

Children and Young People Committee

Meeting Venue:
Committee Room 1 – Senedd

Meeting date:
23 November 2011

Meeting time:
09:15

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



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Agenda

1. Introductions, apologies and substitutions (09:15)

2. Implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009: Evidence Session (09.16 – 10.15) (Pages 1 – 6)

**Welsh Local Government Association
Association of Directors of Education**

Dr Chris Llewelyn – Director of Lifelong Learning, Leisure and
Information (WLGA)

Karl Napieralla – Director of Education Neath Port Talbot (ADEW)

Break 10.15 – 10.30

3. Implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009: Evidence Session (10.30 – 11.15) (Pages 7 – 51)

Estyn

Ann Keane – Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales

Meilyr Rowlands – Strategic Director

4. Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for the following business: (11.15 – 11.16)

5. Inquiry into oral health – consideration of key issues (11.16 –

11.45)

6. Discussion of forward work programme (11.45 – 12.00)

Children and Young People Committee

CYP(4)-10-11 Paper 1

**Inquiry into the implementation of the Learning and Skills Measure
2009**

**Evidence from the Welsh Local Government Association and the
Association of Directors of Education**



Children and Young People Committee

**Inquiry into the Learning and Skills
(Wales) Measure 2009**

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November 2011



INTRODUCTION

1. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the 22 local authorities in Wales, and the three national park authorities, the three fire and rescue authorities, and four police authorities are associate members.
2. It seeks to provide representation to local authorities within an emerging policy framework that satisfies the key priorities of our members and delivers a broad range of services that add value to Welsh Local Government and the communities they serve.
3. The WLGA and the Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW) welcome the opportunity to respond to the National Assembly for Wales Children and Young People Committee Inquiry into the Implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009. ADEW and the WLGA supported the implementation of the Measure as a means of providing a collaborative approach to provision and enhanced curriculum opportunities for learners aged 14-19.
4. The Committee has posed a number of questions about the implementation of the Learning and Skills Measure which this response addresses. Further detail regarding any of the points below can be provided when the WLGA and ADEW appears before the Committee on the 23rd November 2011.

What effect has the implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 had to date on young people aged 14-19 years? Do young people have a wider choice of academic and vocational courses as a result of the Measure?

5. As the Measure was only implemented in 2009 it is still too early to comment on the long term impact of the changes. However in the short term it is clear that an increased number of young people are able to access a wider spectrum of courses and learning options which provide them with enhanced skill sets for both academic and vocational routes. There is also evidence in some areas that there has been an increased level of attainment for 14 year olds.
6. The anecdotal evidence from local authorities is that the offer of a wider range of courses has had a positive impact on learners, particularly via the Welsh Baccalaureate. There is a wider choice of vocational options, and the access to these courses has improved. Although there has been an improvement in access there is

some way to go towards achieving parity of esteem, particularly in the employment sector, between vocational learning and academic qualifications. In addition there is a concern about the sustainability of this approach to the provision of vocational courses as they are often more costly than academic routes. This is of particular concern given the recent announcement by the Welsh Government that they will be reducing the 14-19 grant by 19% over the next two years.

7. The Measure has also had a positive impact on the wider support for learners. The use of learning coaches has ensured that fewer young people have become disengaged and for others has offered a 'guiding hand' which may not have been available previously.
8. There has been an increase in the number of courses available in both academic and vocational subjects in Welsh and the all schools are meeting the requirements of the Measure. This has been made possible in many areas by increased collaboration between schools, Further Education Institutions (FEIs) and local authorities. There are also examples of innovative use of ICT, particularly in areas where geographic distance makes collaborative approaches more challenging.

Has the implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 had any effect on the numbers of young people choosing to stay on in education or training after the end of compulsory education at age 16?

9. Most areas of Wales have seen a decrease in the number of young people that are not in education, employment or training (NEET), although this is not the case in all local authority areas. On a Wales-wide basis the statistics show that since 2009, when the Measure was implemented, there has been a reduction of 1,700 16-18 year olds who could be categorised as NEET. The number of young people NEET peaked in 2008 when 15,000 16-18 year olds were not in education, training or employment, this figure is now 12,700. Figures are also showing that the number of 15 year olds leaving education with no qualifications is reducing, however attainment at 17 has remained steady for a number of years.
10. It is difficult to draw conclusions from these statistics at this early stage and monitoring trends over the next few years will give a clearer picture. It is also important to ensure that the quality of post-16 provision remains high and that there are opportunities for young people when they leave education and training. Whilst the number of NEET 16-18 year olds is decreasing there is a marked increase in the number of 19-24 year olds who are not in employment, education or training. There

are now 58,000 NEETs between 19 and 24, rising from 36,600 in 2004. Clearly the current economic situation is a significant factor in these figures.

What practical problems are being addressed in order to implement the Measure?

11. There have been a number of practical issues that have been encountered during implementation of the Measure. Many issues were raised at the consultation stage of the Measure, prior to implementation, and included concerns over transport, particularly in rural areas; meeting the required number of courses; and partnership and collaborative working. Local authorities and 14 – 19 networks have worked hard to ensure that these challenges have been overcome in order to enable young people to take full advantage of the extended curriculum offered.
12. There are a number of issues that particularly, although not exclusively, impact on rural areas. In order to meet the curriculum demands it has been necessary in some cases for young people, and/or staff, to travel between institutions. Local authorities have overcome this challenge by using central coordination of transport including sharing funding.
13. Accessibility issues have also been overcome by the innovative use of ICT. This type of remote learning has worked well in some areas, however, for some of the vocational courses this is not a practical option. A good example of where ICT is working well is in north Wales where they have developed an online welsh language resource. This approach has worked well to avoid duplication and is now being shared with other regions who require welsh language support.
14. Despite these challenges the target of providing 30 options, including 5 vocational courses, seems to have been met in all areas. The establishment of partnerships has been key to enabling effective delivery. Partnerships between schools, and with FEIs, has meant that duplication of courses has been avoided and regional networks have provided strategic direction and support.

Is the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 being implemented consistently across all local authorities?

15. There is widespread support for the 14-19 curriculum and local authorities are meeting the requirement to provide the 30 options. There are inevitably variations in provision according to the needs of the local area. The 14-19 representatives meet at a regional

and national level to share good practice which promotes consistency in approaches. Methods of delivery do vary according to a number of factors, including rurality, pupil numbers, diversity etc. Taking a bespoke approach is a strength of 14-19 delivery and has resulted in some excellent and innovative programmes, which were highlighted in the recent 14-19 evaluation report.

Are vulnerable learners, particularly those with additional learning needs, able to benefit from the provisions in the Measure?

16. During the consultation stage of the Measure there was a concern that pupils who would be unable to access level 2 provision would be disadvantaged within the new framework. The focus on achieving level 2 has meant that there has been a redirection of resource away from those pupils who would be more suited to level 1.
17. There are however, good examples of where specialist support is available for more vulnerable learners. Trinity Fields School in Caerphilly works in partnership with the local FEI to support an independent learning programme. Young people who are NEET or in danger of becoming NEET can also access support from Learning Coaches and also via more informal learning environments, such as youth work.

Is learning support being delivered effectively?

18. Support is available to all pupils within the 14-19 framework, although not all learners require support. Many learners only require intermittent support at particular junctures, which is provided alongside work with those who need a greater level of ongoing support. There are now substantial numbers of learning coaches who have been trained across Wales to fulfil this role.

What effect is the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 having on further education colleges?

19. Local authority engagement with FEIs has been very positive. All local 14-19 networks have full involvement of colleges and the experience of building effective partnerships has been beneficial to effective delivery of the 14-19 curriculum.

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Children and Young People Committee

CYP(4)-10-11 Paper 2

Inquiry into the implementation of the Learning and Skills Measure 2009

Evidence from Estyn

This paper summarises Estyn's evidence on the effect that the implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 has had on young people aged 14-19 years. In particular, we answer below the three main questions raised in the terms of reference for the inquiry.

We also attach our most recent reports on education for 14-19 year old learners:

- Area inspection report on the quality and standards of provision for 14 to 19-year-old learners in Flintshire (June 2011); and
- Wider choice and the learning core: progress in implementing a wider option choice and the learning core for 14-19 learners (August 2010).

1. Whether the implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 has had any effect on the numbers of young people choosing to stay on in education or training after the end of compulsory education at age 16.

Destination data shows that the number of 16 year old learners who choose to continue in full-time education is increasing year on year. This suggests that the wider range of courses on offer due to implementing the Measure is impacting positively on learners' decisions to stay on in education or training.

Careers Wales Destination Data

	2007	2008	2009	2010
Percentage of young people continuing in full time education after Year 11	77.2%	79.2%	82.2%	82.8%
Percentage of young people not engaged in education, employment and training after Year 11	6.9%	7.1%	5.7%	5.4%
Percentage of young people not engaged in education, employment and training after Year 13	4.6%	5.6%	6.6%	7%

Specifically, during the last two years, the percentage of young people aged 16-18 not engaged in education, employment and training has decreased as more young people choose to stay in full-time education. Increasingly, pupils from a broader range of ability are choosing to stay on in full-time education as there are more courses available that appeal to them.

However, during the same period of time, the percentage of young people after Year 13 who are not engaged in education, employment and training has increased. This may partly be due to changes in the job market in Wales as well as increased unemployment rates across the UK.

2. Whether young people aged 14-19 have a wider choice for academic and vocational courses as a result of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009.

Providers have increased the number and range of general and vocational choices for learners, as illustrated in the chart below of Careers Wales data. Much of this increase is in the range of vocational courses offered and is partly the result of collaborative working between providers. Most of this collaborative working is either between schools only or between schools and further education colleges, although work-based learning providers also provide specialist facilities or expertise in some vocational areas that are not normally available in schools.

	2008	2009	2010
Number of schools included in survey	191	222	222
Highest number of courses	35	49.5	56
Lowest number of courses	16	22.5	26
Number and percentage of schools offering 20 or more courses	167 (87%)	222 (100%)	222 (100%)
Number and percentage of schools offering 24 or more courses	103 (54%)	214 (96%)	222 (100%)
Number and percentage of schools meeting the requirements of the Measure for 2012 (30 or more courses)	29 (15%)	136 (61%)	196 (88%)

Inspection evidence also demonstrates that schools are making good progress towards meeting the full requirements of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure. Most schools now provide a good range of general and vocational courses for their learners.

Early on, some schools offered vocational courses at entry level or level 1 without offering subsequent progression routes to enable learners to move to level 1 or 2. But with the increase in collaborative arrangements and the numbers of courses being offered, planned progression routes for learners are now more common. More recently however, some schools have begun to enhance their in-house vocational options so there is less collaboration in some areas as a result.

There is wide a variation in the range and number of courses available to learners in different areas. For example, although most Welsh-medium schools meet the full requirements for the number of courses contained in the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure in key stage 4, rural Welsh-medium or bilingual schools make up most of the schools that are not currently meeting the full requirements of the Measure. This

is mainly because that in these parts of Wales, there is not enough provision of Welsh-medium vocational courses that require specialist facilities and many Welsh-speaking learners cannot progress to Welsh-medium courses at further education colleges because of a lack of Welsh-speaking tutors.

3. What practical problems have been addressed in order to implement the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009.

Some of the practical problems that need addressing in order to implement the Measure are listed below.

There is still a lack of impartial advice at key points (at age 14 and 16) when learners make choices. Reductions in institutional budgets result in increasing competition for 16-19 learners between colleges and school sixth forms because the income of both is dependent on the number of full-time learners they enrol.

Key stage 4 pupils in particular, are sometimes reluctant to pursue courses that are offered by an alternative provider, particularly if this means that they have a long journey between providers during the school day.

Vocational courses are more expensive than traditional academic courses and usually require learners to travel between providers. Transport costs in some areas are high and schools do not always have sustainable plans in place to meet these additional costs. The funding of this provision has largely come from grants rather than mainstream sources and so there are doubts about its sustainability, particularly for those courses that are provided collaboratively.

Class sizes still vary too much between and within providers. In order to meet the Measure, a minority of schools offer courses that are not economically viable. The current economic situation exacerbates this issue. Keeping learners in too small school sixth form classes is leading to larger class sizes at key stage 4 and key stage 3.

In order to meet the needs of collaborative working, providers have a common timetable in key stage 4 and the sixth form constructed in 'blocks' of subject time. This common timetabling may impact adversely on pupils at key stage 3 as subjects are grouped together e.g. three English lessons in one day so if a pupil or teacher is absent, a significant amount of curriculum time is lost in that subject.

The pace at which transformation plans (reorganisation or amalgamation of providers) have been implemented has been slow and, in order to meet the requirements of the Measure, 14-19 Networks have been increasing the number of courses available within the existing, often uneconomic, configuration of providers. Providers are trying to set up new provision without knowing what the infrastructure will be in the future.

Further comment

Another question that is worth asking is whether implementing the Measure has had an impact on the quality of outcomes – on the standards and wellbeing – of learners.

Standards

The tables below of KS4 and sixth form examination results show an improvement in performance against key indicators over the last five years. There was a sharp increase in the number of courses offered Sep 2009 compared with Sep 2008 and another increase in Sep 2010 (when the schools offering 30+ courses increased from 61% to 88%). We have seen some impact on the Level 2 threshold in 2011, but we need to wait until 2012 outcomes to confirm this effect.

L2 including English / Welsh and mathematics

Year	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
Percentage		45.57%	47.19%	49.41%	49.57%
Year on year improvement			1.62 percentage points	2.22 percentage points	0.16 percentage points

L2 threshold

Year	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
Percentage	55.03%	57.95%	60.66%	63.76%	66.57%
Year on year improvement		2.92 percentage points	2.71 percentage points	3.1 percentage points	2.81 percentage points

L1 threshold

Year	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
Percentage	86.01%	86.82%	88.20%	89.66%	89.91%
Year on year improvement		0.81 percentage points	1.38 percentage points	1.46 percentage points	0.25 percentage points

Key stage 4 – Average Wider Points Score

Year	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
Average Wider Points Score	343.89	356.03	378.90	393.96	No data this year. This indicator has been replaced by the capped
Year on year improvement		12.14 points	22.87 points	15.06 points	

					points score
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L3 threshold

Year	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
Percentage	93.9%	94.2%	96%	94.8%	96%
Year on year improvement		0.3 percentage points	1.8 percentage points	decline of 1.2 percentage points	1.2 percentage points

Post-16 - Average Wider Points Score

Year	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
Average Wider Points Score	618.5	630.9	687.7	748.1	792
Year on year improvement		12.4 points	56.8 points	60.4 points	43.9 points

The level 2 threshold outcomes have improved by more than have outcomes at the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh and mathematics. They have improved by eight point five percentage points compared to four percentage points over three years. The Measure is impacting on standards, particularly the level 2 threshold and the average wider points score. More key stage 4 learners are gaining the level 2 threshold but too many are still not gaining qualifications in the key subjects of English or Welsh and mathematics.

The average wider point score for post-16 learners has improved since 2008-2009. This is probably due to the increasing numbers of learners achieving the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification, which adds to their point scores.

Wellbeing

Broadening the curriculum may have had a slight impact on indicators to wellbeing, such as attendance and behaviour. The evidence is that performance against these indicators has improved slightly during this period:

- In secondary schools, attendance rates have increased by only half a percentage point from 90.6% in 2004 to 91.1% in 2010.
- In 2009-2010 there were 185 permanent exclusions across Wales, a decrease from 213 in 2008-2009. The total number of fixed-term exclusions has also fallen slightly in 2009-2010.

Estyn survey reports on provision for 14-19 year old learners

In August 2010, Estyn produced a report on the progress in widening choice at 14-19 ('Wider choice and the learning core'). The main findings from this report still have currency and the headlines are outlined below.

'There has been a great deal of progress in widening the choice for learners and in the provision of the learning core in the last two years. Learners can now choose from an increasing number of courses. There is much more collaboration too between providers. Despite this progress, there are still a number of shortcomings. These include:

- *too wide a variation in the range and number of courses available to learners in different areas;*
- *too many courses that have limited viability because they attract only small numbers of learners and/or duplicate provision that is available elsewhere in the same catchment area;*
- *a lack of impartial advice at key points when learners make choices;*
- *too little evaluation of the quality, outcomes, efficiency and cost effectiveness of provision; and*
- *the doubtful sustainability of many vocational courses, particularly those that are provided collaboratively.'*

Estyn Area inspections

Over the past 10 years Estyn has published a series of reports on provision in various local authority 14-19 networks in Wales. Progress on our recommendations has been better in some areas than others. In 2009, we published a positive report on progress in Caerphilly and this year inspectors were positive about 14-19 provision in Flintshire, where we undertook an area inspection earlier in 2011.

Below is a case study from the Flintshire report which gives a detailed account of Learning Pathways provision:

Key question 2: How good is provision? Good

Learning pathways: good

All Flintshire secondary schools exceed the minimum requirements of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure for 14 to 16-year-old learners. There is a good range of general and applied courses and generally good opportunities for learners to progress to courses at higher levels.

Collaborative arrangements for provision at key stage 4 between schools and

between schools and Deeside College are developing well. This year around a quarter of the key stage 4 learners in Flintshire are involved in a wide range of collaborative courses. Nearly all of these courses take place at the high-quality Learning Core Centre at Deeside College and they are well received by learners. Post-16 learners generally have access to a wide range of courses that cover all Domains (these are: mathematics, science and technology, business and management, services to people, creative arts and culture, and humanities and languages) and provide good opportunities for progression between levels. A total of eight secondary schools have recently introduced the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification for 14 to 16-year-old learners. Deeside College and around two-thirds of the schools offer the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification at post-16. The college offers a very wide range of applied courses from entry level to level 3 and a few courses at level 4.

Learners in Ysgol Maes Hyfryd special school have good access to a range of courses at both key stage 4 and post-16. Learners have many opportunities to follow courses in mainstream classes. Deeside College offers entry level learners provision to develop their skills for life and work. Foundation courses at the college provide programmes to help promote independent living skills. The local authority works in close collaboration with other agencies and partners to provide courses and opportunities for learners of lower ability. The network supports a curriculum enrichment programme for learners who follow ASDAN programmes in schools.

However, while provision is wide, value for money is in question. It is generally good in Flintshire at 14-16 but not in post-16 provision. In the **resource management** section of the report, where the judgement is 'adequate', we say:

'The current pattern of post-16 provision in schools is unsustainable. Around half of Flintshire secondary schools have too many small classes. In around a quarter of schools, as many as one in four post-16 classes have fewer than five learners. There is also unnecessary duplication of courses on offer in a few schools.'

Issues to do with duplication of offer and lack of viability because of too many small classes are challenges that require transformative planning and these challenges are common across Wales. Local authorities have recognized the need to secure better value for money and educational benefit in their 14-19 provision. However, progress towards transformation is at different stages in different parts of Wales.



Estyn

Rhagoriaeth i bawb - Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

Area inspection report on the quality and standard of provision for 14 to 19-year-old learners in Flintshire

June 2011



INVESTORS | BUDDSODDWYR
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The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting:

- ▲ nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local authorities;
- ▲ primary schools;
- ▲ secondary schools;
- ▲ special schools;
- ▲ pupil referral units;
- ▲ independent schools;
- ▲ further education;
- ▲ adult community-based learning;
- ▲ youth support services;
- ▲ youth and community work training;
- ▲ local authority education services;
- ▲ teacher education and training;
- ▲ work-based learning;
- ▲ careers companies;
- ▲ offender learning; and
- ▲ the education, guidance and training elements of the Department for Work and Pensions funded training programmes.

Estyn also:

- ▲ provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others; and
- ▲ makes public good practice based on inspection evidence.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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Introduction

Estyn carries out area inspections under section 83 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. This states that, if asked to do so by the National Assembly, the Chief Inspector for Education and Training for Wales must inspect:

- the quality and availability of a specified description of education or training, in a specified area in Wales, for persons who are aged 15¹ or over;
- the standards achieved by those receiving that education or training; and
- whether the financial resources made available to those providing that education and training are managed efficiently and used in a way which provides value for money.

The Chief Inspector may, without being asked to, conduct such an inspection.

Section 84 of the Act empowers the National Assembly to direct a local authority (LA) whose area is wholly or partly in the area covered by the report to prepare a written statement of the action it proposes to take in the light of an area inspection report published by the Chief Inspector. In preparing such a statement, the LA must consult with such persons as the National Assembly may direct. The action plan must be published within 50 days. Estyn will evaluate the action plan and approve it if it clearly addresses the issues identified in the report and indicates how improvement is to be achieved. Estyn may also ask specific providers to prepare action plans in relation to matters that lie within their responsibility. The LA must copy action plans to the Welsh Assembly Government.

Her Majesty's Inspectors for Education and Training in Wales and/or additional inspectors conduct inspections. A nominee representing the providers is also a member of the inspection team, but the nominee does not take part in discussions about grading.

The inspection team used the common inspection framework for the area inspection, supported by handbooks of guidance for area inspections and for each sector inspected. These documents are available on the Estyn website at www.estyn.gov.uk.

Estyn applies one of the following judgements to each key question of the common inspection framework:

Excellent – Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice

Good – Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement

Adequate – Strengths outweigh areas for improvement

Unsatisfactory – Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

¹ Section 83 (11) provides that 'persons who are aged 15' includes persons for whom education is being provided at a school who will attain that age in the current school year.

About the area

Social and economic features

Flintshire has a population of about 148,900, which is projected to increase to over 152,000 by 2033. Two-thirds of the population lives in the major settlements of Deeside, Buckley, Flint, Holywell, Mold and Saltney. In 2001, 14.1% of the population spoke Welsh, compared to the Wales figure of 20.5%.

Flintshire has a very low level of minority ethnic population, with just over 1% of pupils in Flintshire schools from minority ethnic backgrounds. There has been a recent increase in the number of people coming from Poland and other European countries to live and work in Flintshire.

Levels of deprivation in Flintshire are lower than those in two-thirds of other areas in Wales according to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation. However, Higher Shotton and Greenfield are among the 10% most deprived wards in Wales. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals in secondary schools Flintshire in 2010 was 11.0%, compared with the Wales figure of 17.1%.

Flintshire has the highest employment rate of any authority in Wales. It has a significant and prosperous industrial heartland and the area is known for its internet companies. However, 16% of residents are in low-skilled, low-paid occupations and the area has a low number of people with degree or equivalent qualifications.

Pattern of provision

Flintshire has 13 secondary schools, including one specialist school and one Welsh-medium school. One of the secondary schools, Argoed High School in Mynydd Isa, caters for 11 to 16-year-old learners only. The Portfolio Pupil Referral Unit comprises of seven bases which combine to provide provision for key stage 3 and key stage 4 learners with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

Deeside College delivers further education provision from two sites in Flintshire. Following the recent reconfiguration, Coleg Llysfasi in Denbighshire is now part of Deeside College. Almost all work-based learning provision is delivered by Deeside College and North Wales Training.

There is extensive collaborative working between providers to extend the range of courses on offer at key stage 4. Learners from all Flintshire secondary schools have access to this collaborative provision. At post-16, four schools are involved in the long established Deeside Consortium in the north of the county. In the south, schools are working collaboratively with the college to deliver a post-16 local curriculum for 2011-2012. This will include courses delivered on the Deeside Llysfasi campus.

The Welsh-medium secondary school, Ysgol Maes Garmon, works in partnership with Ysgol Morgan Llwyd in Wrexham and Deeside College to extend Welsh-medium

provision. It is also involved with the forum that is working to extend Welsh-medium provision across northern Wales.

In 2009, the percentage of unfilled places in Flintshire secondary schools was 11.6%, compared with the Wales figure of 15.9%.

Participation of 16 to 19-year-olds in education and training

In 2009, 83.6% of Year 11 learners continued in full-time education, compared with 82.2% in Wales as a whole. The proportion of Year 11 leavers in 2009 not in education employment or training was 3.7% compared with the Wales figure of 5.7%, Flintshire's figure ranking as the third lowest of those for Wales local authorities. Unverified data indicates that there was a further reduction in the proportion of young people not in education employment or training in 2010 to 2.8%.

Summary

The area provision's current performance	Good
The area provision's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance is good because of:

- good attainment of 14 to 19-year-old learners;
- high levels of learner participation, attendance rates, and the high proportion of 16-year-olds continuing in education and training or moving on to employment;
- developing collaboration between schools and other sectors to widen the range of courses on offer to learners;
- well-developed partnership working to provide a wide range of non-formal and informal learning activities; and
- good quality support for learners, targeted to meet specific needs and providing learners with informative advice on the options available to them.

Prospects for improvement are good because of:

- a strong commitment by partners and stakeholders to partnership working, built on firm foundations through extensive consultation and engagement;
- a clear understanding of the challenges that lie ahead and a strong commitment to changing the current pattern of provision at post-16;
- a good track record in developing collaboration between providers and sectors;
- well-developed quality assurance procedures, resulting in a clear and accurate understanding of current performance and areas in need of improvement; and
- the way self-evaluation processes inform improvement planning.

Recommendations

In order to improve standards and the quality of provision for 14 to 19-year-old learners in Flintshire further, the local authority and providers of education and training need to work together to:

- R1 rationalise provision for 16 to 19-year-old learners to eradicate unnecessary small classes and duplication;
- R2 secure further improvements in the attainment of learners in schools at key stage 4 and especially post-16;
- R3 continue to extend post-16 Welsh-medium provision in Deeside College and North Wales Training, and increase participation levels, so that more learners continue with Welsh-medium learning and assessment at post-16;
- R4 extend across all providers the good practice in the quality assurance of collaborative provision; and
- R5 develop further the way the network centrally collates and uses data and other information to inform strategic planning and to facilitate the evaluation of impact and progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Over the last three years there has been a significant trend of improvement in the performance of Flintshire secondary schools at key stage 4. The proportion of learners that attained the level 2 threshold² including English or Welsh and mathematics was the second highest in Wales in 2009 and the best in Wales in 2010. Flintshire was also the highest performing local authority in Wales in the core subject indicator³ and the level 1 threshold⁴ in 2010. Performance in the average wider points score⁵ has also improved but remains below the average for Wales. Not enough learners attain A* and A grades in GCSE at key stage 4.

The general improvement in attainment is reflected in better performance when comparing Flintshire secondary schools with similar schools across Wales in terms of levels of free school meals. In 2010, around two-thirds of Flintshire schools were in the top half of similar schools in terms of the proportion of pupils achieving the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh and mathematics. However, the proportion of learners achieving the level 2 threshold and the average wider points score has been below expectations for the three-year period up to 2009⁶.

In schools, the proportion of post-16 learners achieving the level 3 threshold⁷ has been around the Wales average over the past three years. The average wider points score⁸ has improved, but is still well below the Wales average. Not enough learners gain A* and A grades in A level.

Outcomes in Deeside College are consistently well above national comparators and expectations. In 2010, attainment in Deeside College was the second highest in Wales and the highest of all general further education colleges. Learners studying A levels at Deeside College achieve good outcomes, with many learners attaining higher than expected grades. Across work-based learning provision, the rates at which learners gain their full qualification frameworks and other qualifications compare well with national comparators and benchmark data.

In 2010, there was an increase in the number of Flintshire learners in schools gaining key skills qualifications, particularly at post-16. However, there are still too few learners gaining key skills qualifications in schools. Entry levels and outcomes in key skills qualifications at Deeside College are good.

² Equivalent to 5 GCSEs at grade A* to C

³ The expected performance in English or Welsh, mathematics and science in combination, the core subjects of the National Curriculum

⁴ Equivalent to 5 GCSEs at grade A* to G

⁵ Comprising all externally approved qualifications at age 16

⁶ Data on performance against expectations for 2010 was not available at the time of the inspection.

⁷ Equivalent to passes in two A levels.

⁸ Comprising all externally approved qualifications at age 18

The college has had the best Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification outcomes for any college in Wales for most of the past three years.⁹

The proportion of learners gaining a recognised qualification in Welsh at key stage 4 has been higher than the Wales average over the last three years. In 2009, the proportion of learners attaining level 2 in Welsh second language had improved and was similar to the Wales average. Not enough learners opt to continue with Welsh-medium provision and assessment at transition to Deeside College at post-16. Few work-based learners undertake part or all of their training in Welsh or bilingually.

A higher proportion of Year 11 pupils in Flintshire continue in full-time education than the Wales average. The proportion of Year 11 leavers not in education, employment or training has fallen and continues to be well below the Wales figure. Participation rates at Deeside College are good. Few learners leave the college with no qualifications.

In three of the last four years, attendance in Flintshire secondary schools has been the best in Wales. Attendance rates in Deeside College and North Wales Training are good.

The rates of permanent and fixed-term exclusions in Flintshire schools are around the Wales average. Local authority unverified data indicates that exclusion rates for key stage 4 learners are lower than the Wales figure. Exclusion rates at Deeside College are very low.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning pathways: Good

All Flintshire secondary schools exceed the minimum requirements of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure¹⁰ for 14 to 16-year-old learners. There is a good range of general and applied courses and generally good opportunities for learners to progress to courses at higher levels.

Collaborative arrangements for provision at key stage 4 between schools and between schools and Deeside College are developing well. This year around a quarter of the key stage 4 learners in Flintshire are involved in a wide range of collaborative courses. Nearly all of these courses take place at the high-quality Learning Core Centre at Deeside College and they are well received by learners.

Post-16 learners generally have access to a wide range of courses that cover all domains¹¹ and provide good opportunities for progression between levels. A total of eight secondary schools have recently introduced the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification for 14 to 16-year-old learners. Deeside College and around two-thirds

⁹ As many schools have only recently introduced the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification, the proportion of learners that have gained accreditation is small.

¹⁰ The Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure specifies the number and type of options that should be made available to 14 to 16-year-olds and to 16 to 18-year-olds.

¹¹ There are five domains: mathematics, science and all aspects of technology, business and management, services to people, creative arts and culture, and humanities and languages.

of the schools offer the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification at post-16. The college offers a very wide range of applied courses from entry level to level 3 and a few courses at level 4.

Learners in Ysgol Maes Hyfryd special school have good access to a range of courses at both key stage 4 and post-16. Learners have many opportunities to follow courses in mainstream classes. Deeside College offers entry level learners provision to develop their skills for life and work. Foundation courses at the college provide programmes to help promote independent living skills. The local authority works in close collaboration with other agencies and partners to provide courses and opportunities for learners of lower ability. The network supports a curriculum enrichment programme for learners who follow ASDAN¹² programmes in schools.

Partnership working with Ysgol Morgan Llwyd in Wrexham and Deeside College has enhanced the curriculum in Ysgol Maes Garmon and provided progression routes for Welsh-medium learners.

There are extensive opportunities in all providers for learners to access non-formal and informal learning activities. These include activities related to sports, volunteering, healthy living, personal development, entrepreneurship, employability and recreation. There are also many opportunities for learners to take part in community, cultural, sporting, aesthetic and creative activities. A wide range of partners contribute effectively to deliver and support these activities.

The work-related skills of learners are suitably developed through a range of activities. Nearly all 14 to 19-year-old learners, including those from the special school, access a good range of work-focused experiences. This includes activities such as enterprise challenges, 'Girls into Engineering' and business mentor initiatives.

All providers make appropriate provision for developing knowledge and understanding of Wales, Europe and the World. They provide well-planned personal and social education or tutorial programmes to develop knowledge and understanding of personal, social, sustainability and health issues.

The network provides support for an extensive collaborative programme of over 30 enrichment activities for more able and talented learners. Participation levels are high.

Support for learners: Good

The 14-19 network has made extensive use of funding to support the accredited training of learning coaching. The number of staff in Flintshire completing accredited learning coach training is well above the Wales average. Providers make effective use of learning coaching by targeting support on the needs of individual learners.

Learners have access to personal support through well-established pastoral care and personal welfare arrangements. Providers work well with the local authority and a

¹² ASDAN is a curriculum development organisation and awarding body offering programmes and qualifications that promote skills for learning, employment and life.

range of agencies to ensure that all learners have access to support. This has had a beneficial impact on the wellbeing of learners.

The Youth Service, in partnership with Careers Wales, makes a significant contribution to the programme of support for learners identified as being at risk of becoming young people not in employment, education or training. Effective partnership working between inclusion welfare officers and schools across Flintshire has contributed to a clear pattern of improvement in attendance and behaviour in secondary schools.

There are effective arrangements for providing learners with access to careers advice, guidance and support. Schools offer appropriate impartial advice and guidance to learners regarding choices at 14 and 16 for the courses offered in school. The college provides comprehensive information to help prospective learners choose suitable courses. Taster courses and open evenings give learners valuable opportunities to gain firsthand experience of the college courses. All learners have access to good quality online information about post-16 provision to help inform their choices.

The new options brochure developed jointly by Deeside College and schools in the south-Flintshire consortium for September 2011 reflects the increasingly collaborative approach to providing learners with clear information about the range of options available to them.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Leadership and partnership working: Good

There has been good progress in helping providers and sectors to work together effectively to offer a wider range of courses for learners at key stage 4 and post-16. The shape of this collaborative provision reflects different approaches and partnership arrangements to meet specific needs across the network. The work of the network has focused on maximising the offer for learners and not just meeting the minimum requirements of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure.

The network has a shared vision and a clear focus on providing the best learning experiences for young people in Flintshire through sustainable collaborative structures. It is making a significant contribution to improving provision for 14 to 19-year-old learners in Flintshire. The development of the Learning Core Centre has been particularly successful in supporting the development of partnerships.

The network engages and co-ordinates effectively the contribution of its wide range of partners. It has developed a strong sense of partnership and trust based on regular communication and extensive consultation and involvement. The monthly 'provider days' promote collaborative working and help partners to develop an understanding of their contribution to the work of the network. There are high levels of stakeholder engagement, such as in the co-ordinated approach to assuring the quality of provision and the planning for improvement.

The network has established a number of sub-groups and steering groups to take responsibility for different strands of work. Network members and providers are clear about their roles and responsibilities within formal partnerships. These are set out in the 14-19 Provision Flintshire Partnership Arrangement, which is agreed and signed by all learning settings and reviewed annually.

Regular meetings of provider curriculum leaders take place to help support the planning of collaborative activities and to develop quality assurance procedures. The group focuses well on the need to increase learner choice and improve outcomes through their own provision and through collaboration. The group also gives careful attention to the need to plan for sustainability of provision and projects.

Overall, partners share resources effectively and use these well to extend learners' choice and enrich their learning opportunities. The development of the Principal Learning route for engineering is based on a collaborative approach, with Deeside College delivering the programme and participating schools responsible for the Welsh Baccalaureate element.

Employer engagement in the network is good. This includes effective links with employers at both strategic level and operational level. The network has engaged employer representation from the start and this has proved beneficial to learners. There is strong employer support for the Principal Learning qualification in engineering.

There are effective links between the local authority's Children and Young People's Partnership and the network to ensure a coherent approach to the planning and delivery of provision for young people in Flintshire. The youth support service makes a valuable contribution to the work of the network, for example through its range of programmes to assist individuals and groups to remain within mainstream education and gain formal accreditation.

Improving quality: Good

The network has made good progress in developing effective arrangements to assure quality. The network's quality sub-group maintains a clear overview of self-evaluation systems, making good use of a wide range of information.

There is a strong commitment to evaluating the quality of collaborative provision, and responsibilities have been clearly defined. Comprehensive service level agreements for assuring quality are in place and reviewed annually. The network receives regular updates from the sub-groups about the progress they are making in the work that they are leading. The quality system has informed decision-making and promoted change in relation to the withdrawal of courses or the movement of provision within the network consortium. Consortium groups have adopted the same procedures to support consistency in the quality of delivery of collaborative provision. However, there is a degree of variability in the rigour of quality assurance at consortium level.

The network makes extensive use of learner voice to inform its quality assurance processes. The two most recent surveys of learners' views have usefully been

supplemented by discussions with focus groups of learners to fully explore the detail behind the quantitative data contained in the surveys.

The network undertakes a thorough annual self-evaluation exercise. All network members contribute fully to the self-evaluation process and have clear ownership of the self-evaluation report and the resulting development plan. The current self-evaluation report is a detailed document based on Estyn's inspection framework. It is comprehensive and evaluative and provides a realistic, self-critical view of the work and progress made by the network. The judgements awarded in the self-evaluation report match those awarded by the Estyn inspection team. The report makes extensive use of a wide range of evidence relating to all aspects of the work of the network. However, it is not informed by an overview of provision relating to the quality of teaching and progress in improving the cost-effectiveness of provision.

There are effective arrangements in place to ensure that issues emerging from quality assurance inform development planning and Area Network Development Plan objectives. Areas for development included in the self-evaluation report are clearly linked to the network's Quality Improvement Plan for 2010-2011.

Resource management: Adequate

The general pattern of provision and outcomes at key stage 4 represent good value for money. The average funding per pupil in Flintshire is the sixth lowest in Wales. Good progress has been made in widening curriculum options for learners through collaboration between providers, and outcomes have improved significantly. Provision and outcomes for post-16 learners at Deeside College and work-based learning also offer good value for money.

The long-established post-16 collaboration by the four secondary schools in the Deeside Consortium has resulted in increasing the total number of options to learners while ensuring the cost-effectiveness of the provision. In other parts of Flintshire, there is not enough flexibility to allow learners to study a combination of courses with more than one provider.

The current pattern of post-16 provision in schools is unsustainable. Around half of Flintshire secondary schools have too many small post-16 classes. In around a quarter of schools, as many as one in four post-16 classes have fewer than five learners. There is also unnecessary duplication of courses on offer in a few schools.

The network has a clear understanding of the challenges it faces in relation to improving the cost-effectiveness of post-16 provision in schools by removing duplication and small classes. The local authority's Strategic Outline Case for the transformation of post-16 provision demonstrates the need for far-reaching and radical change across the post-16 infrastructure. It takes good account of issues relating to sustainability and highlights potential efficiency gains. However, as yet, there are no firm proposals in place regarding the reorganisation of post-16 provision in schools.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources in individual providers are generally well matched to provision. Accommodation and resources within the college are very

good and good specialist resources for applied courses and work-based learning allow learners to learn in realistic work environments.

Work-based learners benefit from accessing a high standard of accommodation and a comprehensive range of suitable resources when attending off-the-job training. Many learners work in a wide range of workplaces which gives them appropriate opportunities to collect national vocational awards.

Providers have enough well-qualified and experienced staff to deliver the courses for 14 to 19-year-old learners. Teaching by non-specialists is very rare. All providers have well-planned continuing professional development opportunities for staff that support the development of the network's 14-19 strategy. These include conferences for curriculum leaders and headteacher forums.

Good use has been made of Area Network Development Plan funds to support initiatives, including providing new technology, supporting collaborative working at key stage 4, training for learning coaching and setting up a project for learners at risk of being not in employment, education or training.

All secondary schools and Deeside College have virtual learning environments and video conferencing facilities. The network has also supported the purchase of a computer suite located at the Learning Core Centre. The Learning Core Centre offers a high quality environment for the delivery of collaborative courses.

Appendix 1

Evidence base of the inspection

Seven inspectors spent a total of 54 days inspecting standards and the quality of provision of education and training for 14 to 19-year-olds in Flintshire. The inspection team included a nominee who is chair of the Flintshire 14-19 network.

The inspectors considered:

- previous Estyn inspection reports on providers;
- documents from the Welsh Assembly Government and the Wales Audit Office;
- local plans and strategies;
- data on learner outcomes provided by the Welsh Assembly Government in relation to the 14 to 19-year-olds of the area, including information on the rates at which learners complete and attain their qualifications and training frameworks;
- data from all providers on their current provision and take-up; and
- the 14-19 network's self-evaluation report.

Members of the team had meetings with:

- managers with specific responsibility for the area within the Welsh Assembly Government, representatives from the 14-19 network group and senior leaders from the local authority and Deeside College to explain the inspection process and to respond to any questions;
- senior managers in secondary schools, Deeside College and North Wales Training;
- focus groups representing 14 to 19-year-old learners;
- the local authority, Careers Wales, Flintshire Local Voluntary Council and leaders of the 14-19 networks; and
- representatives from the 14-19 network group, providers and the local authority to give feedback on the inspection's provisional findings.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Iolo Dafydd HMI	Reporting Inspector
Sue Halliwell HMI	Team Inspector
Meinir Rees HMI	Team Inspector
Janice Thomas HMI	Team Inspector
Mark Evans HMI	Team Inspector
Steve Davies HMI	Team Inspector
Ceri Jones HMI	Team Inspector
Kevin Grandfield, Flintshire local authority	Nominee

Wider choice and the learning core – progress in implementing a wider option choice and the learning core for 14-19 learners



The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting:

- ▲ nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local authorities;
- ▲ primary schools;
- ▲ secondary schools;
- ▲ special schools;
- ▲ pupil referral units;
- ▲ independent schools;
- ▲ further education;
- ▲ adult community learning;
- ▲ youth support services;
- ▲ youth and community work training;
- ▲ local authority education services for children and young people;
- ▲ teacher education and training;
- ▲ work-based learning;
- ▲ careers companies;
- ▲ offender learning; and
- ▲ the education, guidance and training elements of the Department for Work and Pensions funded training programmes.

Estyn also:

- ▲ provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others; and
- ▲ makes public good practice based on inspection evidence.

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Introduction

- 1 This report has been produced in response to a request for advice from the Welsh Assembly Government in the Minister's annual remit to Estyn for 2009-2010. The report evaluates progress in implementing wider choice and flexibility (Element 2) and entitlement to the learning core (Element 3) of Learning Pathways 14-19¹.
- 2 The findings are based on an analysis of all the 14-19 networks² three-year strategic plans for 2010-2013, visits to ten 14-19 networks, responses to questionnaires sent to other networks and data on the key stage 4 options available in secondary schools in Wales.
- 3 The report follows on from the Estyn report on choice and flexibility for 14-19 learners published in March 2008.³

Background

- 4 In 2001, the Welsh Assembly Government made a commitment in 'The Learning Country' to deliver better outcomes in schools, colleges, universities and work-based learning and set a goal that **'95 per cent of young people by the age of 25 will be ready for high-skilled employment or higher education by 2015.'**
- 5 In July 2004 and April 2006, the Welsh Assembly Government published Learning Pathways Guidance I and II, which set out expectations for transforming provision for 14-19 learners. The policy aims to extend choice and flexibility for learners by providing them with individual learning pathways that meet their needs. It also aims to provide opportunities and experiences that will help learners to develop the wider skills needed for life and work, and the support and guidance needed to help them reach their potential.
- 6 The Estyn report on choice and flexibility for 14-19 learners found that:
 - choice within schools and colleges was increasing, but learner opportunities depended on what was on offer in their school or college;
 - at key stage 4, there had been an increase in entry level or level 1 courses on offer, but little increase in the number of level 2 courses;
 - many schools saw vocational courses as only suitable for less-able learners;
 - many schools were reluctant to offer vocational courses because these did not contribute to the key performance indicator of five GCSE grades A* to C;
 - many options menus at key stage 4 were based on a model for a broad and balanced curriculum, and only a minority of schools tried to meet the aspirations of Learning Pathways;

¹ Learning Pathways 14-19 Guidance II. Welsh Assembly Government 2006.

² 14-19 networks are strategic groups of providers of education and training in a local authority area.

³ http://estyn.co.uk/ThematicReports/0308_Learning_Pathways_Report.pdf

- at post-16, most of the limited expansion of courses was in level 2 courses for middle-ability or lower-ability learners;
 - there was limited collaboration between providers, particularly at post-16;
 - most developments had resulted from grant rather than mainstream funding;
 - too little attention was paid to the entitlement of learners;
 - there was tension between the need to work collaboratively and the funding and governance arrangements that focus on independent, individual providers; and
 - networks lacked systems for quality assurance that draw conclusions about the effectiveness and efficiency of provision.
- 7 The Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure ('the Measure') received royal approval in May 2009. All maintained mainstream secondary schools must comply with part 1 (key stage 4) provisions by September 2010. Compliance with part 2 (post-16) provisions is not yet required. The Measure aims to ensure that the widest possible choice is available to learners in maintained schools and in colleges. It provides 14-19 learners with a legally binding entitlement to a specified minimum number of courses from which to choose their individual learning pathway, including the learning core. Access to support services, including the learning coach function are not entitlements required by the Measure, but they are an expectation, described in the 14-19 Learning Pathways Guidance document.
- 8 The Measure places a duty on local authorities to form local curricula for learners in key stage 4, and assist the Minister in establishing local curricula for post-16 learners. These local curricula are to contain a wide range of academic and vocational options. By 2012, all key stage 4 and post-16 local curricula must offer a minimum of thirty courses of which five must be eligible vocational courses. At key stage 4, these vocational courses should be at level 2 and at post-16 they should be up to level 3. In planning local curricula, networks should ensure progression routes are available key stage 4 to post-16.
- 9 The implementation of these requirements is being phased in and local authority areas were allocated to a band for the options that are to be available to learners at key stage 4. The Annex gives details of the bands and requirements.
- 10 Options should be from the five **domains** of learning:
- mathematics, science and all aspects of technology;
 - business and management;
 - services to people;
 - creative arts and culture; and

- humanities and language.

11 The learning core identifies the skills, knowledge, understanding, values and experiences that all 14-19 learners will need whatever their chosen learning pathway. The aspects of learning set out in the learning core include minimum requirements and enhancements. The learning core involves wider learning consisting of skills, knowledge and understanding, attitudes and values, and common experiences. In Learning Pathways II, these are:

Skills	Knowledge and understanding	Attitudes and values	Common experiences
Key skills	Wales, Europe and the World	Respect for self, others and diversity	Work-focused experience
Welsh-language skills	Personal, social, sustainability and health matters	Responsibility for personal and social development, sustainability and health.	Community participation opportunities
Work-related skills	Careers education and guidance		Cultural, sporting, aesthetic, and creative experiences

12 In 2008, the ‘Transforming Education and Training Provision in Wales’ policy⁴ was announced by the Welsh Assembly Government. This policy led to the establishment of learning partnerships to develop plans to improve learning opportunities for post-16 learners. The policy does not specify the structures needed to deliver the provision but challenges local authorities to use resources more effectively and efficiently.

⁴ Skills that Work for Wales Autumn 2008 – policy to transform education and training provision in Wales.

Main findings

- 13 There has been a great deal of progress in widening the choice for learners and in the provision of the learning core in the last two years. Learners can now choose from an increasing number of courses. There is much more collaboration too between providers. Despite this progress, there are still a number of shortcomings. These include:
- too wide a variation in the range and number of courses available to learners in different areas;
 - too many courses that have limited viability because they attract only small numbers of learners and/or duplicate provision that is available elsewhere in the same catchment area;
 - a lack of impartial advice at key points when learners make choices;
 - too little evaluation of the quality, outcomes, efficiency and cost effectiveness of provision; and
 - the doubtful sustainability of many vocational courses, particularly those that are provided collaboratively.

Progress at key stage 4

- 14 The number and range of general and vocational courses at level 2 at key stage 4 have increased significantly over the last two years. Nearly all schools met the requirements of the Measure for September 2009. By September 2010, all schools will meet the statutory requirement for their particular band. Most schools already meet the minimum requirements of the Measure for 2012. However, one fifth of schools just or only just meet the minimum.
- 15 The increased availability of vocational courses is having a positive impact on students. In most schools, the availability of level 1 and level 2 vocational courses has contributed to improvements in attainment, attendance and behaviour. There are new vocational courses in construction, vehicle maintenance, engineering, health and social care and salon services, for example, but too few in business and management.
- 16 Most collaborative working at this key stage is between schools and local further education colleges or work-based learning providers who can provide specialist facilities or expertise for courses that schools cannot offer. These courses are usually expensive to run. The funding of this new provision has largely come from grants,⁵ instead of from mainstream funding, and the sustainability of the new provision is doubtful in the longer term.

⁵ Grants to networks to support their Annual Network Development Plans.

Progress at post-16

- 17 In all parts of Wales, post-16 learners can choose from a wide number and range of courses, as long as they are prepared to move to another institution to study.
- 18 In only a few cases are schools and colleges working together effectively. In these cases, providers have agreed joint funding and governance arrangements, share timetables and have set up practical arrangements for supporting learners. While most of these providers have established internal tracking systems to monitor learner progress on courses held elsewhere, they do not do enough to evaluate the quality and viability of provision for their learners when they are at other providers.
- 19 Schools do not always provide impartial advice to learners when they make their option choices. This makes it more likely that learners will choose what the school has to offer rather than choosing to study elsewhere. Many schools with sixth-form provision are reluctant to collaborate with other providers because of concerns over the potential loss of numbers in the sixth-form. Managers fear that loss of numbers would affect per capita funding and this would reduce their capacity to retain teachers.

Planning collaborative provision

- 20 Further education colleges and schools, and schools with other schools, can now collaborate formally by establishing joint committees. However, no such arrangements have yet been set up.
- 21 Even though increasing collaboration between providers at post-16 is a major priority for 14-19 networks, few networks have established joint quality assurance processes, or systems for sharing data to track learner progress, or joint evaluation of the impact of collaborative provision.

Welsh-medium provision

- 22 Most Welsh-medium schools meet the requirements for the number of courses required by the Measure for key stage 4. Most 14-19 networks aim to increase the number of courses for Welsh-speaking learners through the development of bilingual courses in further education colleges or through collaboration between Welsh-medium schools.
- 23 A few networks have established collaborative arrangements across local authority borders. There is increasing use of information and communication technology to provide teaching, learning and assessment materials, particularly across north Wales networks. Even so, in many parts of Wales, provision of Welsh-medium vocational courses that require specialist facilities remain inadequate. A shortage of Welsh-speaking tutors is impeding progression to further education college courses at post-16 from Welsh-medium or bilingual schools.

Non-formal and informal learning

- 24 The provision of non-formal⁶ and informal learning⁷ is a good or outstanding feature in many schools and colleges. Nearly all schools and colleges offer non-formal activities such as Duke of Edinburgh Award, first aid and food hygiene certificates. Providers also offer learners varied and interesting informal learning experiences that include cultural and sports activities, and educational visits. These enrichment activities contribute towards progress files, curriculum vitae and to the award of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification.

The learning core

- 25 Most schools and colleges plan and deliver the learning core effectively, although a majority of learners on extended work placements or other collaborative courses do not always gain their full entitlement. The learning core is especially effective where learners are involved in the Welsh Baccalaureate. The number of providers offering the Welsh Baccalaureate at key stage 4 and post-16 is increasing as providers see it as an ideal vehicle for meeting the requirements of the learning core. The number of centres offering the Welsh Baccalaureate is set to rise from 167 to 217 in September 2010, making the award available to an estimated 7,000 additional learners.
- 26 Where providers do not offer the Welsh Baccalaureate, provision for the learning core is not as good. Although generally sound, there are often weaknesses in the provision for key skills, Welsh-language skills and work-focused experience.

⁶ Non-formal learning experiences are programmes leading to accreditation but those that are normally outside of the National Qualifications Framework.

⁷ Informal learning experiences are wider experiences that do not have accreditation.

Recommendations

In order to expand choice and flexibility and improve the learning core:

providers should:

- R1 work more closely with other providers to maximise choice and flexibility;
- R2 make sure that all learners get impartial advice when they make choices at age 14 and 16;
- R3 deliver all aspects of the learning core, particularly key skills, Welsh-language skills and work-focused experience; and
- R4 make sure that learners taking extended work placements or other collaborative courses receive their full entitlement to the learning core;

networks should:

- R5 plan to make local options and collaborative arrangements sustainable;
- R6 require a collaborative plan from providers to reduce travelling for learners;
- R7 monitor and evaluate learner entitlement; and
- R8 evaluate the quality and effectiveness of collaborative provision;

the Welsh Assembly Government should:

- R9 further support the provision of Welsh-medium vocational courses.

Learning Pathways: wider choice and flexibility

Progress at key stage 4

- 27 The number and range of vocational courses offered at level 2 has increased since Estyn reported on choice and flexibility in 2008. We reported then that at key stage 4 there had been an increase in entry level or level 1 vocational courses, but little increase in the number of level 2 courses, and many schools saw vocational courses as only suitable for less-able learners. While this is still a perception in a minority of schools, level 2 vocational courses are now a prominent part of nearly all local curricula.
- 28 In 2008, we reported that many schools were reluctant to offer vocational courses because these did not contribute to the key performance indicator of five GCSE at grades A* to C. The revised performance indicators for key stage 4 attainments⁸ now include these vocational courses and this is no longer a reason why schools should not include vocational courses in their curriculum.
- 29 Nearly all schools met the non-statutory key stage 4 requirements of the Measure for September 2009. In September 2010, all schools will meet the statutory requirement for their particular band. Most schools already meet the minimum requirements of the Measure for 2012. However, one fifth of schools just or only just meet the minimum.
- 30 There is a variation within and between 14-19 networks in how well they meet the requirements of the Measure. In nine networks, all the schools already meet the requirement for 2012, while in the other networks nearly all of the schools do so. In one network, fewer than half the schools currently meet the 2012 requirement.
- 31 In many schools, the greater availability of level 1 and level 2 vocational courses has contributed to improvements in attainment, attendance and behaviour. The table below provides an early indication of the impact on attainment of the widening of choice at key stage 4.

Key Stage 4 attainment ⁹	2007	2008	2009
Percentages attaining the level 2 threshold	55.0	58.0	60.2
Percentages attaining the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh (first language) and Maths	44.4	45.6	47.2
Percentages attaining five GCSE at grades A* to C	54.2	55.8	57
Percentage point difference between Level 2 threshold and five GCSE at grades A* to C	0.8	2.2	3.2

⁸ Level 2 threshold – five GCSE at grades A* to C and vocational level 2 qualifications.

⁹ National Statistics on Examination Results produced by the Welsh Assembly Government released on 26 November 2009.

- 32 The difference between the percentages attaining the level 2 threshold and the percentages attaining five GCSE passes at grades A* to C has increased from 0.8 percentage points in 2007 to 3.2 percentage points in 2009. This is the result of an increase in the proportion of pupils gaining qualifications at level 2 in vocational qualifications over the last three years. The gap between those gaining the level 2 threshold and those gaining the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh first language and mathematics has widened from just over ten percentage points in 2007 to thirteen percentage points in 2009. More pupils are gaining level 2, but too many are still not gaining qualifications in the key subjects of English or Welsh and mathematics.
- 33 The attendance and attitude of the minority of learners involved in the new vocational courses have improved because they enjoy their courses and do not wish to lose their places on them. These learners particularly enjoy the work-based elements of the courses and being part of a team at their employment placement.
- 34 Nearly all local curricula at key stage 4 include collaborative courses offered by more than one provider working together. Collaborative vocational courses in key stage 4 tend to be in the 'mathematics, science and technology' domain, and 'services to people' domain. There has been an expansion in the number of construction, vehicle maintenance, engineering, health and social care and salon services courses. There remain too few vocational courses in the 'business and management' domain and there is too little opportunity for progression in this domain.
- 35 In most cases, schools collaborate with further education institutions and only a few work with other schools. When pupils choose collaborative courses, they often need to travel to them. Most collaborative courses take place on a set day and many learners miss lessons in the learning core or the other courses they have chosen. Many schools make allowances for this and make time available for learners to catch up on missed work. Most learners taking these courses receive good support. A few schools assign learning coaches to these learners to help them to complete their work and keep up with their other work in school. However, where schools do not provide additional support, learners are disadvantaged, especially where they miss lessons in the core subjects of English or Welsh first language, mathematics and science.
- 36 Many schools have developed partnerships with local employers or work-based learning providers to offer learning pathways for small groups of pupils for whom the traditional curriculum is not motivating. These pathways are usually for pupils at risk of leaving education or training at sixteen. Level 2 work-based learning pathways are also available in a few areas and the majority of learners who completed these courses in 2009 achieved the level 2 threshold.
- 37 Most schools now start to plan the options they will offer following an open-choice survey of learners' interests. Courses are then organised into blocks based on the results and generally contain a mixture of general and vocational courses. Nearly all learners report that they have been able to choose the courses that they wanted. A few schools offer a completely free

choice from the courses they can offer and produce timetables for individual pupils based on their choices.

- 38 Many of the collaborative courses require expensive specialist facilities or work-based learning placements, such as the IMIAL¹⁰ Level 2 Certificate in Vehicle Maintenance and Repair (equivalent to the level 2 threshold or five A* to C GCSE's). However, schools and network co-ordinators are concerned about the sustainability of these courses once funding ends. Nearly all schools will continue to run most of the courses they offer themselves even when the 14-19 grant funding ends. These courses rarely require specialist facilities, can be staffed from within existing resources and are not dependent on the continuation of grant funding.

Progress at post-16

- 39 In all parts of Wales, post-16 learners can choose from a very wide number and range of courses, as long as they are prepared to move to another institution to study. In many areas, however, if they decide to remain in their school sixth-form, their choice is often restricted.
- 40 Schools do not always provide impartial advice to learners when they make their option choices. Many schools with sixth-form provision are reluctant to collaborate with other providers because of concerns over the potential loss of numbers in the sixth-form. Managers fear that loss of numbers would affect per capita funding and this would reduce their capacity to retain teachers.
- 41 Nearly all sixth-form learners say that they choose to study at the same school because they know the staff and wish to stay where they feel well supported. These learners are prepared to compromise on their choice of courses in order to remain in the sixth-form. Most learners in college choose it because the style of learning suits them and they wish to take specialist vocational courses. A few learners choose college because their school does not offer the possibility of progression from their previous courses.
- 42 Many of these schools offer courses that attract only very small numbers of learners. These often represent an inefficient use of resources, especially where the courses duplicate provision is available elsewhere in the network catchment. Only a very few schools can meet the post-16 requirements of the Measure on their own. These are usually large schools with big sixth-forms. However, most schools will not be able to provide learners with enough choice at post-16 on their own. Most cannot provide vocational courses that require specialist facilities.
- 43 In 2008, Estyn reported that there was limited collaboration at post-16 between schools and colleges, and between schools and schools, and this is still the case. Collaboration plans have still not been fully developed in the majority of areas. In many areas, providers are awaiting decisions on local area transformation plans that are likely to lead to fundamental changes to the organisation of post-16 education.

¹⁰ IMIAL IMI Awards Limited is the leading awarding body for the retail motor industry.

- 44 In a few areas, providers have started to address the need to remove duplicated provision in order to free-up staff and resources, and develop additional new courses. In these cases, providers have often agreed funding and governance arrangements, share timetables and have set up practical arrangements for supporting learners. In these collaborative arrangements, providers share the teaching of courses.

Common key stage 4 and post-16 issues

- 45 Estyn reported in 2008 that leaders needed to be willing to compromise, give up some of their autonomy and show greater trust in each other. Most 11-18 schools recognise the need for collaboration to ensure learner entitlement, but they are also keen to retain their learners with the result that they discourage learners from choosing options in other providers. In 2008 we reported that there were tensions between the need to work collaboratively, and the funding and governance arrangements that focus on independent, individual providers. Since 2008¹¹ further education colleges and schools, and schools with other schools can collaborate formally by establishing joint committees. However, no such arrangements have yet been set up.
- 46 A few schools are still resistant to increasing collaboration because it might lead to the removal of courses, especially those that attract small numbers of learners. Thus, collaboration may result in a loss of staff that then has a knock-on effect on courses in other key stages. A few schools fear that allowing large numbers of their learners to follow a course in other schools or colleges at key stage 4 may eventually lead to smaller numbers remaining at their school at post-16. A few of these schools claim that it is difficult to ensure quality when the provision is elsewhere and they would prefer learners to take all their courses in their school. In these instances, the school actively discourages learners from choosing courses offered at other providers.
- 47 Key stage 4 and post-16 option evenings still focus almost exclusively on what the school provides and not what is available elsewhere. In a few 14-19 networks, there are common option booklets produced by all providers, and learners make good use of Careers Online¹² when choosing courses. In these networks, learners receive suitable information and advice when planning their learning pathway. This includes meeting with tutors, careers advisers, learning coaches and college staff, and having taster sessions for collaborative courses. However, many schools do not give learners impartial advice at the end of key stage 3 or key stage 4.
- 48 The cost, time-commitment and complexity of transporting learners to other providers are practical barriers to collaborative working and the rationalisation of courses. Many networks are exploring other means of offering courses collaboratively, including distance learning using virtual-learning environments, video conferencing and tutors travelling between sites. These arrangements are mostly at an early stage of development and there has been little evaluation of their effectiveness or how they can improve value for money.

¹¹ Section 166 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

¹² Careers Wales website where learners can make their option choices.

Planning collaborative provision

- 49 There is little evaluation of the cost effectiveness of collaborative provision as a whole. Common data sets on attainment, achievement, attendance, exclusion rates, and completion and retention rates for collaborative provision are limited and do not present a reliable and valid picture of provision across partners or sectors. While most providers have established internal tracking systems to monitor learner progress on collaborative courses, networks do not yet have systems that can evaluate the impact of collaborative provision.
- 50 The Welsh Assembly Government is developing quality indicators for the evaluation of collaborative course provision and a self-assessment framework for 14-19 networks. Most 14-19 networks are beginning to plan how to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of collaborative provision. Quality champions are in place in each network and all networks have established a quality framework and protocols for collaborative working.
- 51 Currently only a minority of 14-19 network plans have a range of developments for post-16, while the majority focus on extending the range of courses at key stage 4. These plans are mainly concerned with how the Annual Network Development Plans grants will be used, and do not include developments that are paid for through mainstream funding and so give an overall picture of developments. As a result, few of these plans focus enough on post-16 developments.
- 52 In many areas, a widening range of partners is appropriately involved in the network. Careers services, youth services, voluntary groups, training providers and others are becoming increasingly important in ensuring the implementation of all aspects of Learning Pathways 14-19.
- 53 Nearly all 14-19 networks are working with local transformation planning groups to consider post-16 provision. Most are planning local consortia based on geographical proximity or language needs. A minority are considering closing school sixth-forms and moving to tertiary provision.

Welsh-medium provision

- 54 Most Welsh-medium schools are meeting the band requirements of the Measure in key stage 4. Even so, in many parts of Wales, there are still not enough Welsh-medium vocational courses, particularly for those that require specialist facilities. In addition, class sizes at post-16 are often small in Welsh-medium schools, and there is less scope for rationalisation and collaboration than in the English-medium sector.
- 55 Providing Welsh-medium vocational courses at post-16 is a particular challenge, and progression is difficult for learners who wish to continue their vocational studies through the medium of Welsh. Most Welsh-medium schools are unable to offer vocational courses that require specialist staff and equipment, and other Welsh-medium schools are often too far away to share provision. Colleges and work-based learning providers who have the facilities

often do not have Welsh-speaking tutors who are confident enough to deliver these courses in Welsh.

- 56 A few providers are tackling this issue by working across more than one 14-19 network. For example, in Anglesey and Gwynedd, there is joint planning between the two local authorities. In north Wales, Cynnal¹³ co-ordinates the development of Welsh-medium resources, virtual learning environments and distance learning options for Welsh-medium schools in Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Wrexham and Flintshire. There are a further two Welsh-medium groups in south-east and south-west Wales. These groups facilitate cross-border working on a regional basis.

Non-formal and informal learning

- 57 Nearly all schools and colleges offer 14-19 learners a wide range of non-formal and informal learning activities. This provision is a good or outstanding feature in many schools and colleges. All learners say that their provider offers a varied and interesting range of opportunities outside the formal curriculum.
- 58 Nearly all schools and colleges offer non-formal activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award, ASDAN¹⁴, Millennium Volunteers¹⁵, OCN¹⁶, first aid and food hygiene certificates. These often link to Welsh Baccalaureate work-focused experiences or specific subjects, such as catering.
- 59 Nearly all providers also offer learners varied and interesting informal learning experiences. These include community action events, debating societies, school and student councils, eco-committees, cultural events, sports and visits. These enrichment activities have a high priority because providers encourage participation as part of the production of progress files, for the development of strong curriculum vitae or the award of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification.
- 60 Schools and colleges have very good links with partners such as voluntary organisations, education business partnerships, community groups, fire and rescue services, Careers Wales and youth services to extend further the range of opportunities available for young people in their area.
- 61 Non-formal and informal learning activities are especially valuable in developing literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, engaging hard-to-reach learners, providing alternative learning experiences for less-able learners and offering enrichment activities for the more able and talented.

¹³ Cynnal provides the advisory service for Gwynedd and Anglesey local authorities.

¹⁴ ASDAN's award programmes and qualifications accredit personal and social education, skills development and enrichment activities.

¹⁵ Millennium Volunteers is a UK wide initiative designed to promote and recognise volunteering among young people aged 16–25.

¹⁶ Now 'Agored Cymru' offering vocational and vocational related qualifications.

Learning Pathways: the learning core

- 62 Most schools and colleges have well-established provision for the learning core. More and more schools and colleges are offering the Welsh BaccaLaureate because they believe that the requirements for the learning core match those of the Welsh BaccaLaureate. At post-16, learners in many schools and colleges are able to take the Welsh BaccaLaureate Qualification. This has become increasingly popular with learners as more providers offer it, and employers and higher education institutions have come to value it. A growing number of schools also offer the Welsh BaccaLaureate to learners in key stage 4. The number of centres offering the Welsh BaccaLaureate is set to rise from 167 to 217 in September 2010, making the award available to an estimated 7,000 additional learners. Many providers who do not offer it are planning to do so.
- 63 Where providers do not offer the Welsh BaccaLaureate, providers still make good progress in developing most of the learning core as much of it builds on existing provision, including that which is statutory at key stage 4. However, Welsh-language skills, particularly at post-16, key skills and work-focused experience are less well covered.
- 64 The few learners in key stage 4, who are on learning pathways that include extended work placements or other alternative programmes, often do not have enough access to all parts of the learning core. This is because they miss days in school to attend placements or college and there is no provision for them to catch-up the work covered in the lessons they missed.

Skills - key skills, Welsh-language skills and other work-related skills

- 65 Providers who offer the Welsh BaccaLaureate deliver its skills component through a combination of designated Welsh BaccaLaureate lessons and lessons in other subjects. In a majority of these providers, learners have between two and seven one-hour Welsh BaccaLaureate lessons a fortnight. These lessons cover key skills, Wales, Europe and the World, personal and social education and an independent investigation. Many providers plan the delivery of key skills across the curriculum and use Welsh BaccaLaureate lessons to compile the key skills portfolios that learners need to achieve key skills qualifications. This is especially the case at post-16.
- 66 Providers that do not offer the Welsh BaccaLaureate often do not develop key skills systematically enough for learners on general courses. These providers have not mapped key skills provision across the curriculum and few learners achieve the key skills qualifications.
- 67 At key stage 4, nearly all English-medium schools provide Welsh-language skills through compulsory Welsh second language provision as part of the National Curriculum, although standards in Welsh second language are often low. At post-16, very few providers offer opportunities to develop Welsh-language skills, unless Welsh is part of the Welsh BaccaLaureate.

- 68 Providers offer nearly all 14-19 learners a good range of enterprise activities and work-focused experiences that help to develop work-related skills. Providers usually deliver these in partnership with employers, Careers Wales and education business partnerships. Most deliver this element of the learning core within the lessons identified for Welsh Baccalaureate or personal and social education. In addition, most schools hold specific events where the school timetable is suspended. These 'enterprise' or 'focus' events are well received by learners in key stage 4 and post-16.

Knowledge and understanding - Wales, Europe and the World, personal, social, sustainability and health matters, and careers education and guidance

- 69 Most learners have timetabled lessons in personal, social and health education and careers, and these cover an appropriate range of topics for this aspect of the learning core. Learners enjoy and benefit from programmes that providers plan well and teach effectively. Learners in some of the providers visited as part of the survey gain a great deal from this part of their curriculum, particularly if it is part of the Welsh Baccalaureate programme.
- 70 There is good provision for Wales, Europe and the World, and sustainability in those providers that offer the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification. Learners undertake projects based on citizenship or politics. Provision is weak where the qualification is not offered.
- 71 Careers advice and guidance are available in all providers. Careers Wales advisers work with groups of learners and offer all learners at least one careers interview during key stage 4 and post-16. Nearly all learners interviewed knew how to access careers advice, though a few had not attended a careers interview.

Attitudes and values - respect for self, others and for diversity, and responsibility for personal and social development, sustainability and health

- 72 Nearly all schools and colleges give high priority to developing positive attitudes and values. Most providers encourage involvement in school councils, eco-committees, volunteering, fund raising for charities and peer mentoring. Most also do a great deal to encourage learners to challenge bullying, racism and anti-social attitudes. Many develop appropriate programmes to improve social and emotional skills. Many providers work well with partners to provide opportunities for learners to take on an extensive range of responsibilities. Learners are successfully encouraged to take care of themselves and others.

Common experiences - work-focused experience, community participation, and cultural, sporting, aesthetic and creative activities

- 73 The common experiences aspect of the learning core is a good feature in nearly all schools and colleges. Most provide specific events for work-related experiences and community participation, when providers suspend the timetable from one to five days. A wide range of cultural, sporting, aesthetic

and creative opportunities are also available, many provided in partnership with other organisations. Learners value these opportunities highly.

- 74 There are some innovative examples of schools and colleges' engagement with employers. These examples are often related to vocational courses that include a work-based experience or courses delivered by employers or training providers. Many providers organise events where local employers work with learners on enterprise activities. While these are effective in developing skills and knowledge about the world of work, they are less effective as a work-focused experience because they are not based in a workplace and therefore do not provide learners with a real feel for what it is like to be in the workplace.
- 75 The provision of a work-focused experience as an entitlement for all learners is difficult to meet in some areas. These areas are usually where employers are sparse or reluctant to take learners for short placements, for example in rural locations or where there is a depressed local economy. Health and safety regulations, rules on risk assessment and the requirement for Criminal Records Bureau checks demand careful and rigorous application, while also avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy that may deter further employer engagement.
- 76 Many schools require learners to undertake work experience in key stage 4, although a minority of schools cannot find placements for all learners. At post-16, only a few schools make work experience compulsory for all learners. Even when work experience is available, learners often feel that it is inappropriate to their needs. This is because learners want work experience that directly relates to their career interests or learning pathway, and schools cannot always provide this opportunity. Many vocational courses include a work placement element and so work experience is often less of an issue for learners at further education colleges.

Annex

Implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure at key stage 4

Progression in the number of options that need to be offered in moving towards the full minimum entitlement for key stage 4 by 2012.

	2009	2010	2011	2012
Band A Blaenau Gwent Caerphilly Cardiff Denbighshire Monmouthshire Newport Swansea Vale of Glamorgan Wrexham	28 (4)	30 (5)	30 (5)	30 (5)
Band B Carmarthenshire Neath Pot Talbot Pembrokeshire Rhondda Cynon Taf Torfaen	26 (4)	28 (4)	30 (5)	30 (5)
Band C Anglesey Bridgend Ceredigion Conwy Flintshire Gwynedd Merthyr Tydfil Powys	24 (3)	26 (4)	28 (4)	30 (5)

The number in brackets shows the number of courses that have to be vocational.

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