

FETN Quarterly Newsletter

October 2025

Welcome to the October Edition of the FETN Newsletter

As the new academic year is well underway, our Autumn edition focuses on the opportunities, challenges, and innovations shaping tutorial, personal tutoring, and broader student development across the FE sector.

In this issue, we cover:

- Sector Updates in Practice
- Member News
- FETN Updates
- Spotlight On
- Hot Topic
- In the Next Edition

We hope this edition sparks reflection and prompts you to think critically about your own provision: what's working well, what needs to evolve, and how employer and student voices can continue to shape your approaches.

Sector Updates in Practice

Funding Boosts and FE Sector Pressures:

What this means for Tutorial

The government has pledged £275 million to support technical training and apprenticeships, including new short courses in AI, digital manufacturing, and green technologies. For tutorial leaders, this investment provides both opportunities and challenges:

- How can tutorial provision better prepare students for these growth areas?
- Could tutorials embed awareness of emerging industries to give learners context and aspiration beyond their main qualification?

At the same time, many colleges face significant budget shortfalls. These financial pressures risk reducing tutorial budgets, staffing capacity, and enrichment opportunities.

- How can tutorial teams remain innovative when resources are stretched?
- What creative low-cost/no-cost approaches could be shared across the network?

Finally, T-Levels continue to struggle with uptake (just 3% of 16-year-olds nationally). Dropout rates highlight concerns about student readiness, placement quality, and support.

- What role can tutorial and personal tutoring play in improving retention and success for T-Level learners?

- How can we ensure parity of esteem between vocational, academic and wider-skill development pathways in the support we provide?
- What best practice is out there to support the sector in their models for industry placement and work experience?

The QSAs are a perfect way of objectively reviewing provision and approaches in these areas. You can find out more on our [Quality Standard Accreditation](#) webpage.

Member News

Colleges Respond with Creativity and Resilience

Despite financial constraints, members are reporting inspiring innovations:

- AI and Digital Integration: Some providers are running employer-led sessions in tutorials focused on AI, digital literacy, and future workforce needs.
- Induction Reimagined: Colleges are embedding employer insight into induction programmes, ensuring students hear about career pathways at the very start of their journey.
- Shared Mentorship Models: Cross-institution initiatives are pooling mentors across colleges or using alumni volunteers to reduce cost while boosting authenticity.

Questions for you:

- How is your college using induction and early tutorial sessions to set the tone for employability and progression?
- Have you found ways to engage alumni or small businesses as a cost-effective resource?

- Would you be open to contributing a short case study for our December newsletter?

Send your stories to leebarrett@fetn.org.uk – your peers are eager to learn from you.

Best Practice: Life Talks - Heart of Yorkshire Group

For the past two years, the Heart of Yorkshire Group has worked with local rehabilitation centres Reflections and GASPED to deliver Life Talks – powerful tutorial sessions that bring to life the real impact of drug and alcohol misuse.

The initiative was carefully designed in partnership, with only those who had successfully completed rehabilitation and were ready to re-engage with work invited to speak. DBS checks and risk assessments were built into the process, with safeguarding officers and wellbeing staff on hand during every session.

Delivered through the GOALS tutorial programme, all 16–19 year-olds on full-time study programmes attend a one-hour talk. Each session features two speakers who share their journeys openly – from addiction and its consequences, such as family breakdown, loss of employment and homelessness, through to recovery and rebuilding their lives. Students are given clear content warnings, the option to leave, and immediate access to support if needed.

The impact has been striking. Students often sit in silence, visibly moved by the honesty of the stories, and many spontaneously applaud the speakers. They ask thoughtful questions and reflect on how the experiences shared relate to their own lives. One speaker explained: “If I can help just one young person make the right decision, it has all been worth it.” A student commented: “I have

friends who think it's a laugh to smoke weed, but I know now it isn't. I'm going to talk to them about what I've heard today as I don't want my friends to end up like that."

Life Talks has not only provided a platform for those in recovery to give back but has also made a tangible difference to young people's understanding of risk, choices and consequences.

To share your good practice or nominate a colleague for a future feature, email us at info@fetn.org.uk.

FETN Updates

New Tools, Events and Opportunities to Shape the Conversation

Annual Conference Friday 28th November 2025

We are delighted to confirm that Paul Blakey MBE, Founder and CEO of Street Angels will be providing the Keynote at our Annual Tutorial Conference on Friday 28th November at the Crowne Plaza Royal Victoria Hotel in Sheffield. Paul was awarded an MBE for his contribution to Community Safety in 2010.

The Annual FETN Conference brings together a range of exhibitors, sector-leading speakers, and practical breakout sessions. This year's themes include:

- Speak Your Mind: rethinking student voice for real impact in FE
- Making It Matter: strategies for powerful group tutorials in a changing world

- Understanding Gambling Through Lived Experience: how to protect young people
- Building a Positive Safeguarding Culture: self-care, communication, and creating attractive institutions on the frontline
- Embedding social action and community projects for wider skills development
- Recent changes to the funding of young people and adults in England: implications for the delivery of high-quality tutorial support
- Tutorial: Its value to you, your learners and your organisation
- An update on the development of a dedicated training programme for Personal Tutors
- Out with the old – in with the new: understanding the intergenerational differences in today's learning environments
- Harnessing funding, data and evidence to improve outcomes

To book your place at this friendly, popular event please visit the [FETN Annual Conference Page](#)

Forthcoming CPD Hot Topics

We are currently developing a short CPD series on emerging hot topics for colleges. Areas under consideration include:

- Supporting students with mental health needs in tutorial settings
- Low-cost induction redesigns with high impact
- PREVENT and digital extremism – staying ahead of new threats
- Building resilience into personal tutoring under budget pressure

Would you like to suggest a hot topic that matters most to you and your team? Get in touch—we want this programme to directly respond to member needs.

New Online Member Collaboration Space Coming Soon

We are in the final testing phase for our new collaborative space at fetn.org.uk, allowing members to share queries, download content, post ideas and troubleshoot challenges with peers across the country — no more waiting for email replies! Details of how to use the new online forum will be sent to members shortly.

Spotlight On

Employer Engagement in Turbulent Times

Amid funding pressures, colleges are finding new, cost-efficient ways to engage employers in tutorial:

- Micro-Projects: Employers set short challenges for students (e.g. design a social media campaign, draft a customer response) to be completed in tutorial sessions.
- SME Engagement: Local small businesses are stepping up as guest speakers, offering realistic, relatable insight into everyday workplace skills, often being very insightful as in lots of areas in the country it is likely our learners will be working for a small or medium sized employer
- Alumni Storytelling: Ex-students in industry are contributing virtually or in person, sharing their authentic career journeys, importance of the core skills needed for success, and how it feels to be 'next steps ready'.

Reflection prompts:

- Which employers in your area could be involved in smaller, lighter-touch ways?

- How could you mobilise alumni voices into tutorials more effectively?
- How do you measure the impact of employer contributions on student confidence and readiness?

Hot Topic

Equity in Careers Guidance and Tutorial

The DfE recently highlighted persistent gaps in careers guidance provision for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Students with fewer social connections and less access to industry experience are at risk of reduced employability outcomes.

Tutorial provision can and should address these equity gaps. Some leading practices include:

- Structured careers conversations in 1:1s, ensuring every student has consistent, high-quality guidance.
- Using tutorial to connect learners with role models from diverse backgrounds.
- Embedding aspiration-building activities in tutorial (goal-setting, employer visits, alumni mentors).

Questions for reflection:

- Are you confident that disadvantaged students in your setting receive the same level of exposure to careers and employers as their peers?
- What data or feedback do you use to identify and address equity gaps?
- Could your tutorial programme be the “leveller” that ensures no student misses out on opportunity?

In The Next Edition

Our December edition will look ahead to 2026 with a strong focus on:

Spotlight On: NEET Prevention & Adult Learner Motivation – strategies to prevent drop-out and sustain re-engagement.

Curriculum Mapping for EDI: Making tutorial part of your institutional inclusion strategy.

Digital Tools for Reflection and Progression: The best platforms and practices for self-assessment and progress tracking.

Member-Led Q&A: We will respond the questions you send in.

We want your input. What questions, challenges, or case studies would you like to share? Email leebarrett@fetn.org.uk

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