

Agenda – Children, Young People and Education Committee

Meeting Venue:

Hybrid – Committee room 4 Tŷ Hywel
and video conference via Zoom

Meeting date: 26 March 2025

Meeting time: 09.30

For further information contact:

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Committee Clerk

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Hybrid

Private pre-meeting

09.15 – 09.30

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

09.30

2 Routes into post-16 education and training – evidence session 9

09.30 – 10.30

(Pages 1 – 24)

Cllr Lis Burnett, Spokesperson for the Welsh Local Government Association

Sharon Davies, Head of Education, Welsh Local Government Association

Gwyn Tudur, Assistant Head of Education at Gwynedd County Council and representing the Association of Directors of Education in Wales

Attached Documents:

Research brief

Welsh Government Association WLGA and Association of Directors of Education in Wales ADEW

Break

10.30 – 10.45

3 Routes into post-16 education and training – evidence session 10

10.45 – 11.45

(Pages 25 – 34)



David Hagedyk, Chief Executive, Colegau Cymru

Lisa Michelle Thomas, Principal of Merthyr College and Chair of Colegau Cymru

Attached Documents:

Colegau Cymru

4 Papers to note

11.45

4.1 Routes into post-16 education and training

(Pages 35 – 36)

Attached Documents:

Letter to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee from Universities Wales

4.2 Care Inspectorate Wales: Annual Scrutiny

(Pages 37 – 38)

Attached Documents:

Letter to the Chair of the Children Young People and Education Committee from Care Inspectorate Wales

4.3 P-06-1488 Establish a ‘Care Society’ to Tackle the Long COVID Crisis in Wales

(Pages 39 – 40)

Attached Documents:

Letter to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee from the Chair of the Petitions Committee

4.4 Teacher recruitment and retention

(Pages 41 – 42)

Attached Documents:

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

4.5 Information from Stakeholders

(Pages 43 – 47)

Attached Documents:

Letter to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee from the Equality and Human Rights Commission

4.6 Issues facing the Higher Education Sector

(Page 48)

Attached Documents:

Letter to all Welsh Universities from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee

4.7 Children on the margins

(Page 49)

Attached Documents:

Letter to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee from NYAS Cymru

4.8 Routes into post-16 education and training

(Page 50)

Attached Documents:

Response from the National Centre for Learning Welsh to the questions that were unasked at the meeting on 13 March

4.9 Legislative Consent: Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill

(Pages 51 – 52)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee and the Chair of Equality and Social Justice Committee to the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip, and Minister for Further and Higher Education

4.10 Legislative Consent: Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill

(Pages 53 – 55)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education
Committee to Stakeholders

4.11 Issues facing the Higher Education Sector

(Pages 56 – 60)

Attached Documents:

Response from Cardiff University to questions from the Children, Young
People and Education Committee

5 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(xi) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting and for item 1 at next week's meeting

11.45

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

11.45 – 12.00

7 Discussion on issues facing the Higher Education Sector

12.00 – 12.15

8 Pre appointment hearing for the Chair of the Qualifications Wales Strategic Board – consideration of the approach

12.15 – 12.30

(Pages 61 – 65)

Attached Documents:

Private paper

Document is Restricted

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 14

Ymateb gan: Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru a Cymdeithas Cyfarwyddwyr Addysg Cymru
Response from: Welsh Government Association (WLGA) and Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW)

Welsh Local Government Association - The Voice of Welsh Councils

The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) is a politically led cross party organisation that seeks to give local government a strong voice at a national level.

We represent the interests of local government and promote local democracy in Wales.

The 22 councils in Wales are our members and the 3 fire and rescue authorities and 3 national park authorities are associate members.

We believe that the ideas that change people's lives, happen locally.

Communities are at their best when they feel connected to their council through local democracy. By championing, facilitating, and achieving these connections, we can build a vibrant local democracy that allows communities to thrive.

Our ultimate goal is to promote, protect, support and develop democratic local government and the interests of councils in Wales.

We'll achieve our vision by

- Promoting the role and prominence of councillors and council leaders
- Ensuring maximum local discretion in legislation or statutory guidance
- Championing and securing long-term and sustainable funding for councils
- Promoting sector-led improvement
- Encouraging a vibrant local democracy, promoting greater diversity
- Supporting councils to effectively manage their workforce

Introduction:

This paper responds to the call for evidence by the *Senedd's Children, Young People and Education Committee's* inquiry into *Routes into Post 16 Education and Training*.

Aside from 6th form provision in schools (not present in all local authorities as some have a tertiary education system), local government has limited input into post 16 education and training provision (and, particularly, post 18), which is primarily the remit of colleges of further education, training/work based learning agencies and universities, all of which (including 6th forms) now fall within the remit of Medr, the Post 16 regulator.

However, as well as providing some bespoke provision where required (mostly as a stop-gap measure, prior to successful brokerage of relevant post 16 courses), local government does provide a great deal of support, advice and guidance to young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or who are showing as being at risk of becoming NEET, mainly via the *Youth Engagement & Progression Framework* (YEPF). This includes the co-ordination of the local YEPF partnerships, provision of lead workers (mostly youth via youth workers) and a brokerage function onto post-16 education and training, so local government input in (and prior to) this area is crucial.

The YEPF is described thus *"This Framework contributes towards our goal of tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment, by helping us re-engage young people and raise their aspirations, to ensure no one is left behind. It is built around the early identification of young people aged 11 to 18 who are at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET) or homeless, understanding their needs, putting appropriate support and/or provision in place and monitoring their progression."*

Local authorities via the Engagement & Progression Co-ordinators (EPC's), officers charged with co-ordinating the local YEPF, also continue to play a valued role with post 16 partners in the planning and co-ordination of the Young Person's Guarantee (YPG), meeting on a regular basis (locally and regionally) with providers to share information both strategically and at operational level.

Crucial in the journey of young people's learning is continuity of provision (learning pathways), particularly at the transition stage between statutory education and post statutory education and training - between schools, colleges and training providers to ensure that young people are able to pursue learning pathways which offer progression, challenge and reward, as well as destinations which are productive for them as individuals, for institutions, for the economy and wider society.

As with previous/recent responses provided in regard to Post 16 education, including the development stage of Medr, the WLGA and ADEW have consistently mentioned that, whilst Medr continue to make assurances that local government will have a voice in their work with post 16 providers, this part of the sector does not have representation on the Medr Board.

Context:

1. In order to ensure a coherent pre and post 16 education system, all relevant partners must have knowledge and oversight of and input into each other's work and, where relevant, collaborate to ensure a good quality, comprehensive offer which provides learning options relevant to both learners and the economy and avoids duplication. In this regard, Regional Skills Partnerships also play a crucial role in providing the relevant links to employers and labour market intelligence, ensuring that courses are providing the relevant skills base for employers by providing accurate and up-to-date labour market information.
2. Given the extremely challenging public sector funding situation, services and the work-force delivering services are coming under increasing strain, with less money at the same time as ever increasing demand. As well as a reduction in capacity across the sector as we emerge from the Covid pandemic (which continues to further exacerbate the situation) there is a recruitment and retention crisis compounding an already challenging scenario. These factors are converging to impact on the ability of services to effectively engage with children, young people and their families/carers, many of whom continue to suffer under the cost-of-living crisis, to either avoid them finding themselves on the margins of services and/or when they find themselves in difficult circumstances, carrying out the intensive work necessary to overcome barriers to accessing even basic provision.
3. Given local government's role in post 16 education, much of this paper describes the breadth and depth of the challenges and conditions which need to be in place to enable young people to access post 16 learning but it is also crucial that relevant courses are made available at appropriate levels to meet need. The education system has some levers and expertise in breaking down barriers to learning but it is being increasingly recognised that this is a much wider, societal issue which can only be addressed via a much more holistic approach involving other public and voluntary sector partners, particularly around cost-of-living issues and mental and physical health, which is playing a huge part in low levels of attendance across the system. A great deal of work is going on in schools and other education settings to address such issues but a whole system approach is needed.
4. Whilst this paper paints a picture of extremely challenging circumstances, the sector remains resilient and innovative in its attempts to ensure young people are ready and able to continue their learning at post 16 level. Local government politicians and officers regularly engage in such discussions at local, regional and national levels to ensure that every part of the system is playing its part and is sharing good practice as well as learning from other evidence in regard to successful interventions – due to the complexity of many people's lives, this requires quite bespoke solutions, which require time, effort and resource.
5. Before reflecting on physical routes to post 16 learning provision, it is crucial to highlight conditions which need to be in place for young learners to be able to do so effectively, if at all. Issues of pre-16 attendance, behaviour and well-being in schools are well documented and discussed, with numerous both tried, and

tested as well as new and innovative methods used. Following the pandemic, anxiety in children and young people is at unprecedented levels, many not even being able to leave home and numbers of home educated children and young people are increasing at rates not previously seen. This requires intensive input based on trusting relationships with professionals, which requires space and time to develop. Anxiety alongside neurodiversity can further complicate challenges.

6. Science and society continue to learn more about neurodiversity (ND) and how this can affect (positively and negatively) people's experiences and opportunities. How society can and should adapt to and encourage different neuro and physical abilities and conditions is an area which requires support of the health sector. Though Initial Teacher Education (ITE) is changing to improve understanding, training and professional learning in this area often does not match need and/or demand. There is also concern that the 'social contract' between parents, pupils and schools is changing, accompanied with a higher level of expectation (in some cases entitlement) about what the education system can provide. Whilst the system does its very best to accommodate this, it is not always possible to meet such high demands.
7. Further, whilst supported by the education sector in principle, the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Act continues to be costly and challenging, particularly to schools and local authorities. Such challenges are compounded by developmental delay in many young people as a result of the Covid pandemic, requiring the education system to readjust in numerous ways. Not all colleges are able to meet requirements in Individual Development Plans (IDP's), which can put further strain on local government resources and/or mean that a young person is unable to take up a potential place. This situation is also an issue in the context of training agencies, particularly if a small provider.
8. Even in circumstances where provision meets need, in the context of levels of anxiety and greater awareness of ND, some young learners find the 'step up' and scale of college environments too daunting, especially if they struggle to leave their home. This requires a greater level of support, time and patience whilst being aware that the longer they are out of education, the more difficult it can be to return, with many behaviours becoming entrenched and more complex.
9. There are a number of routes for learning at post 16, some academic and others either vocational and/or a mixture of both, including apprenticeships. The availability and quality of information available to learners, whilst crucial in providing an overview of learning options (where they are located, potential progression routes and course content) though can be patchy. Where this is in place, it needs to be accessible (via a range of mediums including online, up-to-date and comprehensive). Careers Wales play a crucial role in the provision of education/careers information and advice and local government welcomes the recent announcement that Careers Wales is opening its offer wider to all learners in years 10 and 11 as pupils from all backgrounds and abilities need good quality and relevant careers advice and guidance, delivered in numerous engaging ways.

10. Post 16 destination data is provided by Careers Wales but it is felt that this is not always up-to-date and there are very few organisations either equipped to (relevant skill sets and working practices) and/or willing to make the strenuous efforts required to find those hardest to reach/"unknowns", as this requires (often persistent) home visits to establish their status and engage. This often falls to front line local government staff (EPC's and/or youth workers), which means going over and above general working practice.
11. Youth information (generally but including education related) is something which Welsh Government and the Youth Work Implementation Board is looking as there has not been a national youth information portal for some years. A couple of good examples of an information portal for learners looking to access post 16 learning can be found here [Welcome to Caerphilly Pathways](#) and here <https://www.llwybraugwyneddynysmon.cymru/>
12. As described by a case study of a young person in Gwynedd below, in some, often particularly rural, areas transport can be a huge barrier to accessing education provision (as well as leisure and recreation services). Often, even if public transport is in place in certain areas and runs to plan, multiple changes of buses and/or trains are often required which can take considerable time, effort and capability either way. If services do not run to plan or are cancelled, this can cause distress as well as time missed from courses.
13. If transport is in place and the young person is at the stage whereby they can consider accessing an education programme, there is concern across the sector around availability of these at appropriate levels to meet the learner's ability. As already described, the sector is seeing increasing numbers of young people who are either behind in their emotional development and/or experiencing mental health/behavioural issues. Due to time away from education (including some from the home education community), many of these learners are also behind in their educational journey/age related levels. This means that, at post 16 level, demand is increasing for transition/pre-entry level courses but, whilst this has been recognised in the JGW+ programme where a pre-engagement strand has been put in place, demand is currently out-stripping supply.
14. For some young people aged 14-16 a more vocational pathway is required, which can also act as a useful preparatory step to post 16 provision, whereby learners are exposed to college environments at an earlier age and, therefore become more used to the requirements in these settings, which can be quite different to those in school. Where Welsh Government funding has supported this in the past, following recent changes to the Education Improvement Grant, these courses are at risk.
15. An example of the above is in Gwynedd and Ynys Mon where the two local authorities have established a consortium commissioning such (14-16) courses on behalf of schools in these areas. As a result, a close and positive relationship has been established with the local colleges of FE. However, the changes in the grant mean that funding goes directly to schools which may have consequences for small schools, the partnership developed with the colleges and learner choice, potentially also resulting in an increase in the numbers of young people NEET.

16. As identified by Hefin David (MS) in his report *Transitions to Employment (2023)* meaningful work experience can be crucial for a young person to gain a better understanding of the requirements of the workplace, often long before entering the employment sector. The WLGA and ADEW agree that this important phase in a young person's education needs looking at. However, this can be resource intensive as placements in industry need to be identified and assessed as appropriate for young learners under the age of 16 or 18. This can take time, resource and expertise which schools struggle to find.
17. Neath Port-Talbot reintroduced work experience for pre-16 learners a couple of years ago and the evidence from this shows that those who participate have greater understanding of the skills they need in the workplace and are actively seeking the pathways and qualifications that can help them with careers into sectors they are interested in. A few of the young people have also been offered apprenticeships when they leave school, based on these placements. However, this is currently funded from the Shared Prosperity Fund, which may render it unsustainable if/when this funding is cut.
18. Prior to 2015, the responsibility for work experience placements was within the Careers Wales remit. This was then taken on by local government (often via the 14-19 Local Area Network, LAN) and now schools. There does not appear to be a central driver for work placements currently, meaning that many learners (particularly those who are not from families with motivated and well-connected parents) miss out.
19. It is also crucial that, if a young person has successfully started a post-16 course but, for whatever reason, this has broken down and the young person stops attending, every effort is made by the provider to establish the reason/s for this and that potential barriers to attendance are removed. This may also require a swift referral to the EPC, so that they can investigate and work with the young person and provider to get them back on track. This requires close communication between provider and the local authority via the tracking element of the YEPP.

Case Study - Young Person A:

- Young Person's attendance at school declined during Year 9, she did not attend a lot during Year 10 and was on a reduced timetable in Year 11.
- Careers Wales provided advice and guidance and she applied for a pre-vocational course with the local college of Further Education (attending would entail at least a 45 min bus journey from her place of residence). Young Person was not expected to achieve the required grades to move on to a Level 1 Course in subjects that interested her.
- She was identified during Year 11 Transitions Panel as being at risk of not transitioning to Post 16 education.
- Careers Wales referred her to Gwynedd Youth Support over the Summer period and to help prepare for College, but young person stated that had secured a job in the Hospitality Sector over the Summer Holidays and was happy with how things were going. It was agreed with young person that Gwynedd Youth would keep in touch with her.
- At the beginning of September, young person decided that she did not want to pursue the pre-vocational course. An alternative option would be an entry level course in another Campus (a Bus journey that would take about an hour one-way).
- Arrangements were made for the young person to attend College to learn more about the course, visit the college campus and meet the tutors and student Support service.
- Young person was registered to start the course but did not attend, stating that the College Campus was too large, bus journey was too long and the expectation of attending College 4 days a week was too much to start with.
- Young Person is currently working 2-3 hours a week in the Hospitality sector, but due to the nature of the Tourist Season in her area, there are not a lot of work opportunities at this time of year. She is now looking at her employment options. JGW+ programme has been explored and would be a good option, but the provision has one centre in Caernarfon, serving all of Gwynedd which can be too challenging for young people living in more rural areas.

20. The young person above also has siblings who have had a similar journey. Her younger brother is attending school and her older sister is attending college and is planning on moving on to University next year. She's found going back to a regular school routine after Covid really challenging.

21. Young People who have struggled with attendance or have been EHE find it challenging to transition to a full-time timetable, busy campus, packed college bus or Public transport. Young people want to progress with their education and view Post 16 options as a new start after difficult times at school. The step for them can often be too big, requiring a graduated provision which offers a more flexible approach to support their transition back to full-time education.

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

RET 34

Ymateb gan: ColegauCymru

Response from: CollegesWales

Senedd Children Young People and Education Committee Inquiry - Routes into post-16 education and training.

ColegauCymru is an education charity which promotes the public benefit of further education (FE) in Wales. We believe that all learners have the right to world-class education, delivered in a safe, diverse and inclusive setting and within a sector which supports the wider community, employers and the economy. We convene the FE Principals' Forum, which represents the interests of FE providers. We undertake research and policy development and provide practical support to the FE community. Working closely with Welsh Government, their agencies, and other stakeholders, we help shape policies affecting the FE sector, their learners and staff.

FE and apprenticeships are fundamental to Wales' economic recovery and to the fairer, greener, stronger society we all want to build. There is no route map to a better Wales that doesn't rely on a thriving, resilient and successful FE and Work-based Learning sector. Colleges recognise the long-standing support that the Welsh Government has given to the FE sector, however more action is still needed from the Welsh Government and from Medr to create the right environment for colleges to deliver for learners. Our key asks in this response are:

- 1) **The Welsh Government must develop a strategy for Vocational Education and Training.** We would like the Welsh Government to develop a national Strategy for Vocational Education and Training. There is a lack of overall strategic intent and purpose in post-16 policy and a new strategy, aligned to a clear understanding of the requirements of the economy, would ensure the delivery of vocational and technical education that can support growth and offer equitable opportunities for individuals. This ask reiterates the recommendations made both by the Welsh Government's Vocational Qualifications Review and ColegauCymru's Taith funded research into the Finnish VET system.
- 2) **Collaboration between schools and colleges must be improved to benefit learners.** Part of the solution to ensuring learners make the right choices for their futures is to ensure that they understand their options at any early stage in their education journey. This is why the recommendations in both the Transitions to Employment report by Dr Hefin David MS and in the Welsh Government's Review of Vocational Qualifications to improve school / college collaboration, and to give colleges greater access to school pupils, are essential. There has not been enough urgency given to addressing the recommendations from both reports and these should be priorities for the Welsh Government, Medr and the pre and post-16 sectors.
- 3) **Longer term funding arrangements are critical for delivering better mental health and wellbeing support.** Demand for FE, and in particular vocational provision, is rising. The education and social impact of the pandemic is still evident through poor levels of attendance in schools, significant mental health challenges facing many learners, and evidence of wider behavioural challenges of learners entering college. Recent analysis

by ColegauCymru shows that enrolment in the 16-18 age group for 2024/25 has increased by 8.27% since 2023/24. Enrolment figures have particularly increased for those learners coming in at lower levels and learners who require support to remain in education. With the increase in mental health referrals, and the implementation of ALNET, it is more important than ever that funding is protected through multi-year longer term funding for the sector. Longer term planning for mental health and wellbeing is also needed to address pressure on provision.

- 4) **Transport barriers must be removed.** An ongoing concern across the college sector is the cost of transport. According to the Welsh Government’s own data, 41% of 16 to 24 years olds identified transport as being the number one barrier to getting a new course, training or a job. Funding arrangements for learners vary widely across Wales. In some cases, parents cover the costs, while in others, it’s the colleges or Local Authorities that pay or subsidise travel. Colleges across Wales have faced an increase of more than £3.2million in learner travel costs over the last year.

Question 1 - Quality of information given to learners about the full range of post-16 options

Improving independent advice and guidance for learners is absolutely critical. As set out in the Welsh Government’s Review of Vocational Qualifications¹, the Learning and Skills Measure (2009) recognises that advice given to learners should be unbiased and should be in the best interests of the individual. In 2022, Estyn² found that options to continue learning at 16 vary considerably depending on where learners live in Wales, what language they wish to learn in, and what their education attainment was at age 16. The report also found that the national, regional and local structures to bring coherence and to support improvements are not working well enough. Estyn’s research³ shows that the majority of schools with their own sixth form provide learners with detailed information about courses available in the sixth form but relatively little, if any information, on other options at all levels or apprenticeship opportunities available through alternative local providers. ColegauCymru urges the Welsh Government to implement the recommendation from the Review of Vocation Qualifications in Wales, “that all learners receive equitable and impartial advice on, and access to the opportunities available to them in post-compulsory education and training, and consider how best to support this aim specifically for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities”⁴.

In ColegauCymru’s Taith funded research into the Finnish VET system⁵, it is clear that the issue of ‘attractive’ pathways can be complex. Often individual learner choices are constrained by their environments and knowledge of working life, so guidance plays a key role in this. There is a clear role for Careers Wales in this activity—at least with ‘gateway’ learners preparing for their next stage. Currently, funding models drive competition between different types of providers. This has created barriers to colleges being able to access learners in some schools to set out

¹ [A review of vocational qualifications in Wales](#)

² <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/system/files/2022-10/A%20review%20of%20the%20current%2016-19%20curriculum%20in%20Wales.pdf>

³ [A review of vocational qualifications in Wales](#)

⁴ [A review of vocational qualifications in Wales](#) (recommendation 15)

⁵ [Strategies for Moving Freely - The Finnish Approach to Vocational Education and Training.pdf](#)

the options available to them and means there is variation across Wales, and even within local authority areas, on the quality and amount of advice given to pupils.

Also, if there is a lack of relationships between a school and college this means that it is difficult to gather data on learner transition. Sharing transition data across all phases of education is critical for successful learner movement between educational settings. This is currently a weakness in the systems of support, meaning colleges spend significant time chasing data and students arrive without the data needed to support them.

The new curriculum states that schools must include careers and work-related experiences, and all learners have a right to high-quality independent advice and guidance, particularly at key transition points in education and life. There must be an appropriate range of entry and exit points that can be accessed by learners at different stages of their lives, including for upskilling and retraining.

A national VET strategy for Wales would provide a framework for routes and pathways through our FE system. ColegauCymru's Taith funded research into the Finnish VET system⁶ in 2024 recommended: "The Welsh Government should develop a Vocational Education and Training Strategy. A key learning point from this project has been the cohesiveness of the Finnish VET system coupled with an agility for 'moving freely'. This has been achieved by a clear strategic approach to VET that is long-term, is based on a clear analysis of its operating environment, and links with other parts of government". Evidence from successful systems around the world demonstrates the need for Wales to have more non-university pathways to higher level qualifications and skills acquisition. Access to independent advice and guidance is key to making this work.

With the establishment of Medr, it is critical that the viability of small school sixth forms is considered. Central to Medr's mission of establishing high-quality learning and transition pathways should be a commitment to reviewing the sustainability and offer between 16-19, in particular the viability of small school sixth forms and the breadth of choice learners are able to access. In too many parts of Wales this has been left in the 'too difficult' box, but this short-termism has ultimately been to the detriment of learners. For example, in 2021/2022, 42% of sixth form classes had 5 learners or less (across Wales). There is now sufficient evidence from different parts of Wales that this issue can be addressed, and Medr should expect local authorities to show leadership where change is needed. At a time of acute pressure on public funds, it is failing learners if we don't address parts of the system that cannot offer the choice and educational experience that they should rightly expect. Greater local collaboration to ensure learners have choice and access to high quality provision is needed to underpin reform for the future.

Question 2 - How effective careers support is at compulsory school age

Estyn's Report into Impartial Careers Advice and Guidance to Young People aged 14-16 years provided by Careers Wales⁷ states that, where relationships with schools are good, Careers Wales provides clear advice, often challenging risky or unrealistic ideas through sensitive questioning. Most of the young people eligible for a guidance session respond well to their

⁶ [Strategies for Moving Freely - The Finnish Approach to Vocational Education and Training.pdf](#)

⁷ <https://estyn.gov.wales/improvement-resources/impartial-careers-advice-and-guidance-to-young-people-aged-14-16-years-provided-by-careers-wales-advisers/>

adviser and consider questions around their initial ideas and plans and are willing to work towards the action plan they create with support.

However, despite the work of Careers Wales in engaging with schools it is clear that too many young people do not have access to the information and guidance they need to make informed choices about their future, including the opportunities in vocational education and training.

Improving opportunities for collaboration between colleges and schools, particularly in supporting the transition into post-16 and in offering vocational programmes at study between 14-16, will significantly help learners, parents and carers make informed choices.

School absenteeism, particularly among young people aged 14-16, has increased post pandemic. Some schools are reporting rates as high as 42.6%. Overall, attendance fell by 6.3 percentage points from 2018 to 2023.⁸ 14-16 Pathways and schemes, for example the Junior Apprenticeship programme and school / college partnerships, provide vocational education opportunities to learners aged 14 to 16 who have been identified by schools as being at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). There are different delivery models for the 14-16 provision in FE colleges, but five out of the 12 FE Colleges have accessed 'junior apprenticeship' funding.

Cardiff and Vale College's Junior Apprenticeships programme has seen high success rates with an average of 86-88% of learners achieving vocational qualifications and GCSEs, and the majority have progressed on to FE or employment.⁹ An independent study has also found that the Junior Apprenticeship Programme at Cardiff and the Vale College will save the economy £750,000 per person in preventative spend over the course of a 40-year working life and 60-year adult life, in addition to providing numerous additional benefits to learners.¹⁰ Estyn's Review of the Junior Apprenticeship Programme in Wales¹¹ found that earlier pathways for 14-19 improved levels of engagement and attendance, high success rates in vocational qualifications offered and strong progression rates into further education and training.

A range of provision for 14-16 learners exists. Coleg Sir Gâr and Coleg Ceredigion have approximately 900 learners from Schools across Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion who study with them for between 2 and 4 hrs a week. The delivery model is prescribed by the College and the school. For example, some schools send their pupils to the College (they are bused into the College and back to attend class), or College Staff go into Schools to deliver the vocational qualification - in Llanelli there is a vocational centre on one of the school sites (the College services the construction centre). They also have a Youth Access provision. This is where some pupils from across a range of schools join a full vocational programme for 2 or 3 days a week. The other days they are in school picking up the statutory requirements of pre-16 education. Coleg Cambria is also delivering a similar model.

However, programmes at Colleges with the large numbers of learners are consistently oversubscribed, and learners in many areas of Wales do not have similar opportunities because there are no collaborative local arrangements in place within their areas to support the delivery of 14-16 programmes. Schools should work collaboratively with colleges and local authorities

⁸ Estyn

⁹ Cardiff and Vale Annual Self-Assessment Reports

¹⁰ August 2023 by Dr Steve Garner - Reducing inequalities in educational outcomes at CAVC.

¹¹ <https://estyn.gov.wales/improvement-resources/a-review-of-the-junior-apprenticeship-programme-in-wales/>

to evaluate opportunities for developing or extending 14-16 programmes in order to broaden their curriculum offer in the best interests of learners. Local Authorities should also work collaboratively to evaluate the potential for introducing or extending junior apprenticeship provision to enhance suitable learning opportunities for Year 10 and 11 pupils struggling to engage with existing mainstream provision in schools. We recognise this will require additional funding to both support any capital and ongoing costs but the value to local authorities will come in the form of better outcomes for learners and improvements in attainment and attendance.

Question 3 - Changes in routes post-18

Further data and more detailed analysis over the longer term would be needed to make a definitive statement about whether learners are changing their choices post-18. However, there has been an impact from the cost of living crisis and the changing labour market that means both young people and adults are considering different choices as they enter higher education. There is scope to consider how we can create more non-university pathways to higher skills. This should not be at the expense of traditional pathways to university and it is crucial that Wales has a successful and financially sustainable university sector. However, there is scope to further develop the role of FE institutions in delivering access to higher education for local communities, either as a direct provider, offering progression and lifelong learning routes at Levels 4 and 5 to enable upskilling and reskilling, and in delivering degree apprenticeships.

Question 4 - Welsh-medium provision

ColegauCymru is supportive of the Welsh Government's aspiration for one million Welsh speakers and increased learning through the medium of Welsh is welcome. However, there needs to be full consideration of the workforce challenge in meeting the ambition to create more bilingual pathways in post-16. Significant investment in education, and specifically teacher recruitment and development, is required. This includes not only recruiting new Welsh speaking staff but also upskilling existing staff. We have seen the success of these initiatives across the FE sector. For example, Coleg Gwent, supported by Coleg Cymraeg Cendlaethol, has increased bilingual learners on key areas such as childcare and health care from 7% to 52% over the last five years.

We would welcome a greater breadth of qualifications being made available through the medium of Welsh, assuming funding is available to support the workforce to deliver them. There is a need to develop a coherent and connected system of qualifications that are flexible and valued by learners and employers alike. This would mean having the workforce in place with sufficient Welsh language skills to deliver and assess these qualifications. Awarding organisations with sector expertise and sufficient Welsh language capacity will need to develop qualifications and to provide the necessary external quality assurance.

If we are to meet the one million Welsh speakers by 2050 target, it is essential that a whole education system approach is taken. The FE sector, with its well-established links to employers, is critical to the success of Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 targets and, therefore, consideration must be given to ensuring robust transition arrangements for the new

cohort of learners as a result of the changes to compulsory school education being brought forward by the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill.

Question 5 - Equity of access

The FE sector in Wales generally supports a higher percentage of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds compared to Higher Education (HE) and school Sixth forms, through various learning pathways such as vocational lower level provision, Adult Community Learning and apprenticeships. The most recent figures show that of the 98,175 learners (both full-time and part-time) enrolled at FE institutions from August 2021 to July 2022, 13% were from the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods in Wales. This is compared to 8% of the 23,375 Sixth form students registered at schools in Wales. Enabling people from all backgrounds the opportunity to have the best educational opportunities offered to them provides an excellent basis for furthering social mobility in Wales. Participating in adult learning has a significant impact on social mobility – helping people gain better employment opportunities, leading to higher wages and therefore a better standard of living.

Learners from more deprived areas require a higher level of financial support. There is support available to college learners via the Financial Contingency Fund (FCF) which is critical for colleges to flexibly use to meet the support needs of their learners. However, some colleges have already exhausted their FCF pots this year, such is the acute pressure on their budgets. In 2023/2024, over 8% (3,666) of full-time FE learners aged 16-18 utilised Financial Contingency Funding for free meal vouchers, with a further 748 learners in the 19+ age bracket, bringing the total number of learners who relied on the FCF in order to eat during the college day to almost 10% (4,414). Colleges have noted that it is not only those learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds struggling with the cost of living, but now those middle earners are also facing financial hardship. As with the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), ColegauCymru suggests that eligibility for receiving support from the FCF is also reviewed in order to support all learners who are facing financial difficulty.

An ongoing concern across the FE sector is the cost of transport. According to the Welsh Government's own data, 41% of 16 to 24 years olds identified transport as being the number one barrier to getting a new course, training or a job¹². Funding arrangements for learners vary widely. In some cases, parents cover the costs; while in others, it's the colleges or Local Authorities that pay or subsidise. For example, Coleg Cambria does not receive any contribution to their Learner Travel Bill from Flintshire or Wrexham but do receive a contribution from Denbighshire. However the Coleg has been informed that this is under review, and their transport bill for 23/24 was £2,665,456. Colleges across Wales have faced an increase of more than £3.2million in learner travel costs over the last year. We recognise that Local Authorities are facing intense budget pressures, and this year Rhondda Cynon Taf has withdrawn funding for some transport from September 2025; and from September 2026, Merthyr Tydfil will no longer fund over-16s outside of the council area to travel to college. Learners who study at Coleg y Cymoedd's Nantgarw campus have said the change will have a big impact on future students' ability to attend college¹³.

¹² [Young Person's Guarantee National Conversation: update for participants | GOV.WALES](#)

¹³ [Councils in Wales face 'unsustainable' budget gaps, warns WLGA - BBC News](#)

There is also concern that the Welcome Ticket Scheme which allowed refugees to access free public transport has ended¹⁴. The impact varies across Wales and between colleges, partly because of differences in local demographics, and partly because of the wide range of learner transport arrangements in different local authority areas. For some colleges, the impact is acute and is already affecting some of the most vulnerable learners. This includes some learners having to leave college earlier to be able to pick up their children from school because they are on foot, or not continuing with their studies at all. Cardiff and Vale College - A College of Sanctuary has approximately 1200 refugees and asylum seekers and has said that travel cards have had a huge impact on attendance with these groups. The College provides them to all learners that need them, however their travel bill is already an additional £550K more than last year – £1.5 Million in total on transport costs.

The implementation of Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (ALNET) is already transforming the learner experience in FE. However, sustaining and building on this progress will require ongoing support from Welsh Government and LAs. FEIs need enhanced funding, and long-term financial commitment to support the additional resources required for ALN provision. Colleges have significantly increased staffing levels to meet their new ALN duties. However, this has been achieved with limited additional short-term funding and no certainty of long-term financial support. Addressing the resourcing challenges of the duties in the post-16 sector must be addressed for both the short and longer term. Alongside the need to better resource support for additional learning needs, there are other challenges to be addressed: information sharing; consistency in provision; specialist provision; and building stronger collaboration.

ColegauCymru and its members recognise the significant role that they have in achieving a more equal Wales, and the sector is helping to reach the ambitious target of an anti-racist Wales by 2030. All FE colleges in Wales have anti-racism and equalities plans in place, supported by appropriate equality, diversity and inclusion internal structures, teams and leads. College staff have participated in a range of training and leadership programmes supported by Welsh Government, and we would urge this support to continue. Staff in the FE sector would like to emphasise how valuable this funding has been, enabling links to be made with practitioners and leaders from across all phases of education. Given the momentum that this has created, we would be grateful for further support in enabling the continuation of this engagement.

Shifting the focus towards disability, supported internships in Wales are delivered through Pathway programmes and involve a partnership between employers, FEIs and young people. This provision is expensive to offer as it requires high levels of staffing with people who are well-trained. Therefore recent funding reductions make it difficult for colleges to sustain. Raising the profile of supported apprenticeships with groups of disabled learners is also key, as apprenticeship providers find it difficult to attract applicants for employers. Bridgend College has partnered with Project SEARCH and Hft to provide a supported internship programme at phs Group. The programme has allowed learners to; agree realistic individual outcomes and targets for their programme of learning; engage in meaningful work at the employer's premises; work to develop and improve their employability skills; have the opportunity to practise and improve their independence skills; and gain experience at work for their CV. While there has been support from the Welsh Government in this area, Wales needs to be better at

¹⁴ [Welcome Ticket: Refugees will no longer get free bus travel - BBC News](#)

acknowledging the challenge and the need to improve outcomes for disabled people through consistent funding, better data collection and raising the profile of Supported Internships.

Last year, the Welsh Government invested £4million into the FE sector for better mental health, this funding is used to support learners and staff across a range of projects. Mental health referrals for young people are increasing. FE Colleges have gathered the following data on wellbeing and safeguarding referrals. This illustrates a significant percentage increase, year on year, since the beginning of the Pandemic:

Total	8,456	10,409	15,990	22,438
Percentage increase on prev. year		23%	54%	40%

With the increase in referrals, it is more important than ever that funding is protected through multi-year longer term funding for the sector. Longer term planning for mental health and wellbeing is also needed to address pressure on provision. As part of the wider work being undertaken on mental health, FE Colleges in Wales fully recognise the impact of keeping active on wellbeing. Active wellbeing can provide a preventative solution to wellbeing and mental health related referrals. As part of this, FE colleges are delivering an Active Wellbeing Project via a combination of funding from Sport Wales, college resources and use of Welsh Government project funding for mental health in FE. The project reached over 5000 FE learners in 23/24. There is good evidence that a wide range of engagement and delivery models are being used successfully; For example, referrals for individual learners or groups identified as needing specific support related to behaviour, wellbeing or other potential risks. However the key challenge is the increase in referrals places further pressure on resources in college wellbeing teams alongside other responsibilities.

For a number of colleges it is the case that support staff providing pastoral care and mental health support are funded by UK Government funding pots. We welcome the extension of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund for one year as a transitional arrangement but are concerned that this will be at a reduced level for a further year with £900 million of funding. This reduction will severely impact the FE sector’s ability to deliver current projects that are having a positive impact on learners, for example developing pastoral care initiatives and resilience coaches, as well as the future of the staff delivering these projects. Specialist pastoral roles are critical to the success of learners with complex needs, both for their success at college and to develop the skills they need to function in society and work. However, the sector is losing skilled staff because of low pay and uncertainty for pastoral staff helping to address behaviour and attendance issues. At Coleg Cambria for example, the college was successful in a bid to deliver a Supportive Steps Project which was approved by Flintshire Local Authority. The Supportive Steps project focuses on supporting learners at most risk of becoming NEET, by addressing barriers to attendance with team colleagues receiving referrals from Progress Coaches, triggered by a learner having five non-attendance marks, so that targeted interventions can be put in place. However funding for this project ended in December 2024 and the Coleg do not know if they will receive any further support to continue to deliver the project.

A skilled workforce is essential to ensure a thriving Welsh economy, and adult learning and upskilling are a key part of the rebuilding the Welsh economy. Lifelong learning can provide a

sense of wellbeing and purpose, helping to address social issues such as loneliness and isolation. These benefits in turn provide communities with the tools to thrive. Skills help people into work, and to improve at work, which allows us all to keep up with a changing world and our rapidly transforming workplaces.

However, participation in lifelong learning has fallen over the last decade in Wales with large inequalities in access to learning by age, socioeconomic group, and prior educational attainment. Findings show that there is a growing trend of working-age adults in Wales being under-qualified and lacking essential skills. Almost half of adults from the lowest socioeconomic groups have not received any training since they left full-time education. In Wales the proportion with a level 4 qualification and above is 4% below the UK average.¹⁵ There are inequalities regarding disability (15.2% of disabled people have no qualifications, compared to 4.9% of non-disabled people) and geographical distribution of delivery. The Committee should consider and recognise the important contribution of adult community learning (ACL) to offering adults flexible routes to return to and continue their studies and to gain skills and qualifications. Sustained investment to build capacity in the ACL sector needs to be central to any post-16 strategy. This must include routes to raising levels of basic skills and to supporting those communities with the highest levels of people without recognised qualifications.

Question 6 - Post-16 destination data

Pupil Destination Data for 2023 and previous years, shows a high proportion of learners dropping out of A Levels after year 12. In 2023, 10,698 learners progressed into year 12, however only 7,813 then returned to complete Year 13.¹⁶ This data suggests that there is a lack of objective advice for school pupils on their post-16 options. This lack of advice may have led to many learners dropping out of sixth form to commence studies within FE later during the year. This data shows the importance of all learners being able to access a range of impartial post 16 careers advice.

Currently, we do not have a clear assessment of the national occupational and skills that Wales needs for the future. We need to chart enrolments onto qualifications, learner destinations, and if learners have remained in Wales. Without such correlation it is difficult determine whether we have a relevant and effective range of vocational qualifications to meet our future needs. ColegauCymru's Taith funded research into the Finnish VET system recommends that the Welsh Government should develop National Skills Anticipation Planning. In Finland, VET is planned and delivered based on reliable, contemporary data, collected in a systematic and coordinated way, and that should be the aspiration in Wales. The current system does not work, with significant regional variation in approaches in Wales that results in data that providers often regard as unreliable. This unreliability leads to duplication at the institutional level and is therefore a waste of scarce resources. The size of Wales merits a national approach with regional and sectoral input.

The Welsh Government, working with Medr, should expedite work identifying not only enrolment trends of learners, but destinations of learners, to understand if learners progress into an industry related to their vocational qualification. These trends should be mapped

¹⁵ <https://wcpp.org.uk/publication/supporting-the-welsh-lifelong-learning-system/>

¹⁶ <https://careerswales.gov.wales/education-and-teaching-professionals/pupil-destinations/pupil-destinations-2023>

against the labour market demands to determine whether Wales is succeeding in filling its occupation and skills gaps to meet future aspirations.

Question 7 - Welsh Government's role

Colleges recognise the long-standing support that the Welsh Government has given to the FE sector. Over the last two decades the FE sector has undergone significant structural change and reorganisation to help us deliver on the priorities of the Welsh Government and of local communities. The sector is therefore well placed to be able to respond to the changing skills landscape and to support growth in the Welsh economy. However, more action is still needed from the Welsh Government and Medr to create the right environment for colleges to deliver for learners. There is a lack of overall strategic intent and purpose in post-16 policy, and a new strategy, aligned to a clear understanding of the requirements of the economy, would ensure the delivery of vocational and technical education that can support growth and offer equitable opportunities for individuals.

Alongside this, both the Welsh Government and Medr must work together to improve the transition to post-16 education and training, and specifically to deliver a new 14-19 Learning and Transition Pathway. Successive reports have identified weaknesses in the transition to post-compulsory education. A cross-party consensus to support change at a national and local level is needed. If we are to genuinely put learners at the heart of the system then the government must give the leadership needed to ensure learners have access to the support they need and the opportunity to make real choices about their futures.

Part of the solution to ensuring learners make the right choices for their futures is to ensure that they understand their options at any early stage in their education journey. This is why the recommendations in both the Transitions to Employment report by Dr Hefin David MS and in the Welsh Government's Review of Vocational Qualifications to improve school and college collaboration and to give colleges greater access to school pupils are essential. There has not been enough urgency given to addressing the recommendations from both reports and these should be priorities for the Welsh Government and the pre and post-16 sectors.

**For Further Information please contact Clare Williams, Policy Officer, Colegau Cymru.
clare.williams@colegaucymru.ac.uk**

Routes into post 16 Education and Training

Buffy Williams MS

Chair, Children Young People and Education Committee

seneddchildren@senedd.cymru

6 March 2025

Dear Chair

Firstly, may I express my thanks to the Committee for inviting Universities Wales to provide oral evidence earlier this month, which we hope will provide useful information to the Committee in preparing its report and recommendations, along with our written evidence.

I would like to provide an update to the Committee in light of the latest UCAS data now available, demonstrating the application rate for university entry for next academic year based on applications made by the 29 January Equal Consideration deadline:

- Wales has the lowest proportion of 18-year-olds applying for university in the UK: just 32% of Welsh 18-year-olds have applied to university compared to 33.2% at this point last year. This is particularly concerning when compared to the UK as a whole, where the figure stands at 40.6%.
- The figures show a widening application gap between the least and most advantaged students in Wales. The proportion of 18-year-olds applying from WIMD Q1 has decreased to 20.1%, while those from Q5 has increased by 0.3%.
- Disadvantaged students in Wales are also less likely to apply to university, compared to other parts of the UK. In England, 31% of 18-year-olds in Q1 (the most disadvantaged) apply for university, compared to just 20.1% in Wales.
- Applications via UCAS from mature students in Wales have also continued to decline, particularly in the 25-34 age group. Wales now has the fewest numbers of mature students applying to university than at any point in the past decade.

This latest data release underlines the issues Universities Wales raised in our written and oral evidence, that generational inequality is being baked-in.

We are particularly concerned about the gap in applications between WIMD quintiles 1 and 5, and the fact that over time this gap has *widened*, while the gap has *narrowed* in England. The social mobility and life-changing opportunities offered by tertiary education are not being grasped by those with the most to gain – and this must be addressed for Wales to be a progressive and prosperous nation where all can reach their potential and thrive.

Further to the above, as requested, I will also address the questions shared by the Committee clerk that were not covered during the oral evidence session:

- Your paper refers to the importance of data to understand trends of learners' destinations. To what extent does a lack of published data limit decisions post-16 education and training providers are able to make regarding provision?

At present, there is not one set of data or analysis that presents a complete picture of participation across the tertiary education sector as a whole. While it is possible to piece together separate data sets to some extent, caution must be exercised in drawing conclusions or shaping policy interventions on the basis of incoherent data. For policy makers to draw conclusions and understand trends, one dataset would provide the granularity and certainty needed for any interventions to be well-founded.

- In your view, who should be taking forward work on improving data in this area? Should it be Careers Wales, the Welsh Government or Medr for example?

Universities Wales welcomes Medr's commitments within its draft strategic plan, and its written and oral evidence, to taking forward work on ensuring there is a robust dataset from which to better analyse the full picture of post-16 education and training destinations.

I would like to thank the Committee for conducting this important inquiry, and look forward to continuing to work with you in calling for much-needed interventions to boost Wales' post-16 education and training participation rates, to pave the way for the future our country needs.

Your sincerely



Amanda Wilkinson

Director, Universities Wales

Agenda Item 4.2



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: 7 March 2025

Dear Buffy Williams MS

Eliminating profit from children's care homes (correction of data provided)

The following question was asked by Vaughan Gething MS during the Children, Young People and Education Committee on the 9 January 2025.

"We've had a lot of talk about the Welsh Government plan to eliminate profit from children's care homes, and some people talk about that as a risk in terms of some people moving away from the market, or whether actually it will help to deliver the stability that everyone is looking for. So, I'm interested in your view on how big a risk those plans are, and, if there is a risk, what you'd expect providers to do about that, and, obviously, the conversation you're having with the Government about it."

I stated that on the 31 December 2024, 33 per cent of children's homes were not for profit. Margaret Rooney added that 64% of children's care homes have to become not for profit by 2030. The detail of the number of care homes for profit and not for profit I provided was accurate, but the percentage I gave was incorrect. It should have been 25% and not 33% as stated.

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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.

I attach below a chart which shows the position:

Number of services not for profit and for-profit children's homes					
For Profit/Not For Profit Grouped	service provider sub-type	31/03/2022	31/03/2023	31/03/2024	31/12/2024
For profit	Limited Company	201	219	234	249
For profit	Other Corporate Body	6	6	6	6
For profit Total		207	225	240	255
Not for profit	Charitable Company				1
Not for profit	Charitable Incorporated Organisation	1	1	1	1
Not for profit	Local Authority	34	38	58	64
Not for profit	Other Corporate Body	14	13	15	18
Not for profit Total		49	52	74	84
Grand Total		256	277	314	339
Percentage of total which is not for profit		19.1%	18.8%	23.6%	24.8%

I apologise to the committee and welcome this opportunity to correct the data.

Yours sincerely



Gillian Baranski
Chief Inspector
 Care Inspectorate Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau

Petitions Committee

Chairs of Health and Social Care Committee;
Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee;
Equality and Social Justice Committee; Children,
Education and Young People Committee; Wales
Covid-19 Inquiry Special Purpose Committee

07 March 2025

Dear Chair,

Petition P-06-1488 Establish a 'Care Society' to Tackle the Long COVID Crisis in Wales

The Committee considered the above petition during its meeting on 17 February, alongside correspondence from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care and the petitioner.

During the discussion, I noted key points raised in my prior meeting with the petitioners. Members acknowledged the wide scope of the issues raised, which extend beyond the remit of the Petitions Committee. It was clear that addressing these concerns would require a cross-governmental strategy from the Welsh Government.

As a result the Committee agreed to write to the First Minister, with relevant Cabinet Secretaries copied in for awareness, to inquire about the Government's cross-portfolio strategy for addressing long COVID, particularly in relation to individuals who are either unemployed or facing difficulties returning to work due to potentially undiagnosed long COVID.

Additionally, the Committee agreed to write to relevant Senedd subject committees to seek more information on your ongoing or planned inquiry work regarding the Welsh Government's strategic approach to Long COVID.

The full details of the Committee's consideration of the petition, including the correspondence and the actions agreed by the Committee can be found here: [P-06-1488 Establish a 'Care Society' to Tackle the Long COVID Crisis in Wales](#).

I would be grateful if you could send your response by e-mail to the clerking team at petitions@senedd.wales.

Yours sincerely

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Carolyn

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.





Teacher Recruitment and Retention

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

Buffy Williams MS
Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

12 March 2025

Dear Buffy,

Thank you for your letter of 18 February requesting information about the Strategic Education Workforce Plan to inform the scoping of your forthcoming inquiry. I welcome the Committee's interest in this area.

As I outlined in my written statement, I'm aware from my discussions with teachers, leaders and teaching assistants that there are increasing pressures on the profession and society's expectations of what we expect from our schools have changed.

My officials are currently working with the WLGA and local authorities / governors as the employers and the education unions through our existing forums to develop the framework for the plan. I anticipate that I will be in a position to share this more widely during the summer term to inform an open discussion with the profession and other key stakeholders. Subject to collective agreement, I hope to be able to publish the plan in 2026.

I would be happy to share further information with the Committee members during the summer term.

Yours sincerely

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.

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.

Buffy Williams MS

seneddchildren@senedd.wales

Wednesday 12 March 2025

Dear Buffy,

Subject: Follow up from meeting with the EHRC Wales

Thank you for meeting with us last month to discuss our priorities, we found the discussion to be very helpful.

As agreed, please find below information on our concerns regarding restraint in schools as well as a further update on our new Human Rights Tracker.

Our restraint in schools' inquiry

In June 2021 we published our [Restraint in schools inquiry: using meaningful data to protect children's rights](#). One of our key findings was that there is no reliable data in Wales or England on the extent to which restraint is used disproportionately on protected groups of children.

A key recommendation within the report was for the Welsh Government, and

Bydd y Comisiwn yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg.

The Commission welcomes correspondence in Welsh or English.

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the UK Government, to have national minimum standards set for recording the use of restraint in schools. These should include, for example, the type of restraint used, the reason(s) for the use of restraint and the protected characteristics of the child (including age, sex, disability – broken down by impairment type – and race).

We welcomed both the Welsh Government's Reducing Restrictive Practice Framework and the formal response we received from the then Minister for Education. Within this he stated the Welsh Government would develop specific guidance on restraint for the education sector. Nevertheless, progress on this has been slow and has not moved forward.

As you know, the Welsh Government has a long-standing commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Our [CRC report](#), published in January 2023, highlighted our continued concern that schools in Wales are not legally required to record the use of restraint. Due to this lack of standardised recording and monitoring it is still not possible to fully assess the prevalence of restraint, including any disproportionate use on children with certain protected characteristics. This makes it very difficult for schools and the Welsh Government to monitor restraint usage or minimise it.

Bydd y Comisiwn yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg.

The Commission welcomes correspondence in Welsh or English.

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This was reflected in the [concluding observations](#) of the UNCRC Committee.

Since we met last month, the UK Government has launched a [consultation](#) on its revised 'Use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions in schools' guidance. The guidance has been updated to support schools to meet the new statutory requirement to record every significant incident of use of force and report these incidents to the parents of the pupils involved. This statutory requirement will be effective from September 2025.

We are concerned by this widening gap and that children in Wales will not be protected in the same way.

This may be an area the CYPE Committee wish to scrutinise the Welsh Government in, to ensure the recommendations within our inquiry report are met and that the Welsh Government develop restraint guidance for schools in Wales.

Human Rights Tracker

As discussed, we have launched a new phase in our [Human Rights Tracker](#). The Tracker is a unique online tool which assesses how well the Welsh and UK Governments are putting their international human rights obligations into

Bydd y Comisiwn yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg.

The Commission welcomes correspondence in Welsh or English.

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practice.

We have updated our Tracker's methodology to make it easier to understand the UN's recommendations, and the actions the Welsh and UK Governments have taken to meet these recommendations. Where a recommendation relates to matters devolved to the Welsh Government, we have a separate assessment of action they have taken.

We want people to engage with our Tracker and to use it as a tool to inform research, debate and decision-making. We hope this will drive action and meaningful change that enhances human rights and makes life fairer for everyone in Wales.

As mentioned, we would be more than happy to arrange a demonstration session for Committee members and Senedd staff on our new tracker.

We hope the information provided is helpful, if you require any further information, please let us know.

Bydd y Comisiwn yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg.

The Commission welcomes correspondence in Welsh or English.

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Comisiwn
Cydraddoldeb a
Hawliau Dynol

Equality and
Human Rights
Commission

Yours sincerely,

Rev Ruth Coombs
Head of Wales
Wales | Cymru

Bydd y Comisiwn yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg.

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Agenda Item 4.6

Letter from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee to all Welsh Universities regarding issues facing the [Higher Education Sector](#)

[Letter to Aberystwyth University](#)

[Letter to Bangor University](#)

[Letter to Cardiff Metropolitan University](#)

[Letter to Open University Wales](#)

[Letter to Swansea University](#)

[Letter to University of South Wales](#)

[Letter to University of Wales Trinity St David](#)

[Letter to Wrexham University](#)

Buffy Williams MS
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Welsh Parliament
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CF99 1SN

17th March 2025

Plenary Debate 'Children on the Margins' Inquiry

Dear Buffy Williams MS,

On behalf of NYAS Cymru, I would like to sincerely thank you and the Children, Young People and Education's Committee for the Plenary debate which took place on Wednesday 12th March 2025 regarding the Committee's 'Children on the Margins' inquiry. During the debate, we were pleased to hear you discuss the inquiry's recommendation 3 regarding return interviews, and we would like to thank you for emphasising the call for **the offer** of a return interview to be mandatory, rather than the interview itself.

When the Minister for Children and Social Care spoke about Welsh Government's response to this recommendation, it was stated children and young people 'already have a statutory right to a return interview under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014'. NYAS Cymru's understanding is that they are not statutory, and we are concerned that the active offer of advocacy may be being conflated with return interview services. We noted that in Welsh Government's written response to the recommendation 3, the active offer of advocacy was also referenced. As you and the Committee are aware, advocacy delivered through the active offer is fundamentally different to a return interview.

The active offer of advocacy is only available for children and young people in Wales who become subject to child protection enquiries leading to an Initial Child Protection Conference or taken into local authority care. While these children and young people are at higher risk of missing incidents, any child or young person in Wales can experience missing and the majority will not be eligible for the active offer and therefore would not be able to access it after a missing incident. If advocacy is likened to a return interview, this will likely result in children and young people not receiving or being able to access the right support services. The active offer of advocacy cannot and must not be perceived as an alternative to a return interview and we believe Welsh Government must be clearer on this, to prevent any confusion in legislation and practice. We would strongly welcome the Committee writing to the Minister for Children and Social Care to clarify this, to ensure there is a clear understanding of the differences and individual importance of return interview services and the active offer of advocacy.

Once again, we would like to thank you and the Committee for truly listening to our calls, the day-to-day experiences of our frontline workers and most importantly, the children and young people we support. Please do not hesitate to reach out if there is anything we can do to continue supporting this work.

Best regards,



Sharon Lovell MBE, Chief Executive, NYAS Cymru

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Agenda Item 4.8

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

Routes into post-16 education and training

Data

This is a response from the National Centre for Learning Welsh to the questions that were unasked at the meeting on 13 March

- In your view, is there sufficient data available regarding the number of learners in both pre- and post-16 education who study through the medium of Welsh? If not, who should be responsible for collating and publishing that data?
- To what extent does a lack of published data that shows the trends of young people's choices and destinations limit the tertiary education sector in being able to plan future provision?
- In your view, who should be taking forward work on improving data in this area? Should it be the Welsh Government or Medr for example?

Activities to increase the skills of young people and the workforce need to be significant, and lead to clear outputs in terms of confidence and skills that allow the Welsh language to be used at work and in the community. We suggest, therefore, that there is a need to reconsider the way in which data is recorded in terms of learning through the medium of Welsh, and to ensure that there is consistency and clarity regarding the definition of 'medium of Welsh' in the tertiary education sector.

We believe that there's a special opportunity to incorporate the work of CEFR and the Code into the post-16 provision, and that this is planned to align with what is set out in the Welsh Language and Education Bill. We believe that this needs to be acknowledged if the Code, as set out in the Welsh Language and Education Bill, is to be used in the tertiary education sector.

The Centre is pleased with the initial discussions that have taken place with MEDR, to identify areas of collaboration and areas where clarity may be required in terms of duties and responsibilities. The Centre is keen to ensure that it shares expertise on the acquisition and learning of the language to facilitate young people's post-16 education pathways, specifically in terms of recording skills in the Welsh language in the context of this question.

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

—
**Children, Young People
and Education
Committee**

**Y Pwyllgor
Cydraddoldeb a
Chyfiawnder
Cymdeithasol**

—
**Equality and Social
Justice Committee**

Agenda Item 4.9

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Jane Hutt MS

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip

Vikki Howells MS

Minister for Further and Higher Education

20 March 2025

Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill LCM

Dear Jane and Vikki,

As you will know, the Business Committee has referred the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill Legislative Consent Memorandum (LCM) to the Children, Young People and Education Committee and the Equality and Social Justice Committee with a reporting deadline of 2 May 2025.

We are writing to you jointly on certain issues relating to the LCM:

1. What are your views on clause 38 and whether there are any concerns about the remaining provisions set out in the Illegal Migration Act 2023 and elements of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022?
2. What are your views on the retrospective nature of clause 51?
3. What discussions have you had with the 17 organisations in Wales with active membership of the UK ENIC Service?
4. Have you sought any clarification about how the issues addressed in clause 51 arose in the first place and whether the Home Office is conducting a review of the situation?
5. Have you received an estimate for the volume and value of fees charged without statutory authority and the impact this has had on people living in Wales?

6. Why are you not seeking consent for clause 53 of the Bill? Clause 53 contains a regulation making power for the Secretary of State to make consequential provision. These regulations may amend, repeal or revoke any enactment. Clause 53(3)(c) states that "enactment" includes an enactment contained in, or in an instrument made under, a Measure or Act of Senedd Cymru. We would be grateful if you could provide a response no later Friday 28 March. If you have any concerns with this timetable please don't hesitate to contact our clerks at any time.

Yours sincerely,



Buffy Williams MS
Chair
Children, Young People and Education
Committee



Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair
Equality and Social Justice Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

See Annex A

20 March 2025

Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill LCM

Dear colleagues,

As you may know, the Senedd's Business Committee has referred the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill Legislative Consent Motion (LCM) to the Children, Young People and Education Committee.

We would therefore be very grateful for your views to support our scrutiny of the LCM. In particular we would welcome your views on:

- the Bill in general;
- the remaining provisions in the Illegal Migration Act 2023, including whether they have any concerns about existing arrangements for unaccompanied children;
- whether the Bill is compatible with the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011, including what impact it would have on the 'child first, migration second approach' which underpins the delivery of support to child asylum seekers in Wales; and
- clause 51, which provides retrospective statutory authority for fees charged in connection with the following three services provided by a third-party supplier on behalf of the Home Office and the Department for Education (DfE): The Home Office Visas and Nationality Service; The DfE UK European Network of Information Centres Services (the UK ENIC Service); and The non-UK Early Years Qualifications Recognition Service.

If you would like to submit your views, please do so no later than Friday 28 March. We apologise for the very short timetable.

Yours sincerely,



Buffy Williams MS
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Annex A: Recipients

The Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Cymru

Barnardo's

Bevan Foundation

British Red Cross

Children's Commissioner

Children in Wales

ColegauCymru

Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team Wales (EYST)

Equality and Human Rights Commission

National Youth Advocacy Service

Universities Wales

Wales Strategic Migration Unit

Welsh Local Government Association

Welsh Refugee Council

These responses were developed during the consultation process launched on 28 January 2025. This process is ongoing and there will be subsequent changes to the proposals between the date of submission of this document and the close of the process. This information is correct as of 21 March 2025 but will change as the process continues.

An overview of your assessment of the financial challenges facing Cardiff University, with reference to key data that underpins your proposed changes (e.g. current and projected student numbers, take-up rates, levels of Cardiff University reserves, etc.)

Cardiff University is not alone in facing significant financial challenges – the same factors are impacting many universities in the UK and globally.

Cardiff University is running an operating deficit: our operating deficit in 23/24 was £31.2million, and we began 24/25 forecasting a deficit of £65 million had we not acted as outlined below. This is a result of a combination of factors, not least the impact of recent high inflation on operating costs, the rise in the cost of National Insurance Contributions for the University (estimated at £7m), and failure of the level of UK tuition fee to keep pace with the cost of educating home students. We make a loss on our research activity: very little of our research activity is fully-funded even though it is critical to addressing the grand research challenges of our increasingly complex world. Each year, our pay bill rises as a result of promotions processes and the nationally-negotiated pay increase.

Simultaneously, we have experienced a sharp decline in international student numbers. This has occurred for a range of reasons:

- The previous UK Government’s rhetoric on international students has meant that the UK is now perceived as a considerably less welcoming destination for students and they are choosing other destinations which have more attractive visa regimes
- Following the pandemic, patterns of international student mobility have changed, with more students choosing to study closer to home in countries like Malaysia and Singapore, which have ambitions to be global education hubs
- The quality of universities worldwide is improving, meaning there are more options for students to remain in their home country.
- Cardiff University is struggling to compete with other, higher ranked and better recognised UK institutions, within a smaller pool of international applicants.

In recent years Cardiff’s league table position has declined, most notably in the QS World University Rankings where it fell from 154th to 186th. Improving our position in the league tables is a key strategic focus but it will take time to change our position.

The UK undergraduate market demand is showing signs of flatlining, meaning further growth here will be problematic. In recent years we have taken more students through clearing, have increased student numbers in some disciplines to compensate for difficulties recruiting in others, and have lowered tariff in some subjects, with the resulting need to accommodate larger and more academically diverse cohorts, posing challenges for both teaching and the student experience.

For a number of the subjects which we are proposing to discontinue, most notably ancient history, modern languages and translation, music, and religious studies and theology, there is a significant and sustained drop in student demand. Fewer students are choosing to study these subjects to GCSE or A Level and this means that there is likely to be continued pressure on recruitment to those courses across Wales and the UK as a whole.

The domestic postgraduate market has been shrinking for a number of years, as a result of a rise in the cost of living, a relatively buoyant employment market for graduates, and a shift in demand to more flexible types of provision and continuing professional development. We are repositioning ourselves to respond more effectively to these new demands, but these developments will take time to deliver.

We are also moving at pace to further diversify our income, notably in transnational education, the first of which will be our partnership in Kazakhstan. However, as with flexible provision and continuing professional development, these new initiatives will not generate significant income for several years.

Using our reserves is not a sustainable solution to our financial challenge. We cannot repeatedly spend more than we earn, which has been the case since 2020-21. We know that if we carry on as we are, we will run out of cash in four years' time. Reserves can only be used once and are already being reduced by running an operating deficit in consecutive years and exceptional restructuring costs.

Although we have £426m of liquid assets, much of that money is not available to be spent.

- £53m of that are our endowments, which we cannot legally spend.
- £62m is in the bond repayment fund.
- £26m committed to capital projects which are already underway.
- £144m bond proceeds remain. This must be spent on long term infrastructure that will generate returns to enable paying back of the bond.
- £100m long term reserves. Council has approved £63m draw down to cover cost of the 2024/25 operating deficit and exceptional restructuring costs.
- £41m remaining that is freely available.

Details of any specific policies at Welsh- or UK-government level that have significantly impacted on Cardiff University's ability to operate sustainably;

There are two significant issues which have impacted on Cardiff University's sustainability. The first is the relative decline in the value of the tuition fee compared to the costs of teaching. We receive additional funding from Medr in relation to higher cost courses and modules, but these are tied to specific subjects and still do not fully close that gap.

The second issue is the impact of the policy of the previous UK Government in relation to international students. Due to the growth in the funding gap for teaching home students, in recent years universities across the UK have relied on recruiting international students, who make a higher financial contribution. The number of international students applying to UK institutions has been in decline since the COVID pandemic due to a number of factors, including geopolitical trends and a greater range of competitors. This has been exacerbated by the decision of the previous UK Government to prevent postgraduate students from bringing

dependents and from the attempts to abolish the graduate route visa. This created substantial challenges to international student recruitment, which has continued to decline ahead of the next academic year.

The current UK Labour government, although being more positive and welcoming in its tone towards international students, has yet to make any policy changes that will encourage more international students to choose the UK.

Cardiff University would also note that the rise in National Insurance Contributions (NIC) will increase our deficit by £7 million. Although the NIC increase is not specific to universities, it places further pressure on our finances. We estimate that the increase in tuition fees will only equate to roughly half of the National Insurance rise.

The changes that have already been made in recent years by you or your predecessors to mitigate the impact of the financial challenges facing Cardiff University;

Cardiff University has already cut costs by reducing its non-pay budget, selling buildings, pausing academic promotions, and through two rounds of voluntary severance. We have sought to grow income with January starts for some of our programmes and by taking additional students through clearing. We are continuing to divest from our estate, and we are continuing to tighten non-pay budgets.

However, we cannot continue with annual rounds of budget cuts that demoralise our community and affect the staff and student experience. Cutting non-pay budgets also curtails our reach and reputation – we become less visible and our reputation diminishes, with a knock-on diminishing effect for Wales. We need to disinvest to reinvest in areas of core and emerging strength, to ensure we have an academically and financially sustainable institution for current and future generations.

We acknowledge that Welsh Government has provided additional financial support through its intention to further raise the tuition fee cap ahead of 2025/26 and the £18m allocated across Welsh universities in February 2025. This is capital expenditure for energy efficiency and digital transformation which we intend to use in a manner which will reduce our costs in the longer-term. It does not remove the sustained pressure on our operating costs.

Clarification of the rationale for each of the key proposals set out in your statement of 28 January, including whether the proposal has been made strictly for financial reasons or otherwise;

These proposals are designed to make Cardiff University both academically and financially sustainable, in line with our strategy: [Our future, together](#).

Last year we embarked on a major consultation exercise *Y Sgwrs Fawr–The Big Conversation*, to co-create that strategy. Our staff and students told us firmly that we should commit to a better future for current and subsequent generations – not just for those who work and study here, but more broadly for Cardiff, Wales and the world.

We can fulfil that mission only if we are sustainable. That means living within our means, having the financial headroom to innovate, recognising what the world needs from us and being agile enough to adapt to the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

We are taking the steps now – earlier than many other universities, and with more clarity in terms of our proposals - to ensure that we have solid foundations for an exciting future.

While we are driven by the academic ambitions of our strategy, long term financial sustainability must be part of our considerations.

In terms of the subjects initially proposed for closure (apart from nursing), there has been a sustained drop in the number of students studying these subjects at GCSE and A Level. In turn this means that the level of provision currently provided by the higher education sector as a whole is likely to reduce. It is deeply frustrating that competition law prevents universities from dealing with these scenarios in a collaborative and co-ordinated way.

With regards our nursing degrees, a number of other factors were important beyond finances including NSS scores, ability to meet recruitment targets that are externally set, and the challenges of recruiting students in competition with other local providers. Since the initial proposals were launched, we have been part of constructive conversations for the future provision of nursing which will undoubtedly be reflected in our final plans.

More widely, we have only been able to recruit to our desired levels in recent years by lowering our offers and by making extensive use of the clearing process in some of our Academic Schools. Our proposal is that Cardiff University will now ‘hold tariff’ and no longer soften our offer-making to the same extent. This is in part due to the diminishing financial advantage to increased home undergraduate student numbers but also due to the expected benefits to the student (and staff) experience with smaller, similar-tariff, cohorts. Doing so may also have a beneficial impact on other Welsh institutions who are struggling with recruitment. This in no way affects our commitment to widening participation: we will continue to work hard to recruit students who have experienced educational disadvantage and our contextual admissions policy allows us to make offers three grade below our standard offers for the most disadvantaged applicants.

The expected cost savings associated with each of the key proposals as set out in your statement of January 28;

The costings underpinning the specific proposals rely on commercially confidential information. They will also change as a result of the consultation which is currently ongoing.

Taken in the round, these proposals will not completely close our financial gap but they are an important step towards financial sustainability. They will also give us headroom to invest in new activities that can generate income (such as flexible life-long learning) and extend our reach and reputation in order to fulfil our academic ambitions. We will also continue to divest from buildings where this is possible and look for other savings, which will further reduce our ongoing costs.

More details about what will happen after the consultation closes and associated timelines (including how the consultation responses will shape the final plans, and when those final plans will be drafted)

The consultation has already delivered changes to the proposals. At mid-point through the consultation, we were able to further refine our proposals based on the feedback we had

received from the Cardiff University community and wider partners including Welsh Government and other higher education providers. These included:

- Reducing the expected number of job losses because of applications accepted through the earlier voluntary severance scheme and through the current voluntary redundancy scheme.
- Moved more staff out of scope.
- Continued the constructive discussions with staff, students, our recognised campus trade unions and external stakeholders on alternative proposals across a range of subjects. The outcomes of these discussions will affect the final outcomes of this process.

We will have two further review points before the consultation closes on 6th May. At both of those review points, we will be seeking to remove more people from the 'in-scope' pool based on a range of mitigations. These mitigations may come from the acceptance of aspects of alternative proposals, the uptake of voluntary redundancy or the impact of new initiatives, for example the proposed branch campus in Kazakhstan. As we have said throughout this process, compulsory redundancies remain a very last resort.

Following the close of the consultation the University Executive Board will review all the submissions made during the consultation and make final recommendations to the University's Council, who will need to approve the plans.

Any other information that you feel is relevant to the announcement made on 28 January.

The Academic Futures process is only one element of Cardiff University's wider strategy. While there has understandably been significant emphasis on these specific proposals, I also want to emphasise the wider vision for the future of Cardiff University, which has an emphasis on offering an excellent educational experience, generating new knowledge that tackles the big challenges, and acting as an anchor institution in our city-region.

Likewise, I know that there has been understandable concern expressed at the number of proposed job losses and the acknowledgement that Cardiff University will become a slightly smaller university. However, if the initial proposals of a reduction of 400 FTE academic jobs were to proceed, Cardiff University would remain one of the largest universities in the UK, and continue to offer one of the broadest range of subjects. Cardiff University would also continue to be a larger university than we were in 2019.

Finally, the restrictions of Competition Law have made having discussions with other providers a challenge. Legal guidance precluded us from having discussions with other providers prior to the announcement we made on 28 January. Such discussions are crucial to preserving provision at a time when university finances are under pressure and student numbers are falling. Our view is that this also undermines the Welsh Government's and Medr's desire to have a more collaborative and differentiated sector. Cardiff University would encourage the Welsh and UK Governments and the Competitions and Markets Authority to work together to address this challenge.

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