

[News story: Eileen Milner, Christmas and New Year message](#)

“This is my second year as Chief Executive and I continue to be amazed by the dedication of our staff and service providers to help improve the life chances of children, young people and adult learners alike.

In the past year, we have allocated £41.4 billion to over 25,000 colleges, training providers, maintained schools (through local authorities) academies, high needs institutions and early years institutions. Giving more than 12.6 million students the chance to strive for a brighter future.

Assigning £41.4 billion was no small feat – to put this in proportion, this is more than the total GDP of some countries such as Bolivia!

This year has seen huge progress towards implementing one of the biggest school funding system changes, the [National Funding Formula](#), for well over a decade. This funding is enabling circa 8 million learners achieve and aspire through their early learning journeys.

By handling such a large funding pot, our work never stops in ensuring quality learning experiences and value for money for the public purse. An example of this work is, challenging, this year, 213 academy trusts on their highest salary awards and the tightening of the application process to the [Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers](#), to ensure better apprenticeship regulation.

Further, this year has seen the most concentrated period of structural change, since the establishment of the further education sector in 1993, with substantial college mergers and academy conversion programme. We have had 12 college mergers during 2018 and 3 sixth form colleges have converted to academies.

More apprenticeship employers are now benefiting using a transformational leading apprenticeship digital service, who were [awarded](#) a spot on the top 100 digital leaders of 2018 list.

The agency and its learning providers should all be proud of what we have achieved this year. I hope we can build upon our accomplishments to ensure we make the education and skills sector something other nations envy.

Whilst we have seen some incredible achievements, there is still a long way to go to ensure our processes are simple, straightforward and streamlined. We want our service providers to find the education and skills funding process uncomplicated and trouble-free.

Our post-16 providers are now liaising with a single team to manage contracts and allocations and our apprenticeship providers are benefitting by having a central team delivering an end-to-end service for apprenticeships, following the [Apprenticeships and Professional and Technical Education \(PTE\) teams](#)

[transfer](#) this year. Benefits of these streamlined services will continue to be realised throughout the year ahead.

In the coming year, we will establish contract managers for the largest providers to build relationships and to ensure we have better oversight on compliance with our funding rules, and data reporting to support funding and qualifications.

We will also implement a new stronger register of apprenticeship training providers and discuss with providers introducing a provider earnings cap will also ensure better oversight into providers' rapid expansions.

We also continue our work to support further education colleges for the introduction of the College Insolvency Regime, in April.

Collaboration with the further education sector is also key to building on what the [Education Secretary recently championed](#), that the vocational route is as well respected as A-levels and academic degrees. Through one voice we must ensure that sector achievements are realised to put these on an equal footing.

2019 will not be without its challenges. At a time where funding remains tight, it is more important than ever that the agency works with the education sector to ensure efficiencies can be made. One example of where findings are being realised are through a [School Resource Management Advisers](#) pilot, which has been extended recently following successfully finding over £35 million of savings and revenue generation opportunities to help schools maximise their resources and budget.

We must continue to gather insight from your experiences to make better use of our data and we must focus on the goal of making life easier for providers – so they can concentrate on the important job of educating the next generation.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the many education providers, employers and trusts I have had the pleasure of working with and I look forward to continuing this work with you throughout the year ahead."