

## Teacher and Adviser Conference 2026

*Schools Outreach and Widening Participation Team*

<b>Session:</b>	Roundtable discussions: Post 16 education and skills white paper
<b>Speaker(s):</b>	Ross Wilkinson- Head of Widening Access and Participation
<b>Session Bio:</b>	This interactive roundtable session critically explored the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper, focusing on its implications for regional skills planning, progression pathways and post-18 outcomes. Participants considered how schools, colleges and universities can respond collectively through place-based partnerships and closer collaboration with Post-16 providers.

### Session Notes:

*An overview of the post-16 education and skills white paper was provided.*

*Delegates were asked to discuss with their tables and feedback a headline implication from their group discussion to the rest of the room.*

### **Q. Thinking about your role and setting, what are the most significant implications of the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper?**

Summary of responses from the room:

- While the proposed 'youth guarantee' was seen as a positive commitment in principle, several practical concerns were raised regarding implementation. Many Further Education colleges are already operating at full capacity each year- where will the additional places come from to support this guarantee?
- There are potential challenges linked to student movement between providers, particularly between FE colleges and Sixth Forms.
- What are the implications when learners don't engage. It is unclear whether FE providers will be expected to continually reserve capacity for students who may not attend or may disengage shortly after enrolling.
- The commitment to recruit an additional 6,500 teachers sounds promising, but it feels as if it's ignoring the current retention crisis. Should the focus be shifted towards teacher retention to create a more immediate and sustainable impact than relying solely on large-scale recruitment of new teachers?

## **Q. How could schools, colleges and universities respond collectively to this agenda?**

Summary of responses from the room:

- Universities could be clearer on alternative entry requirements such as T-Levels. Although universities have been encouraged to be more transparent about their entry requirements, many still state on their websites that they ‘may consider T-Levels on a case-by-case basis’. This information is often insufficient and applicants need definitive guidance so they can make informed decisions about their study routes and future progression.
- Students from independent schools can find it hard to find work experience opportunities, as some industries and organisations are prioritising state schools or pupils from certain widening participation demographics.

*These notes summarise a session delivered at the Durham University Teacher and Adviser Higher Education Conference on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2026. They reflect information and views shared at the time and are intended as a general overview only. For the most up-to-date information, please refer to Durham University’s website.*