

RE: Further Education Additional Funding 2025–2026

On behalf of the Northern Skills Network, we welcome your recent announcement of an additional £160 million to support 16 to 19 education providers, particularly in the context of recruiting and retaining expert teachers in high-value subjects. This recognition of the vital role that Further Education (FE) Colleges play in our economy and society is both timely and appreciated.

However, we are disappointed to note that, once again, Independent Training Providers (ITPs) have not been included in this additional funding package. ITPs are a fundamental part of the skills system and make a significant contribution to local economies and skills development across the North and beyond. Many ITPs deliver 16-19 provision to those young people who a FE College setting is not the right environment for them to succeed. There has been recent investment for more ITPs to deliver Study Programme provision to support the rising number of NEETs across our Northern towns and cities. Their exclusion from this investment undermines their role and potential in helping to address skills shortages and support economic growth.

We believe that the continued omission of ITPs in funding decisions does not reflect the reality on the ground, where these providers are delivering high-quality training to thousands of learners—often in partnership with local employers and communities. ITPs are integral to delivering apprenticeships, study programmes, traineeships and other vital programmes that support disadvantaged learners and provide pathways into priority sectors such as construction, engineering, and digital.

We urge the Department for Education to reconsider the scope of its funding allocations and ensure that ITPs are equitably supported alongside colleges. A genuinely inclusive and effective skills system requires recognition and investment across all provider types.

We would welcome the opportunity to engage further with the Department to explore how this can be achieved and how ITPs can be more effectively integrated into future funding decisions and strategic planning.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to improving education and skills in our country. We look forward to working with you to ensure that all providers, including ITPs, can continue to deliver the skills that our learners, communities, and employers need.

Yours sincerely,
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