.

Our ability to be an all-encompassing solution is worth emphasising, because too many in our industry purport to help companies, but instead apply lazily put-together blanket solutions – which irritates not only the client, but places a bad reputation on the sector. The range in stature of our clients is a true testament to our effectiveness in this respect.

Values in addition to value

Testifying to our success in this domain is one of our former training clients, Andrew Cooper, the account manager for Freudenberg Technical Products LP, who said of us: “The most interesting

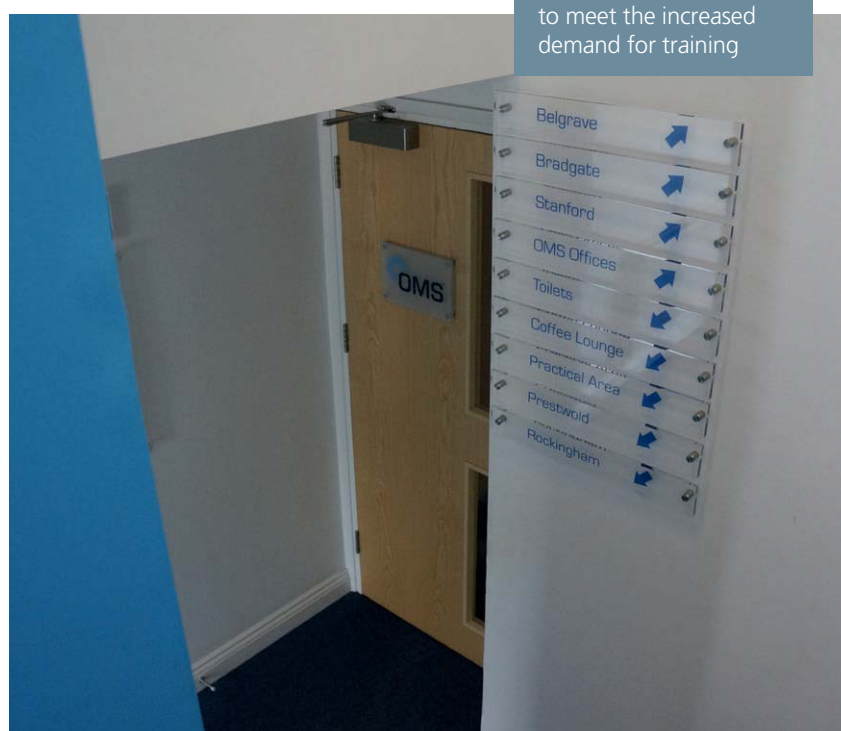
and potentially career changing course I have had the pleasure to attend; the way in which the information was communicated is from the highest level of professionalism and clarity.”

Andrew’s words highlight an important component of our service, namely that of providing our client not just with valuable advice, but also with a genuinely pleasant and hassle-free experience. This, however, is just one value among many. How OMS operates and how we approach our clients, our projects and our own development as a business can be summarised as follows:

- » Conducting ourselves ethically and sustainably, both as individuals and as a company;
- » Nurturing long-term relationships with clients and suppliers;
- » Remaining absolutely confidential with regard to our clients’ projects and aspirations;
- » Ensuring we genuinely listen to and understand the values, practices and viewpoints of others;
- » Empowering and investing in our people to help them to grow and manage solutions; and

“No two organisations are the same, which makes it especially important for us to offer solutions that reflect this great variety”

OMS have expanded to meet the increased demand for training





OMS' practical training area

“Some of the biggest problems that SMEs face are burdens imposed by changes in laws and regulations”

- » Sharing information and skills openly with colleagues to increase our collective learning and experience base.

Meeting challenges

Some of the biggest problems that SMEs face are burdens imposed by changes in laws and regulations. This particular problem has two facets: one is simply understanding and interpreting the laws; the other facet is actually implementing these statutory changes in an effective and efficient manner. This is one of the areas in which our value is most apparent. It is an area in which it's more important than usual to understand our clients as thoroughly as possible, so as to understand which laws and regulations do and do not apply. It's perhaps for this reason that we've seen a 30 per cent growth in demand for our consultancy services, and 10 per cent for training, a lot of which focuses heavily on legislative compliance.

What lies on the horizon

In addition to ensuring continuity of our services, we also want to see expansion. One of the areas in which we are expanding most is that of collaborative working, as many of our clients are managing risk and trying to increase opportunities. It is incumbent upon us, therefore, to put in place collaborative systems with a view to ensuring that the businesses we work with are realising their ambitions in a controlled manner with the correct support and governance.

In terms of our projection for the future, we have no shortage of optimism. For the last four to five years, we have experienced consistent year-on-year growth, and there is no sign of deceleration in this respect. We'll continue to grow by doing what we've always done, that is, listening closely to clients and offering them tailored solutions to their unique difficulties.

Brady bunch ease Tory family feud



Theresa May's Brexit deal lost by 230 votes – the largest defeat for a sitting government in history

A turbulent few months saw the prime minister and the nation become well acquainted with the hitherto inconspicuous MP for Altrincham and Sale West. Sir Graham Brady raised the flag for Tory civil war in early December before potentially signalling a ceasefire at the end of January.

On December 12, Sir Graham, in his role as chairman of the 1922 Committee, the influential grouping of all Conservative backbenchers, had the thankless task of announcing that he had received letters of no confidence in the prime minister from more than 15 per cent of Tory MPs, which meant that, under party rules, Theresa May would face a no-confidence motion.

The move followed Mrs May announcing her withdrawal agreement with the EU in mid-November, arranging for a parliamentary vote on the agreement on December 11 and then, on the day the vote was meant to be called, announcing that it would be delayed until the new year.

A cynic could argue that Mrs May was exchanging a vote she would definitely lose for one she would probably win. Indeed, despite seeing 117 of her MPs vote against her, she had 200 votes in

her favour and duly survived the no-confidence ballot.

The withdrawal agreement was always going to be a much harder vote to win. It raised the prospect of the UK being stuck in an indefinite backstop, which would essentially equate to remaining in the EU's customs union, without any unilateral means of exit. This led to the resignation of two cabinet ministers, Dominic Raab and Esther McVey, and severe criticism from all corners of the House of Commons.

When MPs resumed the debate after Christmas, the Speaker, John Bercow, defied Commons precedent to make a novel ruling on the framework for MPs' "meaningful vote" debate on the prime minister's proposed withdrawal agreement. The speaker decided to allow an amendment to be proposed to the "Business of the House" motion. This was, most MPs believed, flatly against the Commons' rules, both because the motion would be voted on "forthwith" and because the existing Business of the House motion said that changes could only be proposed by a minister.

This seemingly technical step allowed a combination of opposition MPs and Conservative rebels to vote through an important change; in the event of its deal being voted down, the government would now be required to put down a motion *within three sitting days* which would allow MPs to debate what happened next.

The effect was to sharply reduce the grace period the government would otherwise have had – and to bring forward the moment when MPs might seize control of Brexit. And the result was a furious backlash against the Speaker in the chamber.

The debate on Theresa May's Brexit deal lasted 54 hours, saw 200 speeches and stretched through eight Commons days. It ended with a crushing defeat for the prime minister – rejected by 432 votes to 202, the biggest defeat for a government in modern history.

Hard Brexiteers and hard Remainers had voted against it; the Conservatives' "confidence and supply" partners in the Democratic Unionist Party, and all the other smaller parties, had all, for their different reasons, combined to vote down the central policy upon which the May government had toiled since the 2016 referendum.

The defeat had long been signalled, so the key question was: what would the prime minister do next?

Moments after the vote was announced, to gasps at the sheer magnitude of the rebuff, the prime minister rose to respond: "The House has spoken and the government will listen," she said. "It is clear the House does not support this deal, but tonight's vote tells us nothing about what it does support, nothing about how, or even if, it intends to honour the decision the British people took in a referendum that parliament decided to hold."

She challenged the leader of the opposition to table a no-confidence motion in the government and he duly obliged. The following day, Mrs May faced her second no-confidence vote in just over a month, and, once again, she and her government survived.

After cross-party discussions, a further statement from the prime minister and more discussions in the Commons, the next crucial day was January 29, when the House voted on seven potentially game-changing amendments to Mrs May's statement on the defeat of her Brexit bill.

The official Labour amendment pushed the party policy of avoiding no deal and seeking a form of permanent customs union. The Yvette Cooper amendment would guarantee time for a private members' bill that would force the prime minister to seek to extend Article 50 in the event that no deal had been agreed with

the EU and passed through parliament by February 26. The Dominic Grieve amendment called for a series of indicative votes by decreeing that a motion put forward by a minority of 300 MPs from at least five parties would be debated as the first item for MPs in the Commons the next day, thus transferring power from the executive to the legislature.

Each of these was defeated, with majorities of 31, 23 and 20 respectively. Two other amendments were also defeated. The first of two successful amendments was Caroline Spelman's, which passed by eight votes and stated that the UK would not leave the EU without a deal. This, however, was only advisory and carried no legislative force.

The most significant amendment to be passed was the one tabled by Sir Graham Brady, which stated that the backstop should be "replaced with alternative arrangements to avoid a hard border".

The government whipped MPs to vote for it, and, although the amendment did not explicitly compel her to do so, Mrs May promised that, if it passed, she would seek binding changes to the text of the withdrawal agreement. According to *The Telegraph*, Downing Street said Mrs May had three options: "to seek a unilateral exit mechanism from the backstop; to seek a time limit for the backstop, or to adopt a plan put forward by Kit Malthouse MP to 'recast' the backstop as a type of free trade agreement".

This was sufficient to appease the pro-Brexit wing of her party and nearly all of the Tory MPs who had campaigned for Remain in 2016. With the support of the DUP and seven Labour rebels, the amendment was passed by 317 votes to 301.

Sir Graham's announcement on December 12 tore open a number of Tory wounds, and his amendment on January 29 was an attempt to heal them. Time will tell whether it was a mere sticking plaster, and much will depend on the EU's response. But the Tories have shown their feuding party is capable of familial compromise. With the Brady bunch tentatively behind her, Mrs May must once again talk to the neighbours.

A game of Chequers



President Trump's trip to the UK added to the political drama of an already hectic month before the summer recess

On Sunday, July 8, 2018, Britain was awash with sunshine and optimism. England football fans were preparing for their first world cup semi-final in nearly thirty years, while some Scots were hurriedly buying the chequered shirts and flags of England's opponents, Croatia. And the weather, the hottest summer since the seventies, was keeping everyone in good spirits. In other words, it was the perfect time for a political crisis.

While Gareth Southgate's team spent their Saturday doing battle with Sweden, Theresa May's spent theirs battling each other. Late on Sunday evening, after another day of disagreements, the results of the crucial cabinet meeting at Chequers, the prime minister's grace and favour country residence, began to materialise. The most significant of these was the resignation of David Davis as secretary of state for exiting the European Union, who found himself unable to support a proposal that would see the UK maintain a common rulebook with the EU for all goods.

Writing for *The Parliamentary Review* in September, the prime minister argued that a Brexit on these terms would mean we "take back control of our laws, money and borders." Mr Davis

took a different stance: "In my view the inevitable consequence of the proposed policies will be to make the supposed control by parliament illusory rather than real."

If the Brexit secretary's departure threw the government into a spin, it was nothing compared to what came next. On Monday afternoon, with the ink on Davis' letter not yet dry, Boris Johnson announced that he was following suit. For two years, pundits had speculated about the imminent departures of the Brexit and foreign secretaries. Now they were both gone within 24 hours. In his letter, Mr Johnson said the prime minister was leading the UK into a "semi-Brexit" with the "status of a colony".

Jeremy Hunt, who had just become the longest serving health secretary in history, was chosen to replace him, with culture secretary Matt Hancock moving to the Health Department. Mr Davis was replaced by Dominic Raab, who himself would go on to resign in November, once Mrs May's Brexit deal had been formally agreed with the EU, stating that he could not support "an indefinite backstop arrangement" or a "deal that presents a very real threat to the integrity of the United Kingdom." Further July resignations included Steve Baker, Maria Caulfield and Ben Bradley.

It was under this cloud that Gareth Southgate's Three Lions took on, and were defeated by, Croatia. After which, from both a sporting and a political point of view, it was fair to say that England had been chastened by chequers.

If Mrs May was in need of a brief reprieve, she was unlikely to get one with Donald Trump arriving for his long-awaited UK visit. Amid huge protests, Mr Trump decided to give

an interview with *The Sun*, in which he lambasted Mrs May's Brexit negotiations and suggested that Boris Johnson would make "a great prime

minister". This was followed by a characteristic backtrack, where he said he would support whatever stance the "incredible" Mrs May took on Brexit.

The meaning of the meaningful vote

In June, seven months on from his success in attaching a "meaningful vote amendment" to the EU (Withdrawal) Bill in the Commons, the former attorney-general Dominic Grieve was still fighting the same cause on the same bill.

In what proved to be the final round of the long parliamentary battle over the bill, MPs were considering changes made in the Lords, which included a tougher version of the meaningful vote than Mr Grieve's original. In earlier rounds of consideration he had accepted a compromise proposal from the government, only for the consensus around it to break down when Downing Street presented an analysis of what it would mean that seemed far weaker than Mr Grieve had thought.

That in turn prompted the Lords to replace the compromise with a beefed-up version – and this was what MPs, for the second time in a week, were now considering.

The issue remained the narrow but potentially crucial question of what leverage MPs would have in the event that either parliament rejected the Brexit deal between the UK and the European Union or no deal was reached at all. Should there be a vote in the Commons to instruct ministers on what to do next?

The day before, peers had voted in favour of plans to give MPs a greater say – a move that David Davis, the then-Brexit secretary, warned could undermine the prime minister's negotiating position because it seemed to foreclose the possibility of Britain



Dominic Grieve was responsible for forcing concessions around the meaning of the meaningful vote

walking away with no deal. Mr Davis now offered another compromise that would, he said, ensure that there would be a ministerial statement and a motion to the House in the event of no deal, but the key point was that his plan would not offer MPs a chance to instruct ministers – because the motion that would be put down would not be amendable.

But Mr Davis added that the procedural details were far less important than the expressed mood of the House in a moment of crisis, and he warned that the Lords amendment could become a mechanism for frustrating Brexit.

As part of the elaborate legislative dance, Mr Grieve had put down a new amendment. But now a compromise had been offered, he dropped it: "having finally obtained, with a little more difficulty than I would have wished, the obvious acknowledgement of the sovereignty of this place over the executive, I am prepared to accept the government's difficulty, support them and accept the form of amendment they want."

In the end, six Conservatives voted for the Grieve amendment, while four Labour MPs defied their party whip and

voted with the government. And later that evening, peers accepted the bill – which allowed it to become law.

Parliament approves a third runway at Heathrow Airport



The long-awaited decision on whether to increase the capacity of Heathrow airport was given the go-ahead by parliament in June

Fifty years after the Wilson government set up the Roskill Commission to examine options for London airport expansion, MPs backed a planning document that endorsed a third runway for Heathrow with a resounding majority: 415 votes to 119.

The decision to endorse a national policy statement for airports, which supported a third runway, followed an intense 90-minute debate. The result was not really in doubt – when the vote occurred in June, Conservative MPs were on a three-line whip, which meant that they were ordered to back the NPS, while Labour MPs, reflecting the considerable differences of view in their party, were given a free vote.

The transport secretary, Chris Grayling, laid out his case: “All five of London’s main airports will be full by the mid-2030s, and Heathrow is full today. We are seeing business leave the UK and go to airports like Frankfurt, Amsterdam and Paris, which have made additional capacity provision ... We are losing those connections to other countries, and we are losing the investment that goes around those connections.”

He promised that there would be tough environmental conditions: the runway would not be allowed to open if it failed to meet air quality standards. There would be a generous £2.6 billion compensation package for people displaced by the new runway, plus a noise insulation programme for homes and schools.

The short debate ended up with a majority of 296 in favour of the NPS. In the end eight Conservative MPs voted against the government and Labour was split almost in half, with slightly more Labour MPs supporting the expansion than opposing it. Their leader, Jeremy Corbyn, was against it. The NPS does not grant final planning permission for the third runway: it sets the policy framework against which planners (and probably the courts) will judge whether the scheme should go ahead.

The Salisbury poisonings

In March last year, the prime minister issued a grave warning to the Russian government after a double agent and

his daughter, now resident in Britain, were poisoned with a military-grade nerve agent at their home in Salisbury.

Sergei Skripal, a Russian defector to Britain, and his daughter Yulia were exposed to Novichok, a nerve agent developed by Russia.

Theresa May gave Russia 24 hours to provide answers about the incident or face sanctions from Britain.

In a statement to the Commons, the prime minister praised the professionalism of the emergency services and armed forces in responding to the poisoning. She said that the chemical had been identified by “world-leading” experts at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory at Porton Down and that, given the

Russian government’s record of state-sponsored assassinations, ministers had concluded that it was “highly likely” that Russia was responsible.

Months later in June, mother of three Dawn Sturgess died after being exposed to the poison, which also left her partner Charlie Rowley in a critical condition.

The impact of this attack continues to be felt throughout 2019, as a military team continue extensive deconstruction and decontamination work on Skripal’s Salisbury home. Skripal and his daughter Yulia were moved to “a secure location” in April 2018, where they currently remain.

The last word

This edition of *The Parliamentary Review* has overseen yet another extraordinary year in British politics. Cabinet ministers have departed, Commons debates have raged long into the night and, at times, it has felt like little has been achieved. From our standpoint, it is clear that this has not been caused by a lack of trying. The members of parliament with whom we have crossed paths, from all parties and none, have each been working incredibly hard to further what they feel is in the best interests of the constituency, and the country, they serve.

And, though the political realm has been a source of frustration for many, it is clear, as Andrew Neil observes in the opening pages of this publication, that those operating at the micro level of the British economy are not only working tirelessly; they are also achieving great things. The articles from this year’s *Review* representatives exemplify this.

A country is not a perfect blueprint put into action; it is the sum of millions of autonomous parts. Individuals



Lord Pickles addresses the Parliamentary Review gala in the House of Commons

who motivate their staff, inspire their students or simply do their job to the best standard they can muster. And, though there are always adjustments and improvements to be made, it is our conviction that British parts are in fine working order.

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