

# Agenda – Economy, Infrastructure and Skills

## Committee

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Meeting Venue:

**Committee Room 1 – Senedd**

Meeting date: Wednesday, 7 June  
2017

Meeting time: 09.00

For further information contact:

**Gareth Price**

Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

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### Private pre-meeting (09:00–09:15)

**1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest**

**2 Bevan Foundation – City Deals and the Regional Economies of Wales**

(09:15–10:00)

(Pages 1 – 10)

Dr Victoria Winckler, Director, Bevan Foundation

Attached Documents:

Research brief – City Deals and the Regional Economies of Wales

EIS(5)–14–17 (p1) Bevan Foundation and Joseph Rowntree Foundation

**Break (10:00–10:15)**



Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
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National  
Assembly for  
Wales

### **3 Regional Skills Partnerships – Apprenticeships in Wales 2017**

(10:15–11:00)

(Pages 11 – 76)

Iwan Thomas, North Wales Regional Skills Partnership

Jane Lewis, Regional Partnership Manager, South West & Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership

Karen Higgins, Learning, Skills and Innovation Partnership – South East Wales

Attached Documents:

Welsh Government response to the Committee inquiry into the Apprenticeship Levy

Apprenticeships in Wales 2017 Consultation Summary

Research brief – Apprenticeships in Wales 2017

EIS(5)–14–17 (p2) North Wales Regional Skills Partnership

EIS(5)–14–17 (p3) South West & Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership

EIS(5)–14–17 (p4) Learning, Skills and Innovation Partnership – South East Wales

### **4 Minister for Skills and Science – Apprenticeships in Wales 2017**

(11:00–12:00)

(Pages 77 – 95)

Julie James AM, Minister for Skills and Science, Welsh Government

Sam Huckle, Head of Apprenticeship Policy, Welsh Government

Jo Banks, Head of Careers Policy, Welsh Government

Attached Documents:

EIS(5)–14–17 (p5) Minister for Skills and Science

### **5 Paper(s) to note**

## **5.1 Correspondence from the Chair of the Petitions Committee**

(Pages 96 – 98)

Attached Documents:

EIS(5)-14-17 (p6) Correspondence from the Chair of the Petitions Committee

## **5.2 Summary of outreach workshops and interviews – Apprenticeships in Wales 2017**

(Pages 99 – 102)

Attached Documents:

EIS(5)-14-17 (p7) Summary of outreach workshops and interviews

## **6 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting**

## **7 Consideration of draft report – Rail Franchise & the Metro**

(12:00–12:30)

(Pages 103 – 172)

Attached Documents:

EIS(5)-14-17 (p8) Draft report

**Private de-brief (12:30–12:40)**

# Agenda Item 2

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1. This paper is jointly submitted by the Bevan Foundation and Joseph Rowntree Foundation. We welcome the opportunity to submit evidence to the Committee's inquiry on this important subject. The Bevan Foundation is an independent charity that develops evidence-based ideas to make Wales fair, prosperous and sustainable. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) is an independent organisation working to inspire social change through research, policy and practice.

**The current position with regard to the signed Cardiff Capital Region and Swansea Bay City Deals and the next steps planned to take them forward.**

2. How the 'deals' were arrived at, engagement with partners beyond local authorities and how partners might become involved in future is unclear, as are the next steps. This is disappointing given the potential scale of social and economic change brought by the deals. Now the deals are signed and the new authorities in place we hope that there will be greater transparency and engagement with a wide range of partners.

**The intended impact of the City Deals and the way in which this will be governed, funded and monitored.**

3. The intended impact of the city deals agreed to date is relatively narrow, comprising a target number of jobs and increased GVA. Even within this focus, the deals do not consider issues such as the quality of jobs, for example their pay and skill levels, or their location within the region, for example in the most disadvantaged areas.
4. We suggest that the intended impact should be broader to ensure that everyone and all places benefit from growth. JRF has developed a range of indicators which it is using to monitor growth in Manchester and Leeds City Deals: it includes measures of low earnings, worklessness, housing supply / affordability and educational attainment as well as indicators of output, number of businesses and of higher-skilled occupations.
5. The Bevan Foundation hopes to work with JRF to develop appropriate indicators for Wales' city and growth deals. Ideally they will be adopted by the authorities delivering the deals.
6. We would welcome greater clarity on how the impacts are to be monitored. It is vitally important that arrangements are transparent and enable accountability: this includes matters such as who is responsible for decisions, that agendas and minutes of meetings are publicly available and that there is a programme of engagement with a wide range of stakeholders and the community. Engagement with people experiencing poverty is a vital part of this.

**The potential benefits offered by a possible Growth Deal for North Wales and Mid Wales.**

7. The key features of 'deals' are that they cover a functional economic region, have clear, shared goals, secure significant capital investment and are delivered through interagency working. These features are good practice and we can see no reason

in principle why 'deals' should not be adopted in north and mid Wales. However, the characteristics of these areas may mean that a different approach which relies less on capital investment would be appropriate.

### **The degree to which the growth and city deals could solve or exacerbate existing inequalities, both within and between regions.**

8. There is strong evidence that increasing GVA and employment do not, alone, necessarily improve prosperity for everyone. For example, in London high levels of GVA per head and employment co-exist with high levels of poverty.
9. It is often those who are already well-placed in the labour market who benefit from investment and new opportunities, while others, for example people with fewer skills, do not gain. Nor can it be assumed that the benefits of economic growth will trickle-down from one group of people to another or from one place to another, with the result that some people and places are bypassed despite overall gains.
10. It is also feasible that growth in GVA and employment is accompanied by increases in the cost of living, for example if pressure on housing supply results in higher housing costs. The result can be that people on low- to mid-level incomes face increased outgoings and so are no better-off.
11. We are not persuaded that sufficient emphasis has been given in city deals to date to reducing poverty and inequality. We suggest that the proposals to achieve growth, such as to establish an 'arc of innovation' along the M4 and support the semi-conductor industry in Cardiff's City Deal or to focus on life sciences, energy, smart manufacturing and tech & creative industries in Swansea's City Deal, should be accompanied by explicit measures to ensure that all people and all places benefit from greater prosperity.
12. We have termed this 'inclusive growth', which we recommend should be at the centre of the city deal strategies. Our paper ['Prosperity without Poverty'](#) identified the proven ways in which inclusive growth could be achieved in Wales (see Box 1) and we strongly urge the city deals to adopt them. In particular, action needs to stimulate improvement from the bottom up, for example by stimulating growth in Wales' most disadvantaged areas and by raising skills amongst people with few qualifications, as well as to maximise economic potential at the other end of the spectrum.
13. In terms of inequalities between regions, there is a risk that the deals will compete with each other, resulting in 'race to the bottom' e.g. on wages and business incentives (including business rates). There could be unanticipated effects such as the displacement of economic activity across boundaries. This is especially important as the boundaries between all of Wales' deal areas are 'fuzzy'.<sup>1</sup> There need to be safeguards in place to prevent this occurring.

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<sup>1</sup> For example 6,400 people commute between Bridgend (in Cardiff City Region) and Neath Port Talbot (in Swansea City Region). This cross-boundary commuting is nearly twice the number as commute from Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent to Cardiff (all within Cardiff City Region). (Stats Wales (2016) 'Detailed Commuting Patterns in Wales by Welsh Local Authority')

## **The degree to which the growth and city deals co-ordinate with Welsh Government strategy**

14. The Welsh Government's economic strategy is keenly awaited. Its Programme for Government includes 'prosperity for all' as a key commitment - if the growth and city deals are to co-ordinate well with the Welsh Government's strategy then the city and growth deals will need to ensure they include active steps to ensure growth is inclusive alongside boosting GVA and employment.
15. It is also important that there is clarity between the various actors about roles and responsibilities in order to avoid confusion amongst businesses and the public, possible duplication and conflict.
16. We hope that the Welsh Government's strategy will, when published, provide a clear direction, robust framework and common purpose in the city and growth deal areas.

## **We would also welcome comparative views on approaches taken by other growth deals and regions across the UK.**

17. In Leeds City Region, JRF is involved in 'More jobs, better jobs' partnership, which has to date considered how best to use the combined purchasing power of anchor institutions,<sup>2</sup> how to capture the of major capital developments,<sup>3</sup> the role of housing and planning policies in inclusive growth,<sup>4</sup> and how to improve progression from low-paid jobs.<sup>5</sup>
18. It is important that city and growth deals in Wales build on the learning from other parts of the UK.

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<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Business-Economy-and-Labour-Market/People-and-Work/Employment/Commuting/detailedcommutingpatternsinwales-by-welshlocalauthority>

<sup>2</sup> Team at Leeds Beckett University and York St John University (2017) **Maximising the local impact of anchor Institutions: a case study of Leeds City Region**, JRF.

<sup>3</sup> Newby, L. (2017) **Connecting major development to jobs, skills and poverty reduction in Leeds City Region**, JRF

<sup>4</sup> Team at Sheffield Hallam University and University of Sheffield (2017) **Tackling poverty through housing and planning policy in city regions**

<sup>5</sup> Green,A., Sissons,P., Ray,K. Hughes, C. and Ferreira, J. (2016) **Improving progression from low-paid jobs at city-region level**

## BOX 1 – KEY ELEMENTS OF AN INCLUSIVE CITY DEAL STRATEGY

### 1. Better Jobs

- **Developing sector strategies for low-paid industries** to boost their productivity.
- **Actively encouraging employment practices that reduce poverty**, including increasing take up of the voluntary Living Wage; job security and good quality part-time work; providing training and opportunities for progression and adhering to best practice to eliminate discrimination.
- **Taking action against exploitation** e.g. forced labour, pay below the statutory minimum and bogus self-employment.

### 2. Local jobs

- **Incentivising growth in disadvantaged areas in Wales**, through area-based economic development initiatives e.g.:
  - **New Enterprise Zones** which use local planning powers and financial incentives to encourage job creation and employment of people at risk of poverty;
  - **Designating ‘growth poles’** at strategic locations to counterbalance the emphasis on cities.
- **Ensuring all people and places benefit**: via fast, frequent and affordable public transport especially to ‘disconnected’ communities.
- **Accelerating the use of public procurement**: local anchor institutions can use their purchasing power to secure more and better job opportunities for disadvantaged workers and other local benefits.
- **Refocusing Welsh Government business finance on inclusive growth** so that the main criterion is job quality, and not business size or sector.

### 3. Supporting people to get into work

- **The proposed employability programme** should bring together the Department for Work and Pensions’ Work and Health Programme and devolved provision and offer services tailored to people’s distance from the labour market rather than their age or benefit entitlement.
- **Specialist support and an Intermediate Labour Market programme** should be offered for those furthest from the labour market.

### 4. Boost Skills

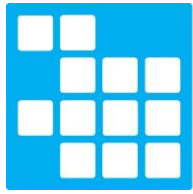
- **Better Apprenticeships**: to improve the quality as well as quantity of provision, including linking funding to outcomes, including accredited learning and an apprentice charter of standards and support.
- **Enhanced provision of adult learning**: focusing on raising low-level skills or qualifications through enhanced adult skills provision.
- **Increase participation in essential skills learning**: step up activity so that all adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills needs are met by 2030
- **Good Quality Advice**: independent, expert careers advice, guidance and support should be available in schools, colleges and for adults.

# Agenda Item 3

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# north wales economic ambition board

## bwrdd uchelgais economaidd gogledd cymru

### REGIONAL SKILLS PARTNERSHIP – NORTH WALES

#### SUMMARY BRIEFING FOR ECONOMY, INFRASTRUCTURE & SKILLS COMMITTEE (07.07.17)

#### Background to Regional Skills Partnership in North Wales

The established Skills and Employment workstream of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB) has been adopted and recognised by Welsh Government as one of the three Regional Skills Partnerships (RSP's), and continues its existing approach of economic and employer led engagement, to inform and drive the skills and employment agenda within North Wales.

The continued delivery and focus within a 'Team North Wales' approach has seen us be the only RSP in Wales to have been demonstrably nationally recognised for our work in collaboration with global and local employers on a completed project of national, regional, and local significance. In 2016, we were awarded the 'Construction Excellence Wales Award' for 'Leadership & People Development', for working in collaboration with our partners at the HMP Berwyn development in Wrexham. This approach based upon a bespoke programme of 'skills brokerage' championed at Wrexham to inform employment opportunities, apprenticeships, and work placements, has now been adopted by partners to support the promotion of opportunities for local labour at Wylfa Newydd on Anglesey.

With an existing employer as Chair of the RSP in North Wales, we maintain our innovative and transparent approach to partnership working, and sustain close working relationships with employers, education & training providers, and local & national government.

Our established work on the production of an annual Regional Skills & Employment Plan, directly aligns to, and supports the current development with partners on the Growth Bid for North Wales, as we continue to collaborate on the promotion and importance of skills development, mobility, and ambition, in a region whose current and future labour market influences, further extends beyond our traditional boundaries, into areas such as North West England and Mid Wales.

<http://regionalskillsandemploymentplan2016.co.uk/>

#### Overview of Apprenticeships in North Wales

Using the most current data available, the total number of apprentices across North Wales fell in 2015 compared to the previous year. Despite the total fall in numbers, there was an increase in those aged 20-24 taking up an apprenticeship within the region as more young people are staying on in education via school, FE and HE post the age of 16.

The promotion of apprenticeships within the region continues to be rigorous, with increased emphasis on the benefit of an apprenticeship to both the individual and the employer, being highlighted by RSP partners directly, and collectively through events and promotional materials supported and promoted by the Regional Skills Partnership in North Wales.





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Flagship companies within North Wales such as Airbus, continue to promote and offer an increasing number of apprenticeship opportunities across a variety of disciplines ranging from craft, technical, and business at different levels. With current and future apprentices recruited this Autumn, there could be in excess of 200 apprentices alone, based at Broughton.

The creation of 100 apprenticeships at the HMP Berwyn development, along with over 20 initial new apprenticeships in progress this year at the early development stage of Wylfa Newydd, cements the regional opportunities via apprenticeships that are currently promoted and offered within North Wales by flagship developments; whilst regionally based companies of significance such as Jones Brothers in Ruthin, continue to attract apprentices from all over Wales, due to their progressive skills development programme to support general and high level construction and plant machinery operations, in projects across the region and beyond.

**5,565**

FEMALE APPRENTICES IN  
NORTH WALES IN 2015  
COMPARED TO 6,710 IN 2014

**4,190**

MALE APPRENTICES IN NORTH  
WALES IN 2015 COMPARED TO  
4,795 IN 2014

**9,755**

TOTAL APPRENTICES IN NORTH  
WALES IN 2015 COMPARED TO  
11,460 IN 2014

With over 67% of businesses in North Wales employing less than five people, the reliance and emphasis on the micro and SME business sector within the regional economy cannot be underestimated, and many of these engage with our education and training providers to support and develop apprenticeships. However, there is still considerable work required to “sell” the benefits of apprenticeships to smaller businesses – the majority of whom do not have the comparable benefits of dedicated HR and training personnel, or applicable knowledge & skills themselves directly, to develop and support these programmes on their behalf.

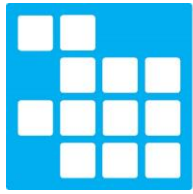
However, both our Further Education Institutions within North Wales, along with our private training providers, continue to provide bespoke and dedicated support to smaller employers specifically, in the sustainable benefits and outcomes generated to these employers and their businesses, of taking on an apprentice – be it through support for product development, expansion, and additional specific skills to benefit the business, amongst other criteria.

The introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy has caused confusion and concern amongst employers within the region – particularly those based closer to the English border, where employees are currently domiciled in both Wales and England, and therefore, subject to differing approaches.

Both FEI’s in North Wales have delivered promotional sessions on the impact of the Levy for employers and individuals based on the limited and emerging information provided, and both institutions have registered within England to support the delivery of the scheme for those affected by the disparity of approach, but also to provide competitive expertise based on experience to date, outside of perceived current geographic boundaries.

We as the RSP have also undertaken a full analysis of support for young people aged 16-24 within the region and published this online both as a key document, and bespoke searchable database to assist individuals and providers.



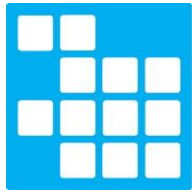


### Challenges for the future of Apprenticeships in North Wales

Whilst providers and partners continue to welcome the overall support and guidance from national partners and politicians on the role and promotion of apprenticeships, and wish to continue this as appropriate for North Wales, there are still a number of challenges which the region faces in terms of promotion, accessibility, and up-take of apprenticeships generally. Without preference of order, the main challenges are collated and highlighted below:

- ✓ Perception amongst smaller employers that the larger 'flagship' employers get the best quality of apprentices, as they can offer greater security and additional benefits. This adds to the reluctance of some smaller employers to engage with providers and take on apprentices
- ✓ Apprenticeships need better promotion within schools as a viable pathway – both teachers and parents need greater support and information in a consistent coordinated approach on the regional benefits and opportunities that an apprenticeship can offer a young person in North Wales
- ✓ Careers Wales promotes pathways and opportunities around apprenticeships, but as in the rest of Wales, we have seen a 50% reduction in resources with only 67 careers advisors who are now each responsible for on average three schools based on a partnership agreement with the schools directly, and are only able to focus on specific cohorts and not broader year groups
- ✓ Whilst we continue to work with Careers Wales, and have collaborated on the first ever "Spotlight" regional resource which has now been copied by others, the messages on opportunities for apprenticeships within key and growth sectors, does still not appear to be taken up in larger numbers
- ✓ Whilst support and promotion for apprenticeships from Welsh Government is welcome, employers and individuals feel that it can be too Cardiff and South Wales biased and focused
- ✓ We as the RSP in North Wales have excellent working relationships with WG colleagues directly involved in skills and the economy, but those colleagues responsible for apprenticeships, due to their South Wales base, often have a lack of understanding of the regional variations applicable to North Wales and our labour market, which can frustrate and hinder progressive developments as part of a wider North Wales and cross-border approach to support our current and future labour market
- ✓ To effectively promote and sustain a regionally coordinated approach to skills and apprenticeships, responsibility should be considered to be devolved to the region as part of the North Wales Growth Deal, to continue to work effectively with national partners, but have a clear and distinct regional knowledge and delivery mechanism directly aimed at individuals and employers within North Wales that is devolved of a potential South Wales bias in terms of project and product development seen to date
- ✓ Regional coordination and promotion of apprenticeships can better engage local and regional employers based on the fact that 67% of businesses within North Wales employ less than 5 people, and local FEI's, training providers, and others have a more direct and purposeful ability to engage with these businesses directly, and therefore support and promote individuals appropriately to these opportunities





# north wales economic ambition board

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- ✓ Promotion of work placements to date has been a positive precursor to supporting those from low income backgrounds into apprenticeships – evidenced in North Wales by experiences gained from the development at HMP Berwyn, and our work collectively with partners including DWP, Princes Trust, Chwarae Teg, FEI's, and tiers 1 & 2 contractors on-site, alongside supply chain companies. This approach and transparency of offer needs to continue if we are to continue to drive upwards the skills and qualifications of all of our workforce at all levels.
- ✓ There is evidence of a concentration of greater numbers of higher level apprenticeships (L4+) in the east of the region compared to the west (e.g. 140 in Anglesey compared to 300 in Wrexham), and whilst density of population is a factor, there is a need to promote progression into higher levels, to address employer needs and demands. This will also assist with wider succession planning and creation of new entry talent, particularly in established industry sectors whose aging workforce will need to be replaced in large cohorts within the next 5-10 years
- ✓ North Wales already demonstrates good example of the promotion of female apprenticeship opportunities within STEM focused industry cluster sectors – be it IT & Communications in Gwynedd, engineering in Flintshire, pharmaceuticals in Wrexham, and energy in Anglesey. However, the promotion of gender balanced opportunities is still a challenge for some employers, and the promotion of females into apprenticeships within traditionally male dominated industries, needs to be continued to addressed, and also vice versa with males being promoted to enter apprenticeships within those industries incorrectly classified as female dominated such as Health, Social Care, media, and the arts
- ✓ To assist the development and retention of current and future skills, we need to place a greater regional focus of the promotion of apprenticeships for our domiciled population, and the opportunities we as a region can offer. This would include an emphasis primarily on those employers and businesses within our three key sectors (*Energy; Manufacturing, Construction*), and four growth sectors (*Creative & Digital; Health & Social Care; Tourism & Hospitality; Food & Drink*) for the region, and the pathways offered here by them collectively via common transferable skills, and also bespoke industry specific skills that apprenticeships in North Wales can offer. These would then also be supported by apprenticeships for sustainable employment within our other foundation economy sectors such as retail and public services, who continue to employ the largest numbers of individuals collectively within North Wales.

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### NOTES:

Chair of the Regional Skills Partnership for North Wales is **Sasha Davies** (Head of Strategic Development Wales for Horizon Nuclear Power).

The Vice Chair of the Regional Skills Partnership for North Wales is **Sioned Williams** (Head of Economic Development for Cynfor Gwynedd).

The NWEAB Regional Programme Manager for Skills & Employment is **Iwan Thomas**

**WEB:** <http://www.northwaleseab.co.uk/jobs-and-skills/>

**Twitter:** @SkillsNWales

**YOUTUBE:** <https://www.youtube.com/user/skillsnorthwales>



As part of the consultation process for the completion of the Regional Employment and Skills Plan the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership (RLSP) has engaged with learners aged between 11 and 19 in a number of careers fairs across the region. The over-arching finding is that there is a general lack of awareness amongst young people of what apprenticeships are, what they entail and what opportunities are available.

Quantified, these findings indicate that;

- 30% had no idea what an apprenticeship was
- 58% didn't fully understand what an apprenticeship is (especially not the benefits)
- 15% understood what an apprenticeship was
- 8% wanted to study an apprenticeship

Anecdotal evidence gathered suggests that if a family member is or had been engaged with apprenticeships they were more likely to understand apprenticeships and want to undertake an apprenticeship.

Furthermore, some learners indicated that schools were keen to promote higher education as a route rather than a vocational apprenticeship route.

### **How can employer engagement with Apprenticeships be improved?**

- A number of employers currently engaged with the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership have concern over the impacts of the apprenticeship levy, particularly for those who have cross border operations and where apprentices operate across multiple sites in the UK.
- Changes to apprenticeships across the UK creates a risk for employers with different standards and different definitions of apprenticeships.
- Large employers with established apprenticeship schemes do not have recruitment concerns and typically recruitment is undertaken via established routes and not through the apprenticeship matching service.
- Smaller companies have more difficulty in recruitment than large.

### **To investigate the main barriers to taking up Apprenticeships?**

There are concerns within the care sector in particular that the basic skills assessments are off putting to some entrants, particularly those who may be returning to the labour market after a period of absence, or those who had a poor academic experience.

Further barriers relate to the aforementioned learner survey findings; one of the main barriers is the fact that many learners are not fully informed on apprenticeships and their benefits. The majority of the 88% that didn't fully understand what an apprenticeship is had a negative understanding. This is substantiated by employers believing that careers advice regarding apprenticeships is not provided early enough in schools which is affecting the understanding of learners.

The lack of information about apprenticeships is also a barrier for employers, further clarity is required by businesses on how to access apprentices.

### **To scrutinise the development of higher level Apprenticeships, with the support of further and higher education institutions?**

- High levels of demand from both employers and providers for higher level and degree apprenticeships, however funding prevents the development and delivery of some activity. These are also seen as important to developing a greater parity of esteem between the academic and vocational routes.
- Employers are concerned that apprenticeships are still viewed by many, including some teachers, as not a route for high academic achievers. This is of particular concern for the Engineering sector which is a significant recruiter of apprenticeships.
- Apprenticeships are seen as a good way of 'growing the workforce' and many companies find that it helps retention and to develop relationships.

### **What good practice exists and what more can be done to address gender stereotyping?**

There are a number of examples of good practice within the region, the Cyfle construction shared apprenticeship scheme has been highly successful (winning a Queen's award recently), additionally there are examples of apprentices being developed and progressed through higher education at a number of large regional employers.

### **How effective is progression between other work-based learning and Apprenticeships and between Levels 2, 3, 4 and above Apprenticeships?**

Employer engagement with the Construction sector indicates that a particular concern is what is termed as 'pre-apprenticeship drop-off'. Although many people are training within the sector, a large proportion are not progressing with many studying at level 1 and becoming dis-engaged and therefore not pursuing their studies further.

#### **Higher Level Apprenticeships**

There is very little information available about the Higher level apprenticeships for businesses and how these apprenticeships are going to work with the educational establishments. This is a source of concern for businesses who are paying the levy and are keen to engage with the higher level qualifications.

The Learning, Skills and Innovation Partnership (LSkip) is the Regional Skills Partnership (RSP) for South East Wales. The Partnership brings together education, industry and other stakeholders to determine economic priorities for skills investment and associated recommendations, that will develop the employment and skills necessary to meet the demands of the regional economy and enable it to grow. The Partnership is supported by an industry led Employment and Skills Board, which brings together a wide variety of stakeholders from across the region.

**To review progress since the 2012 report of the Enterprise and Business Committee, Apprenticeships in Wales.**

The Apprenticeship programme is well regarded in Wales, however, whilst the policy and landscape that supports apprenticeships has continued to evolve and significant efforts continue to be made to address the issues identified, many of the challenges remain and will need further support and development into the long term. Much of these are covered in response to the questions asked of the 2017 inquiry and so will not be repeated here.

**To scrutinise the accessibility of independent careers advice on Apprenticeships and other vocational options?**

**Particularly for young people, either in school, from Careers Wales, online or from other sources?**

Careers information, advice and guidance is viewed as a critical component to support the decision making process and ultimately the choices made by those seeking pathways to employment. It is important that individuals are made aware of the wide variety of different occupations and opportunities that exist within our economy and are also informed of the *potential* that these will offer for employment both now and in the future, as a part of their long-term career aspirations. Unfortunately, current evidence suggests a significant mismatch between the subject areas chosen by young people and those opportunities that offer the greatest potential for employment across the regional economy. Further investigation highlights that there is insufficient/inadequate independent careers information, advice and guidance available, that due to budget pressures and changes at Careers Wales there is no longer universal provision for all learners, so the majority do not receive any support and what support is available is targeted at those at risk of becoming NEET. In the absence of any universal provision, careers advice in schools is variable and there are mixed messages regarding the quality of career information, advice and guidance provided. Many highlight that for those that do not receive Careers Wales support, advice is becoming increasingly limited to online resources, guidance from parents and whatever information and industry engagement the school is able to support or provide.

The lack of careers information, advice and guidance for *all* learners leaves too much to chance and is inadequate in informing and preparing those who are making choices linked to their future career aspirations. More needs to be done to raise awareness of the broad range of occupations available including those featured across apprenticeship frameworks and the many different levels available, highlighting the progression and future opportunity that these can afford. Greater

efforts must be made to inspire and interest individuals in occupations that will offer them potential in the future, in areas that will support business growth and economic development, to raise prosperity.

Inspiring interest in occupations is often successful when achieved through industry or role model engagement, whilst understanding the nature and range of options when selecting pathways to employment will often benefit from independent careers advice and guidance. This suggests that the solution requires a collaborative approach with input from multiple sources, including employers, industry bodies, schools, colleges and Careers Wales. The BITC Business Class model delivered through Careers Wales has been regarded as successful, but there is a challenge over whether the costs might prohibit its sustainability into the future, beyond those that can afford and are prepared to fund it.

Whilst some argue that schools are broadly inaccessible or do not do enough to highlight apprenticeship opportunities, recent feedback suggests that some schools would welcome a lead/nominated work based learning provider as a vocational link, coordinated in conjunction with ntfw. With service level agreements between schools and work based learning providers established to support regular visits and presentations to promote apprenticeship opportunities, including parent evenings, employer links, work experience and others. This idea will be followed up by the RSP to determine the appetite and implications of this approach as a potential model to support future practice.

Comments from employers to the RSP demonstrate a willingness across industry to engage with schools and participate in schemes to raise awareness of the many different occupations that exist in a modern business context, to challenge perceptions, inspire individuals and break down barriers. However, whilst there are successful initiatives, many employers were unsure how to get involved, some had tried to engage but had struggled to get schools to respond and others suggested that better coordination was required. Equally whilst there are a lot of different schemes to support engagement with schools, many felt that there was a lack of coordination or visibility between or across these schemes and no understanding of which environments are well catered for and by whom, and where there is a gap in provision.

Coordination to support engagement between education and industry and the provision of more universal careers information, advice and guidance is a key area for further action and investment.

### **Is the Careers Wales' Apprenticeship Matching Service fit for purpose?**

An apprenticeship matching service is much needed and further development and investment should be supported, however the current online service is regarded as not particularly user friendly or effective and is perceived as limited, including the range of apprenticeship vacancies listed, some of which are not advertised in a timely manner, also nuances within the search feature can inhibit the number and range of options returned. More needs to be done to improve the site, raise awareness of it and the opportunities within it, amongst all of those exploring future employment options, including school leavers.

The site needs to be streamlined and promote apprenticeships throughout the year. It needs to increase the number and range of opportunities it offers and develop into a trusted source of information on apprenticeships, with links to relevant information that extends beyond simply advertising apprenticeship vacancies. The main landing page of this site could be improved to better advertise apprenticeships and their benefits and/or feature new or exciting apprenticeship opportunities, as well as providing access to an improved search facility for vacancies.

A further suggestion is that there should also be a function within the site for those who wish to undertake an apprenticeship to register for and request apprenticeship opportunities. This would highlight the level of demand/interest from learners, the extent to which this demand is or is not met and offer a focus for targeted action.

### **How can better parity of esteem between vocational and academic routes be achieved?**

It is important to both raise awareness and challenge perceptions of apprenticeships and their benefits, targeting individuals choosing future occupational pathways, employers and key influencers such as parents and teachers, to promote parity.

Some consider that academic and vocational routes are set up in competition with each other, a suggestion would be to promote parallel routes to the same occupational objective together and use case studies of individuals to demonstrate the different pathways and their benefits to achieving the same occupational outcome. This is particularly relevant when promoting, for example, higher level apprenticeships or the professions, where different pathways, academic and vocational, can achieve the same professional status and qualification to practice. Degree apprenticeships may also offer potential to promote parity.

Role models and case studies are needed from within industry to raise awareness, inspire and sell the benefits of vocational and apprenticeship routes amongst those looking for pathways to employment, highlighting successes across the spectrum of occupations and levels available. It is important that examples are as diverse as the apprentices themselves and reflect their different age ranges, genders and other characteristics to demonstrate their universal appeal and also break down any perceived barriers.

In addition, there is a need to provide opportunities for those in education to engage with and see the value of vocational and work based learning opportunities and outcomes as an alternative pathway. Work related education and training including Saturday clubs and work experience, and pre-apprenticeship programmes can offer a useful bridge to inspire and engage those making decisions regarding their future and aid transition to apprenticeships and other learning in the workplace.

Employers, particularly those not currently or traditionally engaged in offering apprenticeships or those for whom apprenticeship delivery has not changed or expanded in recent years, should be engaged to explore their apprenticeship offer, conversations with some employers highlights some misconceptions around who apprenticeships are for, the levels and range of frameworks available, and how this can benefit their business, including the opportunity to expand their apprenticeship offer into new areas. This was particularly relevant in areas such as higher level

apprenticeships, where parity between academic and vocational routes needs to be promoted. The apprenticeship levy has created renewed interest in apprenticeships amongst employers and this can be used to drive better engagement and increased use of apprenticeships by employers as an alternative but equal opportunity for occupational qualification.

There is a need to actively challenge the perceptions of key influencers and persuade them of both the parity between different pathways and the benefits of each. Key influences such as parents and teachers need to be part of a wider discussion that drives better education and awareness of how apprenticeships and vocational pathways have and are evolving, the nature and range of options available and the benefits they offer.

### **To investigate the main barriers to taking up Apprenticeships?**

A key barrier is the perception of key influencers on learner choice, particularly parents and teachers, much more needs to be done to challenge these perceptions, educate and raise awareness of the potential and benefits offered by apprenticeships, highlighting the wide range of occupations and different levels available.

Equally, traditional perspectives on apprenticeships need to be challenged and some employers might benefit from support to explore the use of apprenticeships within and across their business, developing their understanding of apprenticeships and how to access them, the extended range of frameworks, occupations and levels that now exist and the ability to develop new frameworks where there is clear and sufficient evidence of need.

For individuals, finding an apprenticeship place can be difficult, as can navigating the systems and processes to access apprenticeships, there is a need for a far more effective and pro-active dedicated support service to recruit and match apprentices to potential opportunities. Further there is a need to understand the extent to which the demand for apprenticeship places cannot be met, to understand any shortfall in opportunities.

Many suggest that a pre-apprenticeship or access to apprenticeship programme would be of great benefit in transitioning people to apprenticeships, there appears to be significant support for a pre-apprenticeship programme targeting 14-16 year olds and for others it is suggested a more universal 'access to apprenticeship' programme might be of value. In both cases the objective is to make the candidate work ready and prepared for entry into employment via an apprenticeship pathway.

### **How accessible are Apprenticeships for people with disabilities (all ages)?**

Apprentices are often recruited via a competitive recruitment process, which should offer equal opportunity, further research is needed to understand any issues, potential barriers and what support might be required.

### **How can people from the lowest income families be supported to take-up Apprenticeships?**

A pre-apprenticeship or access to apprenticeship programme is suggested as a mechanism to engage candidates in apprenticeships, ensure they are work ready and supported into structured employment via an apprenticeship pathway.

There is also some challenge over the differing minimum salary levels applied to apprentices, based on age, consideration should be given to whether the lower salary level is sufficient to meet ordinary living costs. Further support could be considered for those from the lowest income families to meet additional costs, such as travel to work costs and maybe subsistence, whilst undertaking the apprenticeship programme.

### **What good practice exists and what more can be done to address gender stereotyping?**

Much work is being done by both education and industry across sectors to address gender stereotyping, with good examples in areas such as construction, engineering and others. This scale of the challenge is significant and so this work needs to grow and continue but again it is not sufficient to just work with those individuals making career choices, it must also impact key influencers such as parents and teachers and also permeate working environments, to positively encourage and promote a diverse workforce.

Programmes that use role models and develop ambassadors or champions that can challenge traditional views and break down any perceived barriers are to be welcomed.

### **To scrutinise the development of higher level Apprenticeships, with the support of further and higher education institutions?**

### **How effective is progression between other work-based learning and Apprenticeships and between Levels 2, 3, 4 and above Apprenticeships?**

Traditionally progression between level 2 and 3 programmes has been considered the norm, with more of a challenge highlighted in progressing through to level 4 and beyond, particularly when constrained by the limitations of job roles to enable the candidate to demonstrate competence at the higher levels.

Clear and coherent progression routes are needed through to the highest levels, whether through apprenticeships or transition between and across academic and vocational programmes to enable progression.

The limited number and range of higher level apprenticeships and the lack of a clear framework for the delivery of degree apprenticeships is an issue. The number and range of higher level apprenticeships needs to be increased to provide more opportunity for participation and progression at levels 4 and beyond and to promote greater parity of opportunity for qualification achievement in occupations at levels 5 and beyond. There is also a need for a clear policy, framework and funding to support the introduction of degree apprenticeships, in response to a clear demand emerging from some employers and professions.

There is an opportunity to promote collaboration in development and delivery of a broader range of higher level and degree apprenticeships, drawing on the expertise of work based learning providers, Further and Higher Education, to recognise and benefit from the contributions and/or strengths of all providers.

### **How can employer engagement with Apprenticeships be improved?**

Better promotion, education and awareness is needed of the opportunities and benefits presented by apprenticeships. Case studies and role models should be used as part of a structured campaign to raise the profile and potential of apprenticeships amongst employers but also key influencers such as parents and teachers and within schools.

Extending successful shared apprenticeship schemes, such as that operated in Ebbw Vale Enterprise Zone, that are developed in response to demand stimulated amongst groups of employers, can help to grow SME participation in apprenticeships. Greater flexibility around the delivery model for apprenticeships, to reduce the administration and bureaucracy, could assist as this is often regarded as a barrier and burden for SMEs and particularly small employers.

Providing support for employers, particularly those new to apprenticeships, is critical with a single point of contact or source of information needed to explain what apprenticeships are and how they can benefit the business, advice on how to access apprenticeships and a brokerage service to connect employers with providers. Some employers will get this information and advice direct from work based learning providers whilst others will seek third party guidance and support on how apprenticeships work and the options available before doing so. There is the potential to offer tailored support and/or to also link this to other sources of business advice and guidance.

The apprenticeship levy is raising awareness and is a key driver of employer interest in apprenticeships, this presents a challenge but an even greater opportunity to engage employers and introduce them to apprenticeships or extend their use of apprenticeships. This interest in apprenticeships by employers must be capitalised on and clear access to support, advice and guidance for employers must be offered to capture this interest and where appropriate increase the number and range of opportunities offered.

## Apprenticeships Skills Policy

Our Apprenticeship Skills Policy and its five year Action Plan, published in February 2017<sup>1</sup>, sets out our strategy for better alignment of apprenticeships to the needs of the Welsh economy. The content of the Action Plan takes forward improvements in the areas being explored by the Inquiry. We have committed to delivering 100,000 quality apprenticeship places over the next five years, underpinning our ambition to build a more prosperous, ambitious, fairer and resilient country. Skills are a key driver of productivity and apprenticeships play an important role in unlocking our Gross Value Added growth potential<sup>2</sup>. Our approach is to expand and strengthen apprenticeship routes in STEM, and to address skills shortages by developing apprenticeships in growth and emerging sectors.

## Background

The apprenticeship landscape has changed considerably since the Enterprise and Business Committee made its recommendations in 2012. Regional Skills Partnerships have been established to help anchor our system to the needs and priorities of our local economy; the UK-wide model for apprenticeships has ended as a result of reforms in England; new arrangements between devolved administrations have been established.

Recruitment points onto the programme continue to vary depending on a range of different factors - for instance if you are a school leaver, if you are leaving college, an adult that is registered with job centre plus, or if you are employed and your employer is looking for support from the apprenticeship programme. The system has multiple entry approaches to accommodate all recruitment points. This continues to cause confusion for those looking for an apprenticeship. We are improving connections between qualifications and the labour market, strengthening vocational and career pathways within and across education providers and different parts of the labour market. Recognising changing sector needs, we have revised our *Specification for Apprenticeship Standards for Wales (SASW)*<sup>3</sup> to allow more flexibility in terms of what apprenticeships can provide and the tailoring of training to new skill requirements.

We have taken large strides in terms of employer engagement. Our approved apprenticeship provider network has developed links with over 35,000 employers, reflecting the diverse nature of employers operating in Wales. We have introduced an all-age approach that is flexible enough to support both new job apprentices and up-skill existing employees. At the same time, Regional Skills Partnerships are providing a clear indication of demand,

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<sup>1</sup> Aligning the apprenticeship model with the needs of the Welsh economy (February 2017): <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/skillsandtraining/apprenticeships/apprenticeships-skills-policy-plan/?lang=en>

<sup>2</sup> UKCES Employer Skills Survey (2015)

<sup>3</sup> SASW specifies statutory requirements to be met by apprenticeship frameworks: <https://acwcerts.co.uk/web/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/SASW-16th-Oct-2016.pdf>

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supply and utilisation of sector skills within their respective regions, backed by employers in each the regions.

Against this backdrop of change, **Annex A** provides a summary of progress against the recommendation in the 2012 Enterprise and Business Committee Report and **Annex B** provides additional information on roles of Regional Skills Partnerships, Sectors Skills Councils and the Wales Employment and Skills Board.

### Improving the accessibility of apprenticeships

Our Action Plan recognises the need for development in this area. We are:

**Cyclically advertising vacancies:** We are moving to a more defined and cyclical process for advertising apprenticeship vacancies for 16-19 year olds, which will be maximised during the period when student leave school/college. Providers working with the National Training Federation for Wales (NTFW) have committed to advertising at least 1,000 high quality vacancies on the Apprenticeship Matching Service during the June – September period to encourage applications. The Apprenticeship Matching System was evaluated as part of the external apprenticeship evaluation; we recognise that it is no longer fit for purpose and will start to decommission it during 2018.

**One Stop Shop for apprenticeships:** In the meantime we are working on an overarching One Stop Shop for apprenticeship recruitment. The plan is to establish a 'clearing house' where enquiries are referred to the provider network. This approach will involve tracking enquires/applications and reporting on the service received. This system will be linked to Summer Clearing (July - September) and Winter Clearing (January - March). This will be aligned to large scale marketing campaigns.

**Annual campaigns** are operating to raise the profile of the apprenticeships to young people. The first campaign is run in conjunction with GCSE and A Level exam results – this includes targeted radio and digital advertising, supported by social media and PR. The second campaign during August is co-ordinated in conjunction with Careers Wales and called 'Where Now'.

**Raising the Profile:** Our biggest development to raise the profile of vocational education has been Have a Go<sup>4</sup>. We have successfully engaged with 79 schools and 21 local authorities; 20,000 young people have taken part over the first six month pilot phase. It has now been rolled out across Wales.

**Skills Competitions** allow vocational learners to develop and show cases their skills at a UK and world level. Team Wales won forty-five medals in the 2016 Skills Show and four out of the top ten performing organisations were

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<sup>4</sup> The Have a Go equipment raises the learner awareness in the following sectors: Manufacturing and Engineering; Construction and Building Technology; Transportation and Logistics; Creative Industries; Social and Professional Services and ICT.

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colleges and employers in Wales. Wales has secured nine competitors in the UK squad for WorldSkills in Russia in 2019.

***Apprenticeship Engagement Network project:*** this project will facilitate the recruitment of a range of employer representative bodies, employers, and former apprentices with the common aim of promoting apprenticeships. As well as former apprentices acting as Apprenticeship Ambassadors engaging young people in schools, employers with proven track records of successful apprenticeship schemes will be tasked with mentoring and linking up with small and medium-sized employers and attending employer events to advise them on the benefits of apprenticeships.

### **Better parity of esteem between vocational and academic routes**

Through improving apprenticeships (their relevance, level and progression) we are positioning apprenticeships alongside A Levels and higher education provision as a route into high value jobs and professions. Degree Apprenticeships will help bridge the divide between vocational and academic pathways, with younger learners and their parents in particular being made aware that the qualifications are of high standing as they are underpinned by universities.

On a broader issue we are working with UCAS to apply points to apprenticeships which will also support progress to Higher Education and parity between the sectors. Longer term the establishment of a new single strategic authority for post-compulsory education and training recommended by Hazelkorn to oversee the planning, funding and regulation of both vocational and academic routes is expected to help address parity issues.

### **Providing independent careers advice**

Independent and impartial careers information advice and guidance has a key role to play in raising awareness of apprenticeships and helping young people and their parents explore the opportunities an apprenticeship can bring to their career aspirations.

Last year Careers Wales engaged with clients and stakeholders to establish a forward vision for service reforms and digital transformation. The remit letter issued by Welsh Government to the company for 2017-18 supports delivery of these ambitions. As a result we expect to see significant increases in the number of advisers working in schools and with young people at key transition points. We expect the lessons and effective practice emerging from the 'Opportunity Awareness' pilot to be integrated into the Careers Wales offer in the year ahead.

Through the 'Opportunity Awareness' pilot Careers Wales have worked with schools and other partners to actively engage thousands of young people and hundreds of teachers in events and activities designed to raise the profile and understanding of vocational pathways including apprenticeships. A total of 37,103 pupils across 235 schools in Wales have participated in 'Opportunity

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Awareness' group activities this year. The majority of these schools are mainstream secondary schools but Careers Wales have also undertaken sessions with Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and with selected pupils in some ALN specialist schools. Careers Wales have also delivered 51 teacher training sessions with 508 participants.

The careers service in Wales, delivered by Careers Wales, has changed considerably in recent years, with many innovations responding to client needs and preferences. While independent evaluations show high levels of customer and stakeholder satisfaction with the services that Careers Wales offer, we are supporting Careers Wales to drive forward their vision to create services which make better use of digital technologies and delivery channels. In our remit letter to the organisation for 2017-18 we have directed the company to drive forward reforms in line with their overall vision, and we expect to see increases in the levels of engagement and interaction with young people in education increasing as a result.

Delivery of services over the last 2 years to clients in education – averaged out annually:

- 48,659 young people benefitted from 1:1 support;
- 90,900 interactions delivered; and
- 64,279 young people in education attended group sessions.

### **Improving equality and equity of opportunity**

Apprenticeships offer vital opportunities for people of all backgrounds and levels of ability to participate and succeed in learning. It offers a 'second chance' to young people and adults who may not have done well at school, or who need to develop new skills in order to enter and maintain employment.

We are supporting people into employment who are new to the workplace as well as placing a renewed focus on progression in the workplace through access to higher quality training opportunities.

Our drive for equality of opportunity is focused on removing potential barriers to apprenticeships experienced by under-represented groups, recognising that some apprentices may also need additional support to remain and succeed. All providers are required to have a formal equal opportunities strategy in place and undertake a formal review annually. The Welsh Government use apprentice data and other evidence, including self-assessment reports, to monitor participation rates and to evaluate action taken by providers to ensure that learners with protected characteristics are not disadvantaged in any way.

The Welsh Government has appointed an Equality and Diversity Champion to improve the engagement of protected groups onto apprenticeship programmes. The aim is to increase participation of protected groups on apprenticeships and to instigate a culture change on the programme that embraces diversity. Targeted action in conjunction with wider specialist

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organisations such as Remploy is also taking place to reduce barriers faced by those with protected characteristics when accessing the Apprenticeship programme. Welsh Pilot work has commenced with Remploy to match clients on the Work Choice programme to Apprenticeship opportunities in their area.

As Welsh Government we are committed to using the data which is available to help delivery partners understand and tackle inequalities. For example, we have are introducing an annual statistical data matching process, which will allow us to link data on school pupils, further education, work based learning and higher education and examinations to allow us to produce analysis around learners' characteristics, programmes and outcomes.

Tackling gender bias has been at the forefront of our equity strategy. In 2015/16, 57.5 per cent of learners pursuing an apprenticeship were female and 42.5 per cent were male<sup>5</sup>. However, this statistic masks gender bias in some sectors. The reasons are complex and can be rooted back to decisions made in school, for example, the problem with attracting more women into engineering lies with relatively females taking A Level science and maths subjects.

Providers tackle gender bias in certain sectors, for example females in engineering and construction. Individuals are used as positive role models and ambassadors to promote gender balance in all sectors, for example, through visiting schools to share their experiences. Our National Apprentice of the Year is a female engineer who is a natural role model for women considering a technical career.

### **Higher and Degree Apprenticeships**

Over the last 3 years there has been as significant growth in Higher Apprenticeships. There are currently 59 Higher Apprenticeship frameworks available spanning levels 4-7. Several Higher Apprenticeship frameworks include qualifications delivered by universities. Higher Apprenticeships represented 25 per cent of starts in 2015/16, 4 percentage points higher than the 2014/15 figure<sup>6</sup>.

In 2016/17 we developed seven new apprenticeships frameworks, six of these were Higher Apprenticeships (85% of all new frameworks). We have also commissioned the development of ten new apprenticeship frameworks for 2017/18, nine of these are Higher Apprenticeship frameworks (90% of all new frameworks) to meet Welsh employer needs.

Degree Apprenticeships are currently under development in Wales. In December 2016, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)

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<sup>5</sup> Welsh Government, Further education, work-based learning and community learning: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/further-education-work-based-learning-community-learning/?lang=en>

<sup>6</sup> Welsh Government, Further education, work-based learning and community learning: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/further-education-work-based-learning-community-learning/?lang=en>

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invited plans from institutions to develop and combine vocational and academic degree level qualifications which could form part of an apprenticeship. HEFCW identified engineering, advanced manufacturing and IT/computing as particular areas of interest.

We are undertaking a co-development approach working with HEFCW and Higher Education Providers to develop Degree Apprenticeships and delivery options. New policy is being developed that brings together apprenticeships and higher education – sectors with different processes and cultures - therefore requiring the widest possible input and perspectives from stakeholders. The new strategic body for all post-16 education in Wales is expected to have a role in strengthening cohesion between the post-16 education sectors through providing routes to higher level education and training, where people can move between academic and vocational pathways.

### **Aligning apprenticeships to employer needs**

We are also taking a more strategic approach to workforce planning to address the issues facing businesses around the need to increased levels of skills among their employees – and plan in a holistic way for the skill-sets in demand for tomorrow. This approach will involve both the all-age - apprenticeship programme and all-age employability programme.

We are actively reviewing and developing apprenticeships to address identified skill shortages, particularly in growth sectors and emerging job categories, in line with priorities determined by Regional Skills Partnerships. The content of the qualifications within our apprenticeship frameworks are being improved through Sector Qualifications Reviews being conducted by Qualifications Wales. We have established a new commissioning process for our apprenticeships working with Sector Skills Council and alongside the devolved administrations. Where national employers want us to adopting elements of English apprenticeships, we are considering how they align with Welsh frameworks and the components we can incorporate. Our quality standards determine we will only do this where recognised portable qualifications underpin the apprenticeship. The Wales Employment and Skills Board will have an overview of apprenticeships developments and their proposed Apprenticeship Advisory Group will be instrumental on our objective to deliver 30 high performing apprenticeship frameworks to drive forward the Welsh economy.

Our approach will open up new opportunities for people to progress at work. It is becoming increasingly difficult for business to secure people with the right levels and mix of skills to fill their growing number of skilled jobs in the future. The priority for business is to tackle these issues and mismatches fully, so that Wales can push on to have a more productive, high-value economy enabling people can move up in their careers. That is why access to the apprenticeship programme will now come with advice to aid workforce planning arrangements. In order to drive this process we have put in place Apprenticeship Levy Employer Engagement officials.

## **Annex A**

**An update on the Welsh Government's response to and the progress made on the recommendations to the 2012 Committee report.**

### **Recommendation 1 - Accepted in 2012**

**Do more to convince employers, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, of the importance and cost effectiveness of apprenticeships as part of a more strategic approach to planning their medium and long-term skills needs.**

We are taking a more strategic approach to workforce planning to address the issues facing businesses around the need to increase levels of skills among their employees – and plan in a holistic way for the skill-sets in demand for tomorrow.

We are actively reviewing and developing apprenticeships to address identified skill shortages, particularly in growth sectors and emerging job categories, in line with priorities determined by Regional Skills Partnerships. The content of the qualifications within our apprenticeship frameworks are being improved through Sector Qualifications Reviews being conducted by Qualifications Wales. We have established a new commissioning process for our apprenticeships working with Sector Skills Councils and alongside the other devolved administrations. Where national employers want us to adopt elements of English apprenticeships, we are considering how they align with Welsh frameworks and the components we can incorporate. Our quality standards determine we will only do this where recognised portable qualifications underpin the apprenticeship. The Wales Employment and Skills Board will have an overview of apprenticeships developments and their proposed Apprenticeship Advisory Group will be instrumental on our objective to deliver 30 high performing apprenticeship frameworks to drive forward the Welsh economy.

Our approach will open up new opportunities for people to progress at work. It is becoming increasingly difficult for business to secure people with the right levels and mix of skills to fill their growing number of skilled jobs in the future. The priority for business is to tackle these issues and mismatches fully, so that Wales can push on to be a more productive, high-value economy and so people can move up in their careers. That is why access to the apprenticeship programme will now come with advice to aid workforce planning arrangements.

### **Recommendation 2 - Accepted in principle in 2012**

**Publish the number of apprentices that progress into employment at the end of their apprenticeship, according to destination sector.**

The Welsh Government is participating in the UK Government's Longitudinal Education Outcomes Study (LEOS), a large-scale data linking programme which involves matching educational data to information on employment, earnings and

benefits held by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

This programme is already up and running in England and our participation will allow us to track and measure Welsh learners' destinations. As a pilot exercise we have securely transferred three academic years' worth of personal identifiers from the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) to DfE for inclusion in the April 2017 round of data matching with DWP. DWP will use the personal identifiers to create a link with employment, earning and benefits data. The linked data is due to be returned May 2017.

It is difficult to give precise timescales around our own data processing and analysis. We know that the data is far from straightforward and will require significant further manipulation and data cleaning for us to be able to get into a format ready for use. At this stage we are not sure whether we will be able to complete this analysis at sector level. We'll have more clarity on this by the Autumn.

Dependent on the pilot, our intention is to continue to take part in the project with data matched on an annual basis, with scope to extend to schools (PLASC data) and HE (HESA data).

### **Recommendation 3 - Rejected in 2012**

### **Recommendation 4 - Accepted in 2012**

#### **Work with employers to ensure that a significant percentage of Jobs Growth Wales opportunities are converted into apprenticeships.)**

Conversion of a Jobs Growth Wales (JGW) job into an apprenticeship programme has ensured not only the continuation of the employment for the young person but also training to develop skills and enhance future employability.

Managing agents delivering JGW are tasked with promoting apprenticeships as a progression opportunity for young people. We have included information on progression opportunities in our guidance documentation for Jobs Growth Wales and have supplemented this with email reminders to managing agents Jobs Growth Wales be part of the All Age Employability Programme.

### **Recommendation 5 - Rejected in 2012**

### **Recommendation 6 - Accepted in 2012**

#### **Encourage employers with well-established apprenticeship programmes to mentor and link up with small and medium-sized employers to advise them on apprenticeship schemes and share training provision.**

We have been working with a range of key organisations on the development of supply chain apprenticeships and show casing apprenticeship employers via our marketing and promotional work.

## Recommendation 7 - Accepted in 2012

**Target funding at higher level apprenticeships in the most appropriate sectors to ensure that the right skills are being delivered to meet the needs of a vibrant, modern Welsh economy.**

Apprenticeships have supported individuals of all ages to get the skills they need to enter the labour market and, importantly, progress through it into higher skilled work. Our policy has been to expand delivery at higher levels to align better with the economy and achieve a higher return on our investments. We have done this through our funding, contracting and marketing activity.

We have also reviewed learning content to ensure our frameworks continue to meet emerging skill shortages in technical and highly skilled occupations that will drive productivity, such as engineering and IT.

Since Higher Apprenticeships were first introduced in 2011, enrolments have grown rapidly - Higher Apprenticeships represented 25 per cent of starts in 2015/16<sup>1</sup>.

Delivery is predominantly in the social care and management sectors, although there has been some growth in technical occupations which we would like to see expanded, for example, into the construction industry and the STEM sectors. This year we have prioritised the review of existing Higher Apprenticeship frameworks to ensure they are relevant and attractive to employers, for example, we have added Higher National qualifications to frameworks in the engineering sector.

We have increased involvement of professional bodies in the promotion of Higher Apprenticeships and how these complement the professional qualification routes available.

Some delivery is already taking place at degree level and work to define demand and build supply side capacity is underway. The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales is working with higher education providers to develop integrated degrees.

We continue to recognise the value of entry level skills as a useful platform to higher achievement and that they can be the appropriate level for some occupations, for example, those in social care and the certain sectors in the construction industry.

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<sup>1</sup> Welsh Government, Further education, work-based learning and community learning: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/further-education-work-based-learning-community-learning/?lang=en>

## **Recommendation 8 - Accepted in 2012**

**Review the effectiveness of the Apprenticeship Matching Service in meeting the information needs of both employers and potential apprentices.**

The evaluation of Work-based Learning Apprenticeships 2011-2014 reviewed the Apprenticeship Matching Service. Since then we have been pursuing other forms of engagement with young people via Facebook, Social networking and Twitter.

We have worked with stakeholders on all forms of recruitment channels into apprenticeships:

- From the Apprenticeship Matching Service (AMS) website hosted by CareersWales.com.
- Through direct recruitment by employers/providers.
- Through conversion of existing staff to an apprenticeship.

AMS has been frequently updated since 2012, the latest update to AMS has given providers greater control and flexibility in relation to apprentice vacancies they post on AMS. Careers Wales have implemented a new functionality called 'Provider Self Service' which will enable Welsh Government contracted providers to have full administrative control on posting and managing apprentice vacancies on Careerswales.com.

## **Recommendation 9 - Accepted in 2012**

**Work at a UK level to ensure that sector skills councils have the capacity to tailor apprenticeship frameworks to meet changing employer demands and the demand for higher apprenticeship frameworks in Wales.**

We work closely with counterparts across the UK to ensure that the apprenticeship system continues to support employers. For example, officials have worked with the other devolved administrations to establish and maintain the capacity of Sector Skills Councils to develop apprenticeship frameworks to meet employer demand in Wales. Following the demise of UKCES, in November 2016 the devolved nations have collectively commissioned a network of delivery partners to act as custodians for the National Occupational Standards and Framework system across the devolved nations, under contract to Skills Development Scotland. Collective commissioning has meant we are able to agree a fixed commissioning price for each product which, whilst the same as last year, is a reduction on the previous years' commissioning prices. Added to this there is no duplication of tendering for activity and development requests from delivery partners. This arrangement helps ensure the viability of the delivery partners to complete products commissioned.

## **Recommendation 10 - Accepted in 2012**

**Publish the final version of the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for Wales by the end of December 2012.**

The Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for Wales was published in May 2013. In October 2016 a revised version was published to address changes in the skills landscape and provide additional flexibility in framework content.

### **Recommendation 11 - Accepted in 2012**

**Encourage work-based and apprenticeship training providers to develop closer links with employers and schools to support the development of skills and aid progression into work-based training and/or employment.**

Close links between providers and schools have been supported by the “Have a Go” initiative which aims to encourage greater engagement from school children in vocational education including apprenticeships.

Delivery commenced in the summer of 2016 and has involved organising events in schools and careers events as well as in public settings encouraging vocational careers and apprenticeship choices.

Young people are able to try out new skills on a range of fun and interactive activities such as virtual welding, programming robots, using a simulated tractor.

The facilitation of the activities is by trained practitioners drawn from further education institutions, training provider, Careers Wales and Welsh Government officials.

The “Have a Go” equipment raises the learners’ awareness in the following sectors: Manufacturing and Engineering; Construction and Building Technology; Transportation and Logistics; Creative Industries; Social and Professional Services and ICT.

Officials are also working with colleagues in Marketing and Communications to scope options for an Apprenticeship Engagement Network project that will bring together a range of employer representative bodies and former apprentices to promote the programme through various initiatives.

### **Recommendation 12 - Accepted in principle in 2012**

**Tackle problems of esteem and prestige with apprenticeships. This could include:**

- **a reconsideration of the apprenticeship product;**
- **clarification of people’s understanding of the term “apprenticeship”;** and
- **more innovative ways of promoting and communicating an apprenticeship “brand” to young people.**

We are tackling parity between vocational learning and other post-16 educational routes through improving the scope of apprenticeships and access to high quality provision. Through improving the apprenticeship project (its relevance, level and progression) we are positioning apprenticeships alongside university provision as a

route into high value jobs and professions. To support this we are working with UCAS to apply points to apprenticeships which will support progress to Higher Education.

Degree Apprenticeships will help bridge the divide between vocational and academic pathways, with younger learners and their parents in particular being made aware that the qualifications are of high standing as they are underpinned by universities.

The establishment of a new single strategic authority for post-compulsory education and training to oversee the planning, funding and regulation of both vocational and academic routes would also help tackle esteem issues via a range of annual campaigns.

### **Recommendation 13 - Accepted in 2012**

**Ensure all young people and their parents receive high quality advice about opportunities provided by apprenticeships well before pupils choose their options for GCSE and vocational courses, and encourage schools to promote apprenticeships as a viable alternative to higher education.**

Encouraging schools to promote apprenticeships is a fundamental part to our approach, coupled with developing the product itself. Welsh Government activity includes:

- Two annual marketing campaigns to raise the profile of apprenticeships aimed at young people. The first campaign is run in conjunction with GCSE and A level exam results to promote apprenticeships as a credible and viable alternative to other pathways of study. The campaign includes targeted radio and digital advertising, supported by social media and PR.
- The second campaign during August is co-ordinated in conjunction with Careers Wales targeting young people during their exam results – called “Where Now”. This gives young people vital information on all options available to them following their exams.
- Ensuring up to date and engaging content is available to young people on the Careers Wales website.
- Promoting success stories of current / former apprentices through case studies and by securing positive news coverage in the local and regional press.
- Securing PR and press opportunities and utilising individuals that have benefited from apprenticeships.
- Developing engaging video collateral showcasing real life apprentices and promoting these via our social media and digital channels.
- An annual school engagement campaign involving Apprenticeship Ambassadors returning to their local schools to talk to current students about the benefits of the apprenticeship route.

All marketing and communications activity is integrated into wider areas such as WorldSkills, Have A Go activity, SkillsCymru events and provides platforms to highlight apprenticeships as a valid and tangible option.

In addition, independent and impartial careers information advice and guidance has a key role to play in raising awareness of apprenticeships and helping young people and their parents explore the opportunities an apprenticeship can bring to their career aspirations.

Last year Careers Wales engaged with clients and stakeholders to establish a forward vision for service reforms and digital transformation. The remit letter issued by Welsh Government to the company for 2017-18 supports delivery of these ambitions. As a result we expect to see significant increases in the number of advisers working in schools and with young people at key transition points. We expect the lessons and effective practice emerging from the 'Opportunity Awareness' pilot to be integrated into the Careers Wales offer in the year ahead, and have established the increased take-up of apprenticeships as a key organisational outcome to reflect this.

#### **Recommendation 14 - Accepted in 2012**

**Consider how apprenticeship opportunities can be better coordinated, promoted and tailored to ensure that local priorities and needs are strategically met.**

To raise the profile of apprenticeships, all new vacancies should be promoted via one central system and should be a contractual obligation linked into the delivery of apprenticeships by all contracted providers. This will enhance the visibility of apprenticeships in order to become more realistic to both parents and young people.

By maintaining a single system, reports and features could be developed to provide insight into local and regional requirements / priorities. This system could be enabled so that a digital feed is implemented across a range of channels to push out opportunities and a pull into other websites.

A better insight of local and regional activity Regional Skills Partnerships will provide us with the ability to target (geo-targeting) key groups and address specific needs. For example, we need early identification of lack of opportunities in specific geographical areas / sectors - and the ability to respond via the network of providers or the WG account managers.

#### **Recommendation 15 - Accepted in principle in 2012**

**Consider the possibility of grants, including grants for essential travelling costs, being made available to apprentices so that young people from the lowest income households are not deterred from applying for apprenticeships because of the adverse impact on family allowances.**

Any support for apprentices that supplements the wage would need to be declared for HMRC to consider whether it is taxable income. As this support would not be universal, the expectation is that it would be considered taxable.

The Apprenticeship Pay Survey for 2014 provided information on training, hours and pay for apprentices in Scotland, England and Wales. The Survey recognised that some young people are not receiving the pay to which they are entitled. Welsh Government is working with the apprenticeship provider network to minimise the risk of employers not honouring their National Minimum Wage obligations.

### **Recommendation 16 - Accepted in principle in 2012**

**Identify and monitor gender disparity in apprenticeships, the reasons for those disparities, and explore the feasibility of setting targets for improving the recruitment of female apprentices in the economic priority sectors.**

Under its Annual Remit (2013/14), the Welsh Government commissioned Estyn to conduct a two year thematic review of equality issues relating to the apprenticeship programme in Wales. The review was to consider engagement and participation barriers facing black, minority ethnic (BME) and disabled groups and to identify good practice models.

Estyn published the first of two reports in November 2014. The report identifies the barriers that prevent learners from BME communities and those with disabilities from engaging in apprenticeship programmes.

The report included recommendations for Welsh Government and the Work Based Learning Provider network.

The five recommendations for the provider network were to:

- work more closely with schools, employers, community leaders and organisations representing BME and disabled learners to improve awareness of apprenticeships;
- work more effectively with local education providers and other agencies to make sure that valuable experience and resources are shared to support apprentices from BME communities;
- work with community leaders to identify community co-ordinators who will co-ordinate action to raise awareness of apprenticeships in the BME communities;
- make use of role models to promote apprenticeships in the community; and
- work with the Welsh Government and awarding bodies to develop more awareness of the support available for delivering some elements of a qualification for learners with disabilities.

In response to the recommendations in the Estyn report, the National Training Federation for Wales (NTFW) wrote to Welsh Government to request funding for a member of staff who could provide supportive assistance to the provider network to address the recommendations.

In May 2016 an Equality and Diversity Champion was appointed to provide the provider network with a supportive structure to assist them in increasing the take up of Apprenticeships by individuals with protected characteristics.

### **Recommendation 17 - Rejected in 2012**

### **Recommendation 18 - Accepted in 2012**

**Ensure that clearer guidance is provided for employers on how to recruit apprentices and what to expect from learning providers.**

The referral process for employers has been refined and we are working with the Business Wales Skills Gateway team to ensure an efficient service is offered to employers looking to recruit an apprentice.

An animation video has been developed and is available online to guide employers through the referral and recruitment process.

A list of provision and contact details of providers is available which clearly sets out ability to deliver specific apprenticeship frameworks according to sectors and business area.

**Recommendation 19 - We accepted in 2012**

**Review the effectiveness of the working relationship between Careers Wales, Jobcentre Plus and sector skills councils as part of its rationalisation of the apprenticeships system.**

The system that underpins apprenticeship development and delivery was subject to Welsh Government consultation in 2013; the responses to that consultation informed the apprenticeship skills policy plan published in February 2017, *Aligning the apprenticeship model with the needs of the Welsh economy*<sup>2</sup>. This plan sets out how Regional Skills Partnerships have a role with interfacing with employers to influence apprenticeship investment in areas of skill shortages and skill gaps. A stakeholder survey of Careers Wales services undertaken in 2015 concluded that Careers Wales was approachable, understanding of needs, values and respects others, and supports their organisation effectively.

**Recommendation 20 - We accepted in 2012**

**Review the effectiveness of sector-managed apprenticeships for expanding apprenticeship take-up and raising standards of provision.**

In 2014 we issued a protocol to steer the development of potential Welsh Government supported Shared Apprenticeship schemes. From that point all Shared Apprenticeship Schemes have been assessed against the criteria to ensure they are fit for purpose and do not have a negative impact on standard provision. All Shared Apprenticeship Schemes have to demonstrate that they are based on 'extreme market failure' such as the Ebbw Vale Shared Apprenticeship where there had been no apprenticeship activity in the Engineering and Manufacturing sector for years.

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## **Annex B**

### **Additional Information Request**

Update on the role of key players including:

#### **Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs)**

RSPs are at the centre of our Skills Policy. Over the next five years, Welsh Government plans to deliver a post-16 learning environment which remains fit for purpose and sets Wales ahead of other nations of the UK and internationally. To achieve this we are taking a longer-term view of the strategic changes needed as set out in the Policy Statement for Skills.

Our Apprenticeship Policy Plan sets out a clear role for RSPs to identify key skills shortages across the regions of Wales. They also are tasked with identifying the demand the levy will create and proposals to meet that demand, by consulting with levy paying employers. Each RSP Chair is a member of the Wales Employment and Skills Board. This reporting mechanism provides a platform for regional employment and skills matters to be discussed by the membership of Wales Employment and Skills Board.

On 29 July 2016, the three RSPs submitted their regional employment and skills plans together with completed funding templates to inform prioritisation of funding provision for the academic year 2017-18. The next iterations of the plans are due in July 2017.

Regional employment and skills plans are driving planning decisions for providers and providing a critical evidence base from which to make skills investment decisions. This approach is providing the mechanism to enable Welsh Government to align regional skills provision to investment and growth opportunities, including the priorities identified by Enterprise Zones, City Regions/Growth Bids and cross border collaborations.

#### **Wales Employment and Skills Board (WESB)**

In January 2017, The Council for Economic Renewal agreed a new governance structure which will see closer alignment with the Wales Employment and Skills Board.

The revised governance structure will see a refreshed Wales Employment and Skills Board reporting directly to the renamed Council for Economic Development (CED), and the new Chair of WESB will be invited to become a formal member of the CED.

This new working arrangement will provide Welsh Government with a robust challenge and enhanced strategic perspective on skills, apprenticeships, higher education and lifelong learning matters. It will also serve to strengthen links with business, social enterprise and trade unions, to influence policy across a number of areas relevant to the economy.

The Apprenticeship Skills Policy Plan sets out a key role for WESB in providing the strategic direction for apprenticeship developments in Wales. WESB will provide the vehicle for ensuring that the apprenticeship system remains flexible and responsive to the ever and more rapidly changing needs of industry.

The first meeting of the refreshed WESB is to take place on Thursday 25 May 2017.

### **Sector Skills Councils (SSCs)**

The Welsh Government has worked with the other devolved administrations to establish and maintain the capacity of Sector Skills Councils to develop apprenticeship frameworks to meet employer demand in Wales. Following the demise of UKCES, in November 2016 the devolved nations have collectively commissioned a network of delivery partners to act as custodians for the National Occupational Standards and Framework system across the devolved nations, under contract to Skills Development Scotland. Collective commissioning has meant we are able to agree a fixed commissioning price for each product which, whilst the same as last year, is a reduction on the previous years' commissioning prices. Added to this there is no duplication of tendering for activity and development requests from delivery partners. This arrangement helps ensure the viability of the delivery partners to complete products commissioned.

The UK Government withdrew core funding for SSCs in 2012 although some SSCs were successful in securing short term contracts from UKCES to undertake activities relating to maintenance of apprenticeship frameworks and National Occupation Standards until 2015. SSCs no longer receive any UK Government funding and now operating on a commercial basis selling sector related products and services. A number of SSCs have merged and some have ceased trading.

# Agenda Item 5.1

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru  
Y Pwyllgor Deisebau

National Assembly for Wales  
Petitions Committee

Russell George AM  
Chair, Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Ty Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

25 May 2017

Dear Russell

## Petitions currently under consideration by the Petitions Committee

I am keen that we provide the best possible service to people and organisations who petition the National Assembly for Wales.

In this spirit, and a desire to support joint-working between Assembly committees, I am writing to you to share information about the petitions we are currently considering which concern subjects within the remit of your Committee.

The current list is in the annex to this letter.

If any petitions are relevant to your current work programme it will assist us in our consideration if you, or your clerking team, could let us know. If you would like any further information on any of these petitions I would also be happy to provide it.

Yours sincerely



Mike Hedges AC/AM  
Cadeirydd/ Chair



## Annex

P-04-667	<a href="#"><u>A Roundabout for the A477/A4075 Junction</u></a>
P-04-688	<a href="#"><u>TATA Steel Port Talbot Power Plant</u></a>
P-05-690	<a href="#"><u>Resurfacing of the A40 Raglan-Abergavenny Road</u></a>
P-05-701	<a href="#"><u>Road Safety Improvements Along the A487 Trunk Road between Cardigan and Aberystwyth, to Include Passing Places</u></a>
P-05-710	<a href="#"><u>Ensure Disabled People can Access Public Transport as and When They Need it</u></a>
P-05-714	<a href="#"><u>Include a Mynachdy and Talybont Station as Part of the Cardiff Metro Proposal</u></a>
P-05-716	<a href="#"><u>Free Train Transport for School Pupils with Arriva Trains Wales</u></a>
P-05-720	<a href="#"><u>Hirwaun and Penderyn Community Council Petition for the Installation of Fibre Optic Broadband</u></a>
P-05-721	<a href="#"><u>Penegoes Speed Limit Petition</u></a>
P-05-725	<a href="#"><u>Widen the A470 from Pontypridd to Coryton to 3 Lanes</u></a>
P-05-731	<a href="#"><u>Land &amp; Access Lane Sale at Abercwmboi</u></a>
P-05-737	<a href="#"><u>Save Our Bus</u></a>
P-05-738	<a href="#"><u>Public Petition for the Dinas Powys By-Pass</u></a>
P-05-740	<a href="#"><u>Petition To Protect Our High Street</u></a>
P-05-746	<a href="#"><u>Free School Transport for All Children in Wales</u></a>
P-05-748	<a href="#"><u>School Buses For School Children</u></a>
P-05-755	<a href="#"><u>Call on Welsh Government to make the A48 safe for all road users</u></a>



[and pedestrians at Laleston, Broadlands and Merthyr Mawr](#)



## Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee

### Apprenticeships in Wales 2017

#### Purpose

The aim of this Inquiry is to provide an opportunity for the Committee to follow-up Apprenticeship related issues. Some of these matters were raised during the recent Apprenticeship Levy Inquiry but were not directly related to the Apprenticeship Levy.

#### Methodology

The outreach and youth engagement teams arranged workshops, interviews and visits for Committee Members to gather the views of apprentices and non-apprentices on specific aspects of access to and information on apprenticeships. The objective was to target apprentices at various levels, non-apprentices, Welsh speakers and disability groups, which also included a range of ages of males and females.

Workshops were held with Hefin David AM and Caerphilly Youth Forum, AFASIC Youth group and Deffo Cymru. Outreach interviewed apprentices and non-apprentices at the National Assembly, Caerphilly Youth Forum, AFASIC Youth group and Deffo Cymru. Finally, Russell George AM, Hannah Blythyn AM, Hefin David AM, Vikki Howells AM and Mark Isherwood AM visited apprentices at BT and non-apprentices at the Prince's Trust Cymru.

#### Comments/Recommendations made by the young people who took part in the interviews and workshops.

#### Advice and Guidance

- Young people find it hard to access information on apprenticeships, they don't know where to find it.
- The Careers Wales website is not advertised well. Young people either didn't know about it or had difficulty in using it. It was slow, difficult to navigate, there were problems uploading CVs and the Apprenticeship Matching service does not adapt well to all search criteria such as geography.
- Young people felt that the careers advice in school was aimed at those who would take the academic route of further and higher education; some young people suggested that schools were only interested in pupils who were academically successful and who could contribute to school attainment statistics. Advice and guidance on apprenticeships was generally not available or insufficient.
- Young people felt that careers advice and information on apprenticeships should take place before they chose their options in year 9, some suggested that it should start during primary school.



**Assembly Communications: Outreach**

- Young people identified key influencers as family and friends. Many only knew about apprenticeships from their parents/siblings. This either influences their decision to apply for an apprenticeship or introduced them to the stigma surrounding apprenticeships.

**Barriers:**

- Young people felt that there wasn't enough support for apprentices and that they were neither students nor employees. Some felt that it would be beneficial for them to be part of the student's union in order to access support and benefits available to students – an example given was access to bereavement counselling and mental health support.

- Gender stereotyping was identified as a potential barrier. Many felt that engineering, mechanics and science based apprenticeships were aimed at men and this was off-putting for women. Similarly, men also felt that some apprenticeships were aimed at women and that they would be 'laughed at' if they undertook an apprenticeship in hairdressing for example.

- More needs to be done to promote through STEM schemes. BT have STEM Ambassadors, and involve female apprentices in this to promote the opportunities for girls.

- Young people felt strongly about the apprenticeship pay and that it is a barrier to young people. Some described the pay as 'slave labour' or 'cheap labour'. An apprentice at the Assembly highlighted the benefits of earning the living wage, she described how it made her feel like an equal to her colleagues and gave her the ability to pay for travelling costs and to buy clothing. Young people highlighted that, after the day to day costs of employment, they had little to no money left over from the basic apprenticeship wage.

- Some young people were not aware of the progression available with apprenticeships and the possible qualifications they could achieve. This resulted in some young people opting for further and higher education rather than an apprenticeship.

**Positive aspects of an apprenticeship:**

- Apprentices felt that they could learn a trade and build a career whilst getting paid at the same time.

- Many did not see further and higher education as an option because of their experience at school, the debt associated with higher education and that employment is not secure as a result.

- Many appreciated the progression available through the stages and levels, and the support available from colleagues and managers to achieve that.

- Apprentices valued opportunities to experience other departments.

- Some apprentices saw the benefit and opportunity to do a top up degree; by doing an apprenticeship first and then a degree, paid for by their employer. This removed the barrier of student debt and gave them 'the best of both worlds' by obtaining experience and a degree.

- Apart from one individual, all apprentices interviewed had a good experience of apprenticeships. One young person had two brothers who also did apprenticeships.



**Assembly Communications: Outreach**

- The application process for applying for an apprenticeship was good. It was all done online and straightforward.
- One apprentice highlighted the benefit of doing her apprenticeship through the medium of Welsh, explaining that it gave her more employment opportunities for the future”.

**Comments made by young peoples with disabilities.**

- The apprentice was offered no additional support from his college but was given extra help from his employer, this help was voluntary and not part of the apprenticeship programme.
- The apprentice believed that his disability (hard of hearing) was a real barrier to getting an apprenticeship. Many employers don't know how to support people with disabilities and “aren't willing to take a gamble on a disabled person”.
- Employers within the trade industry feel that there is a danger to employing people who are hard of hearing, the apprentice explained that “if something is falling from the ceiling, they can't shout at you to warn you”.

**Suggestion and questions for Welsh Government:**

- More publicity and promotion of apprenticeships is needed.
- More information for parents on apprenticeships.
- There has been an increase of promotion on social media but it needs to be better. Facebook is probably the best social media platform to target.
- Careers Wales could make some YouTube videos which shows the variety of apprenticeships around Wales, and this could be shown in schools and advertised on social media platforms.
- Make sure options are promoted to students in schools and information given to pupils before year 9.
- Promote what is an apprenticeship, the variety of those on offer, and the expectation of what is needed for an apprenticeship – not everyone requires five GCSEs etc.
- More information on higher apprenticeships and the progressions available.
- Apprenticeship events, similar to job fayre events held by universities, where businesses can promote their apprenticeship schemes.





# Agenda Item 7

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