

Underfunding of the further education sector: the importance of college counselling

Monday 29 June, 2015

A segment on last Wednesday's [BBC Radio 4 Today programme](#) featured a discussion with Professor Baroness Alison Wolf on the underfunding of the further education sector.

Baroness Wolf, an expert in education and skills from King's College London, has produced a report for the University's Policy Institute that condemns an "inefficient" and "unequal" funding system.

At a time when we have seen increasing demands for counselling from college students, BACP are concerned over the impact such underfunding is having on counselling services in the further education sector.

The report comes as an increasing number of BACP members are reporting a considerable reduction, or a complete removal of, counselling services in colleges due to underfunding in further education.

Baroness Wolf said to the BBC:

"There's a real incoherence at the root of the way we are funding everything post-18 and that's what I'm writing about [in the report].

"On the one hand, we're pouring money into universities and basically the government said it will pay huge amounts every year for undergraduates that any university cares to enrol, and on the other hand we are starving the old technical current further education sector of the funds to which to train highly skilled technicians."

The BBC programme stated the report reveals that there has been a halving of spending on education and skills for those aged 20-60 since 2010. Baroness Wolf predicts this will accelerate as commitments to protect education spending elsewhere comes into effect.

The BBC also reported that Baroness Wolf said in her report that the undermining of further education colleges has "already starved" the economy of the vital skills it needs, while everyone should be "very concerned" that an "inefficient" and "unequal" funding system could lead to the further education system as we know it vanishing.

BACP believe there are considerable benefits to having counselling services embedded within further education institutions and that all students in both further and higher education should have access to counselling within their college or university.

The Chair of BACP's Universities and Colleges Division, Jeremy Christey, added:

"We are now seeing many colleges are reducing, or even completely cutting, their counselling services just at the time when there is already concern about the lack of accessible alternative provision for young people with mental health difficulties.

"All students in further education should have access to counselling and it is extremely important that access to counselling services remains available in further education colleges as they offer vital resources to those in need of support."

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