

# MY VIRTUAL COLLEGE

# CONGRATULATIONS DR PAUL



## **Andrew Leighton-Price** **Chair of Governors**

As the Chair of Governors, I wanted to take a moment to formally congratulate Dr Paul on his recent national and international awards for exceptional leadership shown within Further Education.

As some of you may know last Friday (traditionally known as Black Friday) was officially renamed Silver and Gold Friday as far as governors were concerned, with Dr Paul receiving GOLD in the Pearson National Teaching Awards in the category of Lifetime Achievement. Some of you may have seen this announced live on the BBC's One Show last Friday, to recognise his dedication to progressing SEND learners, his commitment to positive mental health, his transformation of the College (and skills development for regional growth) and his commitment to advancing prison education.

The same day, he also received a SILVER award at the World Federation of Colleges and Polytechnics annual Awards of Excellence ceremony (held virtually from Canada), in the category of Leadership within Student Services. Once again this was for the ethos that he has created of an individualised approach and the level of outstanding support that is offered to students, as well as recognising his strategic work around the SEND Centre of Excellence and his significant investment made in mental health and welfare services. Details of the award ceremony is here <https://wfcp.org/activities/awards-of-excellence/>

Therefore, as the Chair of Governors - I also wanted to take this opportunity to thank each and everyone of you for making his ethos become a reality and to say last Friday was a very proud day for the College to receive such high acclaim both nationally - and for the first time internationally.

So on behalf of all the Governors, thank you once again for your incredible hard work shown on a daily basis for our students - with exceptional grit and determination and pulling together as a team throughout COVID-19.

You should all be very proud of the reputation you have collectively developed and I know Dr Paul is the first to acknowledge that his success is only made possible by the brilliant staff both here at Weston and also by the brilliant staff working at distance within our prisons.

# REFLECTIONS ON 2020 THROUGH THE ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT TEAM LENS

WENDY SLADE

Helping our graduates to grow Our Academic Development Team at UCW (Mardi, Hannah and Wendy) have always taken a very hands-on, practical and person-centred approach to supporting students with their transition in to HE study. Our face-to-face delivery ranges from Headstart summer workshops involving vocal biscuit debates (to teach new students the art of critical thinking), to HE.LP Assignment workshops with Pomodoro timers, Lego kits and annotated room-length scrolls (to encourage live action and prompt feedback). Our 1-2-1 support appointments allow us time to unpick student concerns or queries, provide scaffolded content and signposted resources to encourage and motivate them along their learner journey - whatever their course, site or level. Our student and staff mental wellbeing activities hosted with LibraryPlus colleagues, have previously included Christmas decoration workshops, international language and food evenings, sunflower drawing and seed planting lunchtimes - all of which have contributed to a sense of community and peer support.

Looking beyond bubble trouble In a time where cross-bubble working is not possible, we've had to explore alternate ways of being virtually visible, accessible, and responsive to our students. Having piloted digital tools over the last few years, we were in a strong position to flick the digital switch overnight in March. We've since grasped many digital nettles (been stung by some) and reaped the benefits of others, such as: SharePoint site with 24/7 access to Academic Skills resources, Homeworking Hub blog Bookings app for daily 1-2-1 support appointments Teams tools try-outs to increase digital confidence Scaffolded hybrid Assignment workshops Programme of StudyHub Online workshops We've benefitted from attending a variety of webinars across our professional community, which have not only developed our own CPD skills, but have put us in the position of learners in a digital world. This has allowed us to reflect on and review the service we offer our students at UCW (which, by the way, is looking pretty student-centred and accessible compared to some other big institutions out there). We also owe thanks to many of our support colleagues and curriculum peers for sharing best practice and enabling partnership opportunities - all of which have contributed to our renowned multi-agency approach to supporting students.

The future- from seeds to sunflowers As academic practitioners, our greatest desire is to see our students' confidence and skills grow throughout their journey with us. This is dependent on a two-way relationship that we've traditionally built through our face-to-face support offer. We've felt challenged by the one-way surveillance mirror feel a quiet Teams meeting can create. We've spent hours exploring ways to build trust and encourage participants to actively engage in new environments. Isolation is hard, but we never underestimate the power of a smile on camera, an emoji wave or a short chat response as a means of saying "You've got this" or "It's normal to worry about that". Uptake in our new support offers is growing. When you get to the end of the week knowing you've supported 20 students you wouldn't have seen without having created and tried new strategies, you know the odd sting along the way has been worthwhile. I am reassured that our team and many others like us have planted many virtual seeds which we will continue to incubate and water in our Weston community throughout periods of remote delivery. As we all take our reflections, new skills and resilience into 2021, I am positive that we will get to see a unique bloom of real and virtual flourishing sunflowers.

# EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT ACTION GROUP UPDATES

## Jayne Griffiths

Ø ATALIANA SERVEST – Cleaning employer. Tom Copsey “We chose to work with Weston College as Sharon from Bridgwater highly recommended them. Brian went out of his way to bespoke a course around what we were looking for so proceeded to give it a try. Both the job centre and the College soon recruited and the course was delivered with us engaging with tours of the site and interviews. All 10 on the course were interviewed with 8 getting job offers which they accepted. We decided to run another course as we needed more team members which was again another great success. More planned for the new year.”

Ø Steve From Atlas Security Yeovil

“I would highly recommend a SWAP (Sector-based Work Academy Programme) to every employer looking to engage with new employees as Weston College have been amazing, they have taken the hassle out of the recruitment process by working directly with the job centres and getting trained staff for us. The interview process was easy and we have gained some very proactive staff members – Thank you”

## Louise Greene

Ø Working with Sedgemoor District Council to develop digital skills (IT Upskilling).

Ø Our T-Level offer went to the Assistant Directors of Sedgemoor so are awaiting confirmation that they wish to progress forward with Industry Placements.

Ø Sedgemoor are also very interested in ILM Level 2 Fast Track funded via AEB.

Ø Alliance employee signed up for the L2 ILM Fast Track within hours of the site going live.

## Dave Crew

Ø Partnership agreed with Bristol 24/7 to profile Traineeships - Emma Hutchins working with Bristol 24/7 regarding employer engagement. Press release live today - New Bristol traineeship programme launched to help tackle youth unemployment

Ø Feedback from Finance Industry Advisory Board - “Weston College are very visible!”

Ø Natwest have agreed to be ‘tech mentors’ for the Spacebar students!

Ø St Monica Trust have agreed to be an employer partner for a Sector Based Work Academy programme! (WECA AEB)

Ø Some great work happening in the background with Lucy Pope and Marketing - to rebrand our digital/tech provision so we are seen as THE destination for tech talent. More info to follow...

Ø Nursing Associate accreditation now secured!! Major news for the health training at Weston College

Ø Insights from Industry will be a ‘brand’ for employer events at Weston College in 2021 - online events can be recorded and uploaded to the website, providing a resource for learners. Why can’t we live stream employer events/interviews into classrooms? Of course we can! <https://www.weston.ac.uk/covidrecovery>

## Anna Carey

Ø Now have a West of England Works Employer engagement champions group, with 9 partnership members attending the first meeting, lots of passion and now a clear offer and ask.

# EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT ACTION GROUP UPDATES

## Heidi Oliver

Ø We're currently working with Bristol Port Authority Avonmouth on a significant amount of commercial Warehousing and Plant work (20-30 weeks) leading into the new year.

## Joe Smith

Ø The Fast Track ILM Level 2 Certificate in Team Leading is now live and enrolments are coming in.

[Link - Team Leading \(Fast Track\), ILM Certificate | Weston College](#)

## Simon Werkshagen

Ø Myself and Heidi now also working with pre-employment to find CTC customers that could sponsor a SWAP (Sector-based Work Academy Programme), specifically WECA employers

## Lauren Squibb

Ø BAM 'Hot Topic' Cafes and mentoring have started to be delivered for Construction learners, with prospects of sponsoring our T Level

## Joe Abdulgani

Ø UCW - I am working with Mark Barnett and the team to support the development of new digital programmes, with new level 4 apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships in the pipeline. We are also look to extend the Digital and Technologies solutions degree apprenticeships to offer a wider range of specialist pathways.

## Heidi Pople

Ø Currently working with Bristol Waste Company on various aspects of up-grading employees both in areas of logistics and mechanical handling equipment.

Ø Police and Fire Brigade utilising the logistics training facilities at the CTC which has continued throughout lockdown with testing being provided by their own delegated examiner.

Ø Fire Brigade continuing to book LGV driver training through to March 2021.

## Simon Bone

Ø Press release being produced to showcase our collaboration with Natwest Accelerator. Positive exposure for IP agenda.

Ø Project with Puxton Park to give students an opportunity to take part/manage/construct a build project on their site are currently being discussed and progressing well.

## Josh Herrington

Ø Skills Survey now live. Early results show management and digital skills are in demand from employers for 2021. .



# OUR FEATURE IN

# Business Leader

ADVERTORIAL



## TRAINING SOLUTIONS

### DELIVERING TECH TALENT FOR INDUSTRY

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic causing significant disruption to businesses this year, the technology sector continues to thrive in city regions across the South West. For example in Bristol, tech has overtaken engineering as the fastest-growing industry with more than \$1bn invested in the city since 2014. According to research by Tech Nation and job search engine Adzuna, the average salary in Bristol is £51k which is £15k higher than the average salary in the city, and recently there were 1,965 IT-related job openings, the highest of any industry in the city region. 430 tech companies now operate in Bristol employing over 8,000 people.

It's important to also note that the pandemic is spurring tech adoption across all sectors, from health, retail and agriculture, as we evolve the way we operate and do business. Data from the 2020 Transformation with Tech report by Lloyds Bank confirmed that almost half (48%) of businesses stated that they would have ceased trading in 2020 had they not used technology during COVID-19. This equates to roughly 2.7 million businesses across the UK. 11% have set up ecommerce since March, more businesses are using cloud software and analytics capabilities. More than half of businesses have been influenced to invest in tech, but three-quarters need help with digitisation.

However, the issue of having a pipeline of skilled people entering tech roles remains critical. Tech may present many job openings in cluster regions in the South West, but competition for talent is an ever-present for employers.

Education providers, including Weston College, are certainly rising to the challenge to deliver tech talent ready for industry, and support businesses with the digital agenda.

The new T Level course, a skills-focused alternative to A Levels designed by industry, is now live at Weston College with students preparing to enter tech roles. Weston

College are one of a handful of education providers in the country offering this course. The T Level training route includes students spending time on an industry placement in a business for 315 hours alongside their course, applying their skills and providing an extra pair of hands for employers.

In addition, degree apprenticeships in digital technology continue to grow in numbers as students choose the work based route and employers see four years degree level training which is 95% funded by the government as an attractive option.

Precision Dippings Manufacturing Ltd, a manufacturing business in Bristol have recently offered a degree apprenticeship in digital technology. Kate Green, Director at POM said "We are a Bristol-based rubber manufacturing business and are proud of having won a Queen's Award for Enterprise for Innovation in 2016 and another for International trade in 2019. We decided to recruit a digital and technology solutions degree apprentice because, knowing innovation is key to company growth, we wanted someone on our team who could specialise in digital analysis and help

us with our e-commerce plans. We're delighted with the very positive impact the apprenticeship has made – especially during the pandemic when online sales have never been more important."

Dave Crew, Head of Employer Partnerships at Weston College said "We're now seeing employers from across the South West recognise Weston College as a destination for tech talent. Close alignment with industry continues to evolve, and in early 2021 we launch new apprenticeships in Cyber Security and Data Analytics, responding to demand from employers."

For further information, email [employers@weston.ac.uk](mailto:employers@weston.ac.uk)

#### NEW FOR 2021!

APPRENTICESHIPS IN CYBER SECURITY AND DATA ANALYTICS

ACCESS UP TO £3K IN GOVERNMENT INCENTIVES TO HIRE AN APPRENTICE BY THE END OF MARCH

CONTACT: [EMPLOYERS@WESTON.AC.UK](mailto:EMPLOYERS@WESTON.AC.UK)



# SUCCESS STORIES

## SANDRA BULL

**Lovely feedback from a nursery last week after receiving our Faculty certificates designed to thank them for their support with our learners.**

"We have enjoyed having Grace with us and she is fantastic. She has built lovely relationships with the staff team and with the children. I am more than happy for Grace to return here after the Christmas period and resume her placement. I have already spoken to Grace about this and I have offered her the chance to come up to my baby room here at GV and have a different age group experience."

## EMMA HOYAL

I've received fantastic feedback from another colleague regarding Nigel Halliday's practice. We are so pleased to be working with Nigel and the impact he is having on learner progressions is clear to see.

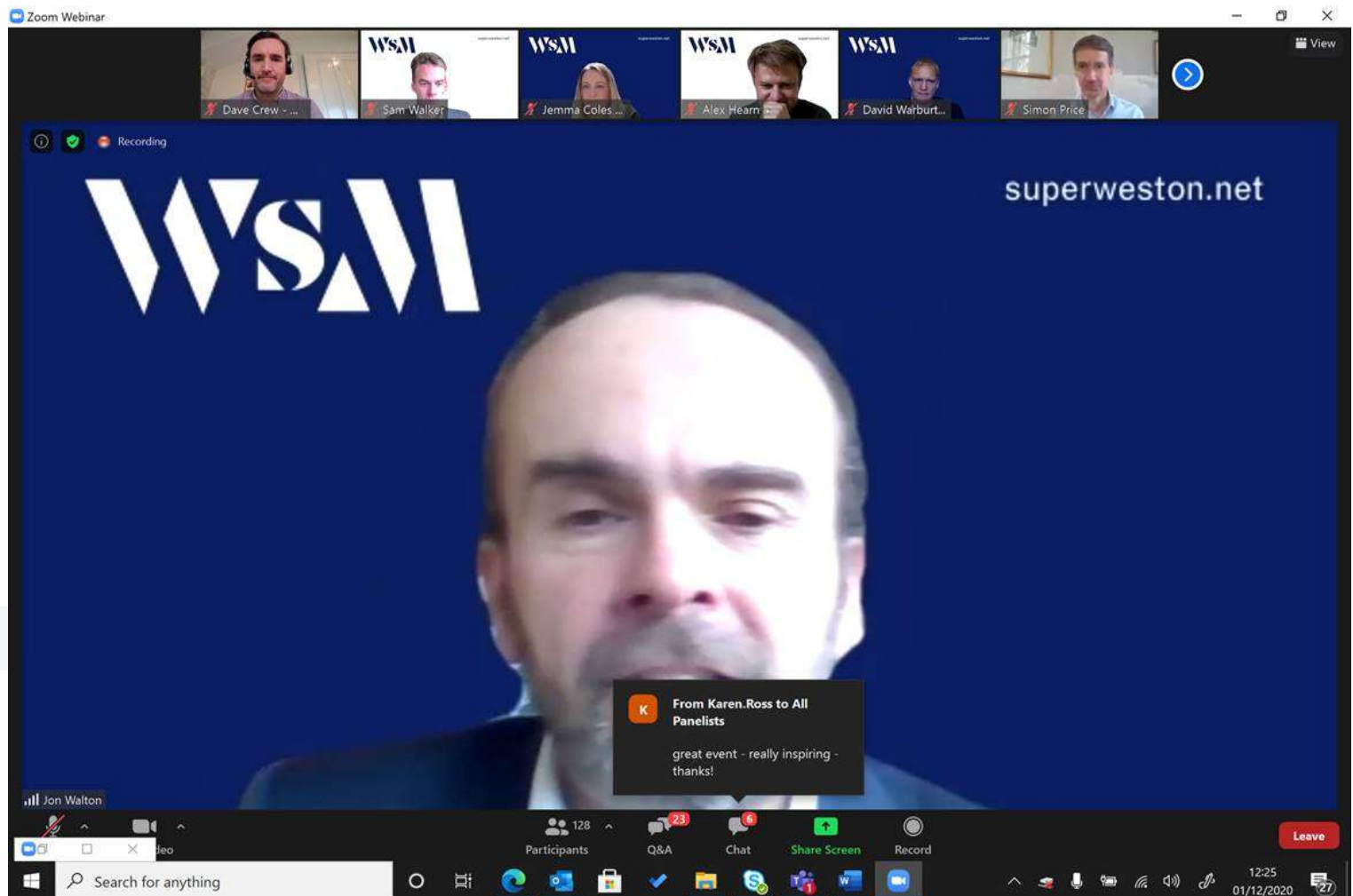
"A JSA Work Coach at Weston JCP contacted me to provide positive feedback that she had received from one of her claimants, whom Nigel signed up on SSU. She said that the learner was "buzzing" after her appointment with Nigel, "singing his praises" and no longer felt as though she was "on the scrap heap". This also resulted in an additional referral from this Work Coach for our team."

## SARAH SMITH

This was received from an HE learner, talking about the blended delivery he has experienced:

"Andreas has a really good online method of having an interactive Powerpoint display at the same time as a facial display and audio set up so we can hear him clearly and feel we're part of the whole lesson through out. I am aware it is different set up in different classes but if there was a way that a similar online set up could be replicated for other lessons it would make it much easier from an online learning perspective."

# WESTON PLACE AGENCY LAUNCH



**DAVE CREW**

A focus for Business Growth is ensuring the College continues to influence key initiatives happening in and around Weston so we can create opportunities for our learners. I attended the Weston Place Agency launch on the 1st of December and spoke about the growth and ethos of the College, and how we're supporting businesses in the town including the new Spacebar (tech hub) in the Sovereign Centre being driven by Lauren Squibb. The Place Agency, officially launched on the 1st of December, will drive a new vision for the town, based on collaboration to ensure Weston is a positive place to live, work and visit.



# MOMENTUM

## SUPPORT FOR STAFF AND LEARNERS AT CHRISTMAS

**BEN KNOCKS**



**We are going to be launching a branded ‘Let’s Chat @ Christmas’ package for learners and staff that will include the following:**

- Ø 11 x 20-30 minute videos on key topics around mental health and wellbeing
- Ø The Four Pillars of Eat, Sleep, Move and Relax
- Ø 7 of the key themes that are affecting staff and students today (results are from a survey we went out)
- Ø Anxiety, Stress, Social-isolation, Resilience and more
- Ø Information on TogetherAll
- Ø 24/7 online support
- Ø Mental Health and Wellbeing Directory
- Ø Comprehensive list of all support that learners/staff can access during the holidays

We are aiming to release this via the launch of the Let’s Chat website on Monday 14th December. If there is any delay in the website launch, we will be launching the support package via the College’s YouTube channel.

We think this is going to be a fantastic resource for the Christmas break at such a critical time.

# SHOUT OUT ON FE WEEK'S THREAD

## FE WEEK



### Thread

FEW

**FE Week** @FEWeek · 1h

...

We'll be livetweeting [@CommonsPAC's](#) hearing on Managing colleges' financial sustainabilit'y', due to start at 10am. Follow our tweets, or watch it for yourself [parliamentlive.tv/event/index/45...](#)



1



2



6 more replies

FEW

**FE Week** @FEWeek · 37m

...

Largest movement in this has been from "outstanding" to "good"



1



FEW

**FE Week** @FEWeek · 36m

...

Number of colleges who have issues on colleges is about 64, Atkinson said



1



FEW

**FE Week** @FEWeek · 35m

...

"Quite a significant chunk," Blake says. How many colleges have used that funding this year?

Atkinson says they will spend around £70m this year



1



FEW

**FE Week** @FEWeek · 35m

...

"More than we thought," he said.



1



FEW

**FE Week** @FEWeek · 33m

...

Milner says colleges have been "very adept" from moving to online learning during full lockdown, calls example set by [@westoncollege](#) and [@GillianKeegan's](#) own [@Chi\\_College](#) "outstanding"



1



1

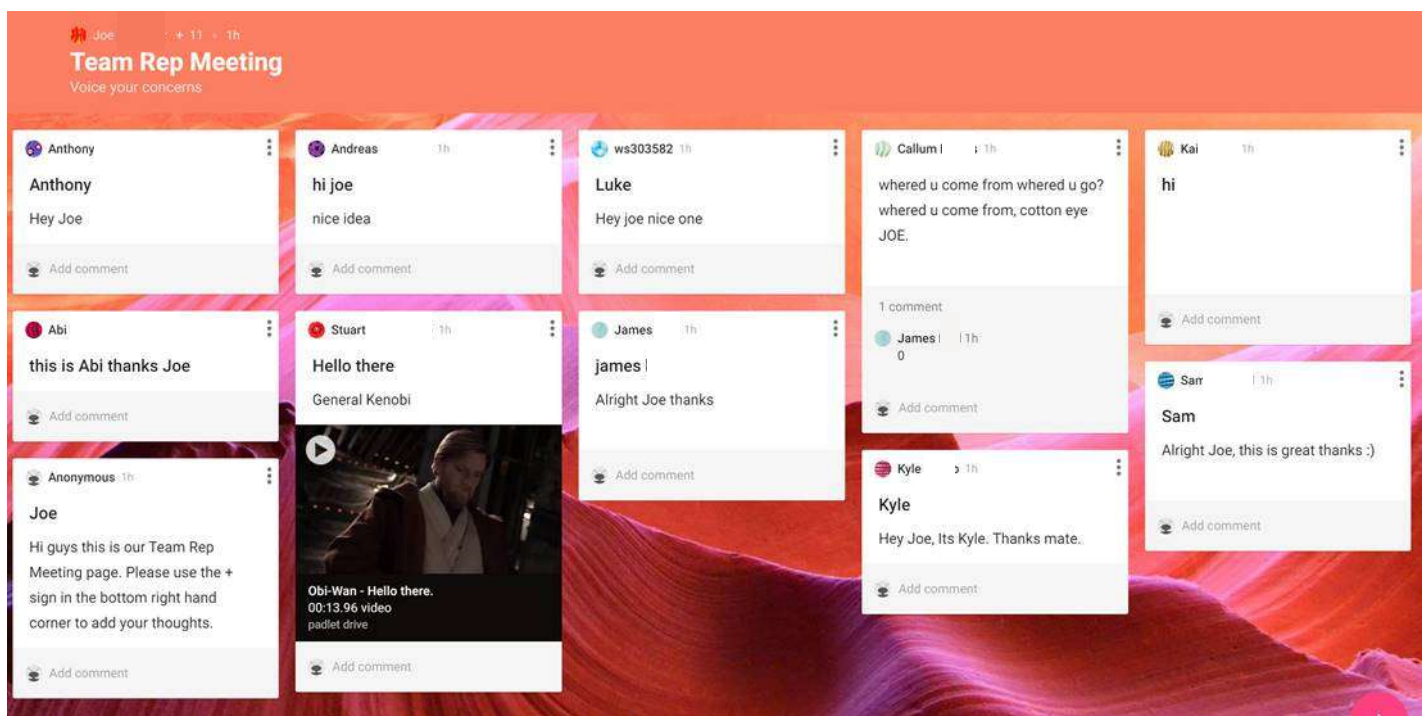


Show this thread

# STUDENT REP

**SARAH SMITH**

One of our Engineering students, Joe, has taken his role as Class Rep very seriously and has used his own initiative to create a padlet for the class to voice concerns and raise issues.



Joe 14:58

Hi Sarah as I am student rep of the level 2 sponsored ECITB course I have made a Padlet on a website and have got the class to join. I am also having a team rep meeting tomorrow in Jordan's class to discuss any issues and how everyone is getting on so far 😊

I shall leave a link to our padlet page 😊

<https://padlet.com/ws268213/uyhn0h9uol5e7dfo>



**Team Rep Meeting**  
Voice your concerns

padlet.com

# HOT TOPIC CAFE

## DAVID LE FEUVRE

The screenshot displays a virtual meeting interface. The main window shows a presentation slide with a central circular diagram. The diagram has a green heart in the center with the text 'Sustaining Life'. Surrounding the heart are various icons and text labels, including 'People who volunteer', 'People who donate', 'People who work', 'People who live', 'People who play', 'People who learn', 'People who work', 'People who live', 'People who play', 'People who learn'. To the left of the diagram is a collage of images showing people working on construction projects. A text box on the slide states 'Delivered Social & Local Economic Value £5,295,664'. On the right side of the screen, there is a 'Meeting chat' window with several messages from participants. At the bottom of the screen, there is a row of participant avatars, including one with a 'bam' logo.

Meeting chat

- 12:18 providing jobs for the community
- 12:18 Support with the new curriculum of the school i.e. decreasing careers within construction
- 12:18 Providing education to make it easier for children in the area to become employed in the future
- 12:18 Playground - for green material used with a few trees
- The school and any new by-ways community and traffic flow
- Accessible for all in any situation. And wide opportunity of work of lessons

We are planning a series of café style discussions with our construction professions learners.

Able supported by Lauren Squibb, we have engaged with BAM construction, and specifically Jess Morgan who delivered the first session on “Social Responsibility during Covid times”.

The virtual meeting room was packed with learners and staff, and Jess spoke superbly about the responsibility the BAM Construction have to create links with communities when they are building.

Learners got involved, asking questions and responding to discussion points, and the feedback gathered at the end was 100% positive (in fact two learners asked if the next session could be longer!)

We are already planning the follow up, which will focus on how sustainability issues can be addressed in construction, a nice relevant topic given the governments recent push to further their green agenda. I’ve been really impressed by the take up of this initiative, and hope this will prove a positive working relationship between BAM Construction and Weston College.



# BACE/BGT WEBINAR

LAURA JAMES

The screenshot displays a webinar interface. The central focus is a presentation slide titled 'WELCOME TO TODAY'S WEBINAR' for an 'MMC FUTURE SKILLS PANEL DISCUSSION'. The slide features four headshots of the panelists and the hashtag #ConversationsThatMatter. In the top left corner, there is a 'LeadersMeets' logo. The top right corner shows a chat window with several messages from participants, including Stuart Downs, Mary Bennell, and David Burden. The bottom right corner shows a text input field for chat, with a note that text can only be seen by panelists.

Last week, Jo Philpott on behalf of BACE led a webinar delivered by Constructing Excellence South West (CESW). CESW is an organisation charged with driving the change agenda in construction within the south west region. They aim to improve industry performance in order to produce a better built environment. CESW is a cross-sector, cross-supply chain, member led organisation operating for the good of industry and its stakeholders.

Back in October, we wrote an article for the CESW newsletter, which was distributed to over 5,000 construction employers. The article highlighted the need for industry to further engage with education, regarding Modern Methods of Construction (MMC), to ensure that the right knowledge, skills and behaviours are being taught to the future construction workforce.

CESW's notorious Friday sessions have a strong following across the construction sector, with over 100 industry attendees logging on to listen to Weston College's opening and the subsequent panel discussion. The panel comprised of Weston College, North Somerset Council who are using MMC within their housing developments, YTKO who are delivering MMC projects and employers who use MMC techniques within their businesses.

Revolutions and evolutions are taking place within the Built Environment because of varied drivers for change. These include a national housing crisis, an ageing workforce accompanied with a skills shortage, a lack of social mobility within the industry, and a drive to improve energy efficiency and build quality. MMC is seen as a solution within construction.

Friday's debate evidenced that MMC are very much here and more changes are afoot. MMC covers such a broad spectrum of construction activity and employers were able to give their opinions on where we should focus our energies to ensure we are getting it right regarding future trends and innovations.

Our partnership with CESW and their members provides Weston College with a better understanding of the skills and foundations that people need in order to be workforce ready – for now and in the future. This initiative has already led to multiple companies contacting the College wanting to work in partnership to support learners by providing excellent opportunities within MMC.



# EVENTS



<https://www.weston.ac.uk/news-and-events/events>

**DON'T MISS UPCOMING EVENTS FOR EITHER YOURSELF  
OR YOUR STUDENTS.**

OR PLEASE SHARE WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS WHO  
MAY BE INTERESTED IN STUDYING AT THE COLLEGE OR  
BECOMING A BUSINESS PARTNER.

**4 DEC 2020**



**ELEVATE - IN  
PARTNERSHIP WITH  
HINKLEY POINT C**

**9 DEC 2020**



**LOXTON LIVE  
DEGREE  
LIVE  
STREAM**

**11 DEC 2020**



**KICKSTART  
SCHEME  
WEBINAR**

# WANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE **NEXT EDITION?**



**PLEASE EMAIL YOUR UPDATES, REASONS TO  
CELEBRATE AND NEWS TO SHARE**



[myvirtualcollege@weston.ac.uk](mailto:myvirtualcollege@weston.ac.uk)

# MY VIRTUAL COLLEGE

# NOVEMBER TEAMS ROUND UP

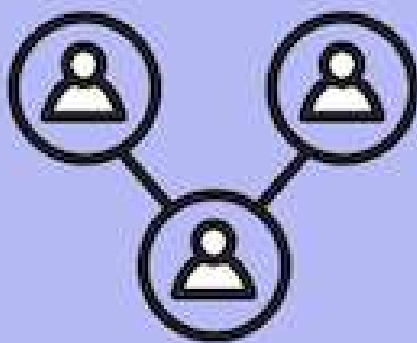
**465,775**

chat messages  
were sent

OUR HIGHEST EVER  
TOTAL!

**16,267**

calls were  
scheduled



**14,784**

different meeting  
participants



**7,433**

active users

**WESTON COLLEGE LEARNING TECHNOLOGY**