

Agenda – Children, Young People and Education Committee

Meeting Venue:	For further information contact:
Hybrid – Committee room 4 Tŷ Hywel and video conference via Zoom	Naomi Stocks Committee Clerk
Meeting date: 13 March 2025	0300 200 6565
Meeting time: 09.30	SeneddChildren@senedd.wales

Hybrid

Private pre-meeting

09.15 – 09.30

Public meeting

09.30 – 11.45

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

09.30

2 Routes into post-16 education and training – evidence session 7

09.30 – 10.30 (Pages 1 – 43)

Dona Lewis, Chief Executive, National Centre for Learning Welsh

Dr Ioan Matthews, Chief Executive, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

Gwenllian Owen, Senior Manager for Higher Education, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

Dr Gwennan Schiavone, Chief Executive, CYDAG

Matthew McAvoy, Secondary Leader, CYDAG

Attached Documents:

Research brief

National Centre for Learning Welsh (Translation)

Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol



Break

10.30 – 10.45

3 Routes into post-16 education and training – evidence session 8

10.45 – 11.45

(Pages 44 – 50)

Faith O'Brian, Managing Director, Cambrian Training

Jude Holloway, Managing Director, Educ8 Training Group

Attached Documents:

Cambrian Training

Educ8 Training Group

4 Papers to note

11.45

4.1 Annual Scrutiny of Medr

(Page 51)

Attached Documents:

Additional information from Medr following the meeting on 6 February 2025

4.2 Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025–26

(Pages 52 – 58)

Attached Documents:

Letter to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee
from the Cabinet Secretary for Education

4.3 Care Inspectorate Wales: Annual Scrutiny

(Pages 59 – 61)

Attached Documents:

Letter to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee
from Chief Inspector for Care Inspectorate Wales

4.4 Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025–26

(Page 62)

Attached Documents:

Letter to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee
from the Chief Executive of Medr

4.5 Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025–26

(Pages 63 – 91)

Attached Documents:

Welsh Government response to the Committee's report on the Welsh
Government Draft Budget 2025–26

5 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting and for the whole of the meeting on 20 March

11.45

Private session

11.45 – 13.30

6 Routes into post–16 education and training – briefing session

11.45 – 12.45

(Pages 92 – 96)

Dr Katy Huxley, Research Fellow, Spark, and Administrative Data Research
Wales, Cardiff University

Attached Documents:

Dr. Katy Huxley and Rhys Davies Cardiff University

7 Routes into post-16 education and training – consideration of the evidence

12.45 – 13.00

8 Legislative Consent: Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill

13.00 – 13.15

(Pages 97 – 119)

Attached Documents:

Briefing note

Legal advice note

9 Business Committee review of the Public Bill and Member Bill processes

13.15 – 13.30

(Pages 120 – 123)

Attached Documents:

Letter from Business Committee

Document is Restricted

This document provides a translation of correspondence received from The National Centre Learning Welsh

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg ar Llwybrau at addysg a hyfforddiant ôl-16](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) on the [Routes into post-16 education and training](#)

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Ymateb gan: Y Ganolfan Dysgu Cymraeg Genedlaethol

Response from: The National Centre Learning Welsh

The National Centre for Learning Welsh response to the consultation on pathways to post-16 education and training

1. Background

1.1 The National Centre for Learning Welsh was established in 2016 by the Welsh Government to lead the Welsh learning for adults sector.

1.2 The Centre's aim is to create Welsh speakers that enjoy using the language, by providing a national Learn Welsh strategy and services. Since its establishment, the Centre has transformed the Learn Welsh sector. The numbers learning Welsh have increased by **33%**, and in 2022-2023 **16,905** learners completed 29,485 Welsh learning activities. Both face-to-face and virtual tutored courses are available, as well as online self-study courses. The Learn Welsh sector employs around 700 people, with the majority of these being tutors.

1.3 Since its establishment, the Centre has developed a number of specific plans and has extended its audience, which includes families, workplaces and young people. We also work with a number of specific sectors and have developed tailored Learn Welsh programmes, for example for early years education and care, health and care, further education/higher education, local authorities and sport. Recently, the Centre has been given responsibilities for providing a national programme for the education workforce. The Centre also has a programme for confidence building and use courses to help speakers that lack confidence or are reluctant to use their Welsh.

1.4 One of the Centre's first duties was to develop a Learn Welsh curriculum. The curriculum is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The CEFR forms the basis of the Centre's curriculum and is therefore used across its various plans and courses. The curriculum includes overviews that show progress in the four skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) across the levels from A1 to C1. They can be used in conjunction with the functional overviews and grammatical syntaxes. As learners make progress, they will learn to use the language (speaking and writing) in an increasing number of contexts, moving from the familiar (A1) to a wide range of familiar and unfamiliar situations (B2), being able to undertake listening and reading tasks of increasing complexity, moving from simple language in familiar contexts (A1) to much more complex and abstract language in a wide range of styles and contexts (B2). They will also be able to benefit from a growing pool of vocabulary, styles and registers (formal and informal); grammar and syntax and pronunciation features. They will also start using the language with more confidence and depth.



1.5 The Centre has selected 10 core providers, through a tendering process, in order to provide various courses to the audiences mentioned above, together with the relevant work of teaching Welsh to adults both in the community and virtually. The sector employs a workforce of 700 tutors, managers and support staff.

1.6 In August 2021, the Welsh Government carried out a rapid review of the National Centre for Learning Welsh. The report stated that the Centre is:

'...recognised as a body that coordinates, plans, delivers and develops Learn Welsh provision at a national level... In the second phase of its existence, this role as a key and strategic institution central to the acquisition of the Welsh language needs to be developed and strengthened.

1.7 The Learn Welsh sector is inspected by Estyn, which follows a specific framework for the Learn Welsh provision. The Centre itself is also inspected by Estyn.

1.8 The Centre's definition of learning Welsh is that it is a broad activity, and a continuum of language learning and acquisition. That includes the following activities:

- Awareness of why the Welsh language is important, an explanation about Welsh culture etc, and includes providing very simple Welsh vocabulary.
- A more formal learning structure, in the classroom or virtually, which follows the CEFR levels from A1 to C1.
- Confidence–building activities, working with speakers who do not have specialist vocabulary to use at work or do not have enough confidence to use the Welsh that they have.
- Opportunities for speakers to continue learning, through refresher and improvement provision.
- Opportunities to use and practice Welsh in the community, at work or with peers.

1.9 The Centre's Strategic Plan has three main areas, namely **attract** people to the Welsh language, **teach** them to speak Welsh, and then **use** it in various contexts such as in the community, at home and at work. The Centre works regularly with a range of partners to deliver its work, such as:

- BBC Wales
- S4C
- Mentrau Iaith Cymru
- Mudiad Meithrin
- Urdd Gobaith Cymru
- Employers
- Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
- Priority sectors such as health and care
- Medr
- Education Workforce Council
- Local authorities

2.0 In 2023, the Centre was given additional responsibility by the Welsh Government to provide specifically for learners aged 16-25 that want to learn and develop their skills in the Welsh language, namely the Ymlaen gyda'r Dysgu scheme. This is free provision for young people, and includes a range of opportunities to learn Welsh. The learning is



tailored for young people in terms of content and pedagogy, and is offered to young people aged 16-25:

- in school
- in Further Education
- in apprenticeships
- in Higher Education
- that are unemployed

2.1 During 2022-23 (published data) over 2,100 young people took up this offer, which is an increase of 9% compared to 2021-22.

2.2 The programme for 16-24 learners includes:

- classes at various CEFR levels that offer 60 or 120 hours of learning
- classes that offer lessons tailored to specific vocational areas in FE colleges, eg childcare, health and care, hospitality, and hairdressing and beauty
- classes that offer lessons so that learners can continue with their Welsh skills after they have finished their GCSE courses
- classes that offer lessons tailored to specific HE subjects, eg undertaking a degree in education, childhood studies and medicine
- classes that are part of an Apprenticeships scheme and the Skills Growth Wales programme
- short courses that are an opportunity to learn in an informal context eg through Urdd open air activities and through Duke of Edinburgh courses
- self-study courses for understanding and learning more about Wales
- tutor-assisted self-study

2.3 Regarding this consultation in particular, the Centre sees an opportunity to ensure that the opportunity to learn, develop and use Welsh is mainstreamed and that post-16 learners understand and value the Welsh language in terms of their:

- personal and cultural development
- social inclusion
- employability

2.4 The Centre is of the opinion that the nature of the information given to learners in schools and tertiary education should include clear information about the personal benefits of speaking Welsh, as well as the benefits in terms of employability.

2.5 It is vitally important to consider the impact of the Welsh Language and Education Bill on post-16 education and training pathways, if the new legislation is agreed upon, as the Bill will have an impact on the linguistic profile of the young people moving from statutory education to tertiary education. We need to plan for that now, so that the sector is ready to offer a clear and meaningful linguistic development continuum.

2.6 Ensuring a language learning continuum following a consistent framework such as CEFR from statutory education to post-16 education and training will facilitate the pathway for young people to continue studying and deepening their Welsh skills. In due course, ensuring that employers also use the same framework to identify essential skills for jobs, as suggested in the Welsh Language and Education Bill, will facilitate young people's pathway to access jobs and make full use of the Welsh skills that they have. The Centre has expertise in using CEFR, as it forms the basis of a Welsh learning curriculum for



adults. The Centre has experience of adapting CEFR to the Welsh context and also of tailoring it for specific audiences, including young people. We believe that this expertise is unique to the Centre.

2.7 The Centre has worked with the post-16 course providers to install Learn Welsh lessons in tertiary education courses, doing so in priority areas such as early years education and care, health and care etc. However, this still requires persuasion and promotion, and being able to install these elements as a formal part of course accreditation would be a means of increasing the growing demand for Welsh speakers in key areas. The Centre has experience of ensuring that lessons like this are completely contextualised to the specific workplace, doing so on the basis of CEFR, and experience of providing for such units. Expanding the Centre's work and using our expertise to provide language learning and acquisition courses based on the CEFR framework would allow a clear continuum for young people. As a result, there would be a future pathway for staff with qualified bilingual skills in these areas.

2.8 The Centre is also of the opinion that post-16 pupils' Welsh skills should be developed as a compulsory part of the Welsh Baccalaureate. Welsh language skills at all levels could be enriched by integrating Welsh into this qualification. At its most elementary level, the offer could build on the Welsh skills of learners that have gained a GCSE Second Language qualification, focusing on the application and use of Welsh socially. For learners in Welsh medium schools the offer could be about ensuring confidence and ability to continue with education and work pathways through the medium of Welsh.

2.9 The Centre believes that ensuring a pathway towards continuing learning, developing skills and using the Welsh language is a key part of the post-16 offer in Wales, in order to ensure bilingual communities, households and workplaces for the future.

3.0 The impact of the Welsh Language and Education Bill must be considered if the new legislation is agreed upon, as the Bill will have an impact on the linguistic profile of the young people moving from statutory education to tertiary education. We need to plan for that now, so that the sector is ready to offer a clear and meaningful linguistic development continuum.

3.1 The Centre is proud of the early discussions that have been held with Medr to identify areas of collaboration and areas where clarity on duties and responsibilities is needed. The Centre is keen to ensure that it shares expertise on language acquisition and learning to facilitate young people's post-16 pathways.

Donna Lewis
Chief Executive
The National Centre for Learning Welsh

[Estyn inspection of The National Centre for Learning Welsh April 2024](#)
[Annual Report 2023-24 The National Centre for Learning Welsh](#)

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Ymateb gan: Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

Response from: Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

The Coleg Cymraeg's evidence to the Children, Young People and Education Committee

Thank you for the invitation to give evidence to the Committee regarding your [inquiry](#) into routes into post-16 education and training.

This briefing note summarises our main messages, and representatives from the Coleg Cymraeg (the Coleg) will be pleased to elaborate and answer questions during the oral evidence session on 13 March 2025.

The Coleg creates and promotes training and study opportunities in the Welsh language by working with further education colleges, schools, universities, apprenticeship providers and employers. We inspire and encourage everyone to use their Welsh language skills, with the aim of creating a bilingual workforce, including the education workforce itself. The Welsh Government has designated the Coleg to advise Medr (the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research) on its duties relating to the Welsh language.

Key messages

- The general lack of participation in tertiary education¹ is a cause for concern for the Coleg, and puts **increasing pressure on Welsh-medium and bilingual provision at all levels**.
- Ensuring **seamless Welsh-medium and bilingual progression routes** from statutory education to tertiary education, and within tertiary education, is essential in order to create the bilingual workforce of the future and achieve the targets of [Cymraeg 2050](#).
- The fact that Medr intends to develop a **National Plan for the Welsh language** in the tertiary sector is an important development, and an

¹ The term 'tertiary education' in this document covers post-16 education including further and higher education, adult community education, work based education, apprenticeships and local authority maintained school sixth forms

associated **fair funding model must be developed, to support all learners to follow Welsh-medium and bilingual routes.**

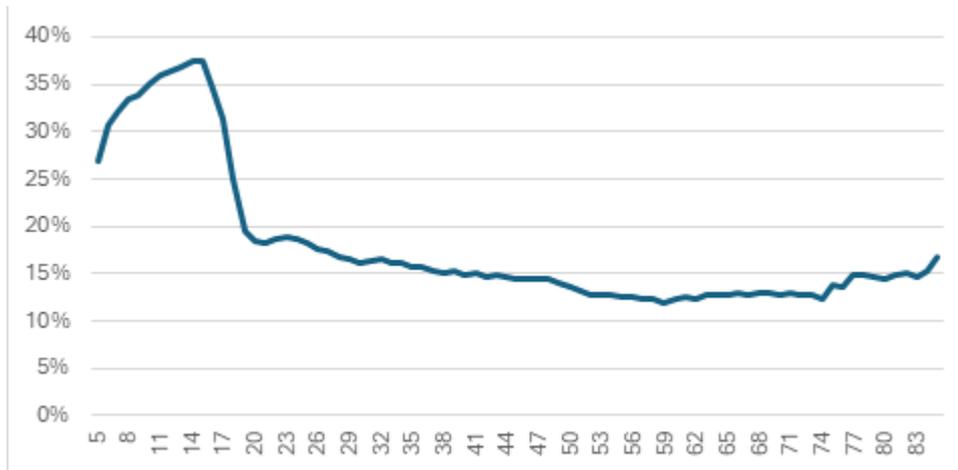
- The **lack of Welsh-medium teaching and assessment capacity** is hindering progress across the tertiary sector, and significant investment is needed to address this.
- There needs to be **better consistency in the data** that is collected and reported across the tertiary education sector to enable evidence-based planning of growth in Welsh-medium and bilingual provision.

Although progression rates from the Welsh-medium and bilingual statutory period are slightly higher than the average² not every learner has accessible and equal access to Welsh-medium provision. This is true even though good work has been done to develop opportunities to study a wide range of subjects through the medium of Welsh, with a significant increase in the numbers studying through the medium of Welsh or bilingually in the tertiary sector since the Coleg was established.

As a backdrop to all this, the 2021 census data shows a significant drop in the percentage of individuals who can speak Welsh at the end of the statutory education period. The data therefore suggests that the bridge between the statutory sector and the world of work – the tertiary sector – is underachieving.

² 'Learner' and 'learners' in this document include all those receiving tertiary education. This reflects the language used in the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022 in relation to the Engagement Code.

Figure 1: Census 2021 data – Speaking Welsh by age



Medr has a statutory [strategic duty](#) to promote, encourage and meet the demand for Welsh-medium education in the tertiary sector. In response to an [advice note](#) from the Coleg, Medr has committed in its first Strategic Plan to [develop a National Plan](#) for the Welsh language across the tertiary education sector, which is an important step.

The next section responds to the specific questions included in the consultation:

The quality of information given to learners about the full range of post-16 options (vocational and academic routes post 16, i.e. further education, sixth form, apprenticeships and training, and onward to higher education)

This is the Coleg's general response under the above heading (questions 1-6).

At a fundamental level, there is a lack of fully objective, impartial advice available to learners about post-16 Welsh-medium routes at all levels. Learners receive information from a number of sources, and the messages can be inconsistent and confusing.

The current post-16 education funding formulas encourage competition rather than collaboration, and this can lead to promotion activity that prioritises the interests of individual providers rather than the interests of the learner. This is referred to in [Estyn's review of the 16-19 curriculum \(2022\)](#): *These competitive pressures are cited by many leaders, both in schools with sixth forms and in*

colleges, as having a significant impact on the range and extent of information, advice and guidance activities that is made available to learners. Financial concerns about budgets and local issues relating to surplus school places and provider performance against learner number targets often add to these pressures.' (p.34)

As part of a project commissioned recently by the Coleg to develop a behaviour change pack to encourage learners to study through the medium of Welsh or bilingually, a strong suggestion has been made that tailored information and personal contact are key in supporting learners to make decisions about their studies. In the higher education sector specifically, the Coleg is piloting a champions project that tries to encourage students to choose to study part of their course in Welsh. This could be a potential model for the whole of the post-16 sector in the future.

The Coleg engages with learners in the post-16 sector mainly through school visits, ambassador schemes, newsletters, resources and transition activities, and promotes the benefits of studying through the medium of Welsh. The results of a recent survey carried out by the Coleg (that received over 500 responses from sixth form learners) suggest that learners have a good understanding of the benefits of using their Welsh after leaving school (90%); nevertheless, only 32% considered studying part of their university course through the medium of Welsh. This suggests that learners need further information and support to address some concerns or doubts that they have about studying in Welsh at a higher level.

The findings of a recent research project sponsored by the Coleg, which was led by Dr Rebecca Ward from the University of South Wales, show that students who study through the medium of Welsh receive better results compared to students who only study through the medium of English. It would be useful to draw attention to these facts when discussing options with learners in the tertiary sector.

How effective careers support is at compulsory school age

We have no evidence to report under this section.

Changes in routes post-18

<p>9. Is there evidence that learners are changing their choices post-18, including a drop in Higher Education enrolments, and if so why?</p>	<p>UCAS data (2023) that was commissioned by the Coleg shows that the number of unique applicants from Welsh-medium and bilingual schools and the number of admissions among this cohort between 2018 and 2023 were at their lowest in 2023.</p> <p>This data also suggests that learners from Welsh-medium and bilingual schools who receive higher grades (ABB+) are more likely to be admitted to study at a higher education institution outside Wales than their peers. Only 39% of ABB+ applicants from Welsh-medium and bilingual schools were admitted³ by providers in Wales in 2023.</p> <p>Graduate Destination data also suggests that Welsh students who choose to study outside Wales are less likely to work in Wales after they graduate, than Welsh students who study at a higher education institution in Wales, making the outward migration described above even more concerning. As a result, we suggest that the Seren Academy's outcomes should be reviewed with more emphasis placed on promoting top-quality Welsh-medium and bilingual provision.</p> <p>Specific challenges face some subject areas where numbers have shrunk, often reflecting A-level trends</p>
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³ Admitted = an applicant who, at the end of the UCAS application cycle, has been placed for entry to higher education

	<p>and patterns. This includes areas such as Geography, Religious Studies, Music, Modern Languages and Welsh as a subject. This is a matter of considerable concern in a period of financial austerity within the higher education sector in Wales and with a funding model that puts subjects with relatively low numbers at a disadvantage.</p> <p>The London Economics Wales report for the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales in 2023 highlighted the fact that higher costs are associated with courses where a relatively low number of learners follow Welsh-medium or bilingual provision. The same is true across the tertiary sector. Funding models need to reflect this in order to enable the maintenance and development of suitable progression routes for all.</p> <p>The Coleg is very concerned about the drop in the numbers studying Welsh as an A-level and AS subject. The Coleg has called on the Government to ensure that the factors that are contributing to the drop, including the sustainability of the provision due to low numbers, can be addressed through the National Framework for Welsh Language Education that is proposed in the Welsh Language and Education Bill.</p>
<p>Welsh-medium provision</p>	
<p>10. The availability of post-16 options (both academic and</p>	<p>Since the Coleg was established, Welsh-medium provision in the higher education sector, and the breadth of this provision, has seen a significant</p>

<p>vocational) through the medium of Welsh, and how this impacts on young people's choices.</p>	<p>increase, and it is now possible to study a substantial amount of almost every subject through the medium of Welsh somewhere in Wales. However, many Welsh-speaking students are still not following Welsh-medium provision, for a number of reasons, including the unavailability of Welsh-medium provision at their particular institution, and a lack of confidence in their own Welsh language skills.</p> <p>Since the Coleg's responsibilities were extended to further education and apprenticeships in 2019, the number of learners who study part of their course bilingually (B1⁴) has increased significantly. However, the number of learners who study their course wholly in Welsh or very extensively in Welsh (C1 / B1) has not changed significantly. The Coleg has recognised the need to address this when reviewing its strategy.</p> <p>The school sector has the most extensive Welsh-medium provision at post-16 level, and Welsh speakers who follow sixth form provision are most likely to go on to study through the medium of Welsh at a higher education institution. But the sixth form sector is facing financial pressures and challenges arising from the need to maintain smaller classes. Higher education institutions also report that a</p>
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⁴ [recording-of-welsh-medium-learning-on-the-llwr-for-further-education.pdf](#)

significant number of learners who have studied at Welsh-medium and bilingual schools are reluctant to study through the medium of Welsh at university, especially if they have undertaken their A-level qualifications through the medium of English.

The [Welsh Language Commissioner's report on post-compulsory Education and the Welsh language: the learners' voice \(2023\)](#) supports these messages and highlights *'differences between school and college learners, in terms of their perception of their ability in Welsh, the language medium of their education and their attitudes as regards the importance of the Welsh language'*, and states that *'Learners' main reasons for not choosing to study subjects through the medium of Welsh were: the perception that their English language skills were stronger and that studying through the medium of English was easier for them; that a subject (or subjects) were not available in Welsh; that their further studies were likely to be in English or that there were better study prospects in English, in their opinion'*.

Teaching and assessment capacity is an issue that is hindering progress across all sectors, and significant investment is needed to increase staffing capacity in order to be able to offer more Welsh-medium and bilingual provision.

These challenges need to be addressed in order to ensure that learners at all levels have access to and

encouragement to follow Welsh-medium provision, so that they continue to maintain and develop their Welsh language skills during their time in the post-16 sector, to prepare them to join a bilingual workforce.

If we look at the participation of learners who have studied at Welsh-medium and bilingual schools to GCSE level: of the pupils who were in year 11 in 2018/19, only 20% went on to study at a higher education institution in Wales⁵.

Only 3% of the students who studied at a Welsh-medium or bilingual school to GCSE age (in 2020/21) went on to follow an apprenticeship route with at least one bilingual learning activity in 2021/22⁶. And 8% of the learners who studied at a Welsh-medium or bilingual school to GCSE level in 2020/21 did not follow a formal education or training route the following year⁷.

The National Plan for the Welsh language that will be developed by Medr, if implemented and supported with proper funding, can offer solutions to some of these challenges.

We note that the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee held a [one-day inquiry in April 2024 into](#)

⁵ Ad-hoc statistical requests: 8 to 19 April 2024 | GOV.WALES

⁶ Ad-hoc statistical requests: 8 to 19 April 2024 | GOV.WALES

⁷ Ad-hoc statistical requests: 8 to 19 April 2024 | GOV.WALES

	<p>the 'Development of post-16 Welsh language provision', and although the committee has not yet reported, it will be important for this Committee to consider the evidence submitted to that inquiry too.</p>
<p>Equity of access</p>	
<p>11. Are some groups of learners disadvantaged by the current system (e.g. pupils from low-income households, learners with travel needs)?</p>	<p>Welsh-speaking learners in some areas are at a disadvantage as it is not possible for them to follow seamless Welsh-medium routes at present.</p> <p>Recent HESA data suggests that mature Welsh-speaking students (21+) are less likely to study through the medium of Welsh at university. Providers have reported that confidence, due to limited use of the Welsh language since leaving full-time education, also influences these patterns. This is particularly relevant in priority areas such as health and care.</p> <p>Local decisions about issues such as transport can inhibit access to Welsh-medium post-16 education, especially for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds and learners living in rural areas. The Coleg welcomes the fact that a spokesperson for the Welsh Government has indicated that a detailed review of the Learner Travel Measure will take place soon and will include consideration of the threshold for transport from home to school, as well as transport for pupils receiving their education through the medium of Welsh.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to accessibility when considering Medr's strategic responsibilities in</p>

	<p>'Promoting equality of opportunity', 'Encouraging participation in tertiary education' and 'Promoting tertiary education through the medium of Welsh'.</p>
<p>12. What support is available for learners to improve access (financial or otherwise)?</p>	<p>The Coleg offers undergraduate Scholarships to higher education students who study 40cr+ or 80cr+ of their course through the medium of Welsh. Over 500 incentive scholarships were awarded to new students in autumn 2024.</p> <p>There is no additional financial incentive at Masters level available to students since the Welsh Government's Welsh-medium postgraduate Bursary scheme was abolished in 2024. This directly affects the availability of provision in some subject areas at M level.</p> <p>In the school sector and further education and apprenticeship sector, there are currently no financial incentives available to encourage learners to study through the medium of Welsh.</p> <p>Reaching wider partnerships, which are funded by Medr, work to increase participation in higher education among under-represented groups including Welsh speakers. The Coleg is a member of the steering groups of reaching wider partnerships across Wales and contributes to specific projects. However, at present very few Welsh-medium and bilingual schools are targeted by the reaching wider partnerships, and this limits the Welsh-medium audience that can benefit from the programme.</p>

<p>13. Is there any regional variation in the information and support provided about post-16 across Wales? Are there any particular challenges facing learners in rural areas?</p>	<p>There is regional variation in the information available about Welsh-medium and bilingual options at post-16 level. For example, in apprenticeships, the North Wales Regional Skills Partnership has mapped out apprenticeship routes and the Welsh-medium/bilingual provision, but other Regional Skills Partnerships have not done so.</p> <p>Learners from all areas should have access to information about all of the post-16 options available to them, and specific expectations should be placed on individual providers and key partners to identify and promote Welsh-medium routes clearly and consistently.</p> <p>With the process of amending the Statutory Guidelines for Local 16-19 Curricula, there is a natural opportunity to ensure consistent processes throughout Wales in relation to collating and distributing information about post-16 opportunities at local and regional levels. Over time, there will be a need for coherence between the new statutory guidelines, the requirements of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans, Medr's statutory responsibilities and its National Plan for the Welsh Language, and the (proposed) National Framework for Welsh Language Education and Learning Welsh that forms part of the Welsh Language and Education Bill.</p>
<p>14. Are there any other equality issues?</p>	<p>This year, for the first time, the Coleg has received higher education and further education and</p>

	<p>apprenticeship data, which offers an insight into the personal characteristics of the individuals who study through the medium of Welsh. We only have a snapshot of wider equality issues, and the data will need to be monitored over a period of time to identify any specific trends.</p> <p>The Coleg wants to ensure that everyone has accessible and full access to Welsh-medium and bilingual education in the tertiary sector. The Coleg recognises that individuals with certain protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are under-represented among those studying in Welsh, and the Coleg undertakes to reverse that under-representation, including by attracting more people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds to Welsh-medium and bilingual tertiary education.</p>
<p>Post-16 destination data</p>	
<p>15. Is there sufficient post-16 destination data collected to understand trends and inform what education institutions deliver? If not, what data is required to fully understand the post-16 landscape?</p>	<p>As stated in our initial advice to Medr, <i>'Weaknesses in the way Welsh-medium and bilingual provision is defined, recorded and measured impedes planning and progress.'</i></p> <p>And these are the relevant aims outlined by the Coleg in our advice to Medr:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Aim 6.1: For planning purposes in the short to medium term, a baseline is established to measure the situation of the current Welsh and bilingual provision across the sector.</i> • <i>Aim 6.2: For the medium to long term, a correct and consistent method of identifying</i>

	<p><i>and recording learners' Welsh skills is developed, based on the proposed Code and including measuring progress over time.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Aim 6.3: For the medium to long term, a correct and consistent method of defining and recording Welsh medium and bilingual provision across the sector is developed.</i> • <i>Aim 6.4: The data system allows learners to be tracked throughout their education or tertiary training.</i> <p>One of the main issues with data at present is inconsistency. Data about language skills is inconsistent and is not easily shared between sectors. Higher education institutions receive information about language skills too late and are reliant on students self-reporting language skills at enrolment. As a result, Welsh speakers do not always receive relevant information about Welsh-medium opportunities and support, and many slip through the net.</p> <p>In the further education and apprenticeship sector, there is a lack of consistency in the way in which institutions define bilingual learning and distinguish between provision that is at B1, B2 and B3 level. The fact that sections of LLWR's data are published at learning activity level rather than individual learner level makes it very difficult to gain a complete picture of the data in the FE sector and poses a challenge in terms of data analysis. Having data at unique learner level only would be very useful and</p>
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	more consistent with the higher education sector and HESA data.
Welsh Government's role	
16. How effective is the Welsh Government's approach to support participation in the full range of post-16 education and training options?	<p>What is clear from our responses to the previous questions is the need for better coherence across all Government activity in relation to post-16 education and training and the statutory period that bridges the tertiary sector.</p> <p>The right environment and conditions need to be created to ensure that the tertiary sector contributes effectively to achieving the ambitions of the Cymraeg 2050 strategy and to providing a bilingual workforce for a wide range of sectors.</p>
17. Are learners, their families and schools aware of available Wales-wide support and programmes, such as the Young Person's Guarantee?	We have no evidence to report in response to this question.
18. Outcomes from Dr Hefin David MS's 'Transitions to Employment' report .	<p>The title and content of the report 'Transitions to Employment' is very relevant to the context of the Welsh language, and is consistent with the Coleg's vision for the post-16 sector.</p> <p>We welcome the report, and recommendation 9 in particular, which states:</p>

'Alongside the other recommendations, an element of Welsh language awareness and skills should be included as appropriate for all learners regardless of their Welsh language skills. Welsh language awareness and skills includes: increasing awareness of Wales as a bilingual nation; promoting the advantages of bilingual skills in the workplace; and introducing or consolidating Welsh language skills including relevant vocabulary and key phrases for the workplace.'

Opportunities to undertake Welsh-medium apprenticeships (at all levels) are currently rare, and holistic planning and additional investment are needed in order to develop opportunities in areas where there is a great demand for Welsh language skills such as Health and Care, Childcare and Public Services.

Agenda Item 3

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar [Llwybrau at addysg a hyfforddiant ôl-16](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) on the [Routes into post-16 education and training](#)

RET 13

Ymateb gan: Hyfforddiant Cambrian

Response from: Cambrian Training

The Children, Young People and Education Committee inquiry into Routes into post-16 education and training.

Faith O'Brien Managing Director (Contract details; faith@CambrianTraining.com) submitted on behalf of Cambrian Training Ltd Offas Dyke Business Park Fisher Road, Welshpool SY21 8JF.

The written evidence provided is not confidential and can be published as evidence provided by Cambrian Training.

1 Quality of information given to learners about the full range of post-16 options (vocational and academic routes post 16, i.e. further education, sixth form, apprenticeships and training, and onward to higher education)

1.1 A significant gap remains in the quality and joint marketing activities between schools, employers, and training providers to effectively promote apprenticeships. This gap is often attributed to a lack of awareness among careers officers in schools and a reluctance to present apprenticeships as a viable option for all pupils, regardless of academic attainment. To address this issue, careers services should start promoting apprenticeships at an earlier stage, presenting them as a parallel pathway to further and higher education. Providing clear, accessible information about apprenticeship programmes—including career progression opportunities, pay scales, and skills development—can help dispel misconceptions and encourage greater uptake.

1.2 Best practices for promoting apprenticeships involve directly engaging with employers to foster strategic and operational relationships while investing in the sector. This is not always the possible for schools due the diverse range of employers and sectors involved. Many employers have successfully embedded apprenticeships into their career pathways, making them a crucial component of their recruitment and retention strategies. This is often missed by schools. Cambrian Training has adopted this approach by building strong relationships at all levels within employers' structures, enabling a deep understanding of their business needs



and ensuring that apprenticeship programmes are optimised to align with their delivery models.

2. How effective careers support is at compulsory school age

2.1 We believe that there is insufficient careers support within schools. Collaboration with employers to offer meaningful work experience opportunities that align with students' career aspirations. Such initiatives would allow students to gain practical experience and develop industry-specific skills, thereby enhancing their employability and reinforcing the value of apprenticeships as a legitimate and rewarding career pathway.

3. Changes in routes post-18

No response

4. Welsh-medium provision

4.1 As an apprenticeship provider, although we can provide apprenticeships in Welsh, just 12.8% of learners choose to do some of their apprenticeship framework in Welsh. It is more often the learner's choice to move away from Welsh post 16, rather than provision being available in Welsh.

5 Equity of access

5.1 For learners post 16 transitions into apprenticeship which require to be employed within the workplace, there are practical barriers which reduce access. For example, roles that involve shift work, non-standard hours, or are located in areas with limited public transport—such as mid-Wales—individuals often face significant challenges related to transportation and accessing employment opportunities. This issue is particularly evident in industries such as hospitality, care, and food services, where flexible or extended working hours are common.

5.2 Additionally, the lack of reliable digital connectivity in some parts of Wales further compounds these challenges, limiting access to roles that offer hybrid or home-working options. It also creates barriers to studying remotely, making it more difficult to fully utilise the blended learning models offered within apprenticeship programmes.

5.3 Cambrian Training actively works to address accessibility issues by collaborating with supported employment specialists, such as Elite and Agoriad, and through its supported shared apprenticeship programme. These initiatives aim to help disabled and disadvantaged individuals gain access to apprenticeship opportunities. However, funding for such programmes is limited and does not provide sufficient support to meet the needs of all individuals who could benefit.



5.4 Furthermore, for those with additional learning needs, there is a lack of both funding and flexibility within current programmes to deliver the necessary support, coaching, and adjustments required to ensure equitable access and successful outcomes. Without enhanced funding and tailored support structures, these barriers will continue to restrict opportunities for individuals to access apprenticeships and realise their full potential in the workforce.

6. Post-16 destination data

No response

7. Welsh Government's role

7.1 We anticipate that the full range of post-16 opportunities will become more transparent with the launch of Medr this year, in doing so raising awareness of apprenticeship opportunities throughout Wales.

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar [Llwybrau at addysg a hyfforddiant ôl-16](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) on the [Routes into post-16 education and training](#)

RET 07

Ymateb gan: Educ8 Training Group

Response from: Educ8 Training Group

Introduction

As a Work-Based Learning (WBL) training provider operating across Wales, our primary focus is on delivering apprenticeships, vocational training, and support for learners transitioning into post-16 education and training. We are also a sub-contractor delivering Jobs Growth Wales+ to 16-19 year-olds and have recently moved into vocational training for 14-19 year-olds both in school and Educated Other Than At School (EOTAS).

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry and address the terms of reference outlined.

Quality of information given to Learners about Post-16 options

As a Provider, we work closely with a variety of services, including schools and Careers Wales to ensure young people understand the variety of options available to them during Post-16 transition. We are committed to providing high-quality, impartial information about the full range of post-16 options available. Our approach ensures learners receive tailored guidance that aligns with their aspirations and career goals.

However, we believe that the information broadly offered to young people by support agencies, schools and Welsh Government literature can be confusing and lack clarity. This can result in misleading, biased, or incomplete guidance, leaving potential learners without access to the comprehensive range of options necessary to make informed decisions about their future.

Commentary:

1. **Schools and EOTAS Learners:** The quality of information provided within schools and for learners educated other than at school (EOTAS) is inconsistent. Careers Wales plays a key role, but stronger collaboration with providers like us would enhance relevance and inclusivity. Greater emphasis on integrating work-based options alongside traditional academic pathways can improve outcomes for all learners.

Providers often face challenges in engaging directly with learners due to limited time within school timetables for career-focused activities. Dedicated opportunities for post-16 providers to showcase vocational work based learning routes would benefit learners.

2. The launch of the VCSE suite in September 2027 requires careful planning to ensure effective engagement and alignment with both school and learner expectations. It is essential for school staff to recognise the value of introducing vocational opportunities and the pathways they create. Schools should establish strong partnerships with Providers who can support vocational progression post-16, whether through further education, employment, or

apprenticeship opportunities. Ensuring these vocational options are presented with equal status to traditional academic routes and subjects is critical for their success and uptake.

3. **Careers Wales:** While Careers Wales (and its funded project Working Wales) is an important resource, there are gaps in tailoring advice to learners' specific contexts. Advisors may not clearly link the pathways available to your people in order to move from compulsory education and into employment. Improved coordination between Careers Wales, schools, and training providers could address these gaps, ensuring all learners receive timely and relevant information.
4. **Sixth Forms & Colleges vs. Providers:** Challenges between sixth forms and local post-16 providers can lead to incomplete or biased guidance for learners. This is particularly evident in areas where competition for enrolment and outcomes are high. Clearer policies encouraging impartiality and collaboration between these institutions are needed.
5. **Employers and Careers Events:** Employer engagement in schools is variable, with some providing robust opportunities while others are limited. Post-16 Providers, particularly those offering placement or apprenticeship opportunities have large databases and networks with a wide range of micro to macro employers. These developed relationships can provide highly valuable insight for learners to understand different industries and employer expectations. Expanding careers events, including virtual options, can ensure equitable employer access across Wales.
6. **Influencers on Career Choices:** Parents/guardians, teachers, and peers significantly influence learners' decisions. However, these influencers often lack the resources or understanding of post-16 pathways to provide comprehensive support. Enhanced training and resources for parents and teachers are essential. Visual, simplified pathway options with associated benefits and 'best fit' guides would support.

Effectiveness of Careers Support at Compulsory School Age

Careers support during compulsory education is pivotal in shaping post-16 outcomes. While effective in some areas, gaps remain in its ability to address the diverse needs of all learners, as outlined above.

Commentary:

- **Positive Outcomes:** Learners who receive personalised guidance are more likely to make successful transitions into education, training, or employment. School-based "taster" sessions, particularly those focused on vocational learning, can play a crucial role in supporting learners' decision-making as they explore their options. This approach helps prevent indecision or frequent changes between subject areas, enabling learners to concentrate on achieving their qualifications.
- **Challenges:** Disparities in support across schools contribute to negative outcomes, including higher NEET rates. Expanding outreach initiatives, such as community-based support to re-engage 16-19 year olds, could address these gaps.

Vocational and work-based learning opportunities often offer flexible pathways tailored to individuals with diverse additional and specific needs, providing access to specialist support

and necessary adaptations. These pathways can significantly enhance employment prospects by connecting learners with employers who are open to nurturing and developing their workforce.

- **Broadening Careers Guidance:** Ensuring all learners, regardless of academic performance, receive a balanced view of all pathways is critical to reducing NEET rates.

Work Experience Opportunities

Commentary:

Work experience is a vital aspect of careers education, yet opportunities can differ widely depending on school and local authority policies. For instance, the Cardiff Commitment funds the "What's Next" awards, which emphasise collaboration between schools and employers to provide work experience opportunities. This initiative should be funded, expanded, and implemented across all local authorities, leveraging post-16 providers' extensive employer networks to enhance employer engagement and participation.

Networking and career coaching are essential for helping young people explore and prepare for the workplace. By fostering these opportunities, a talent pipeline can be developed and nurtured, bridging the gap between industry skill needs and resource shortage

Barriers to employer involvement must be identified and addressed to ensure meaningful engagement. This includes providing access to remote technologies for rural learners or those unable to travel, enabling them to connect with employers virtually. Employers should be supported through free coaching, mentoring, and staff retention training to enhance their capacity to offer high-quality placements. Additionally, any health and safety or safeguarding concerns should be resolved to further encourage employer participation.

Changes in Routes Post-18

Commentary:

- **Decline in Higher Education Enrolments:** Rising tuition fees, living costs, and awareness of alternative pathways such as apprenticeships are driving a shift away from Higher Education. Practical, work-based routes are increasingly appealing to learners seeking to avoid student debt and gain immediate employment.
- **Recommendations:** Enhanced careers guidance and awareness campaigns are needed to ensure learners make well-informed decisions about their post-18 pathways.

Welsh-Medium Provision

The availability of Welsh-medium post-16 options significantly impacts learners' choices and broader efforts to promote the Welsh language.

Commentary:

- **Challenges:** Limited Welsh-medium provision in some areas restricts opportunities for learners to pursue their education or training in their preferred language.

Learners leaving Welsh Medium education predominantly wish to continue their post-16 learning in English. They report a need to improve their written and comprehension skills, broadening their employment prospects.

- **Recommendations:** Expanding bi-lingual options and raising awareness of available opportunities are essential to support learners and promote linguistic equity.

Addressing challenges in gaining essential skills qualifications through Welsh by providing additional preparation and review time.

Equity of Access

Commentary:

- **Disadvantaged Groups:** Learners from low-income households and those with travel needs face notable barriers to accessing post-16 options. Financial support varies regionally, with learners in rural areas particularly disadvantaged.
- **Recommendations:**
 - Provide upfront financial assistance schemes rather than reimbursement models for travel.
 - Develop community hubs with robust internet access and safe environments for learners to study.
 - Address the technology gap by increasing access to digital tools and resources.

Post-16 Destination Data

Commentary:

- **Data Gaps:** While some data is collected, it is insufficient to fully understand trends and inform future provision. Comprehensive destination data, including granular insights into vocational pathways, is essential to shape the post-16 landscape effectively.
- **Recommendations:** Establishing a Wales-wide system for tracking post-16 outcomes would provide valuable insights to guide policy and practice.

Welsh Government's Role

Commentary:

- **Support for Programmes:** Awareness of initiatives like the Young Person's Guarantee varies, limiting their effectiveness. Consistent promotion and clear communication to schools, families, and learners are vital to maximise uptake.
- **Recommendations:** Strengthening partnerships between the Welsh Government, schools, and providers will ensure these programmes reach their full potential. Differentiating between apprenticeship vacancies and funded apprenticeship routes could improve clarity and engagement.

Conclusion

We are committed to working collaboratively with the Welsh Government, schools, and stakeholders to improve routes into post-16 education and training. By addressing the gaps outlined in this submission, we can ensure that every learner in Wales has access to high-quality, equitable opportunities that align with their aspirations and contribute to their success.

Agenda Item 4.1

Additional information from Medr following the meeting on 6 February 2025

Please find a link to the statistical analysis of progression from year 11 to tertiary education which we agreed to share as evidence to the Committee.

[Sta/Medr/04/2025: Progression from Year 11 to tertiary education, August 2017 to January 2025 - Medr](#)

The full report is available via the info bar on the right of the page.

Agenda Item 4.2

Lynne Neagle AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Our ref MA/LN/11039/24

Buffy Williams MS
Chair – Children, Young People and Education Committee

28 February 2025

Dear Buffy,

At our oral evidence session on 16 January 2025 on the scrutiny of the Welsh Government's 2025-26 budget I committed to providing additional information to the Committee.

The enclosed provides information on the specific areas requested by the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynne Neagle".

Lynne Neagle AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
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Gohebiaeth.Lynne.Neagle@llyw.cymru
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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.

Estimate of what it would cost to roll out free school meals in secondary schools

Education Support to Tackle Socio-economic Disadvantage

The education budget for 2025-26 includes significant funding to focus resources on addressing the impact of socio-economic disadvantage in education alongside funding to improve educational standards for all learners. This includes over £257m through targeted support such as:

Pupil Development Grant (PDG): £127,825,000

The PDG has a key part to play in achieving Welsh Government's ambition of high standards and aspirations for all. The PDG is funding given to schools and educational settings which aims to raise the attainment of children and young people from low-income households.

School Essentials Grant (SEG): £13,096,000

The School Essentials Grant has made a huge difference to many lower income families across Wales, helping to reduce the worry surrounding the purchase of school uniform and equipment.

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA): £20,000,000

EMA is targeted support for learners aged 16 to 18 from low-income households to support them with the costs of attending further education

School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP): £5,875,000

This provides: healthy meals; food and nutrition education; physical activity and enrichment sessions, to learners in areas of socio-economic disadvantage for a minimum of 12 days during the school summer holidays.

Family Engagement Officers (FEOs): £3,000,000

FEOs play an important role within Community Focused Schools: establishing and fostering good relationships with families of children and young people at the school; encouraging and supporting parental involvement in the school and engagement in children's learning; and signposting to relevant support and services.

Universal Primary Free School Meals (UPFSM): £93,500,000

UPFSM are already making a real difference across Wales, with nearly 174,500 additional pupils able to access a healthy and nutritious meal each day at lunch time, making a positive contribution towards improving the health and concentration of children and assisting in the raising of standards of learning and attainment.

Costs to increase Free School Meal Eligibility

The Programme for Government committed us to reviewing free school meal eligibility as far as resources allowed. The focus of this has been on extending entitlement to a meal through the Universal Primary Free School Meal (UPFSM) offer.

In the roll out of UPFSM important lessons have been learnt. A number of challenges and costs to extend eligibility would need to be addressed, this includes: the potential need for a new Wales eligibility checking system if adopting a different threshold compared to the UK Government; potential logistical and capacity challenges for schools and local authorities (depending on the scope and scale of any increase in eligibility); unknown estimated capital costs; and workforce development and capacity. For example, in the roll out of UPFSM a capital budget of £60m was required.

Not considering the above factors, as a minimum a review of the income threshold in line with the National Living Wage would increase the threshold to £10,160 (as of April 2025). The estimated net increase in eligible learners taking a free school meal in secondary schools would be around 5,000 (based on 77% take-up) at an annual cost of **at least £3m¹** for the meals alone.

However, the eFSM data is also used as a proxy indicator for socio-economic disadvantage in order to understand and address inequalities. It is necessary therefore to preserve the integrity of that link and ensure that we support children and young people as effectively as possible. We estimate that an increase in the threshold to have a financial impact of £2m for the demand led Schools Essentials Grant and an additional £18m for the Pupil Development Grant.

Therefore, the overall costs of an increase to the threshold of eligibility were not possible to manage as part the recent budget when set in the context of our other priorities and we have sought to support disadvantaged learners in other ways (e.g. through FEOs, SHEP). However, this issue will be revisited as part of the Spending Review in the summer.

The changes that are taking place following the ‘strategic review of education partners’

A review of roles and responsibilities of education partners in Wales and delivery of school improvement arrangements was a commitment in our national mission. Following the review stage we have focussed on the design and co-construction of revised school improvement arrangements. It is now almost 12 months since the results of that [review were published](#) and the School Improvement Partnership Programme was established, in that time we have developed a new outline of roles and responsibilities across the education sector with widespread engagement with partners across education in Wales.

Together with local authorities, unions, Estyn, schools and partners from across the sector, we are building a new culture for school improvement, with school-to-school collaborative working at its heart. As part of the process, in November, every local authority in Wales submitted plans to the Welsh Government outlining their approach to delivering local school improvement arrangements. We are working closely with local authorities to support these changes at a local level.

I also committed to providing strong national leadership by setting out a small number of clearly defined and focused national improvement priorities. I have confirmed these as attendance, literacy and numeracy, supported by improved wellbeing.

I have also agreed a set of high-level national functions to support the sector including:

- Establishing a new National Professional Learning and Leadership Support body focussed on delivering a small and prioritised range of national professional learning, this will create a simplified and coherent professional learning landscape.
- Establishing national support programmes to provide intensive, support for the critical cross-curricular skills of literacy and numeracy, along with curriculum design, progression and assessment. This support is being designed with local authorities, practitioners and other partners.

¹ Costed on 190 schools days and £3.20 per meal (based on the universal primary school offer) and includes sixth form students in years 12-14, but excludes further education colleges, at a take-up rate of 77% (PLASC)

- Establishing an Education Improvement Team within Welsh Government to facilitate regular dialogue with local authorities and schools - connecting national priorities with local delivery.

We recognise that there is significant change in the system and want to ensure the totality of change is coherent and robust. To support this, I have established the National Coherence Group who have considered the changes proposed and provided me advice and observations (which was published on 29 January along with a [written statement](#) on progress).

Information on the funding available to support school improvement partnerships in the context of the establishment of a new national professional learning and leadership body

The tables below outline the movement of professional learning and curriculum funding within the LAEG Reform grant between 2024-25 and 2025-26. We have kept the names of the lines the same as for 2024-25 to enable LAs to see the changes.

In 2025-26 we are providing additional investment of £2,500,000 to support literacy and numeracy; this will be provided via the LAEG. Professional learning funding directed to schools will increase by £1,500,000 to £13,500,000 in 2025-26. Along with the £6,000,000 direct to schools for Curriculum, this brings the total funding direct to schools in 2025-26 to £19,500,000.

As outlined in the evidence paper, in October 2024, I announced my intention to bring together some of the current functions of the regional consortia and local authority partnerships and the National Academy for Education Leadership into a national body. The body will be responsible for designing and delivering professional learning and leadership support on a national level in response to the need for increased consistency and clarity of offer.

The establishment of the National Body means that funding needs to be moved out of the LAEG Reform BEL and into the Teacher Development and Support BEL as the National Body will be responsible for the delivery.

A total of £2.465m is being transferred out of the LAEG Reform BEL into the Teacher Development and Support BEL for the continued delivery of national professional learning programmes for teaching assistants, newly qualified teachers, leaders through the National Body.

A further £1.1m is being transferred from the LAEG Cymraeg 2050 BEL into the Teacher Development and Support BEL for national support for the teaching of Welsh and through the medium of Welsh. £0.6m of this funding will be allocated to the National Body to support Welsh-medium schools on a national basis, and £0.5m will be allocated to the National Centre for Learning Welsh to increase the provision of Welsh language skills professional learning for practitioners. These developments are in line with the ambitions of the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill to develop a workforce that can teach more subjects through the medium of Welsh and to improve the teaching of Welsh in English-medium schools.

£3.565m (£2.465m and £1.1m) has transferred into the Teacher Development and Support BEL and will be utilised to support the new body and the National Centre for Learning Welsh (as detailed in the table below).

Subject to LA agreement over the coming months, we propose to move **£1.73m** for local authority curriculum support from the Education Reform (LAEG) BEL 4501 to the Curriculum and Assessment BEL 5162. This is to take forward enhancement of national capacity for

curriculum design, literacy, numeracy alongside other aspect of curriculum support where economies of scale are agreed (such as international languages, digital skills and RSE).

Professional learning funding:

		2024-25	2025-26			2025-26
LAEG		Allocated to LAs via LAEG	Remaining in LAEG	Transferring to new Body	Transferring to National Centre for Learning Welsh	Total
LAEG (Cymraeg)	Welsh language PL (LA funding)	£2,500,000	£1,400,000	£600,000	£500,000	£2,500,000
LAEG (Reform)	Professional Learning in Schools (direct to schools)	£12,000,000	£13,500,000 <i>(£1,500,000 transfer from school-led PL line)</i>			£13,500,000
LAEG (Reform)	Curriculum reform professional learning programme (LA funding)	£2,700,000	£2,700,000			£2,700,000
LAEG (Reform)	School-led professional learning (LA funding to support school-to-school working)	£3,000,000	£1,500,000 <i>(£1,500,000 transfer to PL in schools line)</i>			£1,500,000
LAEG (Reform)	Professional learning for developing practice and reflection	£900,000		£900,000		£900,000
LAEG (Reform)	A Level and Welsh Bacc PL	£650,000		£650,000		£650,000
LAEG (Reform)	Induction and Early Career PL	£250,000		£250,000		£250,000
LAEG (Reform)	HLTA + TA Pathway (LA funding)	£950,000	£850,000	£100,000		£950,000
LAEG (Reform)	Future leadership programme (LA funding)	£850,000	£285,000	£565,000		£850,000
TOTAL		£23,800,000	£20,235,000	£3,065,000	£500,000	£23,800,000

Curriculum reform funding:

		2024-25	2025-26		2025-26
LAEG		Allocated to LAs via LAEG	Remaining in LAEG	Transferring to fund National Support	Total
LAEG (Reform)	Curriculum reform – schools*	£6,000,000	£6,000,000		£6,000,000
LAEG (Reform)	Regional and local capacity for curriculum development	£3,000,000	£2,500,000	£500,000 (£300k Curriculum Design; £200k RSE)	£3,000,000
LAEG (Reform)	International Languages	£733,000		£733,000	£733,000
LAEG (Reform)	Cross curricular skills support	£1,173,000	£3,173,000 (£673,000 & additional £2,500,000 for L&N)	£500,000 (£300k Literacy & Numeracy; £200k digital)	£3,673,000
TOTAL		£10,906,000	£11,673,000	£1,733,000	£13,406,000

* excludes uplifts to LAEG for school engagement in curriculum workstreams through in-year grant variations

A breakdown of the activities within the Curriculum and Assessment BEL and the Additional Learning Needs BEL

Curriculum and Assessment BEL £23.52m

The Curriculum and Assessment BEL, for example, aligns with the LA support and provides funding for a range of other curriculum related activity – this includes:

- our longitudinal curriculum evaluation and monitoring programme;
- funding to Adnodd for commissioning curriculum related resources and supporting materials;
- the operation of the practitioner focussed National Network;
- national level support programmes – such as those I highlighted in my oral statement of 2 July last year on curriculum design, literacy and numeracy;
- costs associated with the operation of personalised assessments nationally; and
- funding made available to other stakeholder organisations to support schools and settings through the new Curriculum for Wales grant support programme.

Additional Learning Needs BEL £5.597m

The Additional Learning Needs BEL is maintained centrally to fund National ALN support and oversight to improve the delivery of the ALN system. Activities include:

- A formative evaluation of the Additional Learning Needs system;
- Grant funding to secure Wales' Doctorate in Educational Psychology training ten new Educational Psychologists a year, and support Children in Wales' Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Participation Programme;

- National ALN leads to support our work on Welsh Language, Further Education and Health;
- Delivering the legislative review;
- Funding to support inclusive Welsh-medium provision, with activities such as the Welsh dyslexia assessment tool;
- Data and monitoring activity;
- ALN accredited professional learning;
- Communications and engagement cost, associated legal costs, and programme funded staff costs.

Agenda Item 4.3



Buffy Williams MS
Chair of the Children, Young People and Education
Committee SeneddChildren@Senedd.Wales

Eich cyf/Your ref:

Ein cyf / Our ref:

Dyddiad / Date: 4 March 2025

Dear Buffy Williams MS

Formal 'concerns' about children's day care providers

Thank you for your letter of 6 February regarding formal concerns about children's day care providers. The question raised by the committee concerned the substantial increase in concerns from 324 in 2020-21 to 552 in 2023-24. I have set out below a table at Figure 1 showing the concerns received from 2017-18 to 2023-24. I have also included the number of concerns received from 1 April 2024 to 31 January 2025. The chart at Figure 2 shows a very small increase of 0.13 percentage points in the proportion of concerns as a percentage of registered full day care services between the last full pre covid year of 2018-19 and the year 2023-24.

I am sorry I misheard the question in respect of concerns about children's day care providers. Therefore, I mistakenly provided the Committee with the combined concerns for the fourth quarter of 2022-23 and 2024 -24 considered for childcare and play settings and for settings registered under the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care Act, i.e. adults and children's social care services. This explains the disparity between the numbers quoted and the figures you refer to on the StatsWales website. I must apologise for any confusion.

As can be seen, the relatively low number of concerns received in 2020-21 is an outlier when compared with the three previous years, as well as with subsequent years. This is most likely explained by the impact of the Covid pandemic in 2020-21 and the consequent closure of many childcare and play settings. At the peak, just over 50% of the settings registered with CIW were closed. Given most concerns are raised by parents, carers, or staff, it is not surprising that 2020-21 saw a very significant reduction in concerns. Some

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Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)
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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.

impact will have also been felt in the final two months of 2019-20 – which is likely to explain the reduction evident in that year.

The marginal and incremental increase in concerns in the last three years is likely to reflect efforts by CIW to promote and explain our role – including our readiness to receive and listen to concerns about the services we regulate. We do not see any correlation between the expansion of full day care places and an increase in the number of concerns received.

Figure 1

Concerns raised – Breakdown by service type and sub type.

	April 2017- March 2018	April 2018- March 2019	April 2019- March 2020	April 2020- March 2021	April 2021- March 2022	April 2022- March 2023	April 2023- March 2024	April 2024- January 2025
Total	467	492	439	324	528	549	552	473
Childminders	102	118	102	80	92	83	72	48
Creches	3	2	-	-	1	2	-	1
Full day care	244	267	253	210	379	385	382	340
Open Access Play Provision	2	2	5	-	2	-	1	2
Out of school care	48	33	34	10	22	14	20	18
Sessional day care	55	58	27	10	32	28	17	22
Children’s day care – not known	13	12	18	14	-	37	60	42

Figure 2

Concerns raised as a % of Registered ‘Full Day Care’ Places.

	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	March 2022	March 2023	March 2024	January 2025
Total registered services	31,197	34,593	37,638	39,193	39,412	40,510	42,629	43,674
Total concerns raised	244	267	253	210	379	385	382	340
Concerns as a % of services	0.78%	0.77%	0.67%	0.54%	0.96%	0.95%	0.90%	0.78%

As noted in my annual report, most childcare and play services do a good job caring for their children. The ratings we award at inspection show most services to be performing in line with the National Minimum Standards with adequate or good ratings, or a combination

of the two. We are now regularly showcasing [positive practice](#) on our website and over time most providers will have a 'Quality Meeting' with an inspector in between inspections. I am confident this will further strengthen our role in supporting good outcomes for children using childcare and play services.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark red ink, appearing to read 'G. Baranski'.

Gillian Baranski
Chief Inspector
Care Inspectorate Wales

Agenda Item 4.4

Medr

Y Comisiwn Addysg Drydyddol ac Ymchwil
Commission for Tertiary Education and Research



Buffy Williams MS

Chair

Children, Young People and Education Committee

Senedd Cymru

Cardiff Bay

Cardiff

CF99 1SN

4 March 2025

Dear Buffy,

Thank you for your letter of 4 February drawing our attention to recommendation 10 of the Committee's report on the Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2025-26:

"Recommendation 10: Medr should provide us with information about its proposed budget for 2025-26, and work with us as we establish a pattern of annual scrutiny of both its proposed budgets and its annual report and accounts to ensure that Medr is held to account for how it uses public funding to support tertiary education across Wales."

I am writing to confirm our agreement to accept the recommendation, as indicated in our scrutiny session on 6 February. I hope the Committee found the information we provided on 3 February regarding our indicative budget allocations for 2025-26 helpful, and we look forward to engaging with the Committee to agree a suitable approach and timetable for future years.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Pirotte'.

Simon Pirotte

Prif Weithredwr | Chief Executive

Medr

Agenda Item 4.5

Lynne Neagle AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care

Vikki Howells AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg Bellach ac Uwch
Minister for Further and Higher Education

Dawn Bowden AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Plant a Gofal Cymdeithasol
Minister for Children and Social Care

Sarah Murphy AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Iechyd Meddwl a Llesiant
Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Our ref MA/LN/0527/25

Buffy Williams MS
Chair – Children, Young People and Education Committee

4 March 2025

Dear Buffy

Thank you for the Committee's report on the 2025-26 Welsh Government Draft Budget, published on the 3 February, outlining 12 recommendations for the Welsh Government.

We acknowledge the work undertaken by the Committee on their scrutiny of the Draft Budget and welcome this report. Please find enclosed the Welsh Government response to recommendations, in advance of the vote on the Final Budget on 4 March.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lynne Neagle".

Lynne Neagle AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education

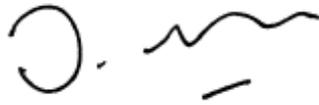
Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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.



Jeremy Miles AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care



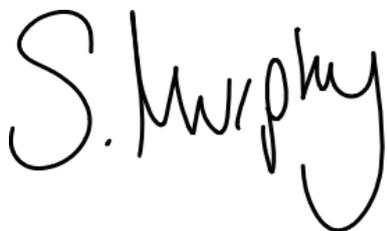
Vikki Howells AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Addysg Bellach ac Uwch
Minister for Further and Higher Education



Dawn Bowden AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Plant a Gofal Cymdeithasol
Minister for Children and Social Care



Sarah Murphy AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Iechyd Meddwl a Llesiant
Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing



Welsh Government response to the Children, Education and Young People Committee (CYPE)

Scrutiny of the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025-26

Summary

This report sets out the Welsh Government response to the Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Committee's Report on the Scrutiny of the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025-26.

It provides responses to the 12 recommendations made in the Committee's Report.

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1. Introduction

The Welsh Government Draft Budget for 2025-26 was published on 10 December 2024. It set out revenue and capital spending plans for the period April 2025 to March 2026.

As part of the budgetary process written evidence was provided by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Minister for Further and Higher Education in relation to budgets within the Education MEG and the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, Minister for Children and Social Care and Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing in relation to budgets in the Health and Social Care MEG to inform scrutiny of the Draft Budget 2025-26. These papers provided information to the Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Committee on budget allocations.

An oral evidence session was held on the 9 January and the 16 January where the CYPE Committee took evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Education; Minister for Further and Higher Education; Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care; Minister for Children and Social Care; and Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing

The Committee published its report on [Scrutiny of the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025-26](#) on 3 February. We thank the Committee for the report.

The Welsh Government has considered the Committee's report and responds to the recommendations below. For each recommendation we have provided a written response and either decided to 'accept', 'accept in principle' or 'reject' each recommendation.

2. Recommendation 1

The Welsh Government should trial publishing a Children's Rights Impact Assessment of the Draft Budget allocations within the Health and Social Care Main Expenditure Group, at a strategic level, for the 2026-27 Draft Budget.

Response: Reject

The duty to have due regard to the UNCRC means that Welsh Government Ministers must consider children's rights in everything they do. The impact of the Welsh Government's Draft Budget on Children's Rights is considered as part of the Draft Budget's Integrated Impact Assessment.

Welsh Government officials are currently undertaking a review of the SIIA, the first review since its introduction in 2015-16, to ensure it remains fit for purpose and consider where improvements might be made in the future.

It is anticipated the review will conclude in 2025. Welsh Treasury are leading on this review with input from the Budget Improvement and Impact Advisory Group (BIIAG).

In addition to ongoing discussions with the BIIAG, there is engagement with other Governments including Iceland, Canada, Scotland and Northern Ireland to draw on experience and best practice from around the world. There is also engagement with key groups such as the Women's Equality Network in Wales. This engagement will be accelerated over the next few months along with wider views from across Wales before discussing emerging recommendations with BIIAG members.

For the Health, Social Care & Early Years Group - A Healthier Wales (AHW) is the Welsh Government's 10-year plan for Health and Social Care launched in 2018. The

plan remains relevant and current, and an Integrated Impact Assessment was undertaken in developing AHW including assessment of the plan's impact on Children and Young People.

Children's Rights Impact Assessments are also completed by individual policy areas in delivering on the aims and objectives of AHW.

The Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 places a duty on the Welsh Ministers to make regulations which require certain public bodies to carry out Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) in specified circumstances.

Following a consultation period, officials are in the process of developing regulations (the Regulations) and plan to lay these before the Senedd this summer (2025).

HIAs are a systematic way of taking health into account as part of decision making and planning processes.

A key part of undertaking an HIA process is considering the impacts of decisions on the health of affected population groups. This includes children and young people, where decisions may impact their health outcomes.

Public Bodies subject to the Regulations will be required to publish their HIA.

3. Recommendation 2

In its response to this report, the Welsh Government should provide more information about the forthcoming Quality Statement for children's health and the newly established clinical lead for child health post, including:

- the precise role and responsibilities of the clinical lead for child health, including how they will work with health boards and other key stakeholders to improve child health services;
- the link between the role of clinical lead for child health and the quality statement for children's health, and how these initiatives will drive improvements in health outcomes for children and young people;
- the extent to which the clinical lead and the quality statement will improve transparency of, and accountability for, how the Welsh Government prioritises and allocates funding for children's health; and
- how these structures will enable the Welsh Government to monitor spending, measure healthcare outcomes for children (beyond just outputs), and hold health boards accountable.

Response: Accept

The Integrated Quality Statement on Children's Health will set out our clear expectations about the high-quality services health boards are expected to deliver. The Quality Statement will be developed with the support of the National Strategic Clinical Network for Child Health. The Welsh Government will monitor the progress against the quality statement through the usual health board quarterly reporting mechanisms and additionally through IQPD meetings.

The role of the Children's Health Clinical Lead within the NHS Executive is to provide clinical leadership within the National Strategic Clinical Network for Child Health, driving improvements in clinical outcomes and service quality. The Clinical

Lead collaborates with various stakeholders, including health boards and other clinical networks, to develop and implement best practices and standards across Wales. This role will help to ensure that children's health services in Wales are effective, equitable, and aligned with national priorities and standards.

The National Strategic Clinical Network for Child Health, under the leadership of the Clinical Lead will develop the NHS response to the Quality Statement.

4. Recommendation 3

The Welsh Government should clarify why the eligibility link between the Pupil Development Grant and free school meal entitlement is a barrier to extending free school meals in secondary schools, given similar concerns have been overcome in the case of the roll out of universal free school meals in primary schools.

Response: Accept

The evidence presented on this issue was in response to a question about priority areas should further funding become available. It was in this context the Cabinet Secretary spoke of her interest in exploring an inflationary uplift to the free school meal income threshold that would increase the number of learners eligible for a meal.

Such a move would be in direct response to perceptions that the current threshold excludes some families that are receiving benefits, and who are living in socio-economic disadvantage, from being able to access much needed additional support.

It therefore stands to reason that, were additional families to be formally identified and recognised as living in socio-economic disadvantage and needing a free school meal, they should be able to benefit from the same level of additional support as other families who are currently eligible under existing arrangements. This support includes School Essentials Grant funding which goes directly to families and Pupil Development Grant funding which is allocated to schools (both of which are key enablers for tackling the impact of poverty and which sit alongside the offer of a meal).

It is feasible to just offer a meal to additional children through a grant, as was evidenced through the rollout of universal primary free school meals. However, it is important to note that the universal commitment did not seek to redefine

measures of socio-economic disadvantage by changing the eligibility criteria for benefit-related free school meals. In fact, a key policy aim during rollout was to preserve the eFSM data set. A 'meal only' offer contrasts with the scenario put forth by the Cabinet Secretary which would provide equity to low-income families by extending the benefit-related eligibility criteria for free school meals, the data set associated with it, and therefore the way in which additional support is targeted to address inequalities.

The Welsh Government remains committed to exploring the benefits and feasibility of increasing the income threshold for free school meals (and passporting the full range of entitlements conferred through that status) as part of the planned spending review.

5. Recommendation 4

The Welsh Government should urgently complete its assessment of the impact of the increased employer National Insurance Contributions on all organisations providing services for children and young people in Wales.

Recommendation 4: Accept in Principle

National Insurance is not devolved. The UK Government has confirmed it will provide funding to public sector employers to cover the increased costs of employer National Insurance contributions. It will use the official ONS definition of a public sector employer. The UK Government has also confirmed the Welsh Government will be provided with our share of that funding to support the costs to the devolved public sector, but we have not yet had confirmation of how much additional funding Wales will receive.

We expect to receive the additional funding in late spring and are working with HM Treasury to clarify the details and the level of support that will be provided.

We recognise third sector organisations and businesses are concerned about increases to Employer National Insurance contributions. However, this will be fully or partially offset by increased Employer Allowance.

We will of course be in contact with our grant recipients in the third sector and others (that fall outside of the ONS definition of public sector) who deliver health and care services in the normal course of business; to understand any pressures they are facing that might impede delivery of agreed objectives.

11. Recommendation

The Welsh Government should clarify what support, if any, it will be providing to third sector organisations that provide services for children in Wales (or to the public bodies that commission those services) to ensure that critical frontline interventions for children and young people are not adversely affected as a consequence of increased employer National Insurance Contributions.

Recommendation 5: Reject

As set out in the response to recommendation 4, National Insurance is not devolved. The UK Government has confirmed it will provide funding to public sector employers to cover the increased costs of employer National Insurance contributions. It will use the official ONS definition of a public sector employer. The UK Government has also confirmed the Welsh Government will be provided with our share of that funding to support the costs to the devolved public sector, but we have not yet had confirmation of how much additional funding Wales will receive.

We expect to receive the additional funding in late spring and are working with HM Treasury to clarify the details and the level of support that will be provided. We recognise third sector organisations and businesses are concerned about increases to Employer National Insurance contributions. However, this will be fully or partially offset by increased Employer Allowance.

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance has stated that as soon as we know the amount of money that will come to Wales to help with public sector employer contributions, that money will be made known to those services and that money will be passed to them immediately. What we cannot do is divert money away from our budget for this Senedd to make up for deficits in budgets that are not our responsibility at all. That is the principle we intend to adhere to for this budget for Wales.

7. Recommendation 6

The Welsh Government should set out clearly:

- the specific evidence and data that has been used to develop and evaluate the Healthy Weight Healthy Wales strategy;
- the specific evidence and data underpinning the decision to shift towards a greater focus on children within that strategy; and
- how success is being measured in the Healthy Weight Healthy Wales programme for children, including what specific outcomes the Welsh Government is seeking to achieve and when.

Response: Accept

Development of an obesity strategy is a statutory duty under the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017. The Healthy Weight Healthy Wales Strategy is a ten-year plan to prevent and reduce obesity in Wales. In Wales, over 60% of the adult population are affected by overweight or obesity and around a quarter of children in Wales are living with overweight or obesity by the time that they are five years old, with the levels higher in the most deprived areas.

In developing the Healthy Weight Healthy Wales Strategy, Public Health Wales reviewed the international evidence base for action to address obesity. A range of indicators are currently used to evaluate the strategy. Both can be found here.

These include the Child Measurement Programme which measures the height and weight of children in Reception class. Childhood obesity is a strong predictor of adult obesity. While prevention is needed across all the life course, effective prevention of adult obesity will require the prevention and management of childhood obesity, and the habits and behaviours formed. A key finding from Public Health Wales' review of international perspectives on action to prevent and reduce obesity is that no country internationally has been successful in lowering

obesity rates at a national level. There are, however, examples of long-term programmes to address childhood obesity that, after a period of sustained intervention through a whole system approach, had managed to halt and reverse the rise. These experiences in the United States, Australia, Amsterdam and across Europe were used to inform the development of Healthy Weight Healthy Wales adapted appropriately to a Welsh context.

Delivery is supported through 2-year delivery plans. A new delivery plan for 2025-27 will be launched in April. Welsh Government have commissioned Public Health Wales to develop an outcome framework to evaluate Healthy Weight Healthy Wales, which will set out goals to provide a focus on the things we want to work towards, across the whole of society, to address the factors that lead to a healthy weight, and indicators to further measure progress.

Financial Implications: The budget allocated for delivery of Healthy Weight Healthy Wales for 2025/26 is £4.042m.

8. Recommendation 7

The Welsh Government should set out clearly:

- how the Draft Budget 2025-26 provides funding to support families waiting for neurodivergent assessments, and to help them once they have received their diagnoses; and
- how the Welsh Government ensures that this support is consistent between local authorities and health boards, and available to families across the whole of Wales.

Response: Accept

In my Written Statement of 3 February I confirmed £13.7M funding to deliver our neurodivergence priorities up to March 2027. Funding for services will be directed through Regional Partnership Boards to ensure consistency across local authorities and health boards and across regions. We will deliver:

- An extension to the National ND improvement programme will create a new collaborative ND service delivery model for children's ND services, providing early help and support. Partners include health, social care and education all of whom expressed support for developing a whole system needs-led response.
- Alongside the service delivery model, an ND assessment waiting list recovery plan to be developed with health boards building on the additional £3m waiting list reduction activity already underway.
- To measure improvement and focus on accountability, a new national Neurodivergence data set for children and young people and reporting system.
- Publication of National Neurodivergence Team Annual Workplan with measurable deliverables to support improvement and an annual outcome report.

- Delivery of the draft Statutory Code of Practice on the Delivery of Neurodivergence Services by March 2026.

Financial Implications: £6.89 Million per year in 2025-26 and 2026-27

9. Recommendation 8

The Welsh Government should set out an up-to-date timeline for the full rollout of phase 3 of Flying Start childcare, clearly setting out the costs of each stage of implementation, the extent to which those costs are met by the Draft Budget 2025-26 or anticipated to be met by future budgets, key implementation milestones, and any barriers to rollout (financial or otherwise).

Response: Accept in principle

We remain committed to our Programme for Government commitment to "Deliver a phased expansion of early years provision to include all 2-year-olds, with a particular emphasis on strengthening Welsh medium provision".

All local authorities have prepared and submitted their delivery plans for the next phase (Phase 3) of the Flying Start Childcare Expansion Programme.

The additional funding provided at final budget will enable us to fund the extension of Flying Start childcare in all local authority areas bringing Wales a step closer to the universal provision of childcare for all two-year-olds.

We are deliberately taking a phased approach to the expansion of Flying Start childcare in Wales. This approach is designed to target resources on the most disadvantaged areas first. We are also committed to working collaboratively with local authorities and the childcare sector to ensure that childcare provision in the expansion programme is both high quality and sustainable.

Continued expansion beyond 2025-26 will depend on further funding being made available in future Welsh Government budgets and the capacity of the sector to respond to the requirements of further expansion.

Financial Implications: £25.2m in 2025-26 (confirmed in Final Budget)

10. Recommendation 9

The Welsh Government should clarify the proposed arrangements for school improvement services, including:

- how additional school-to-school collaborative working will be facilitated by the new arrangements and structure, as opposed to the regional consortia model;
- the rationale for creating the new National Professional Learning and Leadership Support body, what professional learning it will deliver, and how this will support school-to-school collaboration and school improvement; and
- the practical role of the Welsh Government's central Education Improvement Team, and what interactions local authorities and individual schools should expect to have with that team.

Response: Accept

The **review of the future direction and roles and responsibilities of education partners in Wales** was clear in its feedback that the majority of schools and Local Authorities wanted a change to the existing arrangements and a new system that created opportunities to lead on school improvement matters through a greater focus on local collaboration and partnership working between school leaders and their Local Authority. School-to-school and cluster working was seen as the most important element of support and school leaders thought this should be the foundation for the School Improvement [SI] system moving forward. They also expressed concerns about the value-added of the Regional Consortia, with a lot of concern about a culture of 'done to' rather than 'done with' in terms of the culture of SI across the system.

Local Authorities are the statutory function holders for SI and want to hold the delivery and support of their SI functions along with their accountability for SI.

They also see these changes as a real opportunity to join up SI support with wider local services allowing a more integrated approach to school improvement.

Our vision is for self-improving local improvement communities of schools in every part of Wales where school leaders and school staff have agency over their own development, working in partnership with other colleagues, schools and the LA, whilst contributing to a shared local and national improvement agenda.

This means schools and school leaders belonging, and contributing to an open, inclusive and supportive environment that enables the improvement of all schools, focused on continuous improvement in educational outcomes for our young people.

All schools will be operating as part of local improvement communities working with other schools, both horizontally and vertically, to undertake effective peer supported evaluation, improvement and professional learning.

The review was also clear around the need for national leadership and providing national support where required to make best use of resources and secure greatest impact. We have considered the evidence gathered as part of the review of education partners in Wales alongside a wider evidence base that explored a range of matters. The evidence concludes that there are too many organisations involved in the development and delivery of professional learning and leadership support that:

- creates an overwhelming offer for practitioners;
- is variable in terms of availability and quality across Wales;
- causes conflict between organisation and as a result can lead to duplication;
- often doesn't meet the needs of the system, practitioners and learners, and
- does not provide the best value for money.

Moving forward, the national arrangements need to deliver a coherent and consistent offer for our practitioners to provide the opportunities they need to

develop, share practice and learn from each other in order to impact positively on educational standards in Wales and provide the best opportunities for our learners to thrive, and provide value for money.

It was therefore decided to bring together the national provision and support for our practitioners currently delivered by our partners into a single national body to significantly simplify the national professional learning and leadership support landscape.

In particular, the national body will:

- Be responsible for designing and delivering professional learning and support on a national level for school leaders and school improvement advisors. This will include the National Professional Qualification for Headship and other leadership programmes. This professional learning will focus on a range of leadership matters and Welsh Government priorities including promoting school-to-school collaboration and school improvement.
- Develop and deliver a range of professional learning for practitioners in our key priority areas e.g. wellbeing, diversity, ALN, digital and for our Welsh-medium schools.
- Develop and deliver coaching and / or mentoring professional learning to enable peer-to-peer support and development.
- Work with local authorities to develop and deliver national professional learning programmes for our teaching assistants and newly qualified teachers and to support the teaching of Welsh in English-medium schools.
- Work with our universities to support professional learning for research and enquiry and education pedagogy alongside the continuation of the delivery of the National Masters and Doctorate in Education.

Local authorities will work with the national body to support delivery on a local level and to continue to deliver the more bespoke school-based professional learning in response to local priorities and needs and our national support

programmes for literacy and numeracy. Local authorities also work closely with officials in the development and delivery of our national support which we are providing on curriculum design, progression, assessment, literacy and numeracy. This will ensure schools have access to this support and that local approaches build on this.

The recently established Education Improvement Team (EIT) within Welsh Government intends to meet formally with all local authorities initially once every term. These engagements will focus on national priority areas and are intended to support local authorities as they evolve their local school improvement system. As this work develops, there will be opportunities for less formal and more regular engagement around key issues. The EIT will meet with all local authority Directors of Education, their school improvement leads and their headteacher representatives over the course of this spring term.

11. Recommendation 10

Medr should provide us with information about its proposed budget for 2025-26, and work with us as we establish a pattern of annual scrutiny of both its proposed budgets and its annual report and accounts to ensure that Medr is held to account for how it uses public funding to support tertiary education across Wales.

Response: Accept

The Welsh Government is committed to the principles of transparency and accountability and as such acknowledge the importance and benefit of Medr engaging proactively with the Committee through appropriate scrutiny of its budgets and annual accounts. The Welsh Government notes the early engagement between the Committee and Medr aimed at supporting such proposals.

12. Recommendation 11

The Welsh Government should set out in more detail its plans to redesign the eligibility criteria for the Seren programme to include learners on vocational pathways, a timeline for implementing those plans, and how any anticipated financial costs of the changes are met in the Draft Budget 2025-26 or otherwise.

Response: Accept

Central to The Seren Academy's mission of supporting learners in their pursuit of excellence is the creation of an inclusive environment free of barriers to engagement. To maximize our contribution towards the well-being objective of reducing educational inequalities and raising standards, and in alignment with Programme for Government Commitments, we are exploring ways to increase opportunities for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds to participate in Seren

The 2025-26 Widening Participation Project aims to enhance equity of opportunity, ensure fair access, and improve provision within Seren, prioritizing the needs of learners at its core. The project will:

- develop an equity-based approach, to enable all high-potential learners to develop the ambition, capability and curiosity needed to reach their full potential and excel in their future educational pursuits, ultimately fostering social mobility.
- develop a pathway programme to degree apprenticeships equivalent to the pathway programme to an academic degree, to increase the parity of esteem between both pathways.
- strengthen the support structure around the learners and develop new guidance for schools, teachers, and parents with a professional learning programme to support.

- develop an engagement programme for parents and carers to increase their knowledge on how to support their children in reaching their full potential and the opportunities Seren can provide.

Further details will be provided to the Committee in due course.

13. Recommendation 12

The Welsh Government should clarify why the £20 million pounds earmarked for school repairs and maintenance in 2024-25 has been classified as capital expenditure despite Welsh Government guidance to the contrary set out why this funding was not provided via the Local Government Settlement; and clarify whether this funding for repairs and maintenance has formed part of the capital/revenue baselines for the Draft Budget 2025-26, and whether it is likely to in future Draft Budgets.

Response: Accept

The Capital Repairs and Maintenance Grant is provided to delivery partners to support the wider education building estate. The funding is allocated to Local Authorities for schools based on the proportion of schools and pupils in each area, and Further Education Institutes in line with the mainstream post-16 funding methodology. The grant funds essential capital maintenance beyond the day to day running costs of buildings. For example, small scale works such as roof and window repairs, painting or plastering would not be defined as capital, however introducing new ventilation systems, sustainable energy solutions, boilers or roof replacements, etc., would be acceptable uses of this funding.

Whilst this funding is not provided via the Local Government Settlement, delivery partners are able to prioritise the investment to essential capital works limited to the education estate. The grant allocation is a separate funding stream which sits under the Sustainable Communities for Learning (SCfL) Programme. The SCfL Programme also includes funding streams to support other priority areas across the education estate including ALN, Welsh Language, Community Focused Schools, and ICT Digital.

Since its implementation in 2014, the Programme has grown from its original focus towards simply replacing poor standard buildings to one of a holistic, co-construct and cross-cutting programme that is acknowledged as an exemplar in its approach.

This offers a more joined-up approach for LA's & FEI's, improving strategic planning, procurement and delivery of capital investment.

This £20m has been awarded in-year to support delivery partners with their portfolio of capital works in schools based on budget availability within the Education MEG, in addition to a £30m award at the start of the financial year. For 2025-26 no specific baseline budget allocation has been made for the Capital Repairs and Maintenance grant, but it will continue to be considered as part of the overall programme or if budget becomes available in year. Due to the required flexibility of this funding and the close alignment of strategic goals with the wider SCfL investment programme, the funding has been retained within the Education MEG.

The Welsh Government guidance noted in the report relates to SCfL major project business case submission from delivery partners and is designed to prevent low value projects being put forward through that funding stream. The wording on this guidance note is to assist delivery partners in preparing business cases for new build or substantial renovations within the education estate.

Agenda Item 6

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

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