



# **FURTHER EDUCATION RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**

**NORTHERN SKILLS NETWORK  
ROUNDTABLE – MAY 2023**

On the 25th May 2023, the Northern Skills Network (NSN) held a virtual Further Education Recruitment and Retention roundtable for NSN members facilitated by Alex Miles, NSN Co-Chair and MD of Yorkshire Learning Providers (YLP) and Charlotte Jones, Operations/Project Manager at the Greater Manchester Learning Provider Network (GMLPN). The discussion focused on the challenges the FE sector is currently facing and potential solutions.

Alex Miles, opened the session and detailed the key priorities for NSN as detailed in the manifesto published in early 2023 – [click here to read the manifesto](#).

The attendees of the roundtable welcomed input from Spencer Mehlman, Managing Director at the National Skills Agency – Specialist apprenticeship & training sector recruiters.

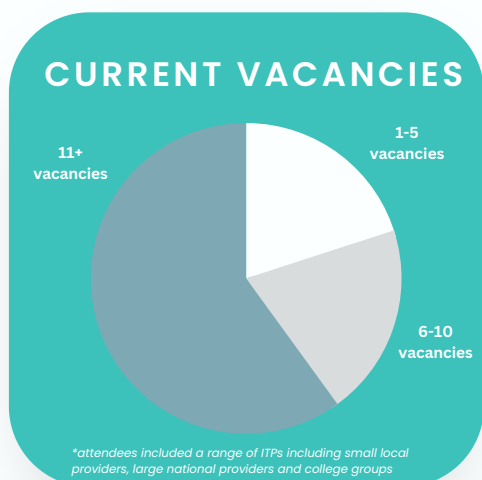
Spencer talked to the attendees about, The Challenge for FE – the current market, Key Points for Training Providers and the retention of staff – [click here to view Spencer's slides](#).

The discussion following Spencer's input included:

- **Cultural aspects** and the **opportunity for people to grow and develop** within an organisation are often becoming **more important than salary increases**,
- The potential for a **"blueprint" for recruitment and retention in FE** that would allow providers to implement aspects that work for them,
- **Teacher/tutor shortages**, and how the **good trades people are out in industry** – how do we promote the benefits of working in FE e.g. the flexibility, security, holidays, pension etc.
  - Specifically in electrical teaching/tutoring, some colleges mentioned that the **demand outweighs the supply** (of teachers/tutors) and in some cases are **having to turn learners away due to the shortage**,
  - Also, the discussion highlighted that whilst teaching qualifications could be worked towards once an individual has started... Awarding Organisations still require specific qualifications to assess/sign off qualifications. **As a sector, we need to engage Awarding Organisations in this conversation.**

# UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGE

Charlotte conducted some polling with the group which indicated:



- ### TOP 5 SECTORS
- That providers are struggling to recruit to
1. Construction  
Engineering & Manufacturing
  2. Digital
  3. Legal, Finance & Accounting
  4. Business Administration  
Transport & Logistics
  5. Education & Childcare

- ### TOP 5 ROLES
- That providers are struggling to recruit to
1. Tutor/Lecturer
  2. Trainer/Assessor
  3. Learning Support
  4. Data/IT
  5. Careers Advisor  
Marketing  
Curriculum Manager
- Other roles included Land Surveyor, Lecturer, Electrical Lecturer & Assessor, CAD Revit Lecturer, Business development and account managers, Contract and claims administrator

# 100%

of attendees stated that without solutions to the current FE Recruitment & Retention crisis, they would anticipate this would impact their curriculum offer in the future

The main reasons for staffing/recruiting challenge was that it is currently a **candidate led market**. Learning Curve Group shared that they have set up their own teaching academy to support, retrain and develop staff, other providers are utilising the Level 5 Learning and Skills Apprenticeship Standard. Whilst these solutions don't have an immediate impact, they support with succession planning.

FE providers are having to change their approach to recruiting new staff into the sector including utilising groups on LinkedIn – **could the Northern Skills Network engage with LinkedIn groups as part of a Northern Skills Campaign?** Some providers have also **utilised Taking Teaching Further (TTF)** which they have **found useful in recruiting new staff**.

Suggestions on local solutions that could support the current FE Recruitment and Retention Crisis included; pooling talent, sector marketing, Sector Based Work Academies. YLP have also launched the "become a teacher through an apprenticeship" initiative shared with local schools. Pooling talent would need to be considered with the subcontracting rules in mind – **NSN to discuss with DfE**, as well as other legal/HR implications.

# LOCAL PRACTICE

## GREATER MANCHESTER LEARNING PROVIDER NETWORK (GMLPN)

Since April 2022 GMLPN have had a working group set up with members and DWP/JCP focused on the FE Recruitment and Retention Challenge. The aim of the working group is to support GMLPN members to develop recruitment and retention best practice, to increase awareness of the FE sector with potential candidates and to develop a jobs board to host GMLPN member jobs.



The jobs board was launched with members in May 2023, for them to get their vacancies uploaded, with a wider launch with key stakeholders (potential recruitment sources e.g. JCP) in early June 2023. This is a tool to sit alongside their Awareness Raising Campaign (linking in with local initiatives e.g. JCPs over 50 campaign) and the creation of social media channels to promote FE and the roles within the GMLPN members.

[You can find out more here.](#)

## YORKSHIRE LEARNING PROVIDERS (YLP)

YLP have launched their “A Force for Education” Campaign which encourages those who are leaving the armed forces to consider moving into FE! The campaign includes an article written to showcase the FE sector and highlighting the transferable skills they have already developed that would be perfect in an FE setting.



They have also launched FE insight event series, with the first one taking place in June which all local armed forces personnel will be invited to. YLP will also be producing a database of member vacancies to promote to potential candidates through this campaign.

[You can find out more here.](#)

## NEXT STEPS

There will be a follow up NSN roundtable to continue the discussion around FE Recruitment and Retention on **27th September** – details to be shared at a later date. At this session, we will review the challenge at the start of the new academic year and understand if the same challenges still prevail. We will also provide further update on local projects and initiatives including GMLPN's & YLP's solutions.

NSN will consider the feedback and discussion from the working group including potential development of a “blueprint” or “good practice guide” for the FE Sector. As well as any further research/follow up survey's – information and updates will be cascaded through the regional provider networks.

If you have any questions, or would like a follow up discussion please e-mail: [chair@northernskillsnetwork.co.uk](mailto:chair@northernskillsnetwork.co.uk).

## LINKS

[Click here to download Kendal College's blog on FE Recruitment & Retention](#)

[Click here to view Leeds College of Building, Recruitment research project – case studies, summary and recommendations report](#)

[Click here to view the slides from the session](#)

## **The challenge for all Training providers in 2023 and beyond is the attraction & retention of PERMANENT talent.**



### **The current market:**

- The National Skills Agency estimates that there are around 8k vacancies within UK colleges and 10k+ within independent training providers.
- Persistent curriculum vacancies in construction, engineering, health & social care to name but a few.
- Covid changed the work life balance and candidate demands have changed.
- Candidate led – shortage of quality candidates across the market.
- Organisational culture is more important than ever.

### **Key points for training providers to consider:**

- Start the process as early as possible – be ahead of the game.
- Can you use a specialist recruiter at the outset?
- Be as flexible as you can re hybrid or remote working.
- Avoid closing dates – find the right person and offer!
- Put together a detailed job description highlighting holidays, benefits, pension, culture, targets etc.
- Make the interview process as short as possible – candidates may have several offers to choose from.
- Ensure salaries & benefits are in line with the market – some providers offer a “market Supplement” often around £3k.
- Consider candidates from sector with the occupational competency.
- If you make an offer – get the paperwork/email out ASAP.

### **Retaining your people is key. Losing a talented team member can cause more than just a vacancy:**

- It takes time and energy to replace them.
- Their workload is shared by the existing team – added pressure.
- Affects the general morale and sets the wrong tone.
- Their loss can also impact client relationships and have bigger implications if the transition isn't as seamless as possible.

### **A few thoughts on retention but worth reiterating:**

- Regular reviews and sensible targets.
- Team events.
- Recognise employee's hard work!
- Flexible approach to working schedules.
- Professional development opportunities.
- Promote from within if possible.
- Good communication and collaboration.

The National Skills Agency is the leading specialist permanent recruiter for the Apprenticeship & Training marketplace. We operate at very sensible rates with no retainers and our fees are only due upon success thus minimising your risk and encouraging successful outcomes for everyone.

### **Areas of specialism include:**

- Directors / Managers
- Business Development Managers
- Marketing Managers
- Trainers, Assessors, Coaches, Lecturers, Tutors
- Operations
- Curriculum Managers
- Project, Product & Programme Managers
- MIS / Compliance / Data / Quality Managers

**Do get in touch with Spencer directly to chat about challenges you face and to explore the best way forward to build the strongest possible team.**

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[Book a meeting with Spencer](#)