Policy Tracker – Keeping track of what happened in the world of education in March 2018

Main talking points
A month which has included an update on the economy from the Chancellor, lots of talk about teacher workloads, a busy National Apprenticeships Week and plenty of reports around higher education.

Key headlines from the month
• Breakfast clubs. Government uses soft drinks levy funding to extend the reach
• Academy trusts. Government shifts trusts on to 3-year budget planning cycle
• Alternative provision. Government launches new review and new fund
• School finances. EPI report highlights extent of the problem
• Troops to Teachers. Government announces new bursary scheme for this September
• Teacher retention. Government announces range of measures
• Teachers as examiners. Ofqual consults on stronger regulatory arrangements
• Returning teachers. Government announces new pilot scheme
• Accountability. NAHT launches major new review
• 16-19. Government confirms internal funding review
• T levels. Government outlines some next steps for providers
• Apprenticeships. Chancellor confirms funding to help small businesses
• Subcontracting. FE bodies issue good practice guidelines
• JISC. Moving to a subscription service for FE providers in England from August 2019
• College funding. The AoC spells it out ahead of the Spring Statement
• Millennial rail cards. Small-scale launch begins
• Youth employment. PM launches new programme of action
• National Retraining Scheme. Government and others start to consider the format
• Devolved adult education budgets. Government spells out how much it’s putting on the table
• Online undergrad degree. University of London teams up with Coursera to offer first one
• Subject level TEF. Government launches consultation
• Uni places. HEPI scopes out future trends in demand over the next decade
• Post-18 Funding Review. Review Group launches call for evidence

Policy Tracker on what happened in March 2018. Policy Watches are intended to help colleagues keep up to date with national developments. Information is correct at the time of writing and is offered in good faith. No liability is accepted for decisions made on the basis of information given.
Reports/Publications of the month (in order of publication)

- **Access to special schools in England.** The Education Policy Institute finds those who need to attend special schools often have to travel much further than those who attend mainstream schools

- **Primary school accountability.** The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) puts forward a number of recommendations including using a wider range of measures over a longer period

- **The monitoring, inspection and funding of Learndirect Ltd.** The Public Accounts Committee publishes the results of its inquiry into Learndirect raising a number of concerns about ‘big’ companies

- **Apprenticeships: a parents’ guide.** The Association for Project Management spells it out for parents complete with case studies and summary basics

- **UK participation in Horizon 2020.** The government confirms that it will continue to support UK participation in this leading EU science and innovation programme for the duration of projects

- **T levels: next steps.** The government outlines what lies ahead for providers including some further announcements in May and the launch of a number of readiness surveys over coming months

- **Alternative higher education providers.** The Public Accounts Committee highlights continuing concerns over student retention and financial controls in a new report on alternative providers

- **Subcontracting guidance.** Three leading FE sector organisations issue best practice guidance on contract management, fee levels and quality monitoring for training and skills providers

- **Future Focus.** UCAS sets out a strategy to 2020 designed to be more aligned to user needs and responsive to current changes in the higher education sector

- **Global Parents’ Survey.** The Varkey Foundation reports on its extensive survey of parental attitudes towards education across 29 countries finding those in the UK generally happy with most aspects

- **Delivering on the promise of the 2014 National Curriculum.** John Blake, education lead at the Policy Exchange think tank calls for more quality learning resources to take the pressure off teachers

- **Teaching Excellence Framework.** The government launches consultation on the metrics to be used to rate teaching quality and outcomes at a subject level

- **Factors affecting teacher retention.** The DfE publishes commissioned research showing that workload remains the main cause of teachers wishing to leave the profession

- **College finances.** The Association of Colleges (AoC) submit their thoughts ahead of the Chancellor’s Spring Statement pointing to financial health deteriorating in some colleges

- **Value for money.** The Office for Students reports on a commissioned survey on how higher ed students perceive value for money finding the quality of teaching and resources featuring highly

- **Shaping the National Retraining Scheme.** The Campaign for Learning and NCFE investigate what form the National Retraining Scheme should take in a new report

- **Economic and fiscal outlook.** The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) issues its latest outlook report on the economy pointing to a slight increase in short-term growth but little change beyond that

- **Integrated Communities.** The government issues a consultative Green Paper to help build more integrated communities proposing a range of measures including housing, schools and ESOL
• The early years workforce. The Education Policy Institute highlights low status, low pay and a downward trend in qualification levels in its survey of the early years workforce

• Forgotten learners. The Million Plus group of modern universities calls for maintenance grants to be restored among other measures to help reverse a decline in mature and part-time learners

• Teachers as examiners. Ofqual consults on new measures to help prevent problems when teachers also act as developers of exam and assessment materials

• Leading together. Teach First launches a new initiative with the DfE and ‘lead’ schools to help provide training and support for teachers hoping to become school leaders

• The Lost Part-Timers. The Sutton Trust charts the decline of part-time students and calls among other things for the issue to be tackled as part of the new post-18 funding review

• Demand for HE to 2030. The HE Policy Institute (HEPI) assesses the impact of increased participation and demography suggesting 300,000 more places will be needed in English HE by 2030

• The Future Landscape for Technical and Professional Education (TPE.) The Collab Group and consultancy PublicCo scope out the potential future landscape and implications for TPE

• School funding pressures in England. The Education Policy Institute highlights the number of state schools in deficit suggesting many will struggle to meet the costs of any new pay award

• Creating Opportunity For All. The government sets out its vision for Alternative Provision in schools as it launches a major review of the extent of the issue and how best to tackle it

• Exclusions Review: Call for Evidence. The government launches a call for evidence from both practitioners and pupils to help inform the recently announced Timpson Review

• Resilience of Students with an Immigrant Background. The OECD reports on their performance and wellbeing, finding them doing well in UK education but not always happy with life

• Bercow: Ten Years On. The Group looking into young people’s speech, language and communication needs, chaired by John Bercow, reviews progress 10 years on from its major report

• How do teachers compare to nurses and police officers? The NFER reports that teachers work as long hours and their average pay has fallen but generally are satisfied with their lot

• SATs procedures for summer 2018. The Standards and Testing Agency publishes its latest set of admin guidance and arrangements for this year’s SATs tests

• Call for evidence. The review group, supporting the government’s major review of Post – 18 funding, launches a call for evidence by 2 May 2018 under the four core themes of its remit

• Adult education budget. The Education and Skills Funding Agency publishes Version1 of the broadly unchanged funding rates and formula for August 2018 – July 2019

• The Future of the Social Mobility Commission. The Education Committee calls on the government to appoint a Cabinet Minister to lead on the issue with a new Commission to focus on social justice

Speeches of the month

• Damian Hinds 10 March ASCL speech focuses primarily on the issue of teacher workload and how this is being tackled but also confirms there’ll be no new curriculum changes during this Parliament
• Amanda Spielman’s 10 March ASCL speech also tackles the issue of teacher workload and sets out what Ofsted is doing from its side
• The Chancellor’s 13 March Spring Statement speech spells out the latest position on the economy and announces a few developments including a new Spending Review being lined up for 2019
• Anne Milton’s 14 March AoC College Governors Summit speech praises the work of governors and announces that new guidance is on the way

Quotes of the month
• “Conservatives created the GCSE, the National Curriculum and Free Schools” – the Prime Minister tells the Party’s Spring Forum what the Conservatives have done for education
• “Our tech sector is attracting skills and capital from the four corners of the earth, producing world-class products including apps like TransferWise, CityMapper and Matt Hancock” – the Chancellor joins in the fun about the Digi Minister in his Spring Statement
• “It’s so compelling that other universities will have to follow” – the CEO of the online course platform Coursera on its new link-up with the University of London
• “In the age of the student, universities will no longer be able to hide if their teaching quality is not up to the world-class standard we expect” – the HE Minister launches consultation on new subject level performance measures
• “It is one of the great unsolved issues in our schools” – the Education Secretary singles out teacher workload as the big it
• “We are trying to make sure that the process of inspections is as painless as possible” – the Chief Inspector offers her support on trying to reduce teacher workload
• “By 2019/20, about half of schools will be in the impossible position of having to choose between a 1% pay rise for their teachers or being pushed further into deficit” – the Lib Dems respond to a think tank report on school funding
• “Children spend longer in primary school than most governments spend in office” – the ASCL President calls for less chopping and changing around education policy making
• “I have confidence that we can come up with an alternative vision for accountability that everyone can all have faith in” – the National Association of Head Teachers launches a commission on accountability
• “Relationships and sex are good gifts of God and should bring joy” – the Church of England responds to the government consultation on Relationships and Sex Education

Word or phrase of the month
• ‘Forecasts are there to be beaten.’ The Chancellor in his Spring Statement but perhaps apt for other areas of public policy as well

Steve Besley
Head of Policy @SteveBesley

Policy Tracker on what happened in March 2018. Policy Watches are intended to help colleagues keep up to date with national developments. Information is correct at the time of writing and is offered in good faith. No liability is accepted for decisions made on the basis of information given.