

New approaches to help support colleges

From September 2021, ESFA is taking a more proactive and preventative approach to identifying and supporting colleges that may face challenges.

Under the changes ESFA will remove the 'Early Intervention' category and some of the restrictions around support that currently entails.

Instead ESFA will run a pilot where any college will be able to request expert help and support from the FE Commissioner through a diagnostic assessment – a process that was previously only open to colleges where a new principal had been appointed – helping all colleges to proactively request assistance much earlier, where that may be helpful.

A new package of support, known as 'Active Support' has also been announced that includes a new Curriculum Efficiency and Financial Sustainability pilot programme. This builds on the success of the School Resource Management Adviser programme, which has so far helped over 70 multi-academy trusts either save or generate new income of over £35 million.

There will also be increased support available from peer leaders through the National Leaders of Further Education and of Governance programmes, and through access to Local Provision Reviews.

The new suite of measures, and change of approach, delivers on the Dame Mary Ney report recommendations and will mean a significant shift in the work of both ESFA and the FE Commissioner to build more supportive relationships with all colleges.

This change in approach also supports the proposals being shared through the Funding and Accountability Consultation now under way.

Kirsty Evans, ESFA Director of Further Education said:

Throughout the pandemic, colleges have continued to rise to the challenge of delivering education and training either safely within institutions or remotely.

To ensure we can continue to build back better and recover, colleges will be critical to upskilling the future workforce, so it feels timely to introduce a more supportive and preventative, rather than reactive, approach to intervention, as recommended in Dame Mary Ney's review.

Through a new Curriculum Efficiency and Financial Sustainability pilot we are keen to learn from the sector where efficiencies can be made, and we want to share good practice, ideas and lessons we are learning from the sector to help prevent colleges going into

financial decline.

Earlier this year, following successful trials, ESFA announced the introduction of annual conversations with colleges. The first of these began in the summer term and will be completed during the 2021 to 2022 academic year. These conversations will provide colleges with the opportunity to showcase achievements and outstanding practice and to raise any concerns.

As part of ESFA's core function, it will still ensure that there is an effective use of public funding, and the safeguarding of the learner is a priority. ESFA will continue to monitor and analyse the intelligence and data that it collects, and intervene where it is strictly necessary.

Looking ahead, the small proportion of colleges that do need more intensive support through formal intervention will be provided with an agreed package of support to secure sustained improvement when they leave intervention. The length of time a college spends in intervention is expected to be shorter than in the past.

Please refer to the [college oversight support and intervention guide](#) to review the full suite of measures and tools introduced.