

## Blame or betterment: Improving regulation and oversight in the FE system

*A new paper from FETL reviews the impact of the regulatory system in further education, and asks how it can improve*

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The Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL) has published a third report in its series on shame and shaming and their impact on further education leadership. While the previous reports looked, respectively, at shame in organisational life and the impact of shame on individual leaders, this report explores the regulatory system within which providers operate and asks whether the prevailing system, with its tendency to focus blame on institutions and individuals, is conducive to sector improvement, and, ultimately, better teaching and learning.

*Blame or betterment? Regulation and intervention in further education*, written by Stephen Exley, former TES Further

Education Editor, and commissioned by FETL, combines analysis of government data and interviews with further education leaders in evaluating what obstacles stand in the way of a genuinely 'self-improving' system and how they might be overcome. His thoughtful analysis reveals leaders' experience of regulation to be highly varied, with some finding it overbearing and 'terrifying' and others praising its 'light touch' and 'generosity'.

Dame Ruth Silver, President of FETL, said: 'Stephen's paper highlights the importance of communication and the need for different parts of the system to talk to each other. I would second this. There is a general need for better communication, between regulators and providers, between providers and government, and among providers and their leaders. We need regulators that understand the sector and we need a sector that trusts the regulatory system they work within to deliver fair, informed judgments and reasoned and reasonable

critique. We also need to ensure that when things go wrong, there is support, including peer-to-peer support, and that leaders are not afraid to acknowledge vulnerability and ask for help, as, very sadly, many are.

'With further education firmly under the policy microscope and major new initiatives and announcements in the offing, including a much-anticipated new White Paper, this report could not be timelier. It has much to say about the past and much sense to offer the future.'

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