

Agenda – Children, Young People, and Education Committee

Meeting Venue:	For further information contact:
Video Conference via Zoom	Naomi Stocks
Meeting date: 4 November 2021	Committee Clerk
Meeting time: 09.00	0300 200 6565
	SeneddChildren@senedd.wales

In accordance with Standing Order 34.19, the Chair has determined that the public are excluded from the Committee's meeting in order to protect public health. This meeting will be broadcast live on www.senedd.tv

Registration and private pre-meeting

(08.45 – 09.00)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(09.00)

2 Papers to note

(09.00 – 09.05)

2.1 General scrutiny of the Minister for Education and Welsh Language

(Pages 1 – 3)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee to the Minister for Education and Welsh language following the scrutiny session on 23 September – CYPE(6)–05–21 – Paper to note 1

2.2 General scrutiny of the Minister for Education and Welsh Language

(Pages 4 – 16)



Attached Documents:

Further information from the Minister for Education and Welsh Language following the meeting on 23 September – CYPE(6)–05–21 – Paper to note 2

2.3 Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Skills and Post–16 Education Bill

(Pages 17 – 18)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee to the Minister for Education and Welsh Language – CYPE(6)–05–21 – Paper to note 3

2.4 Curriculum for Wales

(Pages 19 – 22)

Attached Documents:

Letter from Ymgyrch Hanes Cymru – CYPE(6)–05–21 – Paper to note 4 (Welsh Only)

Translation – CYPE(6)–05–21 – Paper to note 4

2.5 Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill

(Page 23)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee to the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee – CYPE(6)–05–21 – Paper to note 5

2.6 Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill

(Page 24)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee to the Chair of the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee – CYPE(6)–05–21 – Paper to note 6

2.7 Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill

(Page 25)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee to the Chair of the Finance Committee – CYPE(6)–05–21 – Paper to note 7

2.8 General scrutiny of the Minister for Health and Social Services

(Pages 26 – 31)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Minister for Education and Welsh Language and Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing – CYPE(6)–05–21 – Paper to note 8

2.9 General scrutiny of the Minister for Health and Social Services

(Pages 32 – 35)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee to the Minister for Health and Social Services, Deputy Minister for Social Services and Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing – CYPE(6)–05–21 – Paper to note 9

2.10 Committee Forward work programme

(Pages 36 – 37)

Attached Documents:

Letter from Colegau Cymru to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee – CYPE(6)–05–21 – Paper to note 10

2.11 Committee Forward work programme

(Pages 38 – 69)

Attached Documents:

Audit Wales report: A Picture of Schools – CYPE(6)–05–21 – Paper to note 11

2.12 Committee Forward work programme

(Pages 70 – 104)

Attached Documents:

Audit Wales report – A Picture of Higher and Further Education CYPE(6)–05–21 – Paper to note 12

2.13 Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill

(Page 105)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee to the Llywydd and Chair of Business Committee CYPE(6)-05-21 – Paper to note 13

2.14 Legislative Consent: Skills and Post-16 Education Bill

(Pages 106 – 107)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee to the Llywydd and Chair of Business Committee – CYPE(6)-05-21 – Paper to note 14

3 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting

(09.05)

4 Consideration of the approach to the Welsh Government draft budget 2022 – 2023

(09.05 – 09.20)

(Pages 108 – 129)

Attached Documents:

Private paper – Approach to budget scrutiny

5 Introduction to Legislation

(09.20 – 09.30)

6 Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill – briefing from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)

(09.30 – 10.30)

[Tertiary Education and Research \(Wales\) Bill](#)

[Explanatory Memorandum](#)

Break

(10.30 – 10.35)

**7 Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill – technical briefing
from the Welsh Government**

(10.35 – 11.35)

**8 Consideration of approach to the Tertiary Education and Research
(Wales) Bill**

(11.35 – 11.45)

(Pages 130 – 138)

Attached Documents:

Private paper – Approach paper

Lunch break

(11.45 – 12.25)

**9 Committee training session on safeguarding, facilitated by the
NSPCC (part 2)**

(12.30 – 15.30)

Agenda Item 2.1

CYPE(6)-05-21 - Paper to note 1

**Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc
ac Addysg**

**Children, Young People
and Education Committee**

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Jeremy Miles MS

Minister for Education and Welsh Language

Dyddiad | Date 11 October

Pwnc | Subject: Follow up from ministerial evidence session

Dear Jeremy,

Thank you for giving evidence to the Committee on 23 September. As we indicated, this letter includes some additional questions we did not have time to cover in the session. We also wanted to seek some further clarity on developments with managing COVID-19 in pre-16 settings that have arisen since the session.

Managing COVID-19 in schools

We are aware that since the Committee session the education unions have raised continuing concerns about the impact of COVID-19 on schools. We note your letter to headteachers dated 28 September seeking to address some of these. In this letter you state that you will “continue to monitor this situation” and that you can “redouble efforts to improve communications in this area.” Can you outline how you intend to do these two things? You also note that that you are working with the Minister for Health to see what more can be done to support TTP teams and settings, can you provide more detail on what improvements you are hoping to see?

You confirmed to us in Committee the Welsh Government’s position that, where there is a positive case in their household, children should attend school unless they are symptomatic themselves but are encouraged to take a precautionary PCR test. Your statement of 5 October then said they should also take daily lateral flow tests for seven days.

Could you please confirm that the child should still attend school whilst waiting for the result of that precautionary PCR test (assuming they haven’t had a positive lateral flow test)? In other words, would

you regard the disruption to the child's education (even if only one or two days) disproportionate to the level of risk of asymptomatic transmission that might take place if they attend school?

Additional questions

There were some areas that we did not have time to cover during the oral evidence session.

While teaching and assessment arrangements are decisions for individual universities to make, we are aware there have been strong public feelings on these issues. For example, we know that the Senedd has been [petitioned on assessment arrangements at Cardiff University](#). (The petition was rejected because it's a matter for the University.) Can you set out what you expect from higher education providers in relation to teaching and assessment arrangements?

Could you explain what you mean by "protecting" the Educational Maintenance Allowance for young learners, and if you expect to increase the award amount from the current entitlements.

What are your expectations of Qualifications Wales in relation to vocational qualification reform, and are you content with the current status quo?

Information you agreed to send the Committee

You also agreed to provide the following additional information to the Committee:

- the amount of additional funding that has been allocated for school counselling services;
- the letter from Qualifications Wales regarding the reform of qualifications to align with the new Curriculum for Wales. Thank you for providing this already;
- the Welsh Government's modelling in relation to the impact on Welsh institutions if access to higher education for English students is controlled or if English fees are cut following the UK Government's response to the Independent Panel report to the review of post-18 education.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,



Jayne Bryant MS
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.



Agenda Item 2.2

CYPE(6)-05 -21 - Paper to note 2

Further information from the Minister for Education and Welsh Language following a request from Members at the meeting on the 23 September for the letter from Qualifications Wales regarding qualifications reform.

By email

Jeremy Miles MS
Minister for Education and the Welsh Language

22 September 2021

Dear Minister

As you know, while responding to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have also continued our work to reshape qualifications for 14- to 16-year-old learners to help bring the new Curriculum for Wales to life.

In this letter we summarise our work to date and how, moving forward, we will use the principles of co-construction to give stakeholders a strong and central voice in achieving our twin aims of reimagining GCSEs and reshaping the wider 14 to 16 qualifications offer.

We then outline some key assumptions and priorities for reforming qualifications so that they support and align to the Curriculum for Wales Framework and meet the needs of future learners.

In view of your joint responsibility for Education and the Welsh language, this letter also touches on our commitment to making sure that qualification reforms contribute to Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 policy ambitions.

Finally, we discuss some of the key risks and dependencies to securing qualification reform that will help to make the new curriculum a success, notably the timeline for introducing the new curriculum and the development of a new approach to school evaluation, improvement and accountability.

www.qualificationswales.org



1. Background

Since the start of 2020, we have held two public consultations to help shape our approach to this work. The first consultation established guiding principles and foundations for our work, and the second sought views on the range of subjects for GCSE qualifications.

Guiding principles and foundations

In our first consultation, we explained why there is still a case for 14- to 16-year-old learners to continue studying for and taking qualifications. Turning 16 is an important milestone in a young person's life, when they complete their compulsory education before going on to more specific academic or vocational study, training and work. Qualifications at this point reflect education at its broadest point for the learner and provide information that helps young people decide which path to take next. The experience of the past two years has further demonstrated the important role that qualifications play in helping young people to progress on their learning journey.

There was strong support for the guiding principles we proposed for the future range of 14 to 16 qualifications that can be publicly funded. We have agreed that these qualifications should:

1. Relate to, and support, the aims and purposes of the new Curriculum for Wales Framework.
2. Be available in Welsh and English.
3. Contribute to a coherent and inclusive offer.

We also agreed that the main qualifications taken in schools, aligned to the Curriculum for Wales, should continue to be called GCSEs, but that their content and assessment will need to change. We describe below how we intend to collaborate with stakeholders to co-construct the design of a new suite of GCSE qualifications.

2. Shaping the wider 14 to 16 qualifications offer

Our work on reforming qualifications to support the Curriculum for Wales goes further than considering what next for GCSEs. In collaboration with stakeholders, we also want to shape the whole 14 to 16 qualifications offer so that it meets the needs of all learners and offers something for everyone.

We want to give centres a coherent and inclusive choice of bilingual qualifications that supports their school curriculum and meets the needs of their learners. Over the summer we have reviewed the range of qualifications available internationally. We will now engage extensively with stakeholders to consider what other qualifications should be available alongside GCSEs.

Our work on this wider offer will consider the range of qualifications available to 14- to 16-year-old learners from entry level upward and a wide variety of subject areas, including those related to the world of work. We will be guided by learners' needs and the views of teachers, parents and other stakeholders. We expect that the future range of qualifications will include a mix of existing and new qualifications. Some will be made-for-Wales qualifications, and some will be UK-wide qualifications.

We will consult on the defining features of the offer in autumn 2022. Our aim is to have a fully coherent and inclusive range of bilingual qualifications in place by September 2027.

Depending on the degree of change required to shape the offer, there is a possibility that we will require additional resource to help reform existing qualifications or secure new ones. Will continue to work closely with your officials on this to feed into future budget planning.

3. Reimagining GCSEs

Earlier this year, we consulted on the proposed range GCSE subject that would best support the Curriculum for Wales. We have carefully considered all responses and will shortly confirm the range of subjects in which new, made-for-Wales GCSEs will be developed.

This marks the beginning of an exciting and creative phase of our Qualified for the Future work. We will work closely with stakeholders to do two things. First, to rethink the relationship between curriculum, pedagogy and qualifications. Second, to look at the practical ways qualifications' content and assessment should align to the ethos, purposes and content of the Curriculum for Wales Framework, enable effective teaching, and support positive learner experiences and wellbeing.

There are many ways in which qualifications can be designed to assess and demonstrate learner attainment and experiences. Qualifications should not be seen as synonymous with traditional written exams. We will explore how qualifications can be designed to encourage learners to gain meaningful experiences, without assuming the only learning or experiences gained by learners are those specified in qualifications.

We are committed to exploring innovative approaches and reimagining the content and assessment for future qualifications. These include:

- How qualifications can be designed to be as engaging as possible for learners and support their mental health and wellbeing.
- Increasing flexibility - to reflect a school's curriculum and offer its learners a positive teaching and learning experience.
- Exploring digital technology to enhance assessment experiences for learners and build more resilience in how qualifications are delivered.

These ambitions reflect the qualification design priorities discussed later in this letter.

The GCSE name offers considerable benefits to learners; it is familiar, trusted and helps ensure that young people's achievements are recognised and valued. As already discussed, our immediate priority is to work with stakeholders to reimagine the content and assessment of the next generation of made-for-Wales qualifications. Once we have developed the high-level design for these new qualifications, we will consider whether to revisit the question of keeping the GCSE name.

We do not currently believe that additional resources other than those already agreed will be required to support our work of reforming GCSEs; the anticipated costs are already reflected in the Welsh Government impact assessment for the new curriculum.

However, it may be that our renewed focus on stakeholder engagement means that we incur some costs earlier than we had originally expected, so some re-profiling of the funding required in each year may be needed. We will continue to work with your officials to support budget planning for future years.

4. A co-constructed approach

It is essential that everyone involved in education works together to deliver the Curriculum for Wales. We want to give learners, teachers, assessment experts, parents and carers, employers, colleges, and universities a strong voice in shaping new qualification content and assessment.

We will involve stakeholders directly in the work of exploring and developing proposals for each individual subject. Our approach will be collaborative and open. We will learn lessons from how the Curriculum for Wales was developed, and from our recent experience of

working closely with stakeholders to ensure qualifications were delivered successfully in summer 2021.

We will use a three-tier model for stakeholder involvement, consisting of:

- i. Subject-level working groups
- ii. AoLE network groups
- iii. A stakeholder reference group

The enclosed appendix describes in more detail how we will use these groups to co-construct the design of new GCSEs and develop and test ideas for the wider 14 to 16 qualifications offer.

In addition to these groups, we are also working with your officials to agree how the National Network for curriculum implementation can help shape the thinking on new qualifications.

5. Aligning qualifications to the Curriculum for Wales

To support the work of reimagining future qualifications, we have discussed and agreed some key assumptions with your officials about how future qualifications will relate to the Curriculum for Wales Framework at national and school level.

It is important that everyone involved in implementing the Curriculum for Wales recognise that it is much wider than just the qualifications taken by learners. There is no expectation that all learning activities and experiences undertaken by learners should lead to a qualification. Well-designed qualifications can help to encourage high-quality teaching and learning in schools, but they are by no means the only way of securing this. Valuable skills and knowledge can be gained and recognised through other experiences and activities.

It will be for centres (schools, colleges and other settings) to decide which qualifications to make available to their learners. Our role is to shape the range of publicly funded qualifications from which centres can choose the most appropriate for their learners.

The mix of qualifications offered by centres and taken by learners should reflect the purposes, aims and expectations of the Curriculum for Wales Framework. That is, learners should have a choice of qualifications that help them to realise the four purposes, reflect

their learning and experiences across a broad and balanced curriculum, and support their future progression.

Our understanding is that Welsh Government does not intend to specify a minimum or maximum number of qualifications that each learner will be expected to take, nor to dictate specific qualifications that centres must offer to their learners. Our research shows that learners take on average around 13 GCSEs or equivalent qualification. This seems like a high number given the broader expectations of the Curriculum for Wales, so we might expect to see the average number of qualifications taken by learners to decrease over time as schools focus on offering their learners broader and more balanced learning experiences.

Qualifications can be designed to help learners to realise the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales. The design of individual qualifications should also make clear how they relate to specific aspects of the Curriculum for Wales Framework, such as the statements of what matters, descriptions of learning and progression steps. When reimagining qualifications, we will also consider a range of other design priorities, as discussed below.

6. Priorities for qualification design

The following priorities will shape our work with stakeholders to reimagine how new GCSEs and other made-for-Wales qualifications could be designed differently.

Choice and flexibility

As far as possible, we want qualifications to offer schools and learners the opportunity to deliver and to experience their school curriculum in line with the Curriculum for Wales Framework. We will explore with stakeholders how the assessment of knowledge, skills and experiences can be done in ways that offers more flexibility for learners and centres to choose some of the content and context they want to focus on. The nature and degree of flexibility required will vary across subjects, history is likely to include more optional content than mathematics for instance. There are lots of ways flexibility can be achieved, for example by including more teacher-led assessment, or more project-based assessment where learners can decide the area they want to focus on. For each qualification it should be clear how and why the balance has been struck between what is fixed and what is flexible.

Learner experiences, engagement and progression

We will look at how qualifications can help broaden the ways in which the learning and experiences gained by learners are recognised in ways that can support their engagement and progression. For example, qualifications could require learners to conduct specific tasks or activities as part of their work, which they must complete but which may not contribute directly to their final grade. Additional information could be provided alongside an overall grade to indicate a learner's attainment in relation to specific skills or to reflect a particular topic or theme they have focused on.

Digital technology

We will look at how qualifications can be designed to include more effective and widespread use of digital technology in assessment. This is about more than simply switching from paper-based end of course exams to on-screen exams. It is about how digital technology can help broaden the range of evidence that can contribute to a learner's grade, can help make teacher-led assessment more manageable, and make the assessment experience more relevant and engaging. We know digital technology can help to motivate and engage learners, giving them a more positive experience and helping them to demonstrate their true potential.

New technology could also help to make assessment more manageable and less stressful by helping to support more modular and on-demand assessments. Learning from the challenges of the pandemic, more use of digital technology also has the potential to improve efficiency and resilience in the delivery of assessment. Ensuring that qualifications are manageable and accessible to all centres and learners will play an important part when considering new ways of doing things.

Learner mental health and wellbeing

Qualifications are one of the many factors that can impact on learner mental health and wellbeing. Any form of assessment presents a degree of challenge and anxiety. Successfully facing that challenge can help build a learner's confidence and resilience. But it is also important to consider carefully how qualifications can be designed to make it more likely that learners will have a positive assessment experience. New approaches to assessment may be able to help reduce the anxiety for learners. Well-designed assessment should help learners to engage with their learning and to develop their confidence and independence. This can be done for example, by ensuring that the assessment method is appropriate to the learning being demonstrated (validity), by including a mix of different assessment methods within a qualification to cater for different preferences, and by considering the context in which assessments take place.

Change management

As we work with stakeholders to reimagine the design of future qualifications, we will work with others to plan early and effectively to make sure that change is implemented successfully. This will include systematically agreeing the requirements for teaching and learning resources, professional development and training for new teachers.

7. Supporting Welsh language learning

Our recent consultation confirmed that there are many of different views on the part that qualifications should play in helping to realise the Welsh Government's policy of reaching one million Welsh speakers by 2050. We support that aim and are committed to ensuring that qualifications make an active contribution to achieving it.

Given the diversity of views in this area, we would welcome an opportunity to discuss how you would like qualifications to contribute to achieving your policy ambitions.

We will continue to work with your officials and stakeholders to agree how any new qualifications can make the most effective contribution possible to a coherent and joined-up approach across the system. One that will help to create a generation of learners who are enthusiastic and confident about using Welsh in their everyday lives. We will write to you again shortly to update you on our thinking on this important policy area.

8. Future school evaluation, improvement and accountability

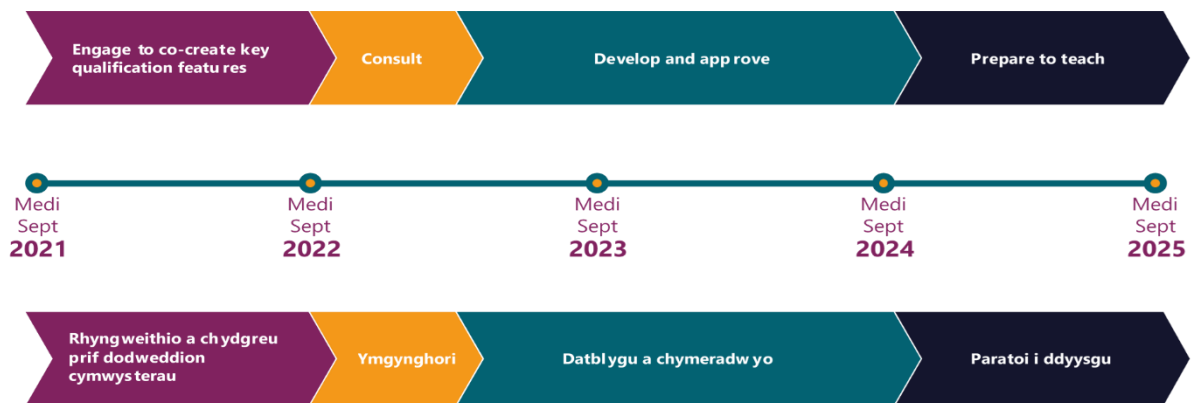
We want to take this opportunity to emphasise the relationship between how qualifications are designed and how their outcomes are used. We fully support the Welsh Government policy aim of reducing the current disproportionate reliance on qualification outcomes in school accountability arrangements and broadening the range of data, evidence and measures to support school evaluation and improvement.

The current use of qualifications in school accountability has two major impacts. First, it limits how qualifications are designed by requiring highly reliable and rigid approaches to content and assessment. Second, it drives school decision about which qualifications learners should take and how much time they spend preparing for them. The less emphasis there is on qualification outcomes, the more scope there is for innovation in how content and assessment is specified. But the reverse is also true. If future arrangements continue to rely heavily on qualification outcomes, this will significantly limit the scope for reimagining qualifications and assessment.

We will continue to work with your officials to support their development of the new approach and help to mitigate any risks to qualification reforms.

9. Timeline for reforms

The timeline below shows the key activities required to create a new set of GCSEs and supporting qualifications. This includes a period of stakeholder engagement and consultation to agree key design features, a period of development and further stakeholder engagement on the detailed specifications and assessment arrangements, and time to prepare for teaching the new qualifications.

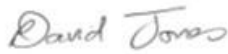


Our aim is to have new qualifications available in time for first teaching in September 2025. That is when the first national cohort of learners to have experienced the new curriculum through their secondary education will be starting in Year 10. There is much to do, and we know that securing sufficient time for preparation and implementation is vital to successful delivery. We will keep this timeframe under review as we continue to explore with stakeholders the nature and scale of the reforms required.

10. Journey to curriculum roll-out

The coming academic year marks a crucial and exciting time in the curriculum reform journey. We look forward to working with your officials and many others to seize this opportunity to co-create an innovative and forward-looking set of new qualifications. Qualifications that will bring the new Curriculum for Wales to life and help give future learners the best possible start in life.

Yours sincerely



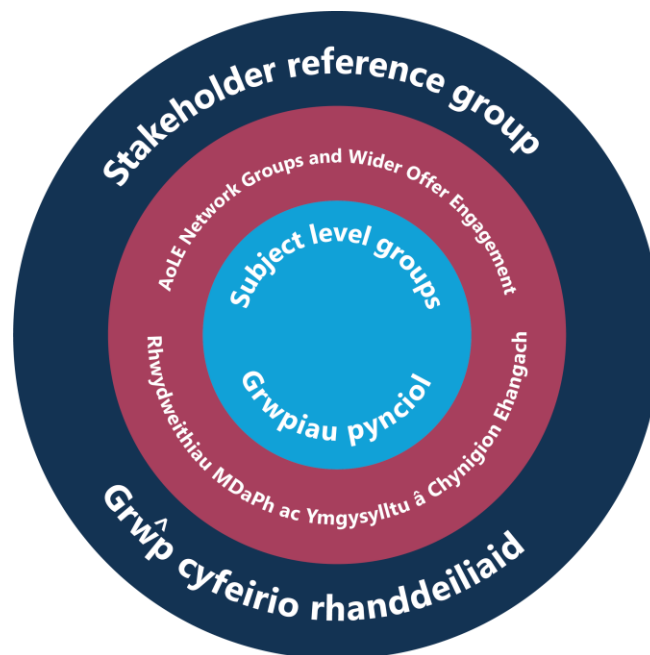
David B Jones OBE DL
Chair



Philip Blaker
Chief Executive

Enc: Model for co-constructing new 14 to 16 qualifications
Appendix 1: Model for co-constructing new 14 to 16 qualifications

We will use a three-tier model for stakeholder involvement. The groups described below will help us to co-construct the design of new GCSEs, they will also help to shape thinking on the wider 14 to 16 qualifications offer.



Subject-level working groups will focus on gathering stakeholder views and developing ideas and proposals for each new qualification being designed. Each group will include a mix of practitioners, subject specialists and assessment experts.

Supporting the subject-level groups will be six stakeholder network groups, one for each curriculum Area of Learning and Experience (Area). These will provide regular suggestions and feedback to the subject level groups to help identify, debate and refine ideas. The network groups will include teachers, lecturers, examiners, learned and professional bodies, and others with an interest in each curriculum Area.

An overarching stakeholder reference group will offer a wider perspective on emerging thinking. The group will include a wide range of voices representing different interests from across the education sector and beyond. The group will help to ensure that the overall qualification offer meets our guiding principles by advising on the following overarching considerations:

- i. Manageability, deliverability and coherence
- ii. alignment to the Curriculum for Wales Framework and its implementation
- iii. teaching practice and learner experience
- iv. accessibility and inclusion
- v. learner mental health, wellbeing and engagement
- vi. progression and post-16 implications
- vii. change management (including teacher training, professional learning, teacher and learner resources)
- viii. public understanding and communications.

CYPE(6)-05-21 - Paper to note 3

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**Pwyllgor yr Economi,
Masnach a Materion Gwledig**

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Jeremy Miles MS,
Minister for Education and Welsh Language

18 October 2021

Dear Jeremy,

Essay mills

On 5 October the UK Government released a statement stating that it would use the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill to ban 'essay mills'. The statement set out that the UK Government "intends to make it a criminal offence to provide, arrange or advertise these cheating services for financial gain to students taking a qualification at any institution in England providing post-16 education including universities."

On the 18th September 2018, the then First Minister Carwyn Jones told plenary that "plagiarism has been an issue in higher education for as long as higher education has been there, but it's got worse", and that whilst he thought essay mills were an issue for universities to deal with in the first instance, he was open to the idea of UK-wide legislation to ban essay mills as he did not think Wales-only legislation would work.

The Committee believes that essay mills not only facilitate plagiarism but that they also often exploit vulnerable students who would be better supported by seeking help from their university.

On 13th July the Business Committee referred the Legislative Consent Memoranda (LCM) on the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill and the Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA) Bill to both the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee and the Children, Young People and Education Committee (CYPE). In order to make the most effective use of Committee time, I agreed with Jayne Bryant MS that we would lead on scrutiny of the ARIA Bill LCM and that CYPE would lead on the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill LCM.

As a result the Economy Committee will not be issuing a formal report on the current Post-16 Education and Skills Bill LCM. However, the Committee would urge Welsh Ministers to work with the UK Government to extend the proposed ban on essay mills in England, which is due to be inserted into the legislation, so that it also covers Wales. This amendment would seem an expedient way to protect the interests of students in Wales, and it can then be scrutinised, and hopefully approved, by the Senedd under the legislative consent procedure set out in Standing Order 29.

I have copied this letter to Jayne Bryant MS, Chair of CYPE Committee and Huw Irranca-Davies MS, Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee. Members agree with the view expressed by the former First Minister for Wales in 2018 that this is an issue suited to a UK-wide approach, and so I am also copying this letter to Stephen Kerr MSP, Convener of the Scottish Parliament's Education, Children and Young People Committee, and to Chris Lyttle MLA, Chairperson of the Northern Ireland Assembly's Education Committee, for their information.

Yours Sincerely,



Paul Davies MS

Chair: Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg | We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

CYPE(6)-05-21 - Paper to note 4

YMGYRCH HANES CYMRU

18 Hydref 2021

Annwyl Jane Bryant,

Ysgrifennaf atoch yn dilyn cyhoeddi adroddiad diweddar Estyn, *Addysgu hanes Cymru gan gan gynnwys hanes, hunaniaeth a diwylliant Pobl Ddu, Asiaidd a Lleifarifoedd Ethnig*. Mae canfyddiadau'r adroddiad yn cadarnhau'n gwbl glir ein pryder na fu unrhyw newid sylweddol nac arwyddocaol o ran dysgu hanes Cymru ers cyhoeddi adroddiad *Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig, hanes a stori Cymru* yn 2013. Mae'r dyfyniadau isod o adroddiad Estyn yn dangos pa mor ddiffygiol yw'r sefyllfa,

Mewn lleiafrif o ysgolion cynradd, nid yw hanes lleol a hanes Cymru yn rhan annatod o gwricwlwm yr ysgol, a chânt eu hystyried yn elfen 'ychwanegol'.

Mewn ychydig o ysgolion, nid yw staff yn ystyried hanes lleol a hanes Cymru o gwbl wrth gynllunio eu gwersi.

Mewn llawer o ysgolion uwchradd, mae gwersi'n cynnwys cyfeiriadau brysiog yn unig at hanes lleol a hanes Cymru.

caiff hanes lleol a hanes Cymru eu cynnwys fel elfen 'ychwanegol' o'r cwricwlwm hanes.

Mae'r rhan fwyaf o ysgolion yn cynnwys cyfeiriadau brysiog neu wersi un-tro ar hanes lleol a hanes Cymru.

Mae'n amlwg fod diffygion sylweddol yn parhau ac mae angen arweiniad cadarn gan y Gweindog Addysg ynghyd â chefnogaeth i ysgolion ac athrawon o ran hyfforddiant ac adnoddau os am sicrhau bod amcanion clodwiw Cwricwlwm 2022 yn mynd i gael eu gwireddu.

Mewn ateb a dderbyniwyd gennym gan Kirsty Williams (ei chyf. TO/KW/06465/20) nodir nifer o ddatganiadau pwysig. Dyfynaf isod o'r ateb hwnnw ynghyd â chwestiynau gennym. Galwn ar y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg i ofyn yr un cwestiynau ac i y bydd hanes Cymru'n cael ei ddysgu'n briodol wrth i'r cwricwlwm newydd gael ei weithredu.

Bydd ysgolion yn cael cymorth i ymgysylltu â gweithwyr treftadaeth proffesiynol, amgueddfeydd ac orielau, yn ogystal ag arweinwyr cymunedol a diwylliannol wrth gynllunio eu cwricwlwm.

Sut ac ym mha fodd yr estynnir y cymorth yma?

Yn gynharach eleni (sef 2020) cynhaliodd Llywodraeth Cymru adolygiad o'r holl adnoddau sydd ar gael ar hyn o bryd i gefnogi addysgu hanes Cymru mewn ysgolion, er mwyn nodi unrhyw fylchau yn yr adnoddau hynny.

A yw canlyniadau'r adolygiad yma ar gael yn gyhoeddus?

A oes rhestr neu gatalog o adnoddau wedi ei lunio?

Pa fylchau a ganfyddwyd a pha fesurau a gymerwyd i lenwi'r bylchau hynny?

Fel y nodwch yn eich llythyr, penodwyd yr Athro Charlotte Williams OBE, i gadeirio Gweithgor Cymunedau, Cyfraniadau a Chynefin: Profiadau pobl dduon ac Asiaidd a lleiafrifoedd ethnig a'r cwricwlwm newydd.

Yn ein llythyr dyddiedig 11 Tachwedd roeddem yn galw am sefydlu gweithgor tebyg i edrych ar y modd y cyflwynir hanes Cymru. A fyddwch yn sefydlu gweithgor o'r fath?

Ym mis Hydref (2020) cyhoeddodd y Gweinidog . . . y bydd cynllun gweithredu yn cael ei ddatblygu ar gyfer y cwricwlwm ac y bydd rhwydwaith cenedlaethol o ymarferwyr a rhanddeiliad yn cael ei sefydlu.

A yw'r cynllun gweithredu y cyfeirir ato wedi cael ei ddatblygu?

A ydyw ar gael yn gyhoeddus?

A oes rhwydwaith o ymarferwyr a rhanddeiliaid wedi ei sefydlu?

Caiff cynllun gweithredu ei gyhoeddi yn fuan yn amlinellu'r prif heriau wrth weithredu'r cwricwlwm . . .

A yw'r cynllun gweithredu wedi ei gyhoeddi?

Os ydyw, beth oedd y prif heriau a ganfyddwyd? Sut y bwriedir ymdrin â'r heriau hynny?

Edrychwn ymlaen at dderbyn eich ymateb.

Yn gywir,

Eryl Owain

Cyd-lynydd Ymgyrch Hanes Cymru

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

Document is Restricted

CYPE(6)-05-21 - Paper to note 5

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

Children, Young People and Education Committee

Huw Irranca-Davies MS
Chair, Legislation, Justice and Constitution
Committee

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Dyddiad | Date 19 October

Pwnc | Subject: Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill

Dear Huw,

We are currently making preparations for scrutiny of the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill ("the Bill"). As part of this, Welsh Government officials will be providing a technical briefing to the Committee on 4 November. The session will take place in the morning, with exact timings to be confirmed. As a Committee that will also be involved in the scrutiny of the Bill, we would like to extend an invitation to members of your Committee to attend this briefing. It would be helpful to know as soon as possible, whether any Members wish to attend, and if so, how many.

Yours sincerely,



Jayne Bryant MS
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Agenda Item 2.6

CYPE(6)-05-21 - Paper to note 6

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

Children, Young People and Education Committee

Paul Davies MS
Chair, Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs
Committee

Dyddiad | Date 19 October

Pwnc | Subject: Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill

Dear Paul,

The Business Committee wrote to us on 5 October seeking our views on the proposed timetable for the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill ("the Bill"). They noted the interest that your Committee is likely to have in the Bill.

I would welcome your views on whether, and how your Committee would want to get involved in the scrutiny of this Bill. I would also like to invite your Committee to the technical briefing we are having from Welsh Government officials on 4 November. While the exact timings of the briefing have yet to be confirmed, it would take place in the morning. It would be helpful to know as soon as possible, whether any Members wish to attend this briefing, and if so, how many.

I am happy to meet with you to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,



Jayne Bryant MS
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

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CYPE(6)-05-21 - Paper to note 7

**Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc
ac Addysg**

**Children, Young People
and Education Committee**

Peredur Griffiths MS
Chair, Finance Committee

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Dyddiad | Date 19 October

Pwnc | Subject: Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill

Dear Peredur,

We are currently making preparations for scrutiny of the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill ("the Bill"). As part of this, Welsh Government officials will be providing a technical briefing to the Committee on 4 November. The session will take place in the morning, with exact timings to be confirmed. As a Committee that will also be involved in the scrutiny of the Bill, we would like to extend an invitation to members of your Committee to attend this briefing. It would be helpful to know as soon as possible, whether any Members wish to attend, and if so, how many.

Yours sincerely,



Jayne Bryant MS
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Agenda Item 2.8

CYPE(6)-05-21 - Paper to note 8

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language

Lynne Neagle AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Iechyd Meddwl a Llesiant
Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Jayne Bryant MS
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cf99 1SN

25 October 2021

Dear Jayne,

As you are aware improving the emotional and mental wellbeing of citizens is a longstanding priority of the Welsh Government. The 2021-26 Programme for Government (PfG) builds on the actions of previous administrations and commits to '*prioritise investment in mental health*'. This is further embedded within the PfG, which contains a number of wellbeing commitments, including in relation to children and young people and the role of education in supporting and promoting wellbeing. The wellbeing of children and young people is also a particular focus of our response and recovery from the Covid19 pandemic.

The Welsh Government has been supported in its work by the Senedd's Children, Young People and Education Committee, which has prioritised the scrutiny of wellbeing support. This resulted in the publication of the *Mind over matter* report (2018) and the follow-up report *Mind over matter: two years on* (2020).

Our response to *Mind over matter* was to convene the Joint Ministerial Group on a Whole School Approach (extended to the whole system approach) to Wellbeing in late 2018. The Group was jointly chaired by the then Minister for Education and Minister for Health and Social Services and has successfully supported policy development and service delivery. The Group continues to support activity in this area and is now chaired jointly by us as the Ministers responsible for education and mental health and wellbeing. The Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee also previously had a seat on the Group and fully participated in discussions and deliberations, though reserving the right to scrutinise Ministerial decisions in line with the role of Committee Chair.

As noted the Group's remit was extended to encompass the 'whole system' approach. This brings within its scope the *Framework on embedding a whole school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing* (March 2021¹); and the *NEST/NYTH Framework* (May 2021²)

¹ [WG42005 \(gov.wales\)](#)

² [The NEST Framework - NHS Wales Health Collaborative](#)

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

published by the NHS led Together for Children and Young People Programme. Taken together these two documents have the potential to ensure all the wellbeing needs of not only children and young people, but also the key adults in their lives (parents, teachers, etc) are met in a timely and appropriate manner.

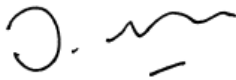
The Group has met twice under the sixth Welsh Government and we have been considering its wider role in supporting activity. We are in agreement that focus now needs to shift from policy development to implementation and delivery and we signalled this at the last Group meeting on 21 September.

Now the sixth Senedd's Committee structure has been established we would be pleased if you would be willing to join the Group in your capacity as Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee and on the same terms as the previous Chair (i.e. full participation, though reserving your right to scrutinise the Welsh Government).

If you are content the next meeting date has yet to be set, though is likely to be sometime during November or early December. We will ensure dates do not clash with future Committee meetings.

For information we enclose the membership of the Group and terms of reference, though both will be subject to change to reflect the new focus on delivery.

Yours sincerely,



Jeremy Miles AS/MS
Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and
Welsh Language



Lynne Neagle AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Iechyd Meddwl a
Llesiant
Deputy Minister for Mental Health and
Wellbeing

Whole School Joint Ministerial Task and Finish Group membership/contacts

Minister for Education and the Welsh Language	Jeremy Miles MS
Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing	Lynne Neagle MS
Chair, Children, Young People and Education Committee	
Deputy Director Equity in Education	Kirsty Davies Warner
NHS Lead Chief Executive for Mental Health	Carol Shillabeer
Public Health Wales Director of Health Improvement	Dr Julie Bishop
Secondary Head-teacher (Lewis Boys School)	Chris Parry
Association Directors of Social Services, Heads of Children's Services	Andrew Jarret (NPT)
WG Director of Social Services and Integration	Albert Heaney
WG SMO (GPs)	Dr Liz Davies
Estyn	Mark Campion
Regional Education Consortia	Kathryn Bevan
DECIPHer (schools health research network)	Prof Simon Murphy
Children's Commissioner for Wales	Prof Sally Holland
Chief Medical Officer	Dr Heather Payne
Chief Nursing Officer	Karen Jewell Hazel Powell
Primary Head-teacher	Paula Vaughan
LHB Vice Chair representative	John Hill Tout
CMO Adviser on Child and Adolescent Psychiatry	Dr Dave Williams
Psychology Representative	Dr Liz Gregory
WLGA spokesperson for HSS	Cllr Jane Mudd
Welsh Government, Deputy Director for Substance Misuse	Tracey Breheny
Principal Youth Officers Group	David Williams
Chief Executive, Children in Wales	Owen Evans
NHS Executive	Lesley Singleton
Pembrokeshire College	Jackie Mathias

Terms of Reference - Ministerial Task and Finish Group on a Whole System Approach to Wellbeing

Purpose of the Group:

The Task and Finish Group has been established by the Welsh Government to take forward the whole system approach to emotional wellbeing and mental health which also recognises the links between mental and physical wellbeing. In achieving this, the Group will have regard to the recommendations and findings in the Children, Young People and Education Committee Mind Over Matter report (April 2018).

The Mind Over Matter report highlights the need for a 'step-change' in emotional and mental health support for children and young people in Wales. As such we need to review existing policies and practices on children and young people's mental health; identify gaps in provision; and, develop new and effective ways of working to accelerate improvement of the support system for children and young people.

Scope

As the Mind over Matter report highlights, and as set out in our National Mission, school is a key setting to support and promote positive physical and mental health and well-being. For this reason, we are taking a "whole school" approach initially, situating the school at the centre of the work of the group.

However, this approach needs to be seen in the context of a "whole system" approach which recognises that school is at the centre of activity, but has a range of interdependencies which extend beyond the classroom to home, community and services provided by other statutory and non-statutory agencies.

The Group will ensure that policy and practice across government supports positive physical and mental health and well-being for children and young people. This will be taken forward in a cross-government and cross-sector way, seeking advice from sector experts, children and young people, and others to ensure that the UNCRC is at the heart of this work.

For the purpose of this group, the work streams will be broken down into "whole school" and "whole system" so that appropriate focus can be given to both.

Principles

The principles underpinning this are:

- Support must be both universal and targeted (diagram 1 illustrates this).
- Support must be appropriate, timely and effective.
- Support must focus on prevention, restorative practice and on effective and timely intervention when this is needed.
- Support should avoid the medicalisation of children and centre the needs and the wishes of the children and young people involved.
- Support should be provided through a multi-agency approach, and should include building skills for effective multi-agency working.
- Support should be provided to the education sector and in particular schools, to build capacity for them to support children and young people in turn.

Diagram 1 1



Programme membership and structure

Accountable to the Cabinet Secretaries for Health and Social Services and for Education (co-Chairs) the Task and Finish Group will provide strategic leadership, direction and support, to implement the whole school (part of a whole system) approach to improve the emotional wellbeing of children and young people.

The Group will meet a frequency determined by Ministers. Current membership is attached separately:

Deputies

Members can nominate a deputy, though for continuity and recognising the need to maintain senior stakeholder engagement, deputies would only be acceptable for no more than one in three meetings, as individuals have been invited recognising their senior role as strategic influencers and decision takers.

Subgroups

The Group will be supported by a Stakeholder Reference Group. The Stakeholder Reference Group will encompass a wider range of public sector, third sector and other relevant organisations or people. Children and young people will have the opportunity to inform, develop and shape activity through representation on a National Youth Stakeholder Group.

Frequency of meetings

The Group will meet at least once every Assembly term (three times per year), and can convene on a more frequent basis should this be required and as determined by ministers.

Work-programme

The role of the group will be to agree and oversee implementation of the work-plan; advising on issues, barriers and activity to overcome them as they arise; and representing the views of their sectors and area of expertise as it impacts on the development and implementation of activity over the lifespan of the programme.

The Group's work-programme will be a dynamic and evolving reflecting the Group's current thinking and priorities, issues and challenges as they arise and impact policy and practice. In taking activity forward the Group will take account of wider activity, including specifically the on-going work of the NHS-led Together for Children and Young People Programme.

Agenda Item 2.9

CYPE(6)-05-21 - Paper to note 9

**Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc
ac Addysg**

**Children, Young People
and Education Committee**

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Eluned Morgan MS,
Minister for Health and Social Services
Julie Morgan MS,
Deputy Minister for Social Services
Lynne Neagle MS
Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing

Dyddiad | Date 27 October

Pwnc | Subject: Follow up from 7 October evidence session

Dear Eluned, Julie and Lynne

Thank you for giving evidence to the Committee on 7 October. Following this session, we agreed to write to seek further information on some areas. I've also outlined the information you agreed to provide during the session.

Child Health Strategy

During the evidence session, when asked whether there were any plans to publish a Child Health Strategy, the Minister for Health and Social Services stated that this was "unlikely" partly because "once you start down that route we'll be having them for everything." We are not convinced by this argument. As the health needs of children and young people can be quite distinct from adults we believe there is a clear argument for a Child Health Strategy. Not having a child health plan makes scrutiny of the Welsh Government more challenging for the Senedd, stakeholders and the public.

We have considered your response to us within the context of Welsh Ministers' duties to give 'due regard' to Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It refers to the right of children 'to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health'.

We therefore believe the Welsh Government should reconsider its decision on a child health plan. We ask that you provide us with a copy of the Child Right's Impact Assessment on this decision. This will enable us to further consider whether the lack of a child-specific plan complies with your duties under section 1 of the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011.

Healthy Weight, Healthy Wales

The implementation of commitments set out in the Healthy Weight Healthy Wales delivery plan were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which meant delays in achieving the 2020 deliverables. During the session, the Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing said that there will be a "renewed focus" on this programme. Can you confirm that the programme is back on track and that the proposals set out in the revised delivery plan for 2021-22, and beyond, will be achieved?

Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Inpatient Service (Mother and Baby Unit)

While we welcome the opening of the interim Mother and Baby Unit 'Uned Gobaith' in Swansea Bay University Health Board, we are aware that this is still only 'an interim solution'. Can you provide clarity on the plans for a more permanent unit? We are also very concerned that women and babies in North Wales still need to travel significant distances to access specialist inpatient support. We note the statement from the Deputy Minister that work is continuing to ensure that provision is made available for mothers who live in North Wales. Can you provide us with more details on the options and timeframe for this?

Care leavers

Can the Deputy Minister for Social Services provide more information on the oral evidence provided to us about discussions she has had with the Minister for Climate Change on ensuring there is adequate and sustainable accommodation for young people leaving care?

Youth Justice

During the session, we asked about the discussions with the UK Government about youth justice. It was disappointing that the response was this was primarily an area for the Minister for Social Justice when this should be a shared responsibility across Ministerial portfolios. We think that it is important that there is a cross-government approach to this issue in line with the principles of the Youth Justice Blueprint and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, particularly as:

- it is an area where many devolved public services play vital and dovetailing roles, and
- the children and young people who have contact with the youth justice system can be some of the most vulnerable in society, and are therefore disproportionately exposed to a range of other disadvantages that fall within your and many other ministers' portfolios.

Mental Health budgets

During the evidence session, the Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing said there would be “different approach to budget planning” this year. Can you clarify if this will lead to changes in how the spending on services mental health services for children and young people is presented in the budget?

Ty Lliard

Due to the on-going concerns about the Unit, we would like to ask for regular updates on any issues at the Unit, and the actions being taken to address these issues.

Additional information you agreed to provide

During the meeting you agreed to provide the Committee with the following:

- The individual Health Board ‘deep dive’ reports that the Essential Services Steering Group has undertaken into specific areas to identify the extent to which essential services had been maintained during the pandemic;
- a note including data on take up of the range of vaccination programmes for children and young people; and
- provide further detail on the progress being made to improve children’s health across a range of public health issues, including childhood obesity, preventative dental health, smoking in young people, physical fitness and illegal drug use.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Jayne Bryant MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Agenda Item 2.10

CYPE(6)-05-21 - Paper to note 10



Jayne Bryant MS
Chair,
Senedd Children, Young People and Education Committee
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

26 October 2021

Dear Jayne,

Audit Wales report - A Picture of Higher and Further Education

You may have seen the recent Audit Wales report - A Picture of Higher and Further Education – published on 21 October 2021 (<https://www.audit.wales/publication/picture-higher-and-further-education>).

ColegauCymru is concerned at some of the findings, including that the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic seems to have been most negative for those in the vocational sector, especially at lower qualification levels, and for learners who are already vulnerable due to deprivation, circumstances at home or learning disabilities.

We also note the points raised in the Audit Wales report in relation to the Welsh Government proposed Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER) Bill. ColegauCymru agrees that the need for the CTER leadership to inspire trust among all relevant partners is vital. The comments from the report are timely and highly relevant as we continue to feel the impact of lockdown and disrupted learning.



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For this reason, we suggest that the Children, Young People and Education Committee consider the Audit Wales report as a matter of urgency, prior to scrutiny of the proposed CTER Bill.

ColegauCymru is happy to support any work that the Committee may wish to undertake on this issue.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Rachel Bowen
Director of Policy and Public Affairs, ColegauCymru

Rachel.bowen@colegaucymru.ac.uk

Agenda Item 2.11

CYPE(6)-05-21 - Paper to note 11



A Picture of Schools

Report of the Auditor
General for Wales

October 2021



This report has been prepared for presentation to the Senedd under the Government of Wales Act 1998

The Auditor General is independent of the Senedd and government. He examines and certifies the accounts of the Welsh Government and its sponsored and related public bodies, including NHS bodies. He also has the power to report to the Senedd on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which those organisations have used, and may improve the use of, their resources in discharging their functions.

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Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

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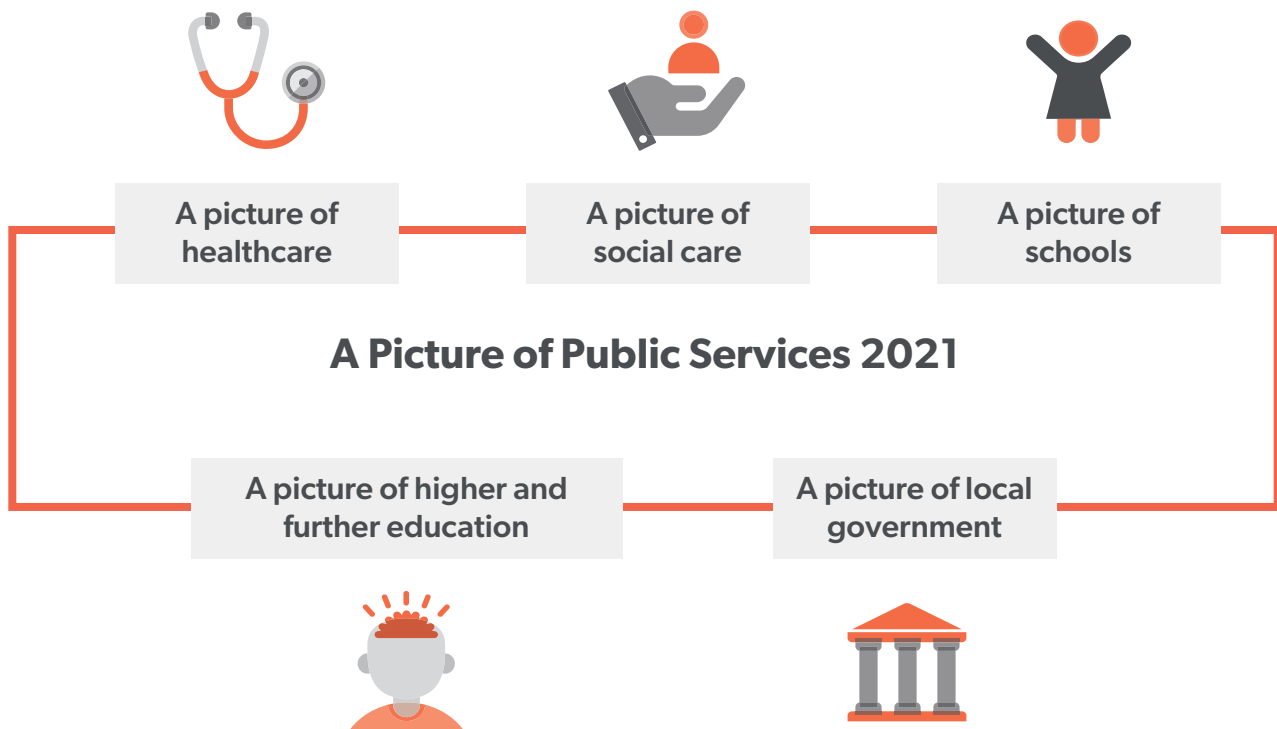
About this report

This report is part of a series of Picture of Public Services 2021 outputs. Our main Picture of Public Services 2021 report summarises some of the key trends in public finances and sets out our perspective on some of the key issues for future service delivery.

This report summarises key information about schools in Wales including the strategic operating context and funding. It explores capacity in the sector, performance, and our view on the key issues or challenges. It does not consider childcare or post-compulsory education other than school sixth forms. We examine higher and further education in our summary sheet of the same name. This report is not intended to be comprehensive. It sets out what we consider to be some of the key issues for the sector, recognising that other review bodies and commentators will have their own perspective on the key issues.

The report is based on a synthesis of our published work as well as research by other organisations.

Exhibit 1: Picture of Public Services outputs



Main report

Schools – context

Delivering learning in challenging times

- 1 The COVID-19 pandemic has presented enormous challenges to public services and the people who deliver them. Schools have faced huge pressures with the challenges of shifting services online while also providing in-person support to children of key workers. Schools then had to adjust their environments for a return to face-to-face learning. All of us at Audit Wales pay tribute to the dedication and extraordinary efforts of public servants during this difficult period.
- 2 As we publish this report, the direct impacts of COVID are still being felt in schools across Wales. Work to understand the indirect impacts of COVID had begun, but it was too early to gauge the scale and extent of these impacts or to estimate how they may affect the provision of school education services in the future.

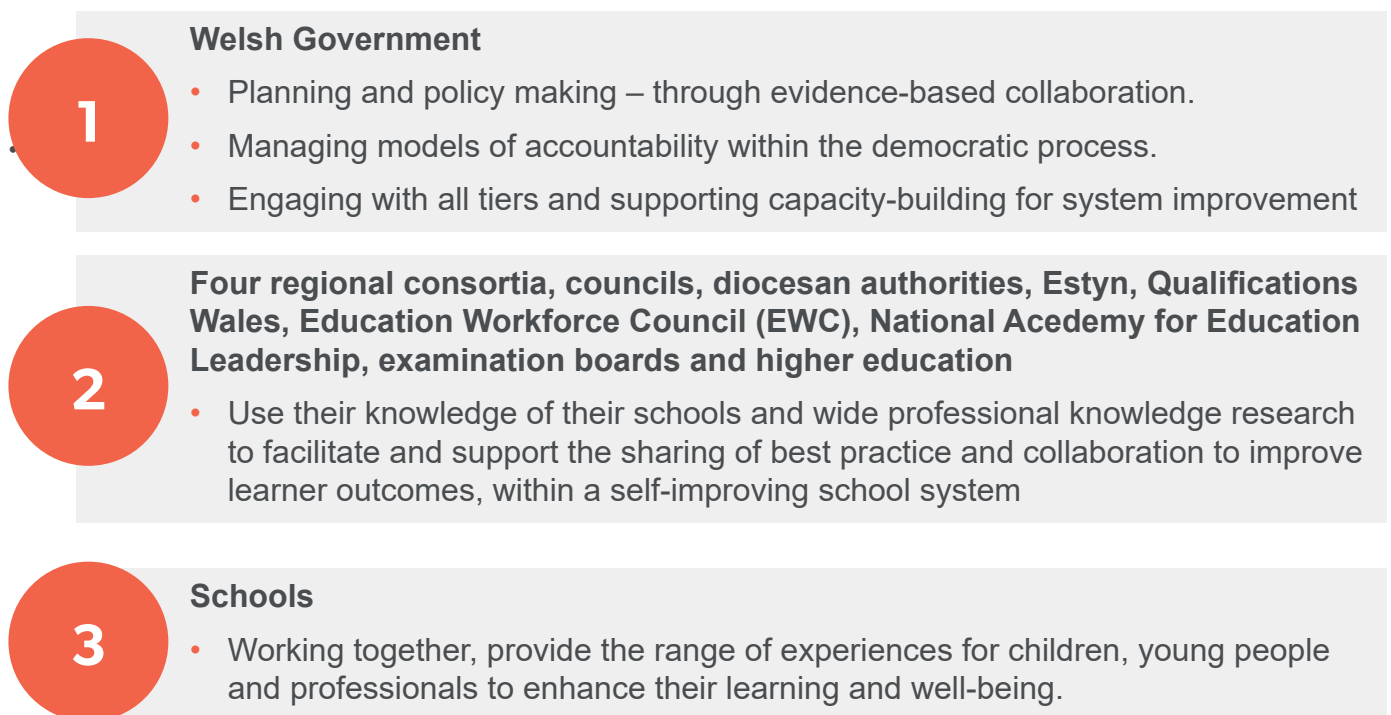
Structures and responsibilities

Compulsory education

- 3 In Wales, education is compulsory from the term after a child turns five. In practice, most start in the Autumn term of the academic year in which they are five. A young person can leave school at the end of June, providing they are 16 by the end of the summer holidays. The Welsh Government has described the education system in Wales as a ‘three-tier model’ (**Exhibit 2**).

- 4 Principal councils¹ have several important legal responsibilities for schools:
- **Funding** – councils decide the schools budget annually, in accordance with the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and the School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010;
 - **Planning** – councils must ensure that sufficient primary and secondary education is available to meet local population need; and
 - **Standards** – councils must promote high standards and support pupils to fulfil their potential. In practice, most councils delegate school improvement activity to the four regional education consortia in Wales.

Exhibit 2: the Welsh education system three-tier model



Source: Welsh Government, Education in Wales: Our national mission, Action plan 2017-21, September 2017 (with Audit Wales' amendments)

1 Principal councils are local government authorities in Wales which carry out statutory duties in their area. The term does not include town or community councils. All references to councils in this factsheet refer to principal councils.

Early years education

- 5 All three and four-year olds are entitled to ten hours of early years education from the term after their third birthday. Most funded places (90%) are in nurseries attached to maintained schools². Others are in non-maintained (private, voluntary or independent) providers. The Foundation Phase is currently the statutory curriculum for three to seven-year-olds.
- 6 In the most deprived areas of Wales, the Welsh Government's Flying Start programme provides part-time childcare for two to three-year-olds and other support for families with children under four years of age.

Schools – strategy

Reforming education for 3-19 year olds

- 7 In light of Wales' poor results in the 2009 international PISA tests (**paragraphs 36 to 38**), the Welsh Government embarked upon a wholesale reform programme including reviews of examinations, teacher training and the curriculum. In 2014, it set out its vision for an improved education system³. In 2017, the Welsh Government said how it would implement the reforms in its Education in Wales action plan. The Plan focused on developing:
 - quality, leadership and collaboration in the teaching profession;
 - strong inclusive schools, reforming the additional learning needs system,
 - raising standards – reducing the attainment gap and reforming the curriculum; and
 - robust assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements.
- 8 The reforms required new legislation:
 - **Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018** – laid the foundations for changes in how learners with additional learning needs are assessed and supported. Importantly it extends support from 0 to 25 years, extending into post compulsory education for the first time. Changes will be phased in from September 2021.
 - **Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021** – enabled the Curriculum for Wales. It extended the curriculum to cover special schools and pupil referral units. In July 2021, the new Welsh Government announced a raft of secondary legislation required to support the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales.

2 Sibieta, L and Jerrim, J., A comparison of school institutions and policies across the UK, Education Policy Institute, April 2021. 'Maintained schools' are overseen by the council and must follow the national curriculum and national teacher pay and conditions.

3 Welsh Government, Qualified for life: An education improvement plan for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales, October 2014

Early years

- 9 Early years has been an area of focus for the Welsh Government for more than a decade. It published a ten-year plan – Building a Brighter Future – to improve early years and childcare in 2013⁴. The plan committed to developing an early years outcomes framework to improve outcomes for children 0 to 7⁵.
- 10 In 2017, the Welsh Government’s national strategy⁶ – Prosperity for All – continued the vision to give children the best start in life and identified early years as one of five cross-cutting priority areas. In October 2019, the Welsh Government announced its intention to establish an integrated early childhood and education approach with the aim of creating a single, child-centred and high quality system of education and care for children under five that will dovetail into the new curriculum⁷.

21st century schools and education programme

- 11 Alongside this reform programme, the Welsh Government has a long-term education capital programme: 21st century schools and education. The programme started in 2014 and requires councils to review plans for school places with the aim of having the right schools in the right places for the future.
- 12 Although the programme’s aims are wider than improving the school estate, the Welsh Government aims that by 2024-25 there will be no ‘bad condition’ schools and the number of ‘poor’ condition schools will have reduced by 25%. Funding is also available for school-based early years facilities and further education colleges through the programme.
- 13 Funding for the first phase of the programme (Band A) was split equally between the Welsh Government and councils. Our 2017 report on the programme⁸ found that the Welsh Government was generally managing well in delivering the £3.6 billion Band A. Our report made some recommendations including more standardisation across the projects to achieve value for money. Since we reported, the Welsh Government has started Band B, which includes a stream of projects funded through the Mutual Investment Model of private financing.

4 Welsh Government, Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan, September 2013

5 Welsh Government, Early Years Outcomes Framework, April 2015

6 Welsh Government, Prosperity for All – the national strategy, September 2017

7 Deputy Minister Health and Social Care, Letter to the Senedd’s Children, Young people and Education Committee, 6 November 2019

8 Auditor General for Wales, The 21st Century Schools and Education Programme, May 2017

Welsh medium education

- 14 The Welsh Government aims to increase the number of pupils learning through the medium of Welsh. This is a major element of its Cymraeg 2050 strategy which includes a target for 30% of learners to be in Welsh medium education by 2031. The number of seven-year-olds assessed through Welsh as a first language rose from 22% in 2016 to 22.8% in 2021, missing the Government's interim target of 24% by 2021.

COVID-19 and beyond

School closures and remote learning

- 15 From 20 March to 27 June 2020, schools were closed to all but the children of critical workers and vulnerable pupils. There were concerns about the wellbeing of the most vulnerable as attendance was low⁹. Schools opened for a short period before the summer break with most pupils attending part-time for their wellbeing and to prepare for the Autumn term. The Welsh Government provided digital equipment and worked with schools to provide remote learning. It provided guidance¹⁰ on its expectations and priorities for schools in July 2020.
- 16 By March 2021, the Welsh Government had funded nearly 11,000 mobile routers for pupils without access to broadband and 10,000 software licences to repurpose existing laptops (not including those loaned through schools). An earlier report by the Education Policy Institute and Nuffield Foundation¹¹ found that the Welsh Government led the UK nations in providing digital equipment, but schools' provision of remote learning was variable. Some children – especially younger pupils and pupils who were more disengaged from school prior to the pandemic – struggled to engage with remote learning. Some lacked family support, broadband or space to study effectively.
- 17 Schools faced more disruption in the Autumn term from national closures¹² and local outbreaks. Only 78% of pupils were attending school in early December 2020. From 4 January 2021, pupils – other than the children of critical workers and vulnerable pupils – were learning remotely. The Welsh Government provided more IT equipment and expanded the group of 'vulnerable' pupils who could attend to include pupils without IT equipment, broadband or space to work and those struggling to engage in remote learning.

9 Welsh Government, Integrated Impact Assessment Summary, June 2020

10 Welsh Government, Guidance on Learning in Schools and Settings: Coronavirus, July 2020

11 Education Policy Institute and the Nuffield Foundation, Education policy responses across the UK to the pandemic, October 2020

12 Welsh Government, Timeline of School Closures During the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Pandemic, May 2021

- 18 Pupils began to return to school in March 2021, beginning with the youngest and those in examination years. Pupils in the Foundation Phase (3 to 7) began to return from 22 February with all primary pupils and those in years 11, 12 and 13 back from 15 March. Other pupils returned to school at the beginning of the summer term. However, COVID-19 infections and the requirements to self-isolate mean that many missed some of the term: 84% of pupils were in school during the week of 28 June to 2 July.

Examinations

- 19 Pupils in exam years have faced particular disruption. GCSE and A level exams did not take place as planned in May/June 2020. Despite changes to the assessment system, the process for awarding exam grades hit difficulties in August 2020 when some pupils received lower grades than anticipated. After the Welsh Government intervened, pupils were awarded the best of either the centre assessed grade¹³ or the standardised grade calculated by the WJEC.
- 20 An independent review¹⁴ in October 2020 suggested that Qualifications Wales¹⁵ and the WJEC¹⁶ should have anticipated these problems with exam results. In November 2020, the Welsh Government announced that pupils would receive centre assessed grades based on internal assessments, internal examination and some external examinations. The worsening health crises meant that, in January 2021, it announced that pupils would receive centre-assessed grades based on a range of evidence but without external examinations¹⁷. In July 2022, the WJEC announced changes to GSCE, AS and A level examinations for summer 2022 following consultation.

13 Centre assessed grades were based on the teachers' professional assessment of what the pupil would have achieved if they were able to sit an examination. Teachers could use any criteria they wish when estimating grades including (but not limited to) completed course work, mock exams or previous academic achievement.

14 Louise Casella (Chair), Independent review of the summer 2020 arrangements to award grades, and considerations for summer 2021: Interim report October 2020, October 2020

15 Qualifications Wales was established in 2013 as the independent, statutory body that regulates qualifications other than degrees in Wales.

16 Since 2015, the WJEC has been the sole provider of qualifications for state-funded schools and colleges for most GCSE, AS and A level subjects in Wales.

17 Welsh Government, Examination and assessment guidance: 2020 to 2021, January 2021

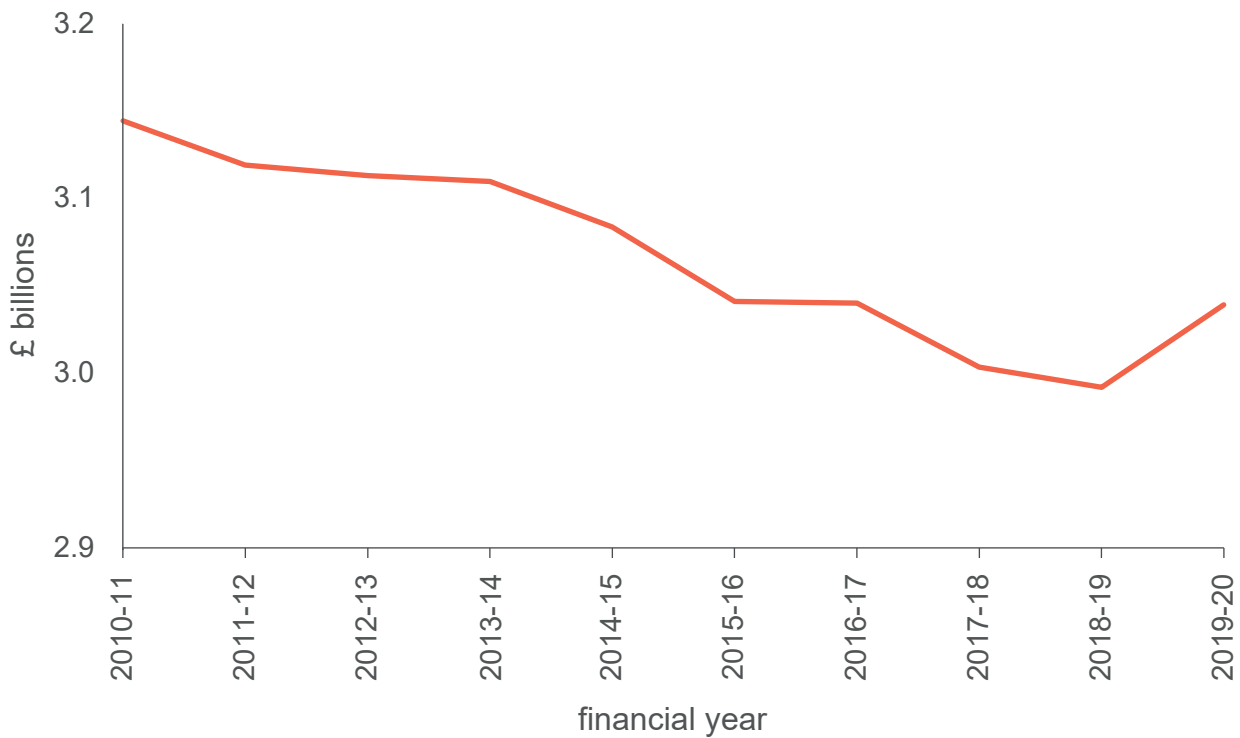
Schools – finances

Trends in school finances

Spending on schools has fallen between 2010-11 and 2019-20 and varies across Wales

21 Spending on schools has fallen over the last decade in Wales, albeit from an historic high in 2010-11 (**Exhibit 3**). In 2019-20, total spending on schools was 3.4% lower in real terms than in 2010-11.

Exhibit 3: total education spending 2010-11 to 2019-20, real terms (2019-20 prices)



Source: Stats Wales Local Government out-turn dataset (Audit Wales analysis)

- 22 Overall, the budgets for schools set by councils across Wales for 2020-21 were 6% higher in real terms than the previous year. They included COVID catch-up support for pupils through the Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards programme¹⁸ as well as funding to enable schools to prepare planned reforms: preparing for the new curriculum for Wales ahead of first implementation in September 2022 and for the additional learning needs reforms being phased in from September 2021.
- 23 Councils' spending per pupil varies considerably across Wales. Comparisons are affected by factors such as whether there are school sixth forms, Welsh medium or bilingual schools as well as rurality and the level of deprivation in the area. In 2020, the Welsh Government commissioned a review of school funding¹⁹. The review adjusted for the different factors and estimated that, in 2018-19, total spending per learner in primary and secondary schools was around £300 above the national average in Ceredigion, Conwy, Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent. It was around £200 or more below the national average in primary and secondary schools in Newport, the Vale of Glamorgan and Flintshire. The report called for more transparency in councils' school spending.

Wales spends about the same as England per pupil but less than Scotland

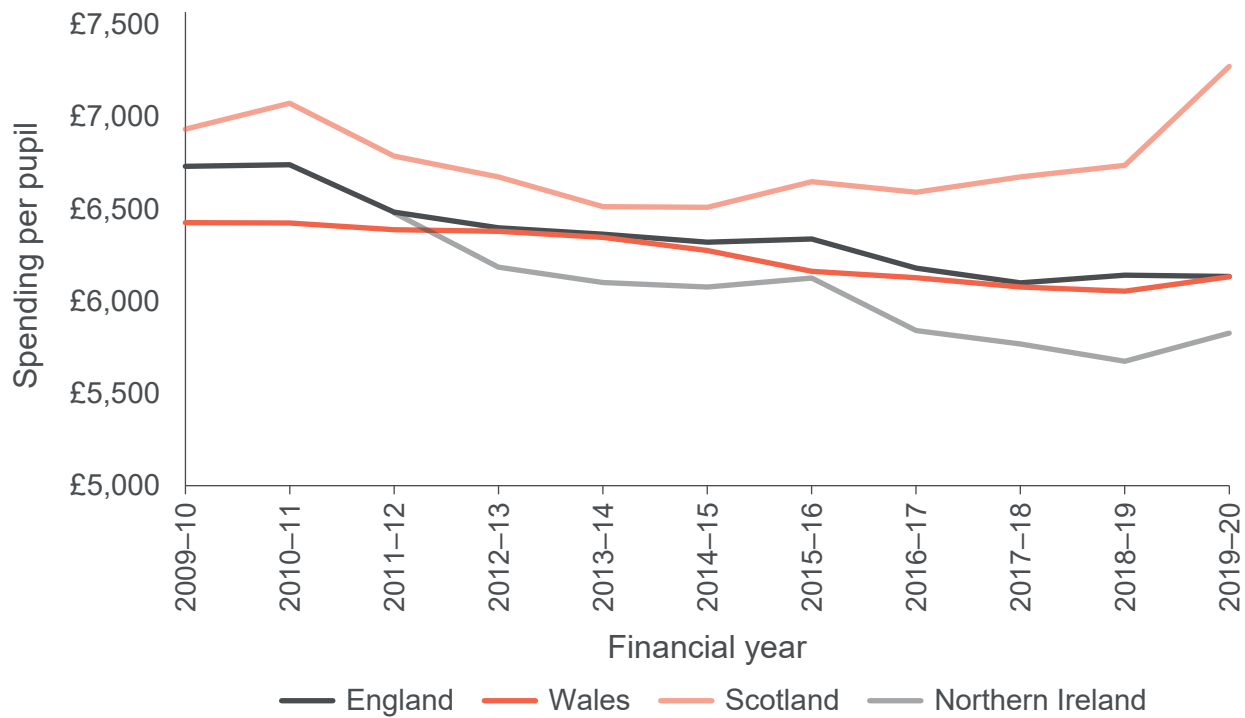
- 24 In 2009-10, spending per pupil in Wales was lower than other UK nations. Research²⁰ has found that, in England, spending per pupil has fallen sharply as a result of spending cuts and rising pupil numbers. In 2019-20, Wales and England spent almost the same per pupil. By contrast, spending in Scotland increased by 5% in real terms and was consistently higher than in the other nations (**Exhibit 4**).

18 The Welsh Government announced its Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards programme in July 2020, aiming to reduce the impact of the pandemic for pupils. Initially, it focused on those in years 11, 12 and 13 with exams, year 7 starting secondary schools and other vulnerable pupils.

19 Sibieta, L., Review of School Spending in Wales, Building in evidence, fairness, transparency and clear expectations, November 2020

20 Institute for Fiscal Studies, Comparing School Spending Per Pupil in England and Wales, July 2018

Exhibit 4: spending per pupil in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, 2009-10 to 2019-20 (real terms, 2018-19 prices)



Source: Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2020 Annual report on education spending in England, November 2021

25 The Welsh Government commissioned review of school funding identified two areas where funding in Wales is significantly lower than England:

- **Funding linked to deprivation** – the most deprived primary and secondary schools in England receive 25 to 30% extra funding compared with about 15% extra in Wales.
- **Sixth form funding** – Welsh Government funding per learner in school sixth forms was around £4,200 in 2018-19 compared to £5,000 in England. The review questions if this level of funding in Wales can support schools to provide a balanced post-16 curriculum in future.

So far, the Welsh Government has committed around £370 million to tackle the impact of the pandemic on education

- 26 In 2020-21, the Welsh Government allocated over £220 million to education (including investment in digital and mental health support in schools and colleges). It also plans to provide an additional £150 million in the financial year 2021-22 to support schools, teachers and pupils. Major commitments include:
- £35.6 million to support mentoring and other support for pupils through the Recruit, Recover and Raise Standards programme;
 - £33 million to support 16 to 19 learners entering new courses of study in schools, sixth form and further education colleges;
 - £23.2 million for free school meals provision during the holidays;
 - £15 million for educational technology in schools through the Hwb EdTech programme;
 - £13 million to support Foundation Phase provision and non-maintained settings; and
 - £9 million to support wellbeing services in schools.
- 27 The Welsh Government has also provided funding for childcare including:
- £16 million for childcare for the children of critical workers and vulnerable children in registered childcare settings from April to September 2020; and
 - £5 million capital funding for childcare and play services, with £2 million aimed at small scale adaptations to enable COVID-safe operations and £3 million allocated to increasing play opportunities.
- 28 Research in June 2021 suggested that catch-up funding planned at that point equated to £400 per pupil in 2019/20 and 2021/22²¹. This compared to £310 in England (3 to 18 year olds); £230 in Scotland (schools only); and £230 in Northern Ireland (3 to 19 years). It is difficult to compare spending internationally, but other countries have announced ambitious plans: the Netherlands has announced catch-up funding equivalent to £2,100 per pupil and the USA is providing funding worth £1,800 per pupil.

21 Education Policy Institute, Comparing catch-up spending within and outside the UK, June 2021. Funding in England stretches into 2022/23 rather than just 2021/22 for the devolved nations. This probably reflects the budgeting cycle with devolved nations knowing their budgets in the Autumn.

Free school meals funding has been extended to the end of 2021

- 29 The Welsh Government provided funding for councils to provide free school meals for those pupils eligible when schools were closed initially. Most did this in the form of vouchers for families²². Wales was the first UK nation to commit to continuing free school meals during the summer holidays 2020. It subsequently committed to providing free school meals until the end of the Easter holidays 2022.
- 30 The cost increased as more families became eligible for free school meals during the pandemic: 105,000 pupils were eligible for free school meals in January 2021, a rise of more than 20% from January 2020. The Welsh Government provided up to £60.5 million for free school meals including an additional £34 million for free school meals in the school holidays up to Easter 2021.

Managing cost pressures facing the education system

- 31 Schools' finances were under strain before the pandemic. Overall, schools held reserves of £31 million on 31 March 2020, equivalent to £69 per pupil. Reserves had fallen by 33% compared to the previous year. Most secondary schools either had negative reserves (43%) or reserves less than 5% of their annual budget (46%). It is likely that schools' reserves will show an increase in 2020-21 as a result of carrying forward COVID funding that they were unable to spend within the financial year. We expect that this will be temporary, reflecting the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic.
- 32 Our work and that of the 2020 School Funding Review have identified cost pressures facing the education system in the short, medium and long term. In addition to questions about the adequacy of schools' funding linked to deprivation and for sixth-forms (paragraph 25), schools face increases in teachers' pay and pensions. Pay represents more than half of school spending. The previous Welsh Government stated that pay would not fall below that of teachers in England. The School Funding Review estimated that school costs per learner would increase by between 6.4% and 8.4% if the Welsh Government adopted a similar approach to the UK government's 2019 proposal to increase starting salaries for teachers in England to £30,000 by 2022-23. The UK government has reaffirmed its commitment to this goal but stated that achieving it will take longer than previously announced.

- 33 There are other specific areas of potential cost pressures on schools. Increases in the number of pupils eligible for free school meals (paragraph 30) mean that more funding will probably be needed for grants and schemes that support those pupils from poorer households. The Welsh Government has stated that the reform of services for pupils with additional learning needs will be cost neutral. However, based on experience in England, we believe there is at least a risk of extra costs²³.
- 34 Generally, the cost of education in Wales is increased by the number of small primaries (less than 100 pupils) and secondaries (less than 700). Wales has lots of small schools partly due to rurality and partly because it operates a split system with Welsh, bilingual and English medium schools. In November 2017, the Welsh Government introduced a grant of £2.5 million each year for the Senedd term to support small and rural schools. It also launched its Rural Education Plan²⁴ and strengthened the School Organisation Code²⁵ so that councils and others consider all viable alternatives before deciding to close a rural school.
- 35 There is a tension between the duty of councils to provide an efficient school estate and communities' support for their local schools. The challenges seem set to continue as projections suggest pupil numbers in rural areas will fall in the medium and long term along with numbers in some urban areas.

23 National Audit Office, Support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities in England, September 2019

24 Welsh Government, Rural Education Plan, October 2018

25 The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 requires Welsh Ministers to issue a School Organisation Code. Amongst other things, the Code sets out the policy context, general principles and factors that should be considered by those bringing forward proposals to reconfigure school provision and by those responsible for making the decision.

Schools – performance

Performance in the international PISA tests

- 36 It is difficult to judge the performance of the education sector in the round, in part because of changes in performance measures over time and because of increasing differences in education across the UK. In recent years, attention has been paid to Welsh pupils' performance in the OECD's international PISA tests that assess the skills and performance of pupils aged 15 in reading, mathematics and science (**Exhibit 5**)²⁶.

Exhibit 5: PISA results for Wales 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2018



Source: Audit Wales analysis

- 37 PISA results in 2009, 2012 and 2015 were disappointing. In 2015, Wales ranked lower than other countries in the UK on all measures. The OECD said that results could not be explained by higher levels of disadvantage: only 6% of the variation in performance in Wales could be attributed to socio-economic status. In England, Northern Ireland and Scotland, 11% of the variation was explained in this way.

26 The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a study of educational achievement organised by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). PISA aims to provide governments with a benchmark for education policy and performance, to make evidence-based decisions and to learn from one another.

- 38 Results in 2018 showed improvement: for the first time, Wales' results were not significantly below the OECD average. Wales' results in maths continued to show improvement; science improved on 2015 and reading had the highest average score since 2006. Wales' performance was still behind the other UK nations in all areas. The 2020 PISA tests, which the OECD planned to report on in 2021, were postponed because of the pandemic. The next snapshot of performance will be available in 2022. Very recent research based on the UK millennium cohort study found that most cognitive outcomes in Wales are very similar to England other than for reading, particularly at age seven²⁷.

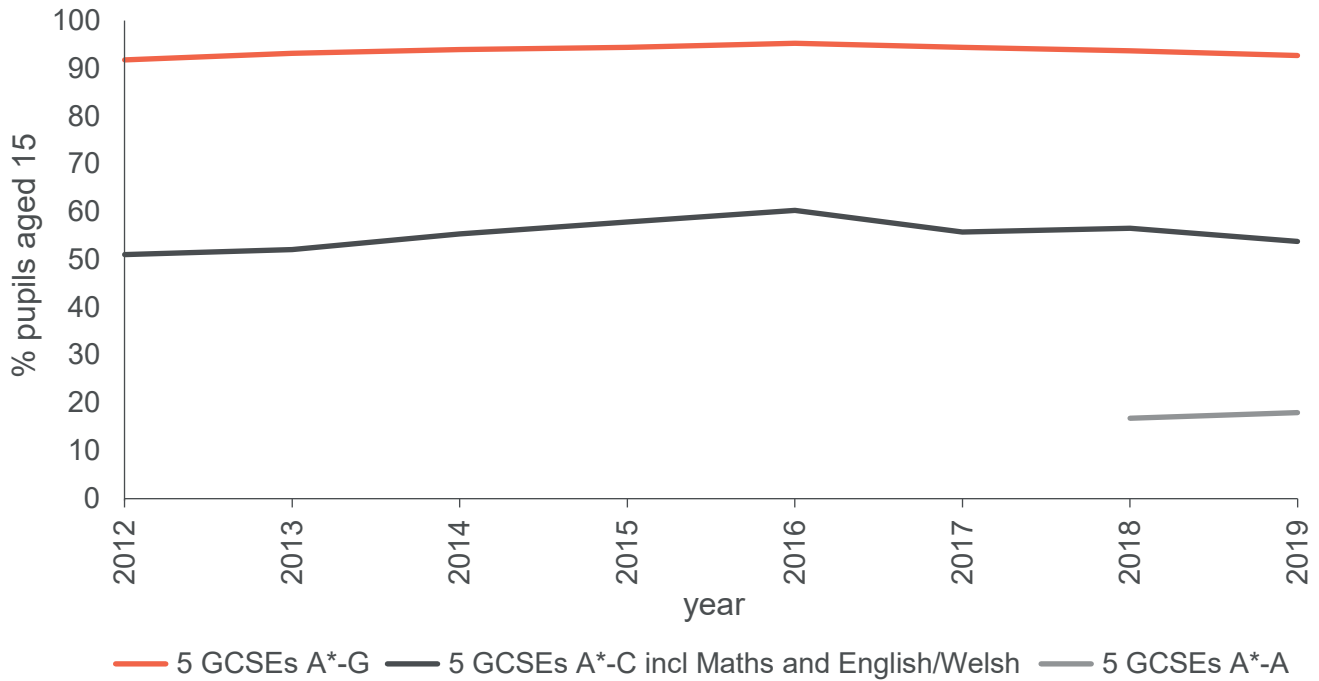
Other measures of performance

GCSE and A-level results

- 39 Looking at performance in GCSE, the proportion of pupils achieving five GCSEs (A*-C) increased before falling back. In 2019, 54% of pupils achieved this level compared to 51% in 2012 (**Exhibit 6**).

27 Sibieta L, and Fullard J, Education Policy Institute. The evolution of cognitive skills during childhood across the UK, July 2021

Exhibit 6: performance at GCSE, Wales 2012 to 2019



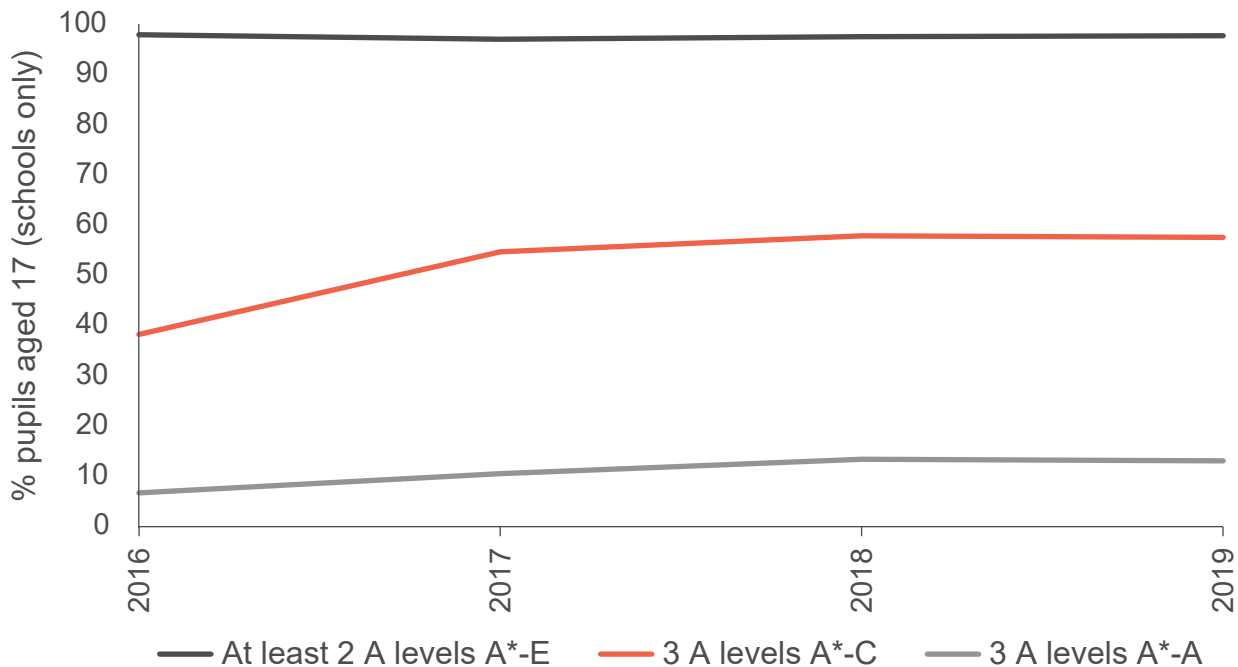
Notes:

- 1 Data is for pupils aged 15 at the start of the academic year.
- 2 The Welsh Government did not to publish these measures for 2020.
- 3 The percentage achieving at least 5 GCSEs A* to A was first published for 2017/18.

Source: Statistics for Wales, Examination results in schools in Wales, 2018/19 (provisional) – Revised SFR 93/2019(R), October 2019

40 The proportion of pupils taking A levels in schools who achieve at least two passes grade A*-G has increased (**Exhibit 7**). There has also been increase in the percentage achieving three A levels at A* or A.

Exhibit 7: performance at A level in Wales 2016 to 2019, schools only



Notes:

- 1 This data is for pupils aged 17 at the start of the academic year.
- 2 Results for 2020 were on the basis of centre assessed grades and so the Welsh Government did not publish the performance measures for 2020.

Source: Statistics for Wales, Examination results in schools in Wales, 2018/19 (provisional) – Revised SFR 93/2019(R), October 2019

41 Pupils taking exams in 2020 and 2021 worked in unprecedented circumstances with qualifications awarded on the basis of centre assessed grades. In 2021, 30% of GCSEs awarded to pupils aged 15 were at A*-A, 3.5% more than in 2020 and 10.9% more than in 2019²⁸. This pattern was the same for A levels: in 2021, 48.3% of A level grades were A* or A grades, 6.5 percentage points more than in 2020 and 21.3 percentage points more than 2019²⁹.

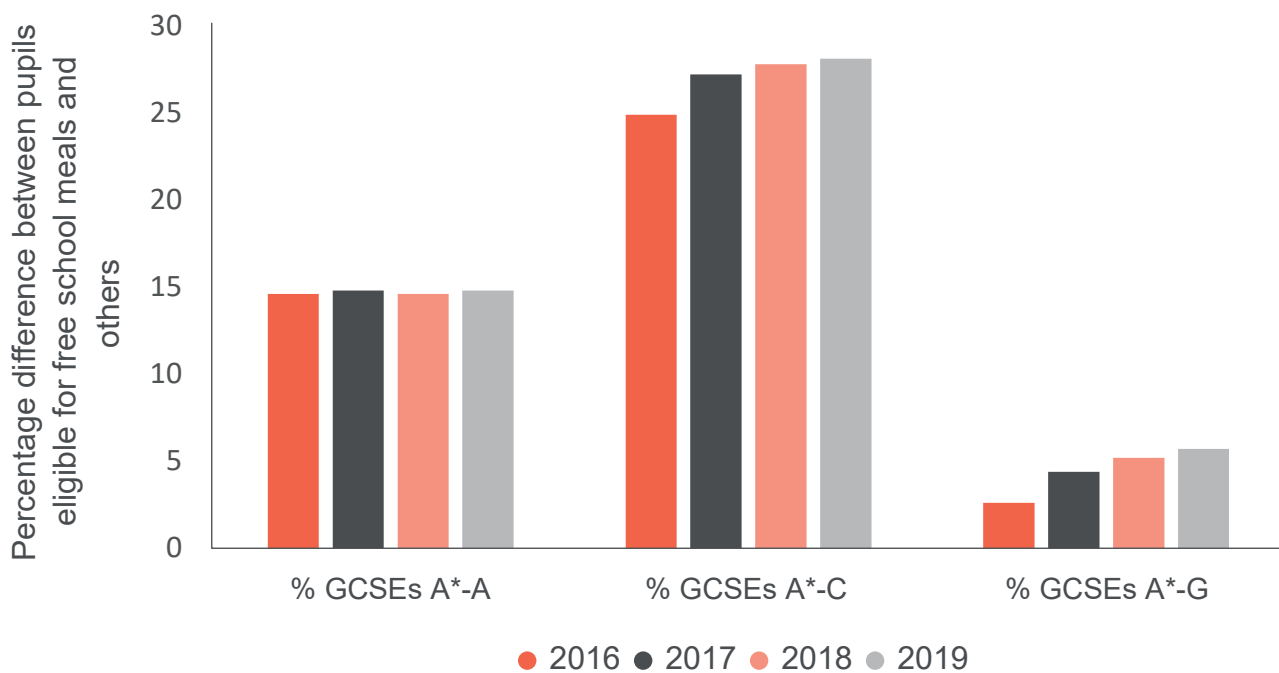
28 Qualifications Wales, Summary of provisional results for GCSE, Key Stage 4 Skills Challenge Certificate and selected level 1/2 and level 2 vocational qualifications in Wales (provisional), August 2021

29 Qualifications Wales, Summary of provisional results for A level, AS, Advanced SCC, and selected level 3 vocational qualifications in Wales (provisional), August 2021

Reducing the attainment gap

42 The Welsh Government has prioritised the aim of reducing the gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and the rest. This includes in early years where children from disadvantaged backgrounds can be behind others by the age of three³⁰. Measuring performance in this area is complex. At GCSE, the attainment gap in the percentages of GCSEs at grades A*-G and A*-C increased between pupils eligible for free school meals and others between 2016 and 2019. There was little change in the attainment gap at the highest GCSE grades during that period (**Exhibit 8**).

Exhibit 8: percentage point difference of GCSE entries by grade range by free school meal status (not eligible for free school meals – eligible for free school meals) 2016 to 2019



Source: Statistics for Wales, Examination results in schools in Wales, 2019/20 SFR 218/2020, December 2020

30 Welsh Government, Written Statement – Launch of Early Childhood Education and Care Approach, October 2019

- 43 Significant attainment gaps also exist for other learners:
- **For girls and boys** – Girls generally outperform boys at GCSE: at grades A*-C, the gap increased from 8.9% in 2015/16 to 10.2% in 2019. For the highest grades the gap remained almost the same: 7.7% in 2016 and 7.4% in 2019. In 2020 the gap between boys and girls increased over the previous year at grades A*-A but decreased at grades A*-C and A*-G. A similar pattern is seen at AS and A level.
 - **For learners with special educational needs** – grades tended to be higher where pupils do not have special educational needs. In 2019, 22% of GCSEs awarded to pupils without special educational needs were at grades A*-A compared to 5.4% of GCSEs awarded to pupils with special educational needs, a gap of 16.8% percentage points³¹.
- 44 In 2020 and 2021 centre assessed grades saw attainment gaps increase. In 2020, 21.8% of GCSEs awarded to pupils not eligible for free school meals were at A* or A compared to 7.1% of GCSEs awarded to pupils eligible for free school meals. This is an attainment gap of 14.7 percentage points compared to 11.5 percentage points in 2019. Provisional results for 2021 suggest that the attainment gap has increased again. The attainment gap between pupils with special educational needs and others and between boys and girls also widened in 2020 and 2021³².

31 Qualifications Wales, Summer 2020 Equalities Impact Analysis: GCSE, AS, and A level, October 2020, Data Tables.

32 Qualifications Wales, Summary of provisional results for GCSE, Key Stage 4 Skills Challenge Certificate and selected level 1/2 and level 2 vocational qualifications in Wales (provisional), August 2021.

Schools – demand and capacity

School places and class sizes

- 45 In 2019/20, there were 1,480 schools in Wales compared to 1,723 in 2009/10. This is mainly as a result of mergers. Surplus places in primary schools fell from 21% in 2010 to 12.6% in 2018. This figure is closer to the Welsh Government's target of 10% surplus places to allow for changes within the year and some parental choice. Surplus places in secondary schools rose from 16% to 19.7% over the same period, but this picture is likely to change as the current cohort of primary school children move through to secondary school.
- 46 In part the changes in surplus places are a result of an increase in the birth rate around 2010 to 2012, with those children now making their way through the system. However, more recently the birth rate in Wales has dropped significantly, which means there is likely to be a rise in surplus places in the coming years. Generally, this picture highlights how the volatility of the birth rate projections makes it difficult for councils and the Welsh Government to plan school places in the medium and long term.
- 47 In 2017, the Welsh Government announced its aim of reducing infant class sizes. It supported schools through a £36 million grant over four years for teaching staff and/or accommodation. Further funding for teaching staff for the earliest years was announced for 2021/22 in May 2021. The latest figures show that, in January 2020, the average infant class size was 25.4, the same as 2019 and a slight reduction on 2018 (25.6). However, the size of junior classes (Years 3 to 6) has increased (from 25.9 in 2018 to 26.3 in 2020). 7.4% of pupils were in infant classes of over 30 pupils, up from 7.2% (7,581) in January 2019 but less than 8.4% in 2018³³.

- 48 Estyn's most recent annual report³⁴ indicates that the number of non-school settings for children under five offering part-time education has reduced. In January 2020, there were around³⁵ 546 providers of education in non-school settings for three or four-year-olds. The number has been falling since 2010, when it was over 700. Some councils do not fund any non-school settings and the funding available varies between areas. In 2018, all paid less than the Welsh Government planned to offer for the childcare element of its childcare and education offer³⁶. The Welsh Government has undertaken work to better understand how non-maintained settings can be supported to provide Foundation Phase provision. It included additional funding in its 2021-22 budget to harmonise funding for education places across settings.

Workforce

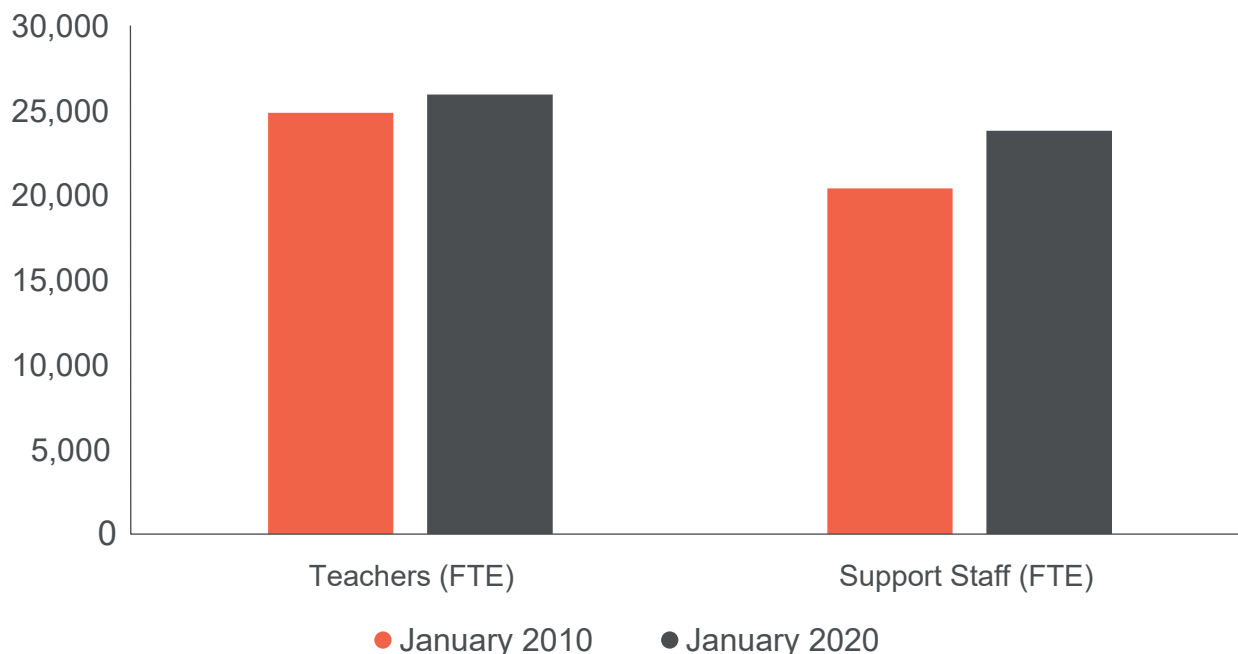
- 49 The number of teachers employed in schools has risen slightly since 2010. The number of support staff employed has increased more substantially (**Exhibit 9**).

34 Estyn, The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales 2019-2020, December 2020

35 The number of non-maintained settings registered with local partnerships to provide education fluctuates, often according to whether children aged three and over attend the setting and on arrangements to fund the provision locally.

36 National Assembly for Wales Children, Young People and Education Committee, Childcare Funding (Wales) Bill Committee Stage 1 Report, July 2018

Exhibit 9: number of staff employed in schools in Wales (Full Time Equivalent (FTE))



Source: Statistics Wales, School Census

50 Schools face a number of workforce challenges, including:

- **Welsh medium teachers** – There are shortages of teachers for Welsh medium schools in some areas and subjects. Our 2020 report found that there is a lack of supply teachers for Welsh medium schools³⁷. The number of recruits to initial teacher education for Welsh medium has consistently been below target. The new curriculum will change the approach to teaching and assessing Welsh and will increase the demands for Welsh teachers in English-medium schools further.

- **Staff for the Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards programme** – We expressed concern about the ability to appoint staff for the programme in September 2020³⁸. Appointing high quality additional staff at short notice was difficult, especially in rural areas, Welsh-medium or bilingual schools and areas of high deprivation³⁹. Instead, schools and colleges have extended hours for part-time staff, paid current staff overtime, or retained staff about to retire.
- **Newly-qualified teachers** – The Welsh Government determines the number of teacher training places available based on expectations about the required workforce. However, for the sixth year in a row, the number of new secondary school trainee teachers was lower than required (54% lower) in 2019/20. The number of new primary school trainees was less than required for the fifth year in a row (12% lower in 2019/20)⁴⁰.
- **Supply teachers** – In 2013 and 2020, we reported on Covering Teachers' Absence and made some recommendations about the management of absence and supply cover staff. The Welsh Government has taken action to improve the training of supply teachers and their pay and conditions. However, our work also identified increasing pay as a further cost pressure for schools and highlights the risk that schools save money by employ teaching assistants rather than qualified teachers in some situations.

38 Auditor General for Wales, Evidence submitted to the Children, Young People and Education Committee for Stage 1 scrutiny of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill, September 2020

39 Estyn, How Schools and Colleges Used the RRRS and Catch-up Grants for Post-16 Learners, June 2021

40 Statistics for Wales, Initial Teacher Education Wales, 2019/2020 FR 18/2021 18 May 2021

Schools – key issues

51 When the pandemic hit, schools and the education system were already showing signs of strain. A major reform programme was part-way through, there were substantial workforce challenges and school finances were under pressure. The Welsh Government had commissioned a review of school funding. The pandemic has disrupted the education of a generation of pupils; its impact varying for pupils of different ages and being particularly difficult for vulnerable children. Going forward, schools face the challenge of supporting pupils' wellbeing and working within the restriction of social distancing and other measures to reduce transmission, which affects their ability to deliver some elements of the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

Mitigating the impact of COVID on pupils

- 52 The impact on individual pupils will have varied but all have experienced substantial disruption. There is worrying evidence of lost learning and that the pandemic has increased inequality – for example, widening the gap in attainment between those eligible for free school meals and others. The Welsh Government has committed around £370 million to date for schools and early years to recover from the pandemic and prepare for reforms. However, the Education Policy Institute has estimated that £600 million to £900 million could be needed over three years to support education recovery in Wales⁴¹.
- 53 The response to the pandemic has brought some beneficial changes. For example, Estyn⁴² reports that communication between parents and schools has improved. Digital learning and skills have accelerated as schools and pupils have had to meet the challenges of remote learning⁴³.
- 54 As well the impact of the pandemic on education, the Senedd's Children, Young People and Education Committee reported growing concern about the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's mental health and wellbeing⁴⁴ more widely. The Welsh Government provided £1.2 million additional funding for school counselling services in April 2020. In February 2021, the Welsh Government announced an additional £4 million to improve access to mental health and wellbeing services in schools in 2021-22 as well as an extra £5.4 million for children and adolescent mental health services.

41 Education Policy Institute, Analysis Paper: Preliminary Research Findings on Education Recovery, April 2021

42 Estyn, Engagement work – Primary sector update Summer Term 2021, July 2021

43 Estyn, Engagement work – Secondary sector update Summer Term 2021, July 2021

44 Welsh Senedd's Children, Young People and Education Committee, Impact of COVID-19 on children and young people: final report, March 2021

Following through the reform programme

- 55 Schools have been stretched over the past year adjusting to remote learning, monitoring vulnerable pupils and supporting the return to face-to-face teaching. Schools will need support to introduce these reforms successfully. In January 2021, the Welsh Government published A Journey to 2022, a roadmap showing what schools needed to do before the start of the Curriculum for Wales. In July 2021, Estyn reported that primary schools needed a period of undisturbed time to be ready to implement the curriculum in September 2022. It found that preparations in secondary schools varied.
- 56 In June and July 2021, the Minister for Education announced changes with the aim of creating more time for schools to prepare and engage with Qualifications Wales on assessment and qualification methods. These included suspending again the requirement for end of stage assessments in primary schools. He also announced that the Curriculum for Wales will not be mandatory for secondary schools until 2023.
- 57 The cost of curriculum reform – both to date and in the future – is not yet clear. The Welsh Government has commissioned an evaluation programme which includes collecting cost information – but without this information, we cannot be sure that sufficient resources are available. We will be looking at costs further in our ongoing work on the curriculum reform programme.

Addressing the workforce challenges

- 58 We have documented some of the workforce challenges facing schools, councils and the Welsh Government. Some of these have been present for a long time. The numbers of recruits for initial teacher training have been a challenge for several years. We understand that the number of applicants has increased for 2021/22, but it is not clear if this will be sustained or is a result of there being fewer alternative opportunities for graduates during the pandemic.
- 59 The challenge of developing a sufficient Welsh speaking workforce is considerable. However, it is vital for schools to help to meet the Welsh Government's vision of one million Welsh speakers by 2050 outlined in its Cymraeg 2050 strategy. There have long been shortages of Welsh medium teachers generally and these are acute for specific subjects such as physics and maths. There is also a shortage of teachers of Welsh for English-medium schools currently, which is likely to be more pressing in the future because of the Curriculum for Wales has a new approach and greater emphasis on learning and assessing the Welsh language.



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Agenda Item 2.12

CYPE(6)-05-21 - Paper to note 12



A Picture of Higher and Further Education

Report of the Auditor
General for Wales

October 2021



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Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

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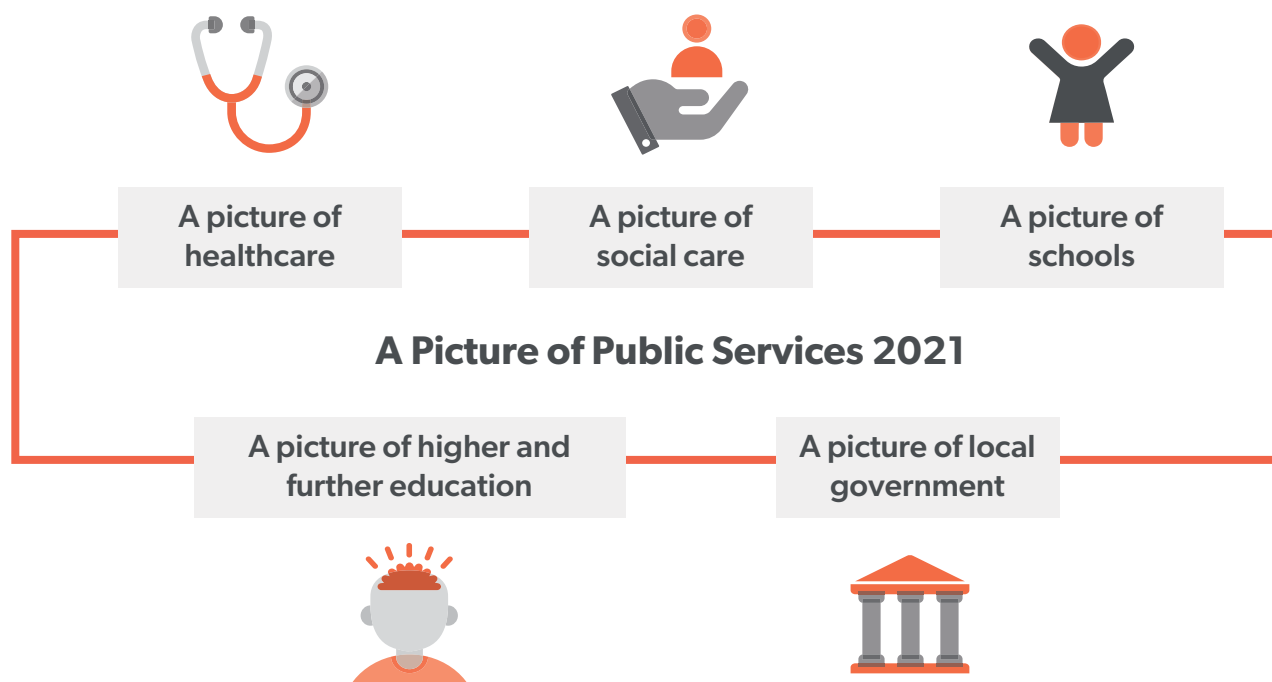
About this report

This report is part of a series of Picture of Public Services 2021 outputs. Our main Picture of Public Services 2021 report summarises some of the key trends in public finances and sets out our perspective on some of the key issues for future service delivery.

This report summarises key information about higher and further education in Wales including the strategic operating context and funding. It explores capacity in the sector, performance, and key issues or challenges in our view. We also discuss aspects of education in A Picture of Schools.

This report is not intended to be comprehensive. It sets out what we consider to be some of the key issues for higher and further education, recognising that other commentators and review bodies will have their own perspective on the key issues. Where possible we have drawn on data that covers similar issues or themes in both higher and further education. However, this report is not intended as a comparison between the two sectors.

The report is based on a synthesis of our published work as well as research by other organisations. It uses data covering a mix of financial and academic years¹.



1 We identify financial years, which run from 1 April to 31 March as, for example 2019-20. We identify academic years, from 1 August to 31 July as, for example, 2019/20.

Main report

Higher and further education context

Delivering higher and further education in challenging times

- 1 The COVID-19 pandemic has presented enormous challenges to public services and the people who deliver them. In higher and further education, staff and students have had to adapt to the challenges of online learning and face-to-face teaching in COVID-safe environments. All of us at Audit Wales pay tribute to the dedication and extraordinary efforts of public servants during this difficult period.
- 2 At the time this report was written, the direct impacts of COVID-19 were still being felt. Work to understand the indirect impacts of COVID-19 had begun, but it was too early to gauge the scale and extent of these impacts. Despite the significant challenges ahead, there are opportunities to rebuild and deliver services differently, learning from the collective response to COVID-19.

Structures and responsibilities

- 3 The Welsh Government sets the overall policy and direction for post-compulsory education in Wales (**Exhibit 1**). Wales has eight universities and thirteen further education colleges, in addition to The Open University. There are also several providers of work-based learning and other post-16 training and education in Wales. Higher education (HE) and further education (FE) institutions are legally independent of government. They are not part of the public sector. Most are registered charities. Nonetheless, many aspects of their operation are subject to government regulation² and are supported by public funding.

2 The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) is primarily responsible for the regulation of HE institutions; the Welsh Government is the principal regulator for FE.

Exhibit 1: post-compulsory education in Wales

Higher education (HE): a type of education that usually concludes with the awarding of a degree or diploma at level 4 of the CFQW³ or above. This includes foundation and undergraduate bachelor's degrees, as well as postgraduate degrees, such as master's degrees and PhDs. It also includes other qualifications, such as Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) or degree apprenticeships. The HE structure is similar to England, but has significant differences to Northern Ireland and Scotland. HE courses are typically studied in universities but sometimes in further education colleges.

Further education (FE) is any post-compulsory education that is not HE. FE students study towards technical and vocational qualifications, such as NVQs and BTECs, as well as general qualifications, such as A levels. This FE structure is identical to the system in England and Northern Ireland and similar to that in Scotland.

Higher and further education strategy

Overall approach

- 4 There is no single document setting out the Welsh Government's detailed strategy on post-compulsory education and skills. The Welsh Government's strategic approach has emerged from a range of reviews and studies⁴ and reflects financial constraints and policy developments at the UK level. It forms part of the wider context of reform in pre-16 compulsory education⁵. The Welsh Government has also sought to integrate its approach with wider policy agendas on economic development and equality under the framework of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

4 Reviews, studies, and plans are published on the Welsh Government's website.

5 Our report A Picture of Schools sets out some of the key aspects of the reform of compulsory education in Wales.

- 5 'Build ambition and encourage learning for life' is one of four headline objectives in the previous Welsh Government's action plan for the economy⁶. The Welsh Government's broad aim is to promote and enhance academic and vocational routes into higher and further education to equip learners with the skills needed for future careers. The Welsh Government also aims to co-ordinate research and innovation to enable institutions to make local, national, and international impacts. The Welsh Government has recently published a strategic vision⁷ with principles for change. Key objectives of the approach include:
- to **increase the economic activity rate** by intervening to help people enter the labour market;
 - to **raise qualification levels** across the workforce and ensure that qualifications meet the needs of a changing economy;
 - to provide **clear pathways** from one level of skill to another, across all parts of the education and training system, and removing artificial boundaries between academic and vocational routes;
 - to promote **lifelong learning** and widen access to skills provision throughout life;
 - to increase **Welsh-medium provision** in FE and to a lesser extent in HE;
 - to **simplify and integrate government interventions** so they provide an effective and streamlined system for individuals and businesses to get the support they need, with strong collaboration between stakeholders; and
 - to bring together all **research funding** and ensure that funding decisions reflect Welsh priorities, including the needs of the national and regional economic sectors.

6 Welsh Government, Prosperity for All: Economic Action Plan, December 2017

7 Welsh Government, Post-Compulsory Education and Training: Strategic Vision, November 2020

- 6 To achieve these objectives, the Welsh Government has sought to make use of available funding in a context of financial constraint:
- as recommended by the Diamond Review⁸ in 2016, HE students now pay tuition fees primarily through loans, with maintenance grants for living costs provided to some students. This replaced tuition fee grants.
 - there is a policy of co-investment in skills; public funding is focused on under-25s and higher-level skills, with employers expected to fund other training and development that benefits their businesses.
 - making use of public sector procurement to increase skills provision, for example, by requiring contractors to provide training as a condition of higher value construction contracts.
- 7 Following the recommendations of the Hazelkorn Review⁹ in 2016, the Welsh Government intends to create a new, autonomous public body to administer the whole of the post-16 education and training system, including HE, FE and vocational training. The Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER) would fund, regulate and co-ordinate the sector and take on the relevant responsibilities of HEFCW and the Welsh Government. The Commission will be functionally independent, but will operate on the basis of a five-year strategic plan approved by Ministers. The Welsh Government has consulted on draft legislation¹⁰ prior to consideration by the Senedd and intends that the CTER will come into existence in 2023.

COVID-19 response

- 8 As with compulsory education, learning in the post-compulsory sector moved online during the initial response to the pandemic. As restrictions allowed, learning transitioned to a 'blended' approach of in-person and online teaching. In the autumn of 2020, practical elements of vocational qualifications were brought forward in anticipation of a winter wave of COVID-19.
- 9 In May 2020, as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic the Welsh Government published a Resilience Plan for the post-16 sector¹¹. This identified priority groups for support, planned co-ordination with local schools and identified the risks of learners not having access to technology for learning.

8 Diamond Review Panel, The Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements in Wales, September 2016

9 Welsh Government, Taking Wales Forward, May 2016

10 Draft Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill, December 2020

11 Welsh Government, Covid-19: Resilience Plan for the Post-16 Sector, May 2020

- 10 The Resilience Plan was divided into three stages:
- **Rescue:** making sure providers had security and funding and adequate arrangements to continue learning. The Welsh Government suspended the collection of FE and adult learning performance statistics, Estyn suspended inspections of FE colleges and HEFCW eased several of its regulatory requirements.
 - **Review:** planning for potential changes to provision and funding once the rescue phase was over. The plan anticipated a phased return to face-to-face learning, a decline in international student numbers and an increase in unemployment leading to a rise in demand for support services.
 - **Renew:** revised arrangements for the following academic year and evaluating the impact of COVID-19. This phase will include planning to meet the changing needs of the economy, reviewing commissioning and funding approaches and potentially embedding positive aspects of the pandemic response, including digital learning.
- 11 The Welsh Government has provided additional funding to support the FE and HE sectors. Packages of £27 million and £23 million were provided to HE and FE respectively in July 2020, followed by an additional £95.5 million for HE later in 2020-21, of which £50 million was for student welfare services and students facing financial hardship, £1.5 million to provide work experience for recent graduates and £44 million for capital spending by universities.

Future plans

- 12 The 2021-2026 Programme for Government¹² includes a 'Young Persons Guarantee', which would guarantee all under-25s the offer of work, education, training, or self-employment. The Programme also includes a commitment to pass the draft legislation prepared in the previous Senedd, policies to promote parity between academic and vocational routes, a target to create 125,000 apprenticeships and a review of adult education to increase participation.

Higher and further education finances

Higher education finances

- 13 Welsh Government spending for HE is mainly in the form of two funding streams:
 - **Student support** funding in the form of **loans** and **grants**.
 - **Grants directly to universities** from HEFCW for teaching, research and specific priorities.
- 14 Most of the funding is for student support, in the form of loans or maintenance grants to support them wherever they study (**Exhibit 2**). Our report on student finances¹³ shows that the total annual financial support provided by the Welsh Government to students in HE has increased by 24% in real terms since 2015-16, reaching almost £1.1 billion in 2019-20. Following the Diamond Review, the balance between grants and loans has shifted as the Welsh Government focused its grants on supporting students with living costs, rather than tuition fees. The Welsh Government grant funding of £386 million in 2019-20 was 13% lower than 2015-16 in real terms. Over the same period, grants decreased from 51% to 36% of the financial support provided by the Welsh Government.

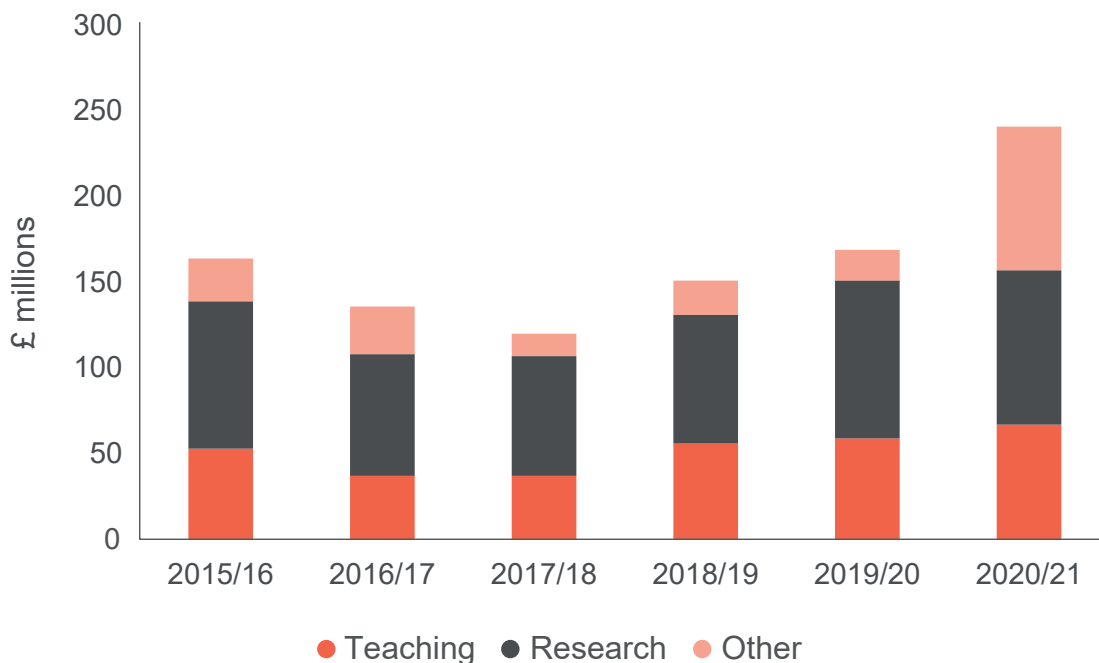
Exhibit 2: tuition fees and student loans

Universities charge tuition fees for students. In Wales, tuition fees for undergraduate courses are currently capped at £9,000 a year for UK students. There is no cap for international students, including those from the EU.

Our recent report on student finances describes the system of student finances for Welsh domiciled students. The report outlines some of the eligibility criteria, mix of grants and loans, and repayment thresholds. In 2019-20, the Welsh Government estimated that for every pound that is loaned to students, 65p will be recovered. Most Welsh-domiciled students go to Welsh universities; around 30% go to England and 1% to Scotland or Northern Ireland.

15 Welsh universities also receive grants from HEFCW (funded by the Welsh Government) for teaching, research and other specified priorities, which may vary from year to year. Teaching grants fell substantially between 2011/12 and 2015/16 as Welsh Government funding shifted to support the policy of higher tuition fees and the introduction of the Tuition Fee Grant in 2012/13. Teaching grants continued to fall to 2017/18 but have since increased (**Exhibit 3**). Research and other grants fell between 2015/16 and 2017/18 but have risen in recent years, with a substantial increase in other grants in 2020/21 due to COVID-19-related funding. Universities also receive research grants from other public sources and raise their own income from commercial sources.

Exhibit 3: HEFCW allocations for research, teaching, and other initiatives, 2011/12 to 2020/21 (real-terms 2019-20 prices)



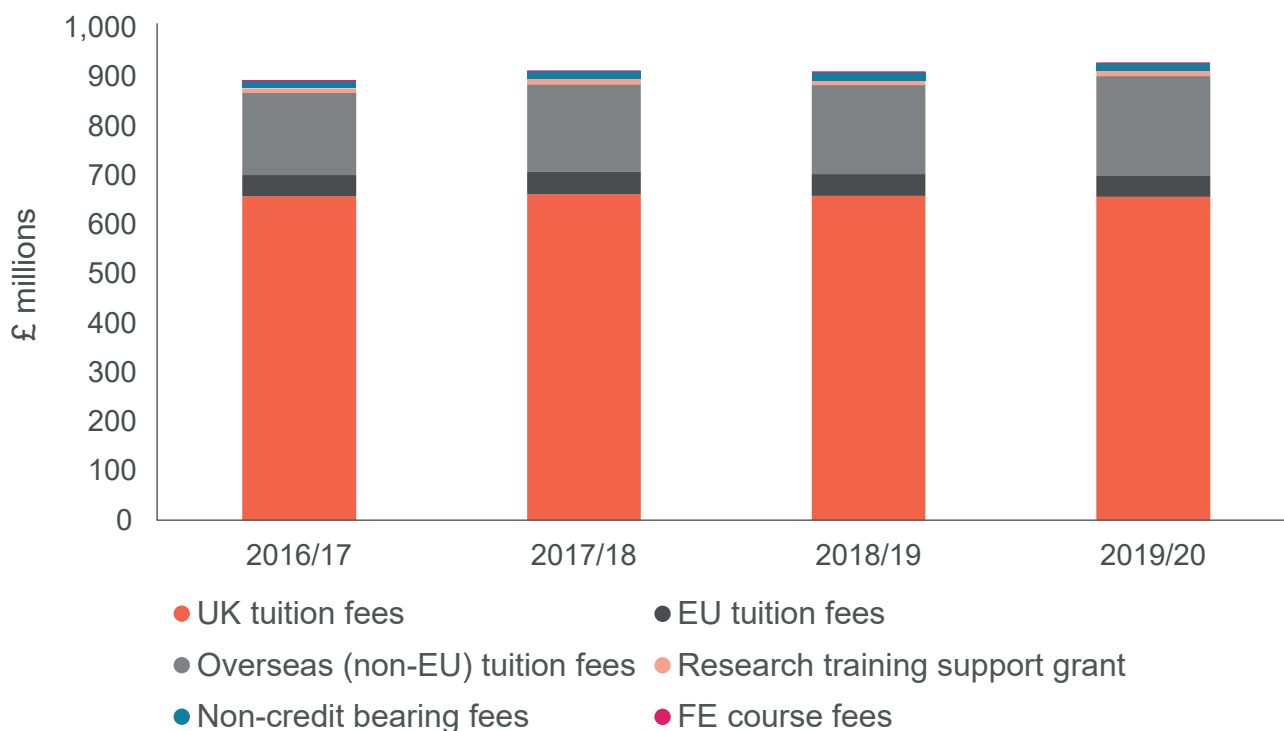
Notes:

- 1 HEFCW reduced its planned total funding allocations to universities by £26 million in 2016/17, £24 million in 2017/18 and £13 million in 2018/19, due to budget constraints. HEFCW did not stipulate which specific funding allocations should be cut, nor does it hold information on how the overall reductions were distributed by universities. The chart assumes that the reduction was applied proportionately to each type of grant.
- 2 In 2020/21, HEFCW distributed £78.5 million (£73.3 million in real terms) of additional funding to alleviate the impact of COVID-19, much of it for student support. This funding is included in the 'Other' category.

Source: Audit Wales analysis of HEFCW funding allocations

16 The total income of Welsh universities has been relatively stable in real terms at around £1.6 billion a year between 2015/16 and 2019/20. However, it dropped by 4% in 2019/20 when the COVID-19 pandemic took hold due to a loss of income from sources such as conferences and residential fees. Welsh universities have a diverse funding base. The majority of Welsh universities’ income comes from tuition fee and support grants, which were worth around £0.9 billion in 2019/20 (**Exhibit 4**). Most tuition fee funding comes from UK students. International students accounted for 26% of tuition fee income in 2019-20, with EU students accounting for a relatively small proportion of this income¹⁴. Fees for international students are typically significantly higher than those of UK students.

Exhibit 4: all Welsh university tuition fee and support grant income, 2016/17 to 2019/20 (real-terms 2019-20 prices)



Note: Non-credit bearing fees relate to activities that students are required to complete but do not carry credit towards their degrees. FE course fees are income for the provision of FE and non-advanced courses provided by a university.

Source: Audit Wales analysis of Higher Education Statistics Agency data

14 EU students were charged the same tuition fees as UK students until the end of the 2020/21 academic year.

Further education finances

- 17 The Welsh Government funds the majority of FE costs through grants to colleges for delivering learning programmes to eligible students, as well as grants for adult learning and payments to contractors administering apprenticeships. The Welsh Government also funds programmes designed to help people into the labour market, including Jobs Growth Wales and interventions to help those who are further from the labour market, such as the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework for 14 to 24-year-olds.
- 18 Welsh Government funding for FE is split between various funding streams (**Exhibit 5**). These include core funding¹⁵ for FE colleges and school sixth forms, which is linked to learner numbers and has remained broadly stable since 2016/17. The Welsh Government provided additional funding in 2020-21 due to the COVID-19 pandemic (**paragraph 11**). Between 2011/12 and 2016/17, core revenue funding for FE colleges fell by 13%¹⁶, which was entirely due to reductions in funding for part-time provision. The overall real terms value of core funding for FE colleges has remained broadly static since then¹⁷. The Welsh Government provides around £5 million a year to local authorities for adult community learning and around £120 million a year to work-based learning providers¹⁸.

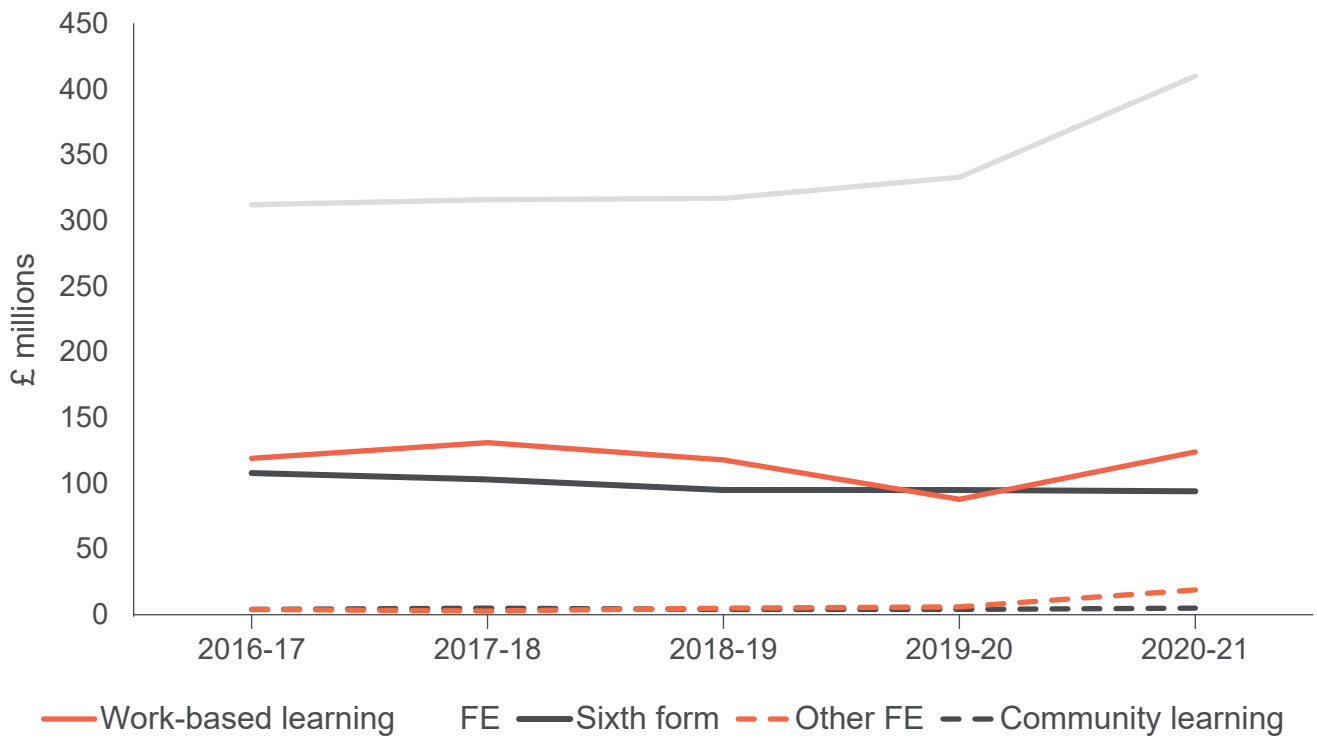
15 Allocations are provided on the Welsh Government's website.

16 Auditor General for Wales, Welsh Government oversight of further-education colleges' finances and delivery, February 2017

17 The Welsh Government has adjusted the funding formula for individual institutions to better reflect demographic changes between the colleges' catchment areas, which may have resulted in changes to the funding levels for some institutions.

18 Contracts are awarded to providers based on a specification and guidance published by the Welsh Government. Current guidance covered the period 2015-2021 and contract details are published on the Welsh Government's website.

Exhibit 5: further education, community learning, sixth form, work-based learning and other FE-related Welsh Government funding, 2016-17 to 2020-21 (real-terms 2019-20 prices)



Note: The final budget of the year has been used for each amount. Other FE-related spending includes investments, Erasmus, and mental health projects.

Source: Welsh Government

Higher and further education performance

- 19 There are a range of measures of performance across HE and FE. In HE, HEFCW publishes data on widening access, student experience, skills and employability, and research¹⁹. The Welsh Government publishes performance data on the FE sector annually²⁰ including data on completion, success, demographics, and deprivation. We have selected performance data that gives a broad picture of both sectors. We have also sought to include the students' perspectives from survey data.

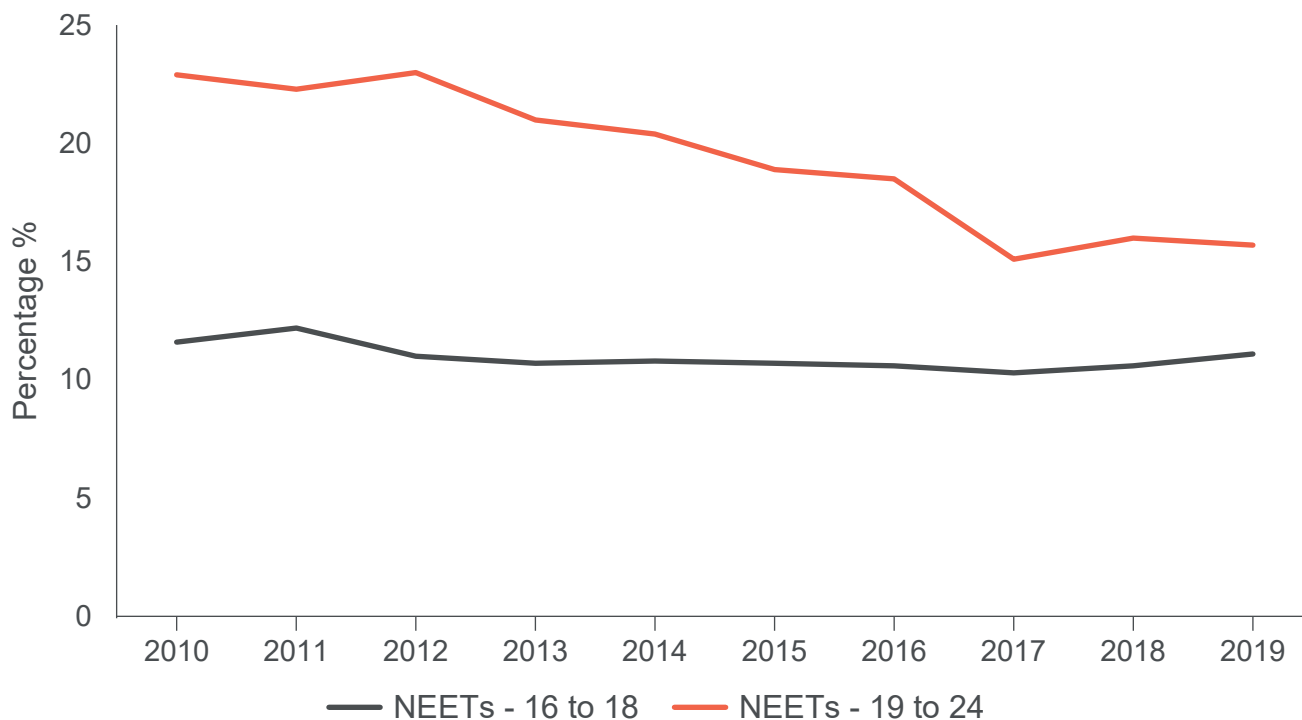
Ambitions for the economy, skills and participation form the wider context for HE and FE performance

- 20 The Welsh Government's Employability Plan (2018) has targets to close the gap with the UK average on three measures: unemployment, economic inactivity and qualifications levels of the working age population. While there has been steady improvement in all three measures since 2010, the gap with the UK average for the proportion of the working age population qualified at levels 2, 3 and 4 has widened. In contrast, the gap for economic inactivity has declined and unemployment was lower than the UK average at the end of 2019.
- 21 Youth engagement has been a priority of the Welsh Government for some time. The estimated levels of young people aged between 16 and 18 years old not in education, employment, or training (referred to as NEETs) have broadly remained consistent over the past decade (**Exhibit 6**). Rates of NEETs aged 19 to 24 years old have fallen significantly since the high point in 2012.

19 These are published annually, see: HEFCW, National measures 2018/19 – summary, December 2020

20 Welsh Government, Consistent performance measures for post-16 Learning: Achievement, August 2018 to July 2019, February 2020

Exhibit 6: estimated percentage of 16 to 24-year-olds not in education, training, or employment in Wales, 2010 to 2019



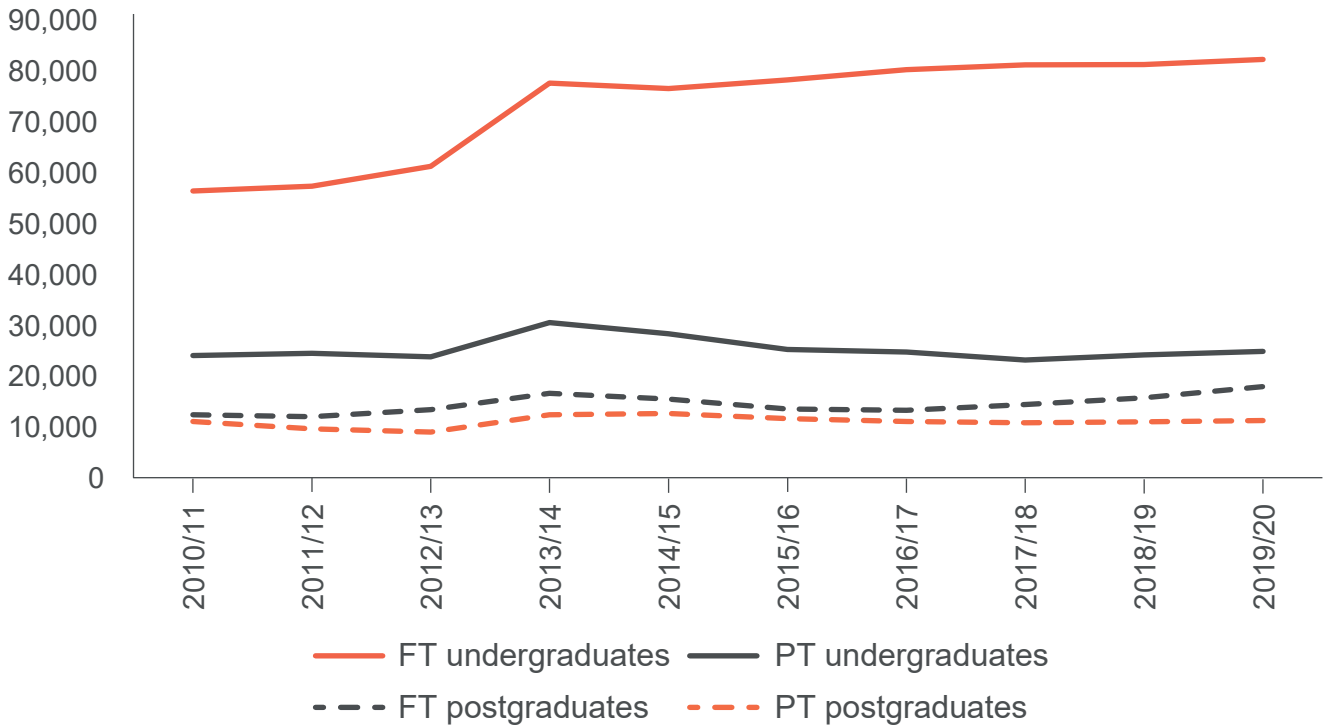
Source: StatsWales

Student enrolment in full-time higher education has increased, while part-time study in both higher and further education has decreased significantly

22 Overall, HE student enrolment increased by around 32,500 (31%) between 2010/11 and 2019/20 (**Exhibit 7**). Much of that increase occurred in 2013/14. Full-time undergraduate enrolment has increased every year. Part-time enrolment has fallen since 2013/14. Amongst part-time students there has been a pattern of rising enrolments with the Open University compared with reductions in other institutions. HEFCW data shows that the number and proportion of undergraduates coming from more deprived areas²¹ and from ethnic minorities increased between 2016/17 and 2018/19.

21 HEFCW reports on the number and proportion of undergraduates coming from the bottom fifth and bottom two-fifths of areas as ranked by the 2014 Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Exhibit 7: student enrolments in Wales by level and mode of study, 2010/11 to 2019/20

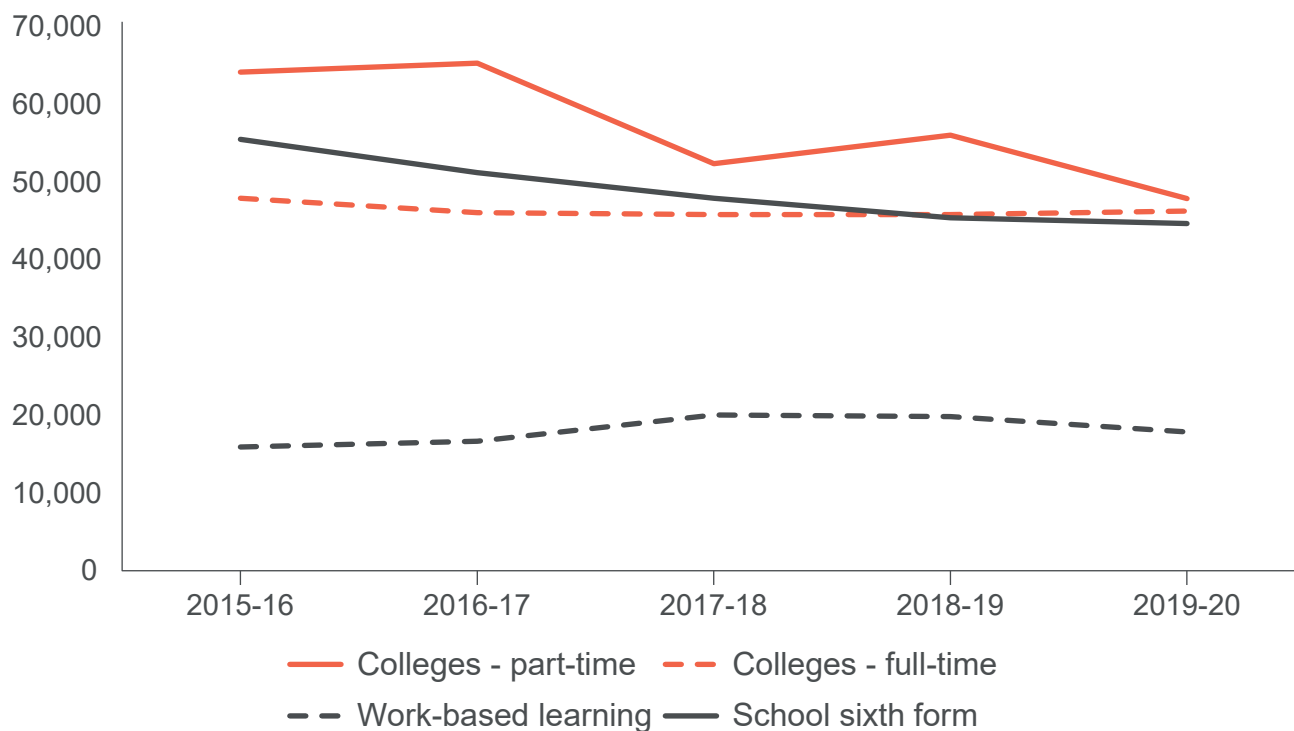


Note: We have included data on the Open University in Wales for part-time students. Data for full-time Open University students is not regularly published by StatsWales due to the data being ‘disclosive or not sufficiently robust for publication’.

Source: StatsWales

23 The number of full-time learners in FE colleges and sixth forms has been stable while the number of part-time learners has fallen considerably, continuing a trend since 2010 (**Exhibit 8**). The Welsh Government has prioritised funding for full-time provision in line with the statutory duty to make reasonable provision for 16 to 19-year-old learners. The number of work-based learners (mainly apprentices) has risen slightly, and the Welsh Government has met its target to deliver 100,000 all-age apprenticeships over the five-year Senedd to 2021. However, there is likely to be a short-term reduction in new apprenticeships due to the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Exhibit 8: unique learners enrolled at further education institutions and school sixth forms, 2015-16 to 2019-20



Source: StatsWales

24 Retention rates in HE have been stable for full-time students, with around 6% of students under 21 leaving their course early each year, compared with 11 to 12% of students aged over 21 between 2014/15 and 2018/19. Retention rates were much lower for part-time students; around 33% of students under 30 left their course early in 2017-18, and 31% of students over 30 did so. However, there has been significant improvement for both part-time age groups since 2014/15, where rates were 43% for under-30s and 37% for mature students.

Academic attainment gradually increased, while vocational achievement rates were stable before the pandemic, but the pandemic has resulted in differing outcomes depending on qualification

- 25 Welsh universities have increasingly awarded first-class honours to students: the proportion rose from 22% in 2015/16 to 28% in 2018/19 and a sharper increase to 35% in 2019/20. Around half of graduates gained upper second-class honours throughout the period, with a downwards trend in lower second-class honours. This trend is consistent across part and full-time study. These trends in Wales broadly mirror patterns across the UK although part-time students in Welsh universities tend to have higher awards than the UK average.
- 26 The Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) has conducted two graduate outcomes surveys for graduates from 2017/18 and 2018/19²². It found that 61% of undergraduates from Welsh universities were in work when surveyed after graduation – down 4% since 2017/18. The survey found that 25% were in further study and 8% were unemployed – up from 23% and 5% respectively. HESA notes that the 2018/19 survey was conducted during the pandemic and this may have affected responses.
- 27 Around 30% of A-level students attend FE colleges for their studies²³. Qualifications Wales data shows that achievement in FE colleges has improved gradually since 2016²⁴. In 2016, 74.0% of results achieved an A*-C compared to 77.8% by 2019. Consistently around 98% of A Levels were passed (grade A* to G) over the same period. In 2020, students in FE colleges had a large increase in A-level grades, following the move to centre-assessed grades due to the pandemic²⁵. Some 92% got A* to C and 38% got an A or A*. This large increase mirrored the trend in schools.

22 HESA, Higher Education Graduate Outcomes Statistics: UK, 2018/19 – Graduate activities and characteristics, July 2021

23 Most A-level teaching takes place in schools, which also provide some vocational courses (Estyn, Post-16 Partnerships: shared planning and provision between schools and between schools and colleges, 2021).

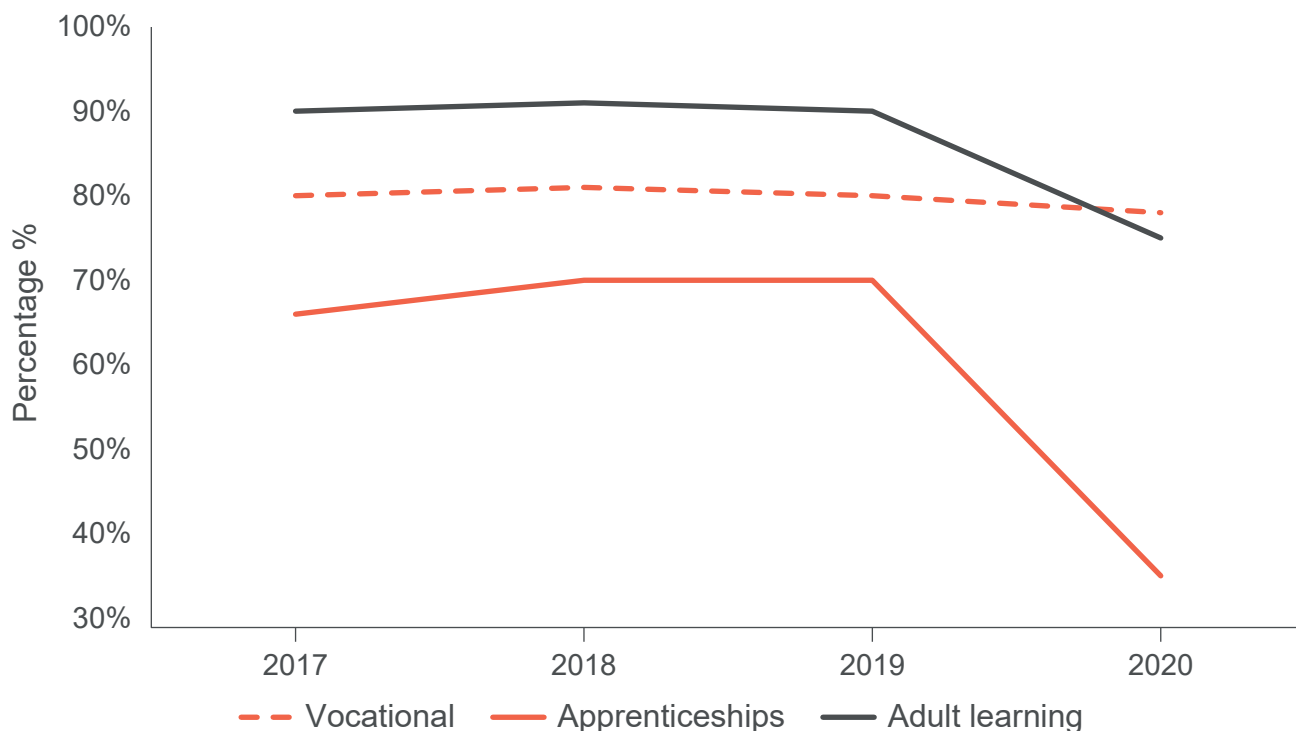
24 Qualifications Wales, Variation in GCSE, AS and A level qualification results in Wales, Summer 2020, October 2020

25 Centre assessed grades were based on the teachers' professional assessment of what the pupil would have achieved if they were able to sit an examination. Teachers could use any criteria they wished when estimating grades including, (but not limited to) completed course work, mock exams or previous academic achievement.

28 Achievement (pass) rates were consistent in the pre-pandemic period (**Exhibit 9**). However, in general the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in lower achievement rates for a variety of reasons. The achievement rate for apprenticeships halved from 70% in 2019 to 35% in 2020. Another 29% of apprenticeships are continuing beyond the expected end date to allow time for delayed practical experience, but 36% ended without the required outcomes being achieved²⁶. This is a substantial increase on the 15% in previous years and reflects the difficulties delivering work-based learning during the pandemic. According to Estyn²⁷, these difficulties included:

- the challenge of conducting practical teaching and assessments online;
- the closure of businesses that provided apprenticeships and work experience; and
- in some cases, the reluctance of awarding bodies to change assessment methods sufficiently to avoid delays.

Exhibit 9: achievement rates for post-compulsory education students, 2017 to 2020



Source: Welsh Government

26 Some of these apprentices may have achieved the necessary learning but their provider was waiting for confirmation of their results when the data was collected.

27 Estyn, Developments in Remote and Blended Learning Practice, 2021.

- 29 For vocational qualifications, the picture was mixed. The pass rate for level 3 vocational qualifications (A-level standard) rose from 81% in 2019 to 85% in 2020. Pass rates for lower-level qualifications fell sharply; for example, by 9% for level 2 qualifications.
- 30 Completion rates for vocational courses²⁸ were around 88% for vocational learners and 75% for apprenticeships in the pre-pandemic period. The rate fell slightly to 85% in 2020 for vocational qualifications and fell sharply to 52% for apprenticeships because the pandemic made it difficult to provide essential practical experience in the workplace. The impact varied by sector, with health and social care, hair and beauty and construction particularly badly affected. Measuring completion rates for A-Levels is complicated by the fact that some students don't progress to year 2 after getting their AS level at the end of year 1. Of those that started year 2, completion rates have been stable at around 95%, while the completion rate for the full two-year A-level programme was 72% in 2019, the last year for which statistics were collected on a consistent basis across both schools and FE colleges²⁹.

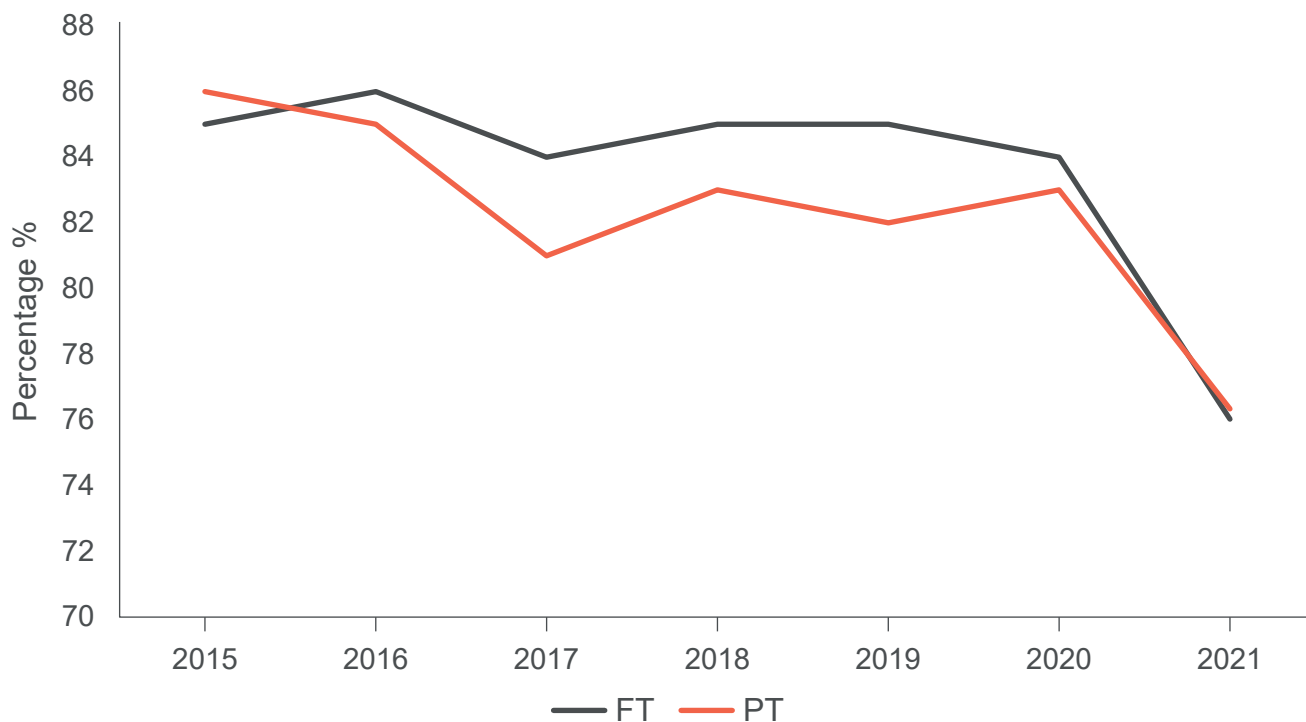
University student satisfaction rates were high and relatively stable until 2019 but dropped significantly during the pandemic

- 31 In HE, overall student satisfaction has fluctuated around 85% over the past decade, with satisfaction among full-time students being slightly ahead of part-time students. In 2020/21, student satisfaction was affected by the pandemic, with satisfaction falling to 76% for both full-time and part-time students (**Exhibit 10**). Satisfaction among HE students in England dropped similarly as a result of the pandemic.

28 Statistics from the Lifelong Learning Wales Record published by the Welsh Government, which includes data from all post-compulsory settings except schools.

29 Statistics for 2019 are from Welsh Government, Consistent Performance Measures for Post-16 Learning: Achievement, August 2018 to July 2019, February 2020. Data for 2020 is from Welsh Government, Outcomes for Learners in Post-16 Education Affected by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic: August 2019 to July 2020, April 2021.

Exhibit 10: student satisfaction in quality of course in Welsh universities, 2015/16 to 2020/21



Source: UK Office for Students, National Student Survey

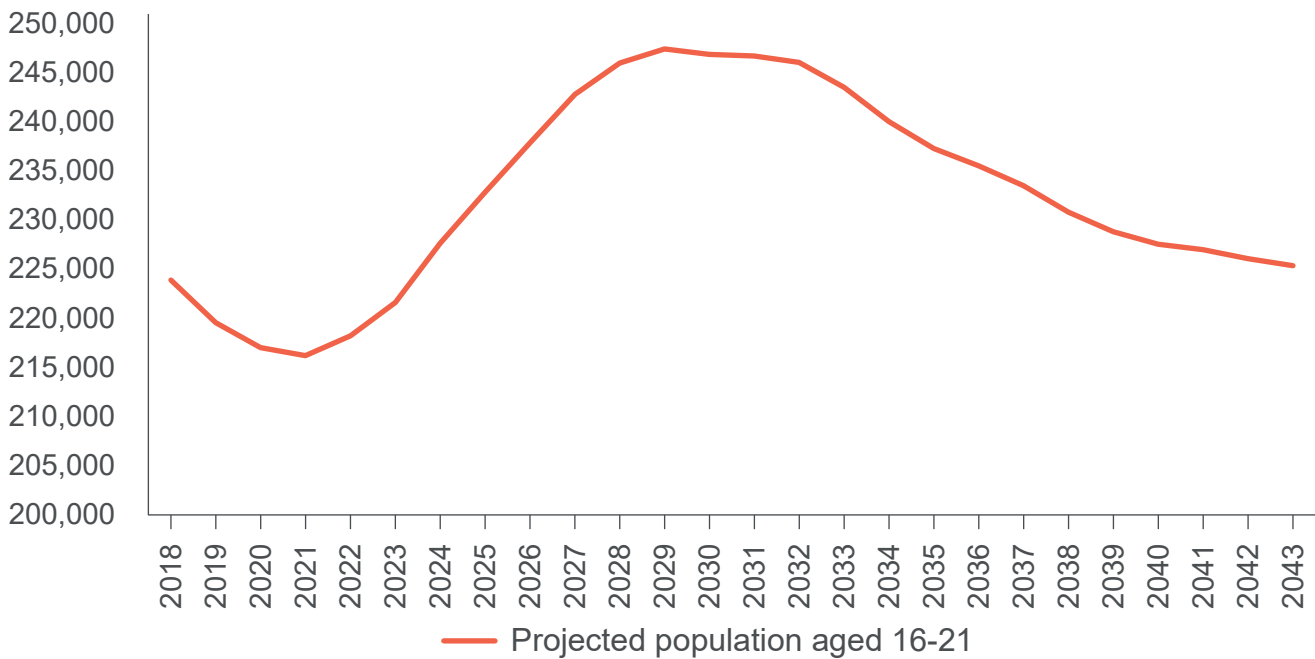
32 The Welsh Government has not collected survey data regularly from FE students since 2015. However, in December 2020 they did survey learners on the impact of the pandemic on their studies where 69% of respondents agreed that they were satisfied with their online provision³⁰. The survey asked learners to reflect on their experiences during the first national lockdown in March 2020 and a lower proportion (64%) said they were satisfied with their online provision at that time.

Higher and further education – demand and capacity

Higher and further education demand will rise and then fall due to demographic changes

33 Places in HE and FE are not limited in Wales and depend on the demand placed on institutions through application. StatsWales projections suggest that the population aged 16 to 21 will grow from 2021 and reach a peak in 2029, after which there is a drop off (**Exhibit 11**). The key challenge will be to create sufficient capacity to support up to 31,000 new learners while then being able to manage a swift reduction in demand.

Exhibit 11: projected population of Wales aged 16 to 21 between 2018 and 2045



Note: These demographic projections were produced in 2018. Since then, there has been a sharp reduction in the birth rate which means that the drop off in 16 to 21-year-olds after 2029 is likely to be sharper than shown here.

Source: Audit Wales analysis of StatsWales data

- 34 HE staff numbers have increased by over 3,000 (16%) between 2010/11 and 2019/20³¹. This growth in staffing is some way below the 31% growth in student numbers in HE. Staff numbers in FE colleges declined by 17% between 2012/13 and 2015/16 due to financial constraints but have since increased and were 8% higher in 2019/20 than in 2010/11³². The Welsh Government believes the transition to blended learning, mixing online and face-to-face, as well as more diverse study times, will enable greater capacity to be unlocked from the current estates and staffing levels. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether current staffing levels will remain sufficient to meet the likely rise in demand.

Higher and further education – key issues

Colleges and universities face financial pressures as a result of COVID-19 and pensions

- 35 Analysis at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic predicted a significant detrimental impact on both HE and FE. The Wales Fiscal Analysis estimated losses could be between £100-140 million for universities, with ‘significant operational challenges in the medium term’ for five of the eight Welsh institutions³³. Much of the loss is due to a reduction in the number of international students and many universities will need to restore numbers to pre-pandemic levels in order to return to financial sustainability. Research for the University and College Union³⁴ concluded that £98 million would be lost by Welsh universities in tuition fees alone due to the pandemic, leading to four of the eight universities to have to draw on reserves. As students typically study for three years, a fall in tuition fee income, both domestic and international, would be felt over a medium-term period.
- 36 The Welsh Government has provided additional funding to both sectors to offset some of the additional costs created by COVID-19 (**paragraph 11**), but there are likely to be continuing costs as they emerge from the pandemic. Any ongoing COVID-19-related restrictions could increase costs or reduce productivity. There will be a need to fund catch-up provision for students who have fallen behind, especially for vocational learners. At present, the amount and nature of any additional funding is uncertain.

31 StatsWales, Staff at Welsh HEIs by gender, institution, year, mode of employment, contract type and employment type, January 2021

32 StatsWales, Full-time equivalent staff numbers at Further Education Institutions by institution, July 2021

33 Wales Fiscal Analysis, Covid-19 and the Higher Education Sector in Wales, May 2020

34 University and College Union, Impact of Covid-19 on university finances in Wales, May 2020

- 37 Both sectors need to address significant pension liabilities arising from defined benefit pension schemes. The University Superannuation Scheme is under particular pressure, with an overall deficit of £15-18 billion across the UK. Benefits have been reduced and staff contributions have increased substantially, leading to industrial disputes with repeated strikes. However, overall contributions (staff and employers) may need to rise from 31% of salary to between 42% and 56% to close the deficit³⁵. FE colleges in Wales also face a worsening deficit for the sector's two main pension schemes; their 2019/20 accounts included deficits totalling £436 million.
- 38 Despite these pressures, HEFCW has concluded that there is no imminent risk of an institution failing, and the Welsh Government has concluded similarly for FE colleges. There are potential financial upsides over the coming decade from a rise in the population of 18 to 21-year olds (the core demographic group for universities) although that is likely to be followed by a decline in learners in that age group.
- 39 The extent to which Welsh universities can benefit from these potential upsides depends to an extent on policy choices in relation to student numbers. In particular, the UK Government's response to the Augar Review of post-18 education and funding in England³⁶ will have important implications for funding and student numbers in Wales. The review recommended a shift in emphasis towards higher-level vocational and technical education, with fewer 'low value' degrees in universities and a reduction in tuition fees from £9,000 to £7,500 per year. If fully implemented, the review would result in some additional funding for Wales through the Barnett formula.
- 40 The number of applications in 2021 suggests that the immediate outlook for tuition fee income is positive for both UK and international students. There are potential opportunities for both sectors from the planned increase in apprenticeship provision (including more degree apprenticeships) and the Welsh Government's focus on lifelong learning. There are also opportunities to deliver more learning digitally following the pandemic.

35 University Superannuation Scheme, 'Pension contributions will need to rise sharply if existing benefits are to be maintained', news release, March 2021

36 Independent Panel report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding, May 2019

- 41 The challenge for the Welsh Government will be to help the HE and FE sectors capitalise on these opportunities while supporting institutions to manage the known financial pressures and risks. Colleges Wales has called for greater certainty in future funding and for funding to continue to be flexible enough to ensure bespoke, local planning over the medium term. The Auditor General reported on FE finances and performance in 2017 and recommended that the Welsh Government return to three-year budgeting for the FE sector. However, financial constraints and uncertainties have led the Welsh Government to maintain annual budgeting.

HE and FE face challenges in managing some of the ongoing consequences of Brexit

Student numbers

- 42 Brexit has resulted in a reduction in the number of students from EU member states now that they face higher fees. Tuition fees from EU students represented around 5% of the HE sector's income in Wales in 2018/19 and losses will need to be replaced to sustain universities' finances. Early indications are positive: for 2021-22 the decline in applications from EU residents has been offset by increases in applications from elsewhere.

Replacing EU funding

- 43 Before Brexit, Wales benefited extensively from EU funding, including for research and innovation through the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI). Much of this research and innovation funding was spent on programmes delivered by the HE sector³⁷. The UK Government is replacing the ESI with a Shared Prosperity Fund that it will administer directly and is available throughout the UK. The scale and nature of this funding for Wales are unclear at present.

37 In total, projects led by the FE and HE sectors had around £388 million of EU funding approved in the 2014-2020 round of funding, including £252 million of funding for research and innovation. Source: Welsh Government EU Structural Funds Programme 2014-2020: Approved Projects, Updated February 2021

- 44 In this context, it will be crucial for universities to capitalise on alternative sources of funding for research. The Reid Review³⁸ made three recommendations to this end, including the establishment of a 'Future of Wales' fund to incentivise researchers to obtain funding from outside Wales. Universities Wales has called for the implementation of these recommendations, but the Welsh Government has committed only to one of them due to the significant costs that would need to be met from future budgets.
- 45 The Welsh Government faces an additional challenge to replace ESI funding for apprenticeships and other work-based learning, much of it delivered by FE colleges and an important part of their income.

Sustaining collaboration and exchanges

- 46 Universities are working to maintain academic and research relationships developed through EU-funded programmes. The UK has maintained access to the Horizon 2020 research programme, but it no longer participates in the Erasmus+ learning exchange programme. Between 2014 and 2020, 683 Welsh students applied to the scheme to study in another university in Europe³⁹ and the scheme funded inward exchanges too.
- 47 The UK Government has set up the Turing Scheme as a replacement to support overseas placements for UK students. The scheme is open to institutions across the world and therefore has a more global focus than Erasmus+, but it does not fund tuition fees or fund inward exchanges and there are additional visa requirements for reciprocal exchanges that may also complicate the process of renewing or arranging new exchange programmes between institutions.
- 48 The Welsh Government has sought to overcome some of these potential hurdles by establishing a Wales-only 'International Learning Exchange' scheme to complement the Turing Scheme. Funding is available for students to come to Wales to study, as well as Welsh students travelling abroad. The Welsh scheme also has the broader focus of Erasmus for vocational work, adult education and youth work.

38 Welsh Government, Review of Government Funded Research and Innovation in Wales, December 2017

39 Erasmus Plus UK, 2014-2020 Applications Received, February 2021

There are opportunities and challenges to manage around the reform of post-16 education

Retaining good practice from the pandemic response

- 49 The response to the pandemic has brought some beneficial changes that could form the basis of future working. Colleges Wales and Universities Wales told us that collaboration had strengthened with the Welsh Government and institutions working together to respond to the emergency with swift, flexible interventions. The development of digital learning techniques has accelerated, and many courses are likely to increase their digital content permanently, although most courses will include face-to-face teaching as part of a blended approach.

The Commission for Tertiary Education and Research

- 50 As Wales emerges from the pandemic, the Welsh Government will consider how it takes forward its reform plans for post-16 education. Front and centre is the Draft Tertiary Education and Research Bill, still to be considered by the Senedd, and the resultant creation of the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER). There are mixed views on the merits of the changes foreseen in the bill. In particular, there is some concern that the new outcome agreements and other accountability arrangements could operate in an unduly narrow and restrictive way that focuses too much on measurable outputs like student numbers and grades and not enough on broader outcomes for students and society. There is also concern about the impact of the proposals on universities' independence.
- 51 The leadership of the new commission will face many immediate and longer-term challenges. It will need to address the concerns of some stakeholders about the new arrangements, develop trust with institutions and other stakeholders, and enable collaboration while respecting institutional autonomy. The new commission will also need to develop a coherent and long-term strategy to deliver Welsh Government objectives. It will need to manage these challenges while setting up the new commission amid the inevitable disruption caused by organisational change.

Delivering the specific commitments in the new programme for government

- 52 The Programme for Government has specific targets to deliver 125,000 all-age apprenticeships over the current Senedd term (a 25% increase) and to offer all under-25s work, education, training, or self-employment under the Young Person's Guarantee. These will be challenging to deliver in a difficult economic context, especially if public spending is constrained. There was a significant reduction in the number of new apprenticeships in 2019/20 and the pandemic has severely affected delivery, with private sector employers less willing or able to take on apprentices in such a difficult operating environment.
- 53 The Welsh Government expects an increase in unemployment following the end of the UK Government's furlough scheme, which is likely to increase the demand for the Young Person's Guarantee. The scale of demand is uncertain at this stage but is potentially high, as there are already around 48,000 NEET 16 to 24 year-olds in Wales and the number could well rise as employment opportunities deteriorate. The Welsh Government estimates the cost at between £27 million and £82 million in the first year, depending on take-up, falling by about a third in subsequent years. It also expects to need different delivery approaches if take-up reaches 20%, as it expects to happen. These approaches are yet to be developed.

Reform of curriculum and qualifications

- 54 The introduction of the new Curriculum for Wales for pre-16 education will have implications for the post-16 sector⁴⁰. The Welsh Government's guidance encourages schools to work with FE institutions to collaborate to support learner transition, the sharing of best practice, and developing a shared understanding of curriculum design, assessment, and progression. As the new curriculum is rolled out in schools, this co-construction with neighbouring FE institutions will be a key element in ensuring the curriculum works for students as they leave compulsory education.

- 55 The Welsh Government will need to consider in due course whether any changes should be made to post-16 qualifications, curricula or assessment. The UK Government has introduced T-levels in England, as a formal mix of classroom and placement-based study alongside A-levels. These new qualifications will replace some existing vocational qualifications in England. There is a risk that this development may reduce the willingness of vocational qualification providers to continue offering qualifications that are still supported in Wales but no longer funded in England.
- 56 More generally, there is a need to ensure that qualifications in Wales meet the needs of employers while remaining sufficiently comparable to be recognised and valued across the UK and further afield. Qualifications Wales is responsible for regulating qualifications and has a strategy based on sector reviews (focused on growth sectors), supplemented with targeted monitoring of specific qualifications⁴¹.

There remain challenges to manage the direct impacts of COVID-19 on learners

- 57 The impact of the pandemic on individual learners will have varied but all have experienced substantial disruption. The effect seems to have been most negative for those in the vocational sector, especially at lower qualification levels, and for learners who are already vulnerable due to deprivation, circumstances at home or learning disabilities. Staff have also been under considerable strain and have had to adapt quickly to online teaching and support. The Welsh Government has provided some support for mental health and wellbeing services, and both Colleges Wales and Universities Wales believe there is an opportunity to build on mental health provision during the pandemic to create a more comprehensive, responsive service across all post-16 educational settings.
- 58 Students entering FE and HE are likely to have experienced significant disruption to their learning and may need additional support to study at the higher levels. There will also be a need for some existing students to catch up on lost learning and practical experience, and to deliver delayed vocational learning programmes in FE (**paragraph 30**). The Welsh Government has provided catch-up grants to FE colleges for support for learners. There is likely to be an ongoing need for support which is likely to require additional resources and capacity.

- 59 Part-time students have been particularly affected by the pandemic, especially those in adult community learning, where only around a quarter of courses have continued to run. This comes on top of a steep decline in part-time provision in FE colleges since 2010, making it more difficult for people aiming to up-skill independently of their employment. Decisions on the level of provision in future will need to take account of the Welsh Government's aspirations for lifelong learning and creating flexible learning pathways that enable individuals to acquire new skills in a way that suits their personal circumstances.



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CYPE(6)-05-21 - Paper to note 13

**Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc
ac Addysg**

**Children, Young People
and Education Committee**

Elin Jones MS

Y Llywydd and Chair of the Business Committee

Dyddiad | Date 7 October

Pwnc | Subject: The Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill

Dear Elin,

Thank you for your letter dated 5 October, which the Committee discussed at our meeting on 7 October.

We are content with the timetable as proposed. However to enable us to meet the deadlines for both the Bill scrutiny and budget scrutiny, we would like to request two additional meetings:

- Thursday 9 December (for Bill scrutiny);
- Thursday 20 January (for budget scrutiny. We anticipate that we will need to undertake Bill scrutiny at our scheduled meeting on 13 January.)

We do not have any scheduling clashes with Members other committee commitments.

We note that the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee may have an interest in the Bill, and we will write to them to seek their views on how they would like to contribute to Stage 1 scrutiny of the Bill.

Yours sincerely,



Jayne Bryant MS

Chair

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Agenda Item 2.14

CYPE(6)-05-21 - Paper to note 14

**Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc
ac Addysg**

**Children, Young People
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Elin Jones MS

Llywydd and Chair of Business Committee

Dyddiad | Date 29 October

Pwnc | Subject: Skills and Post 16 Education LCM

Dear Elin,

At the last Business Committee on 19 October, the reporting deadline for this LCM was extended until 11 November, and the Trefnydd indicated that a supplementary LCM was due to be laid later that week.

At the time of writing, the supplementary LCM had not yet been laid. This means that we are unable to consider the supplementary LCM at our next scheduled meeting on 4 November. As we are expecting the supplementary LCM to address some outstanding matters, there is little point in publishing our report as it currently drafted until we have considered the supplementary LCM. We would therefore like to request an extension to the reporting deadline that would enable us sufficient time to consider the supplementary LCM. For reference, the next scheduled meeting of our Committee is 18 November, which is now the earliest we can consider the supplementary LCM.

I am copying this letter to Huw Irranca-Davies, Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Jayne Bryant MS

Chair

Cc: Huw Irranca-Davies, Chair, Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Agenda Item 4

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

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Agenda Item 8

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

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