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WORK-BASED LEARNING IMPROVEMENT PLAN

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

"The Minister's request for an Improvement Plan for work-based learning represented a unique opportunity. It gave ELWa a chance to take stock, review the evidence and consider the long term changes needed to establish work-based learning as a high quality education and training route. We trust that this document shows that the opportunity has been seized.

Our programmes aim to meet very different needs: offering a well-rounded learning experience for young people; providing focused training for employers; giving people at risk of social exclusion the essential skills they need to get a foothold in the labour market. When work-based learning is delivered effectively, it is to the great benefit of learners, employers and Wales as a whole.

However, too much current provision is not of acceptable quality, and for the programmes to acquire the status they deserve, there has to be a significant improvement in completion rates on Modern (and Foundation Modern) Apprenticeships. When learners don't complete their frameworks, they miss opportunities to acquire the skills, knowledge and qualifications needed for a secure, prosperous future. We also need to get more employers in Wales involved in work-based learning, not just for the sake of their own competitiveness, but to offer young people a practical work focused learning pathway, which leads directly to a job. We are keen that Modern Apprenticeships offer a valuable learning route for young people as part of the 14 – 19 Pathways.

Our Plan proposes a range of initiatives to improve the quality, relevance and success of work-based programmes. We will work with the Skills for Business Network to update apprenticeship frameworks so that they are fit for purpose, and to encourage firms to participate we will explore how to incentivise the engagement of employers. We will help to implement improved advice and guidance on vocational opportunities, so that fewer people make a 'wrong choice' of programme or employer, and then drop out of learning altogether. We will invest and support providers to improve their performance, paying particular attention to continuing professional development of staff and the improvement of Leadership and Management skills.

In drawing up this Improvement Plan, we are ably assisted by a sounding board of experts from our partners and stakeholders. I am particularly grateful to Lord Ted Rowlands for chairing the group, but I must thank everyone who contributed their constructive and sometimes challenging views."