

Agenda – Children, Young People and Education Committee

Meeting Venue:	For further information contact:
Video Conference via Zoom	Llinos Madeley
Meeting date: 23 June 2020	Committee Clerk
Meeting time: 13.00	0300 200 6565
	SeneddCYPE@senedd.wales

Informal pre-meeting

(13.00 – 13.30)

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

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(13.30)

2 COVID-19: Evidence session on the impact of COVID-19 on higher and further education with higher education representatives

(13.30 – 14.30)

(Pages 1 – 40)

Professor Medwin Hughes, Vice-Chancellor – University of Wales Trinity Saint David and of the University of Wales

Kieron Rees, Head of External Affairs and Policy – Universities Wales

Professor Elizabeth Treasure, Vice-Chancellor – Aberystwyth University

Professor Paul Boyle, Vice-Chancellor – Swansea University

Dr David Blaney, Chief Executive – HEFCW



Attached Documents:

Research Brief

CYPE(5)-16-20 – Paper 1 – Universities Wales

CYPE(5)-16-20 – Paper 2 – Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
(HEFCW)

3 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for item 4

(14.30)

Break

(14.30 – 14.40)

4 COVID-19: Consideration of evidence

(14.40 – 15.00)

5 COVID-19: Evidence session on the impact of COVID-19 on higher and further education with further education representatives

(15.00 – 15.40)

(Pages 41 – 54)

Dr Rachel Bowen, Director of Policy and Public Affairs – ColegauCymru /
CollegesWales

Dr Andrew Cornish, Principal and Chief Executive – Coleg Sir Gar and Coleg
Ceredigion

Philip Blaker, Chief Executive – Qualifications Wales

Denver Davies, Head of Monitoring and Compliance – Qualifications Wales

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)-16-20 – Paper 3 – ColegauCymru / Colleges Wales

CYPE(5)-16-20 – Paper 3a – Colegau Cymru / Colleges Wales

6 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for item 7

(15.40)

Break

(15.40 – 15.50)

7 COVID-19: Consideration of evidence

(15.50 – 16.10)

8 COVID-19: Evidence session on the impact of COVID-19 on higher and further education: staff and student voices

(16.10 – 16.50)

(Pages 55 – 60)

Joe Atkinson, Press and Public Affairs Consultant – NUS Wales

Jim Dickinson, Associate Editor – WONKHE

Dr Myfanwy Davies, Council Governor appointed by Academic Staff – Bangor University

Dan Beard, UNISON Higher Education executive member and chair of UNISON Cymru Wales

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)-16-20 – Paper 4 – National Union of Students Wales (NUS Wales)

CYPE(5)-16-20 – Paper 5 – University and College Union (UCU) (this consultation response is published as a supporting paper for this meeting as UCU representatives were unable to attend in person)

9 Papers to note

9.1 Letter from the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services – response to the Committee's letter of 12 May requesting further information on the impact of Covid-19 on children and young people

(Pages 61 – 67)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)-16-20 – Paper to note 1

9.2 Letter from the Chair to the Minister for Education regarding an update on ALN reform

(Page 68)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)-16-20 – Paper to note 2

9.3 Additional information from the All Wales Heads of Children's Services following the meeting on the 18 May

(Pages 69 – 73)

Attached Documents:

CYPE(5)-16-20 – Paper to note 3

10 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the public for the remainder of the meeting

(16.50)

11 COVID-19: Consideration of evidence

(16.50 – 17.00)

12 Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill – consideration of approach

(17.00 – 17.10)

Document is Restricted

Senedd Cymru
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

Ymchwiliad i effaith argyfwng Covid-19 ar blant
a phobl ifanc yng Nghymru

COV 122
Ymateb gan: Prifysgolion Cymru

Welsh Parliament
Children, Young People and Education Committee

Inquiry into the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on
children and young people in Wales

COV 122
Response from: Universities Wales

Universities Wales response to the Senedd Cymru’s Children, Young People and Education Committee’s consultation; Scrutiny of Covid-19 and its impact on children and young people (including students in further and higher education).

About Universities Wales

Universities Wales represents the interests of universities in Wales, and is a National Council of Universities UK. Universities Wales’s membership encompasses the Vice Chancellors of all the universities in Wales, and the Director of the Open University in Wales. Our mission is to support a university education system which transforms lives through the work Welsh universities do with the people and places of Wales and the wider world.

Summary

- The number one priority for universities continues to be the health and wellbeing of students and staff. Universities UK, with support and contribution from Universities Wales, has produced principles and considerations for emerging from lockdown. This work informs both the plans universities are making ahead of the autumn term as well as the discussions that we have had with Welsh Government and HEFCW.
- Universities will have a crucial role to play in Wales’ recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. As well as the economic role that universities play across Wales – supporting jobs and the foundational economy – universities also offer social and cultural continuity for communities across Wales including in the use of facilities, outreach programmes and arts programmes.
- The Office for Budget Responsibility forecasts that education and particularly universities will be among the most impacted by Covid-19.
- The scale of the financial challenges facing the Welsh higher education sector is severe and threatens the ability of Welsh universities to continue to deliver the significant economic benefits to all parts of Wales, world leading research and the UK’s highest student satisfaction. Current estimates indicate that the Covid-19 outbreak may result in an income loss between

£200m and £400m to Welsh universities in academic year 2020/21. It is also estimated that there is a reduction in income of between approximately £80 million and £90 million to universities in the period to end July 2020.

- These estimates only take account of the direct financial impact on universities, not the indirect economic impact that will be felt in Wales as a result of a reduction in university or activity. For example, universities generate £5bn of output, £500m of export earnings and nearly 50,000 jobs.
- There are also wider consequences than the direct and indirect financial impact. For example, there are a number of subject areas important to Wales' prosperity that have a high proportion of international students on those courses. A reduction in international students could mean that those subject areas are no longer viable unless there is replacement funding. For example, in 2018/19, at postgraduate level in Wales international students made up 39% of engineering students, 40% of computer science students, 35% of mathematics students.
- To preserve the sector, and the benefits universities bring to Wales, it is vital that a full package of support is developed by the UK and devolved governments. For example, if research and innovation infrastructure in Wales is not preserved, it could take decades to rebuild what is lost and the associated benefits for Wales.
- Universities are making the most of existing government support schemes, but these have not proven straightforward and their eligibility criteria is not necessarily reflective of the diverse and complex make up of universities' staff structures and funding mechanisms. For example, universities in Wales are not commercial entities but registered charities with a duty of care to protect and use their assets for charitable purposes.
- We are now reaching a point of urgency. Without additional support the sector will have to imminently make difficult decisions in keeping with the governance and financial requirements placed upon them as charities and as institutions regulated by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.
- Welsh universities are working closely with the Quality Assurance Agency to ensure that as little disruption occurs as possible as a result of the transition from classroom-based teaching to remote provision, and that this provision remains of the highest quality.
- There remains uncertainty about the future economic prospects of the UK including in areas such as employment. Universities Wales is supporting work being coordinated by Universities UK to explore how these impacts from Covid-19 can be mitigated, including how we can further support the employability of students and graduates.
- Universities are continuing to work hard with their existing resources to support students across a range of areas including augmenting hardship funds and putting in place other support and resources to help students in accessing their learning and assessments.

- The loss of seasonal and part time work is something that Welsh institutions are aware of and are working with affected students to support them. But the scale of the impact on graduate entry to the labour market is challenging and will be difficult for universities to mitigate on their own.
- The current environment is fast-moving and the issues outlined in this response may change in a matter of days or weeks. We will keep the committee informed of developments as and when they happen.

Higher and further education, including the financial sustainability of the sector, the effect of changes to courses, student accommodation and other student services, and the impact of this on students' legal rights.

The health and safety of universities' staff and students remains the number one priority and universities are working hard to support students throughout the duration of this crisis. Universities UK, with support and contribution from Universities Wales, has produced principles and considerations for emerging from lockdown¹. The principles and considerations provide a framework for individual universities to adapt to their own institutional settings and contexts. This work informs both the plans universities are making ahead of the autumn term as well as the discussions that we have had with Welsh Government and HEFCW.

The Office for Budget Responsibility's analysis suggests that education, in particular universities, will be the sector most severely impacted by the Covid-19 crisis.

There are range of estimates for the financial impact the pandemic will have on the sector in Wales. This range reflects the difficulty of predicting recruitment patterns in 2020/21. However, all point to a major income loss from fee income alone and, once continuing students and other losses are taken into account, current estimates indicate that the Covid-19 outbreak may result in an income loss between £200m and £400m to Welsh universities in academic year 2020/21. It is also estimated that there is a reduction in income of between approximately £80 million and £90 million to universities in the period to end July 2020.

These figures do not include the impact that will be felt as a result of a reduction in the wider economic benefits of universities, staff and students on local communities.

The scale of the financial challenge facing the Welsh higher education sector is not to be underestimated and without support it could take decades to recover from the possible impact that Covid-19 will have the sector. Financial instability in the higher education sector would affect current and prospective students,

¹ <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/principles-considerations-emerging-lockdown-uk-universities-june-2020.aspx>

impacting on areas from financial support, to capital investment, from teaching and learning, research and innovation.

The impact will be wider than university activity. Welsh universities are proportionally more impact to the economy in Wales than the university sector across the UK is to the UK economy. According to independent analysis, universities in Wales generate nearly 50,000 jobs and around £5bn of output. Any reduction in income, including as a result of falling student numbers, will also impact the wider economic benefits of universities including on the foundational economy and jobs².

In 2019, Wales had the highest overall student satisfaction in the UK and led the other UK nations across a range of areas in the National Student Survey, notably student satisfaction, course quality and student voice. Additionally, Welsh universities contribute heavily to world leading research and innovation. Welsh research is cited 68% more than the global average and receives more citations per \$1 million of research investment than any other country.

Therefore, the impact of a financial shock to the sector on this scale, without government support, could have implications for Wales' world-leading performance in these areas.

A possible reduction in international students has wider consequences than the direct and indirect financial impact. For example, a number of subjects crucial to the Welsh economy are reliant on large numbers of international students to be viable. A reduction in international students could pose challenges to the continued delivery of those subjects which would subsequently impact the supply of those very high levels skills in Wales.. For example, at postgraduate level in Wales international students make up:

- 39% of engineering students
- 40% of computer science students
- 35% of mathematics students

To preserve the sector, and the benefits universities bring to Wales, it is vital that a full package of support is developed by the UK and devolved governments.

Universities are making the most of existing government support schemes, but these have not proven straightforward and their eligibility criteria is not necessarily reflective of the diverse and complex make up of universities' staff structures and funding mechanisms. For example, universities in Wales are not commercial entities but registered charities with a duty of care to protect and use their assets for charitable purposes.

We are now reaching a point of urgency. Without additional support the sector will have to imminently make difficult decisions in keeping with the governance

² http://www.uniswales.ac.uk/media/UNI010-Economic-Impact-Report_FINAL.pdf

and financial requirements placed upon them as charities and as institutions regulated by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

The risk to the sector in Wales is compounded by the possible impact of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. There remain many unanswered questions about the transition period in particular what replacement funding for European Structural Funds will be available. There are currently no commitments from governments as to whether projects can and will be funded should there be any gaps between EU and replacement schemes. This is now an urgent matter, especially given the challenges that Welsh higher education faces as a result of Covid-19.

Student financial support including the impact on students who have lost their part-time employment.

Universities have been hard at work, adapting and augmenting existing support mechanisms for students in the wake of Covid-19 and anticipating the need for continued support.

Many universities took the decision to allow students to exit their accommodation early at no cost to the student. Universities now face a loss of income of around £35 million this term due to accommodation, conferencing and catering services.

Where students have chosen to remain in their accommodation, universities have been working to support them as best possible, delivering food and other essential supplies to students in need and maintaining regular contact to ensure the students' health and well-being.

As mentioned below, extensive work has been done around ensuring students have access to hardship funds across Welsh universities. There has also been a process of adapting funding to make it quicker for students to access.

The physical and mental health of children and young people.

The National Union of Students "[Coronavirus and Students](#)" survey shows exceptionally high levels of concern within respondents across a range of areas:

- 95% of students are concerned about the wider economy
- 81% are worried about their job prospects
- 65% are worried about their applications for jobs and university/college

At a time of relative uncertainty, it is increasingly important that Welsh and UK Governments are able to put in place measures to support the higher education sector and in doing so, provide prospective and current students with reassurance.

Vulnerable and disadvantaged children (including pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, children in need, looked after children and children eligible for free school meals).

Children's services, including social care and safeguarding.

Early childhood education and care, including impact on the childcare market and childhood development.

Statutory school education, including arrangements for remote learning, continuity of learning, the impact on educational outcomes and the implementation of the critical workers policy.

Universities are playing a key role in supporting not only their own students' education, but in the wider national effort. Welsh universities are working with regional stakeholders to support the move to online learning in schools:

- Universities in Wales have been working with Welsh Government to create online learning experiences and events for learners in Year 13. The post-16 distance learning resources are accessible via the Hwb, the digital platform for learning and teaching in Wales. These resources are being made available early to enable learners to carry on with their learning and prepare to transition to higher education. The vast amount of resources have been developed by universities, colleges and other organisations, and include online lectures, master classes and tutorials. They also include information about university life, wellbeing, and information for parents and carers.
- Students from Cardiff Metropolitan University's School of Education and Social Policy have come together to create a free homeschool programme for parents affected by the recent Covid-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. Around 30 Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Initial Teacher Education (ITE) students have devised a weekly programme of activities designed for Key Stage 3 (KS3) learners, delivered through Microsoft's Teams and OneNote programmes. From English to Physics, learners have the opportunity to conduct experiments using household items as well as a range of weekly activities that can be done with parents.
- The Open University in Wales has been working with Cardiff Council Schools' Service to identify resources that can help teachers to support learners at home online, mainly through OpenLearn and FutureLearn. The resources will explore how to upskill teachers to use the pedagogical approaches needed to facilitate distance learning online and to convert some of the best content into online packages. The partnership project between the Council and The Open University is the first of its kind in Wales and will provide support, advice and training to teachers on ways to implement distance learning.
- The MFL Student Mentoring Project has created a series of online resources on the Hwb. The project is run by Cardiff University in partnership with Bangor University, Swansea University and Aberystwyth University. The

resources have been designed for Year 13 pupils to explore a variety of languages and cultures in readiness for University life. There are a range of live Seminars and Lectures as well as a series of Language Classes and Resources. Each week will have a unique theme and will be led by either a university academic, a university student or a member of the Welsh Government-funded Languages Project, the MFL Student Mentoring Project. There is also information about what the study of languages looks like at different Welsh Universities.

Exams and qualifications (including vocational qualifications).

Universities in Wales are doing all they can to support students to achieve their learning outcomes and progress. Measures taken include moving assessments online where possible (depending on academic discipline); introducing alternate measures of assessment; and amendments to exam questions if sections of a syllabus have been missed.

This is a difficult situation for students in their final year in particular, and a variety of options and approaches are being used at individual institutions to ensure as many students as possible are supported to graduate this year and in a way that ensures a fair and consistent approach throughout.

We know that some students will require greater support or for suitable alternative arrangements to be made to online provision, and universities are being as accommodating as they can and, on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the individual students' circumstances and preferences.

The QAA is also regularly updating guidance to support providers in maintaining academic standards and quality and has noted that there is unlikely to be "a single approach or solution that will fit all modules, courses or departments".

Universities Wales are also engaged in a UK-wide piece of work led by UUK aimed at exploring options to support recent and future graduates. The work group are considering what universities can do with their current capacity to help support graduates entering the labour market. They are also working to identify whether there is any support that governments and businesses can provide to help ensure that recent and future generations of graduates are supported as best possible.

Youth work.

Support available for the workforce, including (but not limited to) health, social care, education, children's services, and youth workers.

Universities have been playing a critical role in the national effort, supporting a range of initiatives in collaboration with the health and social care system.

Aberystwyth University is working with a group in Machynlleth to produce more PPE to protect health and social care workers from Covid-19. As a result of the partnership with local group Dyfi PPE, academics and staff at the university are laser cutting materials into a specified shape. The parts from the university will be assembled by a Welsh firm into visors. This collaboration has been developed as part of the European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) Project Centre for Photonics Expertise project, in which Aberystwyth is a partner.

2000+ student nurses & midwives who have opted in to work in clinical settings in Wales during this challenging time. Another example of fantastic teamwork with **Bangor University, the University of South Wales, Cardiff University and Swansea University**, supporting the nursing & midwifery workforce.

Social Care Wales have given programmes permission to exercise discretion on practice learning requirements and to do what is needed to support students in placement while ensuring sufficiency and robustness of practice learning. Most partners (local authorities and voluntary organisations) and sponsors, however, are working in collaboration with the **Open University in Wales** to support students' learning even if they are called back to the front line.

Nursing lecturers at the College of Human & Health Sciences at **Swansea University** have launched PurpleAid to support pre-reg nursing undergraduates experiencing financial difficulties through not being able to carry out Bank or part-time work. The staff are offering to buy and deliver essential items to those students who are struggling.

Social work students from Cardiff University's School of Social Sciences have taken on voluntary and paid roles in various caring roles to help local authorities care for vulnerable people.

Swansea University's College of Human & Health Sciences is carrying out critical care training for non-critical care staff for Swansea Bay and Hywel Dda university health boards over the next 4 weeks, manual handling training for Swansea Bay, intermediate life support training for Hywel Dda and are in negotiation with the health boards about what other training they require.

University of South Wales is continuing to train NHS nurses in our facilities, and will be training hundreds of non-critical care staff who are working in critical care. The academic and clinical skills team are delivering this training, which is already underway. Training videos have also been filmed in the Clinical Simulation Centre to demonstrate how to use ventilators.

Frontline housing workers, homelessness support services and the people they look after, many of whom are vulnerable, are the latest groups to be using hand sanitiser made at **Swansea University**, where a solar tech lab has temporarily switched to producing 5000 litres a week during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Swansea University nursing students say they are proud to be able to face the challenge of joining the NHS during the pandemic. More than 700 nursing students from Swansea University opted to take on clinical roles and have begun caring for Welsh patients this week

The University of South Wales is working with university health boards to provide non critical care staff with ITU skills to aid the current situation in which the NHS is finding itself.

A leading **Swansea University** clinician is among a group of experts calling for the introduction of a risk assessment for frontline health professionals treating coronavirus patients. The study - Risk stratification for healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic – examined the demographics of those who had been hospitalised and ultimately died due to COVID-19 compared to the general population.

Doctor Tom Slater from **Cardiff University** has joined a group of academics to investigate the impact of covid-19 pandemic on family carers. The “Caring through Coronavirus” study will seek to understand how family carers are coping during the pandemic and explore whether changes in policy, legislation, and health and social care provision are impacting their wellbeing and caring responsibilities.

Impact of Covid-19 on Welsh HE Sector

Financial impact

1. Universities have experienced substantial loss of income and changes to operating models as a result of Covid-19. Analysis of information provided by universities to HEFCW in early April indicates that the Covid-19 outbreak may result in an income reduction of approximately £80m-£90m by July 2020.¹ This is due to: loss of accommodation fees; reduction in commercial services; and potential loss of tuition fees, research funding and other income.
2. HEFCW analysis, based on financial scenarios provided by each institution in April, has indicated that the Covid-19 outbreak may result in an income loss between £200m and £400m to Welsh universities in academic year (AY)2020/21.^{2 3} This is dependent on a range of factors, including the recruitment rates of international and domestic students, and the timescales of removing current social distancing protocols. These have a direct impact on teaching, research and commercial income such as theatres and conferencing.
3. It is difficult to be definitive about the total forthcoming income loss and its impact, hence the range indicated in paragraph 2 above. Nobody, however, doubts that the income loss will be significant. Without additional government support for universities in Wales, it would be reasonable to assume that several universities will have difficult choices to make in order to avoid becoming insolvent before the end of AY 2020/21.
4. With the use of existing short term borrowing facilities, and continued monthly HEFCW funding, all universities are expected to have sufficient cash to continue to meet their liabilities until at least the end of July 2020, but the initial income reduction will limit their ability to plan for AY 2020/21, and to be as competitive as possible for incoming students in autumn. As charities, universities are not allowed by law to trade if not a going concern: they have to manage their cost base in the light of expected income. Without some additional sectoral financial support, universities in Wales may have to start the process of redundancy consultations and cost base reductions in early summer before knowing the reality of their student fee income in autumn. These actions would likely have a negative effect on student recruitment and, consequentially, further reduce income for AY 2020/21.

¹ The sector had a £1,628.2m turnover in 2018/19 but a £215.6m operating deficit, including one-off accounting adjustments in respect of pension schemes. Excluding these, the underlying position was a £13.7m deficit. Financial forecasts prepared in July 2019, saw universities expecting either deficits or to broadly break even in the short term, with recovery expected with the implementation of the [Diamond review](#) funding recommendations and reversal of the demographic dip of 18 year old school leavers from 2021 onwards.

² An analysis by London Economics for UCU has indicated a shortfall of £100m in the Welsh sector in 2020-21 with a consequent need for universities in Wales to reduce their staffing levels by 1,000. The London Economic report only considers the loss of tuition fees and teaching grant related to new students so only provides a partial picture of lost income and is therefore likely to represent an underestimate.

³ A report published by the Wales Fiscal Analysis programme at Cardiff University's Wales Governance Centre on 15/05/20 estimates that Taking into account predicted falls in international student recruitment and home student enrolment, the report estimates that the sector could lose anything between £100m and £140m in 2020-21 from fee income alone.
https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0010/2394361/Covid_FINAL.pdf

What universities have done in response to Covid-19

5. Despite lockdown, universities are not closed, and most costs will continue to be incurred, and in some cases increased, as a consequence of Covid-19 related activity (such as investment in digital infrastructure to facilitate online teaching and assessment). As salaries form the majority of costs, all universities in Wales have sought to furlough staff where eligible under the UK Government's Job Retention Scheme. The additional 20% of salary costs is currently being met and most academic staff are not eligible for the scheme as they continue to work on essential and publicly funded services, including teaching and research.
6. Universities are also exploring HMRC payment deferment options. All universities will have a net cash outflow for all the remaining months of AY 2019/20 starting from April, apart from May (when they received 50% of the tuition fees due for AY 2019/20 from the Student Loans Company (SLC)), which will result in tight cash positions.
7. Further options being pursued by Welsh universities to reduce the financial pressures they face include:
 - Reduction in cash reserves;
 - Freezing new staff recruitment;
 - Non-renewal of temporary contracts;
 - Freezing pay increases and introducing voluntary cuts for higher paid staff;
 - Reduction in estate maintenance expenditure and revision of capital expenditure plans;
 - Consideration of asset sales; and
 - Taking out or extending loans and overdrafts facilities with their banks.
8. In addition to the above and in the absence of further government funding, staff costs will likely have to reduce. Restructuring requires negotiation with unions and takes time, with no impact for at least three months and additional short-term severance costs. Restructuring decisions would likely need to be made in early summer if no additional support is forthcoming. This would be in advance of students making final choices about study in the autumn, and would likely have a negative impact on the attractiveness of Welsh institutions to prospective students. The coming recruitment cycle is expected to be very challenging for Welsh universities and any further damage to their competitiveness will worsen their prospects for generating revenue and remaining solvent.
9. A reduction in income for Welsh universities of £300m⁴ in AY 2020/21 would equate to approximately 5,000 FTE jobs lost. These jobs would be a combination of lecturers, researchers, technicians and professional support staff with a consequent loss of experience and expertise. These roles would be difficult to replace if funding were made available later in the year. As many university jobs are part-time, the actual numbers of staff layoffs would be far greater (with a potentially disproportionate impact on some protected groups), and there would be a significant impact on the Welsh economy, with some areas losing a substantial part of the local employment base.
10. In addition, universities would seek to consolidate their teaching and research portfolios. Subject areas with a large cost-base and smaller overall student numbers would be most at risk of cut backs. These vary between institutions, but may include agriculture, physical sciences, and other STEM subject areas where skills and research will be critical to the post-Covid economic recovery. Any such contraction would come at the worst possible time for Welsh universities. Domestic demand for higher education is forecast to grow rapidly from 2021 onwards, and this may be even more so as a result of any post-Covid recession. Universities will need high quality teaching capacity and facilities to meet this

⁴ Average figure based on estimated loss of income range of £200-£400m

demand in the long-term and to remain competitive with institutions in the rest of the UK and internationally.

11. Given the substantial time lag until any cost-savings may be realised from restructuring, universities will need support to maintain liquidity during 2020/21 and to maintain competitiveness in the 2020 recruitment cycle. This includes possible applications by some universities to the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS) or Covid-19 Corporate Financing Facility (CCFF), and any other loans, government interventions or refinancing options. The re-profiling of SLC payments will also assist with continuing liquidity in the autumn.⁵

Institutional insolvency

12. If an institution were to become insolvent, significant job losses would ensue, both for those employed by the institutions and others in supply chains and those who rely on expenditure by students. Students would be left unable to complete their studies and would inevitably seek compensation. Financial liabilities, including pension fund liabilities, would crystallise immediately with university assets passing into the ownership of creditors. It is estimated that the cost of disorderly failure of even a small university would be in excess of £30m. For most Welsh universities, the cost would be substantially higher.
13. The disruption to students created by a disorderly collapse of an institution would be significant. Government will be expected to support students to find alternative providers, covering the ensuing costs. These costs, along with the impact on supply chains and the wider economy, would exceed the cost of supporting the sector in the short term to avoid the disruption.

Conclusion

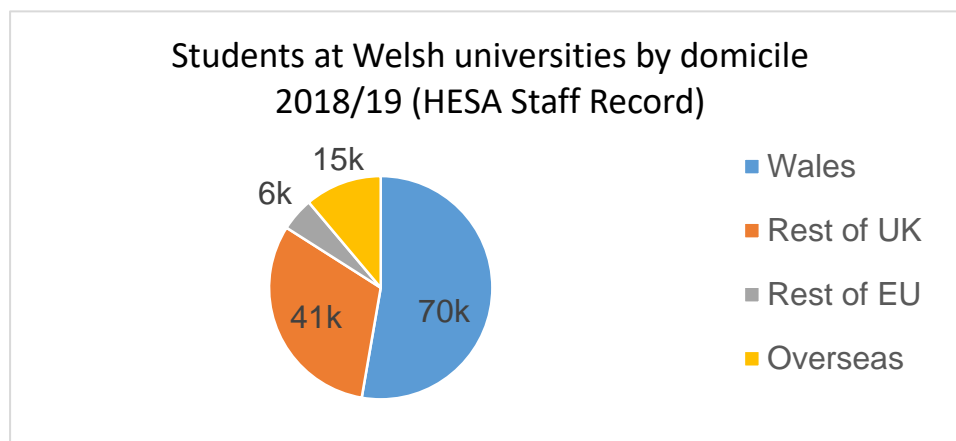
14. Institutions recognise that a return to 'normal' is unlikely, and they must prepare for an adjusted cost base that does not assume levels of international recruitment will immediately bounce back. Longer term support will enable the sector to transition to the 'new normal' business models and forms of delivery. It will not be enough simply to plug financial gaps by replacing lost income. HEFCW is challenging the sector to address the impact of Covid-19 in a way which results in new ways of doing business, for example new blended learning models and investment in digital infrastructure to reduce reliance on the campus estate. Failure to secure additional support will result in, at worst, a risk of institutional insolvency and, at best, a much diminished HE sector, with the loss of hundreds, if not thousands, of jobs and a significantly reduced capacity to deliver to the needs of Wales, as illustrated by the following Annex.

⁵ <https://gov.wales/higher-education-policy-statement-coronavirus>

Annex A

Securing value-for-money – the importance of Welsh universities

1. In 2018/19, 132,000 students were enrolled at Welsh universities⁶, 53% of these students were from Wales, 31% from the rest of the UK, and 16% from the EU and overseas. Students make a substantial economic contribution across Wales as consumers (a recent study for Universities Wales [estimated](#) total student expenditure away from the university campus was approximately £1.7 billion in 2015/16)⁷.



2. Conversely, 31,000 Welsh domiciled students studied elsewhere in the UK. The reliance of Welsh universities on recruitment from outside Wales, and the potential for Welsh students to study outside Wales, means Welsh universities need to retain their competitiveness at a UK and global level to remain sustainable.
3. Universities underpin essential Welsh public services through training, continuing professional development and research activity. Welsh universities train many of the professionals in medicine and allied areas that work in the Welsh NHS, teachers, social workers and other professions, including an increasing amount of Welsh language teaching in these areas and others. Demand for these courses is likely to increase. Universities supply skilled workers and other professionals that underpin the wider Welsh economy.
4. Research and innovation in universities supports the Welsh economy and is helping to combat Covid-19. The recent Reid [Review](#) highlighted the importance of increasing Welsh Government funding in order to ensure that Welsh universities are more competitive in bringing UK-wide grants into Wales. The review recommended maintaining HEFCW's QR allocation of £71m in real terms (2016 prices), introducing new innovation funding at £25m per annum, as proposed in the Diamond review, and in addition the creation of a new Future of Wales Fund of £30m per annum for research investment and a St David's Investment Fund for Welsh innovation activities worth £35m annually and growing to £100m or more post Brexit. Covid-19 has created significant risks for sources of research and innovation income from business and charitable organisations, further underlying the critical importance of maintaining public investment in this area.
5. Universities are major employers. They are one of the largest sources of employment in places like Aberystwyth (1,410 FTE jobs) and Bangor (1,565 FTE jobs), with the loss of jobs at these universities likely to have a devastating, and potentially irreversible, effect on the local economy. In some local authorities, HE provides upwards of 7.5% of local employment. Universities in Wales directly employed 17,295 full time equivalent (FTE)

⁶ Including the Open University in Wales and HE students in further education colleges.

⁷ http://uniswales.ac.uk/media/UNI010-Economic-Impact-Report_FINAL.pdf

staff in Wales in 2018/19 and are [estimated](#) to support 49,000 FTE jobs in the broader economy, equivalent to 3.5% of all 2015 Welsh employment⁸.

6. HEFCW estimates of direct job losses for every 10% reduction in university income⁹

Aberystwyth University	148 FTE jobs
Bangor University	294 FTE jobs
Cardiff University	943 FTE jobs
Cardiff Metropolitan University	190 FTE jobs
Swansea University	700 FTE jobs
University of South Wales	365 FTE jobs
University of Wales Trinity Saint David	234 FTE jobs
Wrexham Glyndŵr University	73 FTE jobs

⁸ http://uniswales.ac.uk/media/UNI010-Economic-Impact-Report_FINAL.pdf

⁹ All figures based on 2018/19 actual university income and 2018/19 average salary for full time staff

Senedd Cymru
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

Ymchwiliad i effaith argyfwng Covid-19
ar blant a phobl ifanc yng Nghymru

COV 68
Ymateb gan: ColegauCymru

Welsh Parliament
Children, Young People and Education Committee
Agenda Item 5

Inquiry into the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on
children and young people in Wales

COV 68
Response from: CollegesWales



COVID-19 AND THE FURTHER EDUCATION (FE) SECTOR IN WALES

April 2020

INTRODUCTION

The spread of Covid-19 (or Coronavirus) has brought severe disruptions to communities and families across Wales. This briefing aims to help our stakeholders understand the position Further Education Institutions (FEIs) in Wales are taking in response to the pandemic to date, and what steps the CollegesWales Principals' Forum have taken to work with the Welsh Government and other organisations, in the best interest of post-16 learners across the country.

Background

On February 28th 2020, the first case of Covid-19 was confirmed in Wales. Since then, the total number of cases and deaths has risen rapidly. On April 15th the total number of deaths in Wales caused by the virus was 463, while the number of confirmed cases stood at 6,118, although the true number is said to be higher¹. According to Public Health Wales, south east Wales is the worst affected area of the country, with 1,570 cases in the Aneurin Bevan Health Board, and 1,471 cases in the Cardiff and Vale Health Board (with Cwm Taf and Abertawe Bro Morgannwg following close behind)². The geographical areas covered by these Health Boards include seven colleges and over 30 campuses which house both academic and vocational learners aged 14+.

Challenges faced by the education sector

On March 18th, during the CollegesWales Principals' Forum, Principals and CEOs from all colleges across Wales met to discuss a coordinated response across the FE sector to Covid-19. The decision was made to suspend all face to face provision by March 20th and take a phased approach to working differently, with the emphasis on online delivery. Importantly, the decision was made to keep college campuses open with a skeleton staff wherever possible, to

ensure learners still had access to libraries and support. The Welsh Government online learning platform is not currently available to FE learners or apprentices. As a result, FEIs have invested in a range of Virtual Learning Platforms or VLEs to reach their students. College support staff have also made use of online platforms like Teams or Zoom for staff meetings, ensuring administration of the colleges continues during these difficult times.

Following the meeting of the Principals' Forum on March 18th, ColegauCymru wrote to the Education Minister on behalf of the sector, and received a swift response on March 20th. The Minister praised the continuous proactive collaboration between colleges, and thanked ColegauCymru for coordinating discussions with officials. In response to specific concerns raised by ColegauCymru, she confirmed that EMA payments, which supported 15,090 FE learners last year³, will still be made in spite of the suspension of face to face teaching, and Financial Contingency Fund payments to learners and suppliers can continue to be made. Colleges are aiming to be as supportive as possible to their vulnerable learners, as well as the companies who provide essential services, at this very challenging time.

¹ <https://coronaviruscymru.wales/>

² <https://public.tableau.com/profile/public.health.wales.health.protection#!/vizhome/RapidCOVID-19virology-Public/Headlinesummary>

³ <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Post-16-Education-and-Training/Student-Support/Educational-Maintenance-Allowances-Further-Education/approvedemaapplications-by-gender-learningcentre-type-award-type>



The table below shows the most recent data for the number of learners enrolled at FE colleges and gives an indication of the numbers experiencing disruption as a result of Covid-19. Each individual learner will face their own challenges in continuing their learning at this time. Colleges have taken

specific steps to support the most vulnerable learners and those at risk of disengaging from studies. The challenge of disengagement has been a primary concern for all FEIs.

NUMBER OF LEARNERS ENROLLED AT FE COLLEGES IN WALES 2018/19⁴

Fig.1

College	Learners
Bridgend College	6,775
Coleg Sir Gâr	8,020
Coleg Gwent	10,835
Grŵp Llandrillo Menai	16,160
The College Merthyr Tydfil	2,170
Pembrokeshire College	5,095
St David's Catholic College	1,380
Gower College Swansea	10,595
Cardiff and Vale College	11,450
Coleg Cambria	16,135
Coleg y Cymoedd	9,450
Addysg Oedolion Cymru / Adult Learning Wales	12,510
NPTC Group	10,985
Total	121,560

Source: StatsWales

⁴<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Post-16-Education-and-Training/Further-Education-and-Work-Based-Learning/Learners/Further-Education/providerlearnersenrolledfurthereducationinstitutions-by-level>

EXAMS AND ASSESSMENTS

GCSEs, AS & A Levels

On March 18th 2020, after consulting with Qualifications Wales and WJEC, the Education Minister announced that summer GCSE and A Level 2020 exams (mainly affecting learners in years 11 and 13) would be cancelled. The Welsh Government also confirmed that they would not be producing achievement or value-added performance measures for 2019/20. Following this announcement, Qualifications Wales made a statement saying they were working with other regulators across the UK “to ensure that learners due to sit their GCSEs and A levels will be awarded a fair grade to recognise their work.”⁵ During this time ColegauCymru has been keen to ensure meaningful engagement with the regulator and also with the awarding bodies. Given the volume of learning taking place in FEIs, see Table 1, this engagement is slowly improving and will be key for both academic as well as vocational assessment.

On March 27th 2020, the Education Minister announced how current year 10 and year 12 learners in Wales will be assessed, following the outbreak of Covid-19 and the cancellation of summer 2020 exams⁶. Learners in year 10 will receive a grade based on evidence including teacher assessments during the academic year to date. ColegauCymru is supportive of this form of assessment as it is the most realistic and practical way forward for both learners and college lecturers. AS level qualifications will be awarded in a similar way. However, in summer 2021, current AS learners will be given two options for their A level award:

- only sit the A2 units, with the A level grade based on their performance in the A2 units;
- or sit both the AS and A2 units. They will be awarded the best grade from either route.

Using the most up to date data from the Welsh Government, in 2018/19, there were 121,560 unique learners enrolled at FEIs in Wales⁷. Of these learners, there were 23,385 AS and A level learning activities⁸ (an activity being one exam entry). Although this is not the most up to date figure (2019/20 data has not yet been released) it gives a clear indication of the number of exams which will be cancelled this year.

Vocational Qualifications

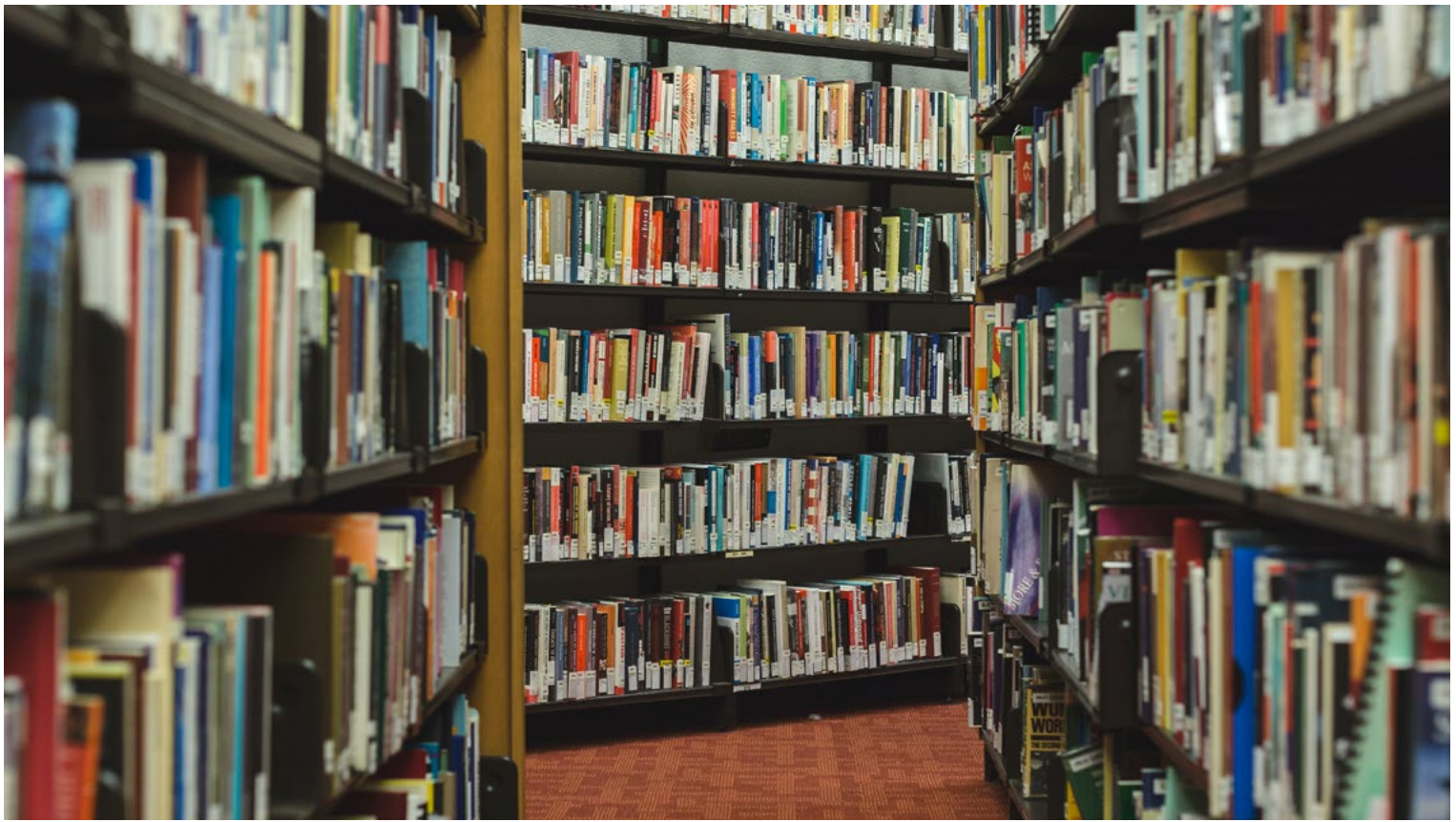
While the situation with regards to GCSEs and A Levels is clearer, there are ongoing discussions with regard to how to award vocational qualifications. ColegauCymru are pressing for a level of parity and consistency. A statement on the assessment of vocational qualifications has now been released by Ofqual and Qualifications Wales, and the sector will consider and respond to the varied requirements placed upon colleges.

⁵ <https://www.qualificationswales.org/english/news/decision-to-cancel-2020-exams/>

⁶ <https://gov.wales/education-minister-announces-exam-arrangements-years-10-and-12>

⁷ <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Post-16-Education-and-Training/Further-Education-and-Work-Based-Learning/Learners/Further-Education/providerlearnersenrolledfurthereducationinstitutions-by-level>

⁸ <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Post-16-Education-and-Training/Further-Education-and-Work-Based-Learning/Learners/Further-Education/learningactivitiesfurthereducationinstitutions-by-qualificationtype-age-gender>



LEGISLATION

Two large education Bills- The Curriculum and Assessment Bill and a Bill on establishing a Tertiary Education and Research Commission (sometimes referred to as the "PCET Bill")- were set to be introduced by the Welsh Government before the end of the current Programme for Government. Management and scrutiny of both Bills in a relatively short period of time was already challenging before the outbreak of Covid-19.

On April 1st 2020, the First Minister, Mark Drakeford made a statement on the Welsh Government's approach

to legislation in light of Covid-19. He confirmed that the Bill on Curriculum and Assessment is "a key priority for the Government", and the remainder of the legislative programme "remains under continual review"⁹. ColegauCymru and the members of the Principals' Forum remain supportive of the principals and objectives of these two important bills, however, the priority for FE leaders is addressing the challenges of the pandemic.

⁹ <https://gov.wales/written-statement-governments-approach-legislation-light-covid-19>

WHAT NEXT?

Most urgently, ColegauCymru is awaiting confirmation from Qualifications Wales regarding assessment for vocational qualifications. We will update stakeholders via social media once a response has been received.

It is still unclear exactly how long schools and colleges will be unable to provide face to face teaching due to Covid-19. The situation is changing on a daily basis, so it is impossible to predict what may happen in the future. If postponement of face to face activities, including teaching, carries on beyond September 2020, it will create a challenge for college enrolments. This would be an unprecedented situation for colleges.

ColegauCymru will continue to monitor updates from the Welsh Government although Welsh Assembly plenary sessions are now scheduled to be held on Wednesdays only via video conferencing.

On February 12th 2020, Kirsty Williams announced the Welsh Government had invested an additional £2 million to develop mental health and well-being support in colleges across Wales. She said,

“Ensuring students of all ages can access mental health support is one of my priorities and I’m pleased we’re providing additional funding for colleges to develop their front-line support services.”

The sector is now considering how best to use the available funds to support learners, taking account of the impact of the covid-19 situation. Securing positive learning outcomes

and the wellbeing of learners are the sector’s joint priorities. Planning for an uncertain future has also commenced and the sector will continue to engage with all its key stakeholders as this evolves.

Conclusion

Colleges and their learners have shown resilience during extremely difficult times, moving from face to face to online digital learning and dealing with disruption to the assessments that they would have expected. Keeping learners engaged with their studies is crucial, therefore colleges in Wales are dedicated to providing the best digital and distance learning possible. During this time and throughout the period of the public health crisis, colleges will collaborate to develop and share best practice to ensure the most positive learning experiences possible for their learners. As the situation is changing on a daily basis, we have aimed to keep this briefing as up to date as possible. Any further updates are available on our website¹⁰ or Twitter page¹¹.

Useful links

<https://gov.wales/further-and-higher-education-coronavirus>

<https://gov.wales/higher-education-and-student-support-coronavirus>

<https://qualificationswales.org/english/coronavirus---covid-19/>

¹⁰ www.colegau.cymru www.colleges.wales

¹¹ <https://twitter.com/colegaucymru>



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Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac
Addysg

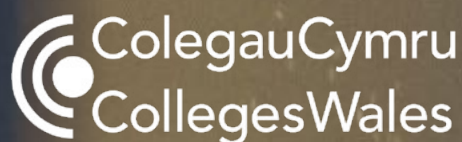
Welsh Parliament
Children, Young People and Education
Committee

Ymchwiliad i effaith argyfwng Covid-19
ar blant a phobl ifanc yng Nghymru

Inquiry into the impact of the Covid-19
outbreak on children and young
people in Wales

COV 68a
Ymateb gan: ColegauCymru

COV 68a
Response from: CollegesWales



COVID-19 AND WORK-BASED LEARNING (WBL) IN FURTHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (FEIs) IN WALES

April 2020

INTRODUCTION

The spread of Covid-19 (or Coronavirus) has brought severe disruptions to communities and families across Wales. This briefing aims to help our stakeholders understand the position WBL providers in the Further Education sector in Wales are taking in response to the pandemic to date, and what steps the CollegesWales Principals' Forum have taken to work with the Welsh Government and other organisations, in the best interest of apprentices and those undertaking traineeships, across the country.

Background

On February 28th 2020, the first case of Covid-19 was confirmed in Wales. Since then, the total number of cases and deaths has risen rapidly although there are signs that these are now starting to stabilise and slow. On April 21st the total number of deaths in Wales caused by the virus was 609, while the number of confirmed cases stood at 7,850, although the true number is said to be higher¹. According to Public Health Wales, south east Wales is the worst affected area of the country, with 1,835 cases in the Aneurin Bevan Health Board, and 1,828 cases in the Cardiff and Vale Health Board (with Cwm Taf and Abertawe Bro Morgannwg following close behind)². The geographical areas covered by these Health Boards include seven colleges and over 30 campuses where both apprentices and trainees are enrolled.

The WBL sector in Wales

All colleges in Wales deliver WBL as either a lead contract holder or member of a consortium. Table 1 shows how many learning programmes took place in 2018/19 across the entire WBL sector. In the current climate, it is clear that healthcare and public services learners will see considerable disruption to their studies as they are asked

to work/volunteer more within their sector. Due to work demands as a result of Covid-19, some of these learners are currently unable to complete formal assessments and written knowledge learning. Colleges are supporting these learners by ensuring tutors and assessors are in regular contact by phone and video call for learning discussion, reviews and further support.

Other vocational sectors are also disrupted and the basis upon which assessments will be made to enable apprentices, as well as vocational learners within mainstream college provision, are yet to be decided. Assessment will be required to establish the level of technical proficiency, underpinning knowledge and in some cases essential skills. In addition, WBL providers support apprentices across a range of other learning areas to ensure that apprentices receive a holistic learning experience. In addition to traditional vocational apprenticeships, WBL includes activities to support individuals to re-engage in formal learning and training. These are referred to as 'traineeships' and there are also programmes funded by Welsh Government to enhance individuals' employability such as the Jobs Growth Wales programme. The content of these programmes is determined by a detailed programme specification and they are delivered via contracts established under a procurement framework. Vocational requirements are determined by the specific apprenticeship frameworks and apply to both Welsh Government and privately funded apprenticeships, which are also delivered by colleges. For an apprentice to successfully complete their programme, they must demonstrate technical competency as well as the required underpinning knowledge. For Welsh Government funded programmes, they must also complete the additional requirements set out in the programme specification.

¹ <https://coronaviruscymru.wales/>

² <https://public.tableau.com/profile/public.health.wales.health.protection#!/vizhome/RapidCOVID-19virology-Public/Headlinesummary>

This table provides the number of learning programmes in work-based learning (WBL) in Wales. The data includes WBL that is delivered by further education institutions and also WBL delivered by other training providers³.

WORK-BASED LEARNING PROGRAMMES BY SECTOR AND PROGRAMME TYPE

Table 1

	2018/19			
	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4+	All Programmes
All Programmes	21620	25510	10370	57500
Agriculture	335	255	40	630
Construction	2700	2770	125	5595
Engineering	2110	2695	215	5020
Manufacturing	855	150	15	1020
Transportation	130	20	0	150
Management and Professional	900	2710	3905	7515
Business Admin	2015	3415	1200	6630
Retailing/Customer Service	1175	1155	45	2375
Leisure, Sport, Travel	760	1535	20	2315
Hospitality	1555	1115	90	2760
Hair and Beauty	1150	590	10	1750
Healthcare and Public Services	7915	8985	4685	21585
Media and Design	20	115	25	160

Source: StatsWales

This table provides the number of unique learners enrolled in work-based learning (WBL) in Wales. The data includes WBL that is delivered by further education institutions and WBL delivered by other training providers⁴.

UNIQUE LEARNERS IN WORK-BASED LEARNING PROVISION BY AGE GROUP, GENDER AND PROGRAMME TYPE

Table 2

2018/19	Apprenticeships and Traineeships in Wales				
	Foundation Apprenticeship (Level 2)	Apprenticeship (Level 3)	Higher Apprenticeship (Level 4+)	All Apprenticeship Programmes	Traineeships
All Learners	19870	24775	10145	54790	6,500

Source: StatsWales

³ <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Post-16-Education-and-Training/Further-Education-and-Work-Based-Learning/Learners/Time-Series/numberofworkbasedlearningprogrammes-by-sector-programme>

⁴ <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Post-16-Education-and-Training/Further-Education-and-Work-Based-Learning/Learners/Work-Based-Learning/uniquelearnersworkbasedlearning-by-age-gender-programmetype>

AWARDING OF VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS 2020

Based on this range of learning requirements, colleges are continuing to ensure that learners finish their studies and complete their assessments as expected, wherever possible. Most apprentices are still being taught with assessments and reviews taking place remotely. In order to support these learners, some colleges have offered use of laptops and other resources to ensure that learners can continue learning and finish their assessments. Supporting vulnerable and/or disadvantaged learners is a key consideration for the Further Education sector.

Concerns have been raised with providers that employers would not take apprentices back on once the UK lockdown is over. However, the message to colleges has been that in many cases, employers are welcoming of apprentices returning after the current circumstances ease. Employers appreciate the difficulties of the situation at present. Apprentices who have been furloughed under the UK Government Job Retention Scheme are still classified as apprentices, as they remain employed, and can continue to participate in learning activity.

On April 9th, Qualifications Wales announced⁵ further details of the steps that will be taken to award vocational qualifications in summer 2020 to learners impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Qualifications Wales stated that, to ensure consistency for all learners, the same approach will be taken for learners in Wales as that set out by Ofqual⁶. More details are expected shortly regarding the process for generating calculated results with awarding organisations, who will provide detailed information to their centres (colleges) in the coming weeks.

On April 20th, Qualifications Wales announced that Essential Skills Wales (ESW) learners would receive a “calculated result based upon the outcome that their tutor/assessor believed they would receive had they taken the tests”⁷. Every year, many college learners undertake Essential Skills Wales. Unlike previous years, this year these learners will receive a predicted grade. Colleges are currently supporting ESW learners by setting targets for ESW progression including the use of resources, and signposting learners to digital tools to support new ways of working.

Current challenges and successes

While this is an unprecedented situation for both colleges and other WBL providers, the sector is keen to ensure that learners continue their programmes where possible, and are given the best opportunities to complete their assessments as expected.

During these uncertain times, colleges continue to support their apprentices and trainees through weekly contact with learners and regular progress reviews being conducted remotely. One college WBL consortium noted that 73.6% of apprentices are continuing to work for their employer, while around 26% are furloughed, with nearly all continuing to progress with their qualification. All colleges reported that a large number of apprentices are still working, whilst others are undertaking theory work whilst furloughed.

All colleges are in regular contact with their WBL learners by using online platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams for meetings and weekly review sessions, while continuing

⁵ <https://qualificationswales.org/english/coronavirus---covid-19/qualifications-wales-statements/awarding-of-vocational-qualifications-this-summer---9-april-2020/>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/awarding-vocational-and-technical-qualifications-this-summer>

⁷ <https://qualificationswales.org/english/coronavirus---covid-19/qualifications-wales-statements/essential-skills-wales-contingency-arrangements---20-april-2020/>

to prepare work and following government advice. Staff are also recording contact with learners via screenshots, e-mail correspondence and work logs. Assessors are using alternative assessment methods to capture practical real work experience. In plumbing, for example, one learner is completing all small domestic plumbing jobs at home, and sending a video recording to the assessor. In hospitality, home-based projects, such as cooking on a budget and making essential staples such as bread, are also being encouraged. Some of this activity can then be evidenced towards meeting skills and behaviours whilst gaining new knowledge and understanding.

Wellbeing and mental health support for learners at this time is a key issue for all colleges. Student support services have moved online to widen access, and assessors are focussing on mental health and wellbeing with students. Almost all staff are continuing with the level of work required to support learners and employers and maintain the appropriate level of audit trail. Maintaining the same number of staff is essential to support learners to continue their studies and to keep them engaged. Some staff have actually seen an increased workload due to learners needing extra support during this difficult time.

While some more vulnerable learners may struggle with isolation or loneliness, those on traineeships have continued to work from home, sometimes in creative ways. One trainee even made his own patio and sent a photo of the results to his tutor. This highlights the ongoing home learning which is taking place, as well as online theory work. Other trainees are undertaking voluntary opportunities, and are using online resources to improve their soft skills and course specific skills. College providers are also focussing on Employability Skills training for those learners undertaking traineeships to maintain focus on progression when the lockdown is lifted. It should be noted that however diligent apprentices may be and despite the best efforts to maintain learning and instruction, it is inevitable that some of the outcomes of traineeships, apprenticeships and programmes such as Jobs Growth Wales will be disrupted. This will need to be addressed and funded into the next contract round (August 2020/July 2021). Failure to do so will mean a waste of the

funded activity that has already taken place and a skills gap for employers. Colleges, as both FE and WBL providers, are keen to explore with Welsh Government a phased return to face to face instruction and in particular the reintroduction of assessment for vocational competence, especially in key sectors.

Additional activities from WBL colleges

As anchor institutions, colleges are currently using the skills of their WBL learners to help their local communities in a variety of ways, such as volunteering at food banks or producing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and distributing to the NHS. In some colleges, assessors are working with apprentices in certain sectors to set up and maintain "buddy systems". The impact of these systems sees learners remaining motivated and engaged, work-based relationships are enhanced, and mental wellbeing is supported.

The challenge of Covid-19 has given learners the opportunity to evidence new skills development, particularly where industries are adapting their production to meet current requirements. e.g. production of face masks, or in the health and social care sector where apprentices are often learning new skills or having to immediately adapt to what they have previously learnt whilst on programme.

CONCLUSION

Learners and apprentices across all aspects of WBL provision, have shown resilience during extremely difficult times, moving from face to face to online digital learning and dealing with disruption to the activities and assessments that they would have expected. Some have dealt with increased job pressures, while others have been furloughed. Keeping WBL learners engaged with their studies is crucial, therefore colleges in Wales are dedicated to providing the best digital and distance learning and other necessary support possible. Likewise, staff across the WBL sector have adapted to very challenging circumstances and continue to be a source of support to employers and learners. During this time and

throughout the period of the public health crisis, colleges will collaborate to develop and share best practice to ensure the most positive learning experiences possible for their learners. It is vital that learners in the WBL sector receive the same level of consideration, support and continuity planning for their futures as their academic counterparts.

As the situation is changing on a daily basis, we have aimed to keep this briefing as up to date as possible. Any further updates are available on our website⁸ or Twitter page⁹.

⁸ <http://colegau.cymru/>

⁹ <https://twitter.com/colegaucymru>



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About NUS Wales

National Union of Students Wales (NUS Wales) is the representative body of more than 250,000 students in Wales. We work on behalf of 20 member students' unions on the issues that affect students in higher education and further education.

Student Financial Support

1. The NUS Coronavirus and Students Survey¹ found that 78% of students in Wales were worried about the impact of Covid-19 on their finances, while 73% were worried about how they would continue to afford rent. Almost half said the income of someone they depend on financially has been affected by the virus. 47% of students in work said they had lost income in some way; 16% had been furloughed, 11% had taken unpaid leave, 10% had had their hours reduced, and 10% had been made redundant. Following public health advice, many students have chosen to leave their term-time accommodation early to spend lockdown with their families. 25% of students told us they would like to be released from their accommodation contract early, but just 9% had been given the opportunity to do so. Students are continuing to bear the financial burden, but many have seen their finances adversely affected by the situation.
2. Most students cannot access existing government support schemes for Covid-19. The majority of full-time students are not entitled to receive Universal Credit, while the casual nature of student work has meant that a lot of students are ineligible for the furlough scheme. Part-time student work is often in sectors such as retail, hospitality and leisure, each of which have been greatly impacted by lockdown.
3. Welsh Government is currently advising students facing financial hardship because of Covid-19 to apply to their institution's hardship fund. Hardship funds are pots of money maintained by institutions that students can apply to if they are facing financial difficulties. They are finite funds designed to support a very limited number of students each academic year. Hardship funds become depleted throughout the academic year as awards are allocated to students. We therefore anticipate that hardship funds will already have been depleted before lockdown was announced. The Covid-19 crisis is an unprecedented situation that hardship funds are not designed for. Furthermore, many hardship funds are limited to full-time students with home status, so part-time and international students are unable to access them. We have heard anecdotal evidence of institutions fundraising to top up their hardship funds, indicating increased demand. Relying on fundraising and goodwill to support students through this crisis is unsustainable. The details of each HE institution's hardship

¹ <https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/covid-19-and-students-survey-report-wales>

fund can be found in their annual fee and access plan; 2019/20 and 2020/21 allocations are set out in the following table:

Institution	Hardship Fund (£)		Anticipated student numbers supported		Funding per student (nearest £)	
	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21
Aberystwyth ²	200,000	200,000	320	280	625	714
Bangor ³	201,500	150,000	Not listed	Not listed	N/A	N/A
Cardiff ⁴	550,000	500,000	750	1,000	733	500
Cardiff Met ⁵	150,000	150,000	400	300	375	500
GLLM ⁶	12,000	12,000	55	55	218	218
NPTC ⁷	6,000	6,000	10	10	600	600
Swansea ⁸	323,000	431,144	1,100	900	294	479
USW ⁹	570,000	570,000	700	600	814	950
UWTSD ¹⁰	230,000	270,197	460	460	500	587
Wrexham Glyndŵr ¹¹	50,000	50,000	150	150	333	333

4. Recognising the significant financial pressures faced by students, the governments of Scotland and NI have announced hardship funds of £5 million¹² and £1.4 million¹³ respectively, though more is expected for the latter. NUS Wales is calling for a £3 million hardship fund for Wales. The UK Government's package of support for the HE sector in England included the ability for institutions to reallocate widening participation resource to their hardship funds¹⁴. While this announcement acknowledged the need for immediate financial relief for students, removing money from widening participation budgets is a case of robbing Peter to pay Paul. Financial support for students facing hardship because of Covid-19 should not re-appropriated from funding streams designed to benefit vulnerable students.

5. We appreciate that Welsh Government is continuing to provide financial support to students in the form of maintenance grants and loans for HE students and the Education Maintenance Grant for FE students. Welsh-domiciled HE students receive a comparatively generous maintenance package to their peers across the rest of the UK, but it is important to note that many students at Welsh institutions are from other nations of the UK, or are EU or international students, and receive different living support arrangements entirely. Because governments across the UK are referring students to institutional hardship funds, it is not the nation where a student is domiciled, but where they live during their studies, which is determining access to financial relief.

² <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/about-us/student-fees/>

³ <https://www.bangor.ac.uk/studentfinance/index.php.en>

⁴ <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/tuition-fees/fee-and-access-plan>

⁵ <http://www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/study/finance/Pages/Fee-Plans.aspx>

⁶ <https://www.gllm.ac.uk/hepolicies/>

⁷ <https://www.nptcgroup.ac.uk/he-documents/>

⁸ <https://www.swansea.ac.uk/undergraduate/fees-and-funding/tuition-fees/tuition-fee-plan/>

⁹ <https://www.southwales.ac.uk/study/fees-and-funding/undergraduate/undergraduate-home/>

¹⁰ <https://www.uwttd.ac.uk/finance/fee-plan/>

¹¹ <https://www.glyndwr.ac.uk/en/Feesandstudentfinance/Undergraduatefees/>

¹² <https://www.gov.scot/news/extra-hardship-payments-for-students/>

¹³ <https://www.belfastlive.co.uk/news/belfast-news/coronavirus-111m-funding-boost-northern-18276082>

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-support-package-for-universities-and-students>

Physical and Mental Health of Young People

6. We are concerned about the impact of Covid-19 on the mental health of learners at all levels of the post-16 education system. We have received reassurances from government and providers that support services are being adapted for online use.
7. We are working with Welsh Government and HEFCW respectively to determine how best to spend the £2 million each for mental health and well-being initiatives for the FE sector, and are awaiting news of the announced £2m for HE.
8. The mental health implications of Covid-19 on the general population are well documented and it is vital that students are not forgotten in any initiatives. One particular area of concern is those students who have been called into the front line of the crisis and the possibility of PTSD and other mental health impacts.
9. Any plan to return to face-to-face teaching and learning must put the safety of students and staff at the forefront.

Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Learners

10. The switch to online learning necessitated by Covid-19 has had a worryingly disproportionate effect on students from widening participation backgrounds. Students from poorer socio-economic backgrounds have been less able to access resources to facilitate their learning in an online environment. Factors such as poor/non-existent internet connectivity, a lack of appropriate technology such as laptops and tablets, and unsuitable learning spaces due to poor quality housing are contributing to an inferior educational experience for students from disadvantaged backgrounds across the post-16 sector.
11. There are a number of ways that students may not be able to complete their studies to a satisfactory degree because of Covid-19. Students with caring responsibilities are dealing with additional duties because of the impacts of Covid-19 e.g. parents whose children's schools have been closed.
12. Students on placement or vocational courses are also disadvantaged by Covid-19. Many students have been unable to complete placements that count towards their final qualification. Some of these students are required to demonstrate certain achievements to satisfy requirements of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBS). We are especially concerned about the financial impact on apprentices – arguably already disadvantaged by their Apprentice Minimum Wage and lack of access to student support.
13. It has been well reported that Covid-19 is having a disproportionate impact on people from BAME backgrounds. We expect this to have a knock-on effect on the attainment gap. Covid-19 has the potential to widen attainment gaps in general and widening participation activities should be ramped up by education institutions to recognise that the economic damage caused by Covid-19 will dissuade many potential students from disadvantaged backgrounds from pursuing further and higher education.
14. It would be deeply unfair for students who have been unable to complete their education to a satisfactory degree because of the impacts of Covid-19 – often those from vulnerable backgrounds – to have to bear additional costs to complete their education at a later date.

Exams and Qualifications

15. We are broadly satisfied with the approach taken to exams and assessments for students in further education. However, there remains concerns around the provision of technical resources and access to broadband that remains a challenge for some. We are aware colleges are doing as much as they can to help, but we want to make sure that no one is falling through the gaps.
16. All Welsh HE providers have implemented 'safety net' or 'no detriment' policies which ensure that a student cannot achieve a grade lower than the average they were working to before lockdown, regardless of performance in exams and assessments. We endorsed this approach at the time and welcome institutions' willingness to recognise that Covid-19 will have varying levels of impacts on students depending on individual circumstances.
17. We are calling for any student who has been unable to complete their studies to an adequate degree to be able to either re-take the year at no extra cost, refund the cost of this year, or write off debt accrued for this year. It would be deeply unfair for students who have been affected by Covid-19 – often those from disadvantaged backgrounds – to have to pay more to complete their studies.

Higher Education

18. We share sector-wide concerns about the impact of Covid-19 on the sustainability of the higher education sector and support calls for additional government support to help safeguard higher education providers at this time.
19. It is incumbent on higher education providers to ensure that any return to face-to-face teaching and learning happens when it is safe to do so, and that student and staff safety is the number one priority. Institutions' financial health must not be put before the physical health of staff and students.
20. It is also vital that institutions are clear about the nature of the offer they are making to students. Students who have accepted offers must be allowed to defer or withdraw at any point if they are uncomfortable with the offer, whether online or in-person teaching is suggested. The same applies to accommodation offers, whether institution managed, private PBSA or other private accommodation.

Ymchwiliad i effaith argyfwng Covid-19
ar blant a phobl ifanc yng Nghymru

Inquiry into the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak
on children and young people in Wales

COV 120
Ymateb gan: Undeb Prifysgol a Choleg Cymru
(UCU Cymru)

COV 120
Response from: University and College Union
(UCU Wales)

I am writing to you as I am unable to attend the committee meeting and I want to ensure that you and your committee colleagues are sighted on the very real implications of the Covid Crisis on the post 16 sector in Wales.

FUNDING

It will impact on both FE and HE institutions; in FE we believe the Work Based Learning (WBL) funding is likely to be cut by about 5% in the coming academic year, which will have a consequential impact on the staffing levels. This will vary across FE institutions as the impact will depend on the size of the WBL offer.

However the impact on HE, we believe, will be significant. UCU commissioned work from London Economics, looking at the potential impact on the finances of Welsh HEIs under-recruitment due to Covid 19. The conclusion is quite stark and please bear in mind that this is looking solely at students, HEIs have other income streams which will also be affected. The report argues that

*“In particular, the analysis estimates that the combined direct, indirect and induced economic impacts of the activities of the 8 Welsh higher education institutions declines from **£4,591 million** to approximately **£4,347 million** (a reduction of approximately **£244 million**). In terms of employment losses, the reduction in institutional activity would be expected to result in approximately **2,545** job losses, of which approximately **1,230** occurring directly in higher education institutions, with a further **1,315** jobs lost throughout institutions’ local, regional and national supply chains.” (p16)*

HEFCW have shared with us a copy of their written submission so I won’t repeat their figures.

We would urge you and your colleagues to do whatever you can to raise this matter in the Senedd to ensure that the Welsh government do all they can to invest in post 16 and ready the sector to deal with the significant projected levels of unemployment in Wales, as a result of Covid19.

Engagement with the Government

UCU wishes to publicly thank the Minister and SHELL officials for their meaningful engagement throughout this difficult period. Working in Social Partnership in Wales has delivered genuine benefits to all the stake holders in post 16 sector education and training, in stark contrast to what I see happening to my colleagues who work in England.

In Wales, we agreed joint protocols for a return to FE on 15th with Colegau Cymru and the government officials have provided appropriate opportunities to comment and request amendments to that advice for both FE & WBL and HE guidance.

Structures have been created to ensure that work can be taken forward over the summer period to ready the sector for the start of the next academic year. We are confident that working in partnership as we have done thus far will produce effective and workable solutions for the post 16 sector in Wales.

Engagement with Employers

As I've said previously, we now have 45 protocols in place for a safe return to the workplace in FE to allow staff to help students complete their licence to practice assessment. Those protocols are based in articulating what the various health and safety regulation require of employers and ensuring that students and staff have access to information and explanations about the safe systems of working being introduced in the FE sector.

In the post 16 space we are discussing the continuity of learning with officials, institutional reps, Universities Wales, NUS, HEFCW, Colegau Cymru, QAA, NTfW, Learning and Work and Careers Wales. UCU are confident that the government are responding in a timely manner, given the uncertainty that exists about the health implications of Covid and the Test Trace and Protect policy of Welsh Government.

As yet we have received no notices of compulsory redundancy from any of the post 16 employers in Wales. Only one institution, Cardiff University, has tabled a request to consider cuts to terms and conditions to achieve cost savings in the coming financial year. We are expecting, that once recruitment figures are known in late October that there will be a raft of redundancy notices issued to the trade unions.

In Summary

It feels like the calm before the storm. There are significant challenges facing the sector, we must find the finance to invest in the post 16 sector to ensure the post 16 sector in Wales can play a full role in a Welsh economic recovery. One important lesson from all this that we would like to the committee to consider is that the government must put digital capacity, literacy and provision of equipment front and centre of its spending in the next budget round.

Julie Morgan AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services

MA/JM/1782/20



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Lynne Neagle
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

8 June 2020

Dear Lynne

Thank you for your letter of 12 May to the Minister for Education and I following our recent attendance at sessions at the Children, Young People and Education Committee. I am aware that the Minister for Education is also providing you with a response so I shall address the issues which fall under my portfolio, accepting that there may be some cross-over between the two.

Before turning to the points raised in your letter, I am conscious there were some actions that the Minister for Health and Social Services and I agreed to undertake immediately following the meeting. I have addressed the points, for which I have responsibility, in the note annexed to this letter. The Minister will provide a separate response to the Committee on the report on unexpected deaths once we have considered the information we receive from the NHS Delivery Unit.

The Welsh Government is in regular contact with Heads of Children's Services, Third Sector Partners and with the regional Safeguarding Boards who are working in innovative ways to support children and young people and to safeguard children at risk during this time. We have been assured that Children's Social Services are in contact with all the children and young people they support. The nature and frequency of the contact they have with families is informed by regularly reviewed risk assessment, with face-to-face visits and/or virtual contact as appropriate on a case-by-case basis. Overall, authorities have reported a steady state in relation to the majority of their services and workforce stability.

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

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

To support local authority social services departments and their partners we published Operational Guidance for Children's Social Services on 21 April. We set out in this guidance that where it is felt that physical sight of a child is necessary because of the level of risk for the child, these should happen following Public Health Wales guidance on social distancing or PPE as appropriate. The guidance also sets out that statutory safeguarding visits to see children on the Child Protection Register should continue to be carried out at least every 10 working days. If following a risk assessment a decision is taken that this requirement can be met through remote/virtual contact for some children on the Child Protection Register, this decision must be agreed by a manager and the rationale for it must be recorded. We have been clear that all cases should be subject to a review of risks on a frequent basis and at least once per week. The intention of this advice is that face-to-face contact with children at risk should be maintained wherever possible with remote contact as an exception subject to risk assessment.

There was a marked reduction in safeguarding referrals relating to children at risk during the start of the lockdown period. We have published a webpage on reporting concerns and a Written Statement and two press releases have also been issued to encourage that everyone reports concerns. At the same time, the Safeguarding Boards and local authorities have issued messages to practitioners and public facing communications to encourage the reporting of concerns. The Welsh Government also continues to provide funding to the NSPCC Childline and to fund the MEIC helpline so that children can talk to someone if they are being harmed. Information from Heads of Children's Services and the Safeguarding Boards assures us that the rate of safeguarding referrals in relation to children at risk is steadily increasing.

In England the UK Government have made temporary changes to ten sets of children's social care regulations to allow greater flexibility for local authorities and providers during COVID-19, via Statutory Instrument 445. We are concerned about the impact of such changes on safeguarding and on children's rights, so we have no plans to amend regulations in Wales. Local authorities have not been calling for Welsh Government to make amendments to regulations, indeed from feedback so far, local authorities are keen to manage services within the flexibilities they have and as per Welsh Government guidance.

On 14 May we published our refined definition of 'vulnerable children' for the purposes of attending an educational or childcare setting (<https://gov.wales/vulnerable-children-and-young-people-coronavirus#section-40031>). We have set out the expectation for children and young people with a social worker, the expectation of children with a statement of SEN and the additional flexibility for other vulnerable children on the edge of receiving care and support if they are known to be vulnerable by the school or family support services. This discretion should be determined on a case by case basis by the school and local authority.

Since 11 May we have published the statistics for attendance at educational settings on a weekly basis (<https://gov.wales/attendance-local-authority-settings-during-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-11-15-may-2020-html>). There has been a sustained increase in vulnerable children and young people attending provision in schools. However, we continue to work with local authorities to increase the attendance at hubs for vulnerable children and ensure they are supported through the most appropriate means for their needs.

In addition we have started collecting data from local authorities on a weekly basis in relation to children's social services during lockdown. These are answered either by a traffic light response or if it is an increase, decrease or static in comparison to the week or the year before. Local authorities are asked to provide a snapshot of their services on the day they complete the return.

As we move forward to increased operation in schools the provision for vulnerable children will remain a priority and these considerations are at the forefront of our work.

Early intervention and support services, for example Flying Start and Families First moved swiftly to a new operating model following lockdown. While some face to face support is available, this is rightly limited by the requirements of social distancing; with support provided through a range of means including online, social media, group chat facilities, video and phone calls. Services have been innovative in their approach to ensuring that families receive support during this time.

I agree that steps to support our children's mental health and well-being remain key for all of us and welcome the Committee's continued focus on support for both the physical and mental health and well-being of our children and young people.

I note the Committee intends to hold a session for key stakeholders to discuss physical and mental wellbeing on 9 June and I await further correspondence on your findings

I want to reassure the Committee that the Rights of Children and Young People as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) continue to be at the heart of decision making within the Welsh Government especially during these unprecedented times.

In respect of the Coronavirus Bill, it is correct that a Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) was not undertaken as part of the preparation of this Bill, given that the Bill was produced by the UK Government and passed through the UK Parliament. As such, UK Government impact assessments were relied upon, one of which was the family test. A summary of impacts document was also prepared in respect of the Bill which has been published on the UK Parliament's website (<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-01/0122/Coronavirus%20Bill%20Impact%20Assessment%20final%203.pdf>).

We, along with the UK Parliament, have had to move very quickly to reduce the transmission of the Covid-19 virus in Wales. Article 6 of the UNCRC, the right of life, has been at the forefront of our actions during this public health emergency.

The most important safeguard for the rights of children was the commitment made, and put into law, that the regulations would be reviewed every three weeks, meaning in practice they are subject to continual review. This has allowed any disproportionate impacts identified to be addressed at speed.

As we move forward and through this pandemic, Welsh Government officials are making sure that work being undertaken following the initial Coronavirus Act 2020 assesses the impact on children's rights as set out in the UNCRC. We expect any Regulations or Directions for Wales made under the Coronavirus 2020 Act will, so far as possible, be subject to the full range of impact assessments required in Wales.

We also need to recognise that one size does not fit all, impact assessments around Covid-19 decisions have had to be flexible with officials applying a common-sense approach and exercising judgement on whether decisions are relevant to children and young people and the likely extent of the effect on them. As a result slightly different practices have been undertaken.

For example, one approach in the Education Directorate was to develop an overarching Covid-19 Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) based on all decisions originating from the decision to bring forward the Easter holidays. A small IIA group was convened consisting of the decision makers and a template developed to interview each of the decision makers. The content of these templates forms part of the evidence base of the IIA. The Childcare team have had one official lead on the IIA but taking a similar overarching IIA approach based on the decision to suspend the childcare offer prioritising provision of childcare for the children of critical workers and vulnerable children. Education and Childcare have been working together so their IIAs are broadly similar in style.

I am also mindful of our current difficulties in engaging with children and young people on decisions which have affected them due to the pandemic. Decisions have needed to be taken at speed to keep children and young people safe and, therefore, Article 12 has not been engaged.

To help address this I asked for a survey to take place to actively seek the views and opinions of children and young people on Covid-19 and the changes that have arisen because of the pandemic.

‘Coronavirus and Me’, was developed in partnership with the Children’s Commissioner for Wales, Children in Wales, the Youth Parliament/ Senedd Ieuenctid and with strong input from children and young people themselves. It is already providing rich data on what is important to children and young people. It has received more than 23,700 responses.

We are the first of the UK Governments to actively seek the opinions of children and young people. Through this online survey, we are hearing and listening to the views and opinions of children and young people in relation to this pandemic. Responses to each survey question (all related to specific Articles within the UNCRC), will be a rich source of information for specific policy teams within Welsh Government and will help inform ongoing Covid-19 decision making.

This crisis has undoubtedly impacted on children and young people, and we have needed to take some tough decisions about balancing keeping children safe against the impact of lockdown restrictions. Despite these difficulties I have been reassured how high children’s rights has sat on the agenda. Protecting children’s rights and supporting children during this time have been a driving force in the Welsh Government, which is why I look forward to the Committee’s publication of its inquiry into children’s rights in Wales report in due course.

As a part of our response to the virus we have made a range of support available to businesses across Wales, including childcare providers. There are a range of schemes, tailored at different parts of the economy, and we do appreciate that navigating them can be confusing. We provided guidance on what support is available to childcare providers on our website to help with this (<https://gov.wales/support-childcare-providers-coronavirus-covid-19>)

Given the range of operating models across the sector not every setting will be able to access every scheme. We have been speaking with the sector umbrella bodies about their concerns, and are taking those into consideration in our thinking about how and when to enable the sector to restart. While decisions around that will be driven by the data and evidence regarding the virus and its transmission, we recognise that the financial sustainability of individual settings will be key to both when and how they can begin to increase their operations.

Future arrangements for the Childcare Offer and the Coronavirus Childcare Assistance Scheme are also intrinsically linked to decisions around restarting the sector, and we are mindful that settings will need clarity on this as soon as possible.

The UK Government's decision to extend the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is also a factor in our thinking and we are pressing for more details on how this will work as services start to recover. The childcare sector in particular needs a flexible approach to the ability to furlough staff.

I hope the committee finds this information helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie', written in a cursive style.

Julie Morgan AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services

Children, Young People and Education Committee: 5 May 2020

Action points recorded by the Clerk:

The Minister for Health and Social Services agreed to write to the Committee once the report on unexpected deaths during the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in Wales was available and the Welsh Government had had an opportunity to consider the report.

- The Minister for Health and Social Services to respond separately.

The Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services agreed to provide information on how much of the support provided by the Welsh Government through the Third Sector COVID-19 Response Fund and the Third Sector Resilience Fund administered by WCVA is being targeted to children and young people. The Deputy Minister also agreed to clarify what funds available for third sector services were continuity of existing work and what is additional funding.

- Our new £24m Third Sector COVID-19 Response Fund provides support based on the needs of Third Sector organisations. Officials are working with WCVA to ensure that the funds can be accessed by all organisations across Wales providing vital services.
- As at 22 May we had supported a number of organisations identifying as supporting either children & families or youth:
 - Voluntary services Emergency Fund – 10 organisations have applied for £425k of support, of these 4 have been paid totalling £3238k
 - Third Sector Resilience Fund – 5 organisations have applied for £214k

The Deputy Minister agreed to provide the reporting timescales for the recently announced task and finish group with carers' representatives which is considering the specific needs of a broad range of carers during and following the Covid-19 pandemic.

- With regard to the reporting timescales we have set up a small group, whose work is time limited, with membership agreed with the Wales Carers Alliance. Its purpose is to share the concerns of carers, including young carers and young adult carers during the current coronavirus situation. Three national carers' organisations, including Carers Trust Wales which leads on representing young carers, are working with officials to agree relevant / appropriate actions. There are no formal reporting timescales as the group meets weekly to consider progress on agreed activity, discuss evidence of new concerns emerging from carers' feedback, and will assist with planning of future agenda items for the Carers' Ministerial Advisory Group.
- The primary mechanism for consideration of and discussion of issues affecting all ages of carer is the Carers' Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) created in mid-2018. It brings together representation from across statutory bodies, the independent Commissioners, local health boards, national carers' organisations, academia, Social Care Wales and others, including Welsh Government officials. The Chair of the group is Mr Arwel Ellis Owen, appointed in January 2020. The group most recently met on 23rd April and I

intend to hold another meeting in the next couple of months, which will include looking into how we can work with the membership to further help and support young carers.

- The Engagement group, which will work alongside the Carers MAG, held an initial introductory meeting of a majority of its new members in mid-January. The Terms of Reference of this group have been drafted but have not yet been formally reviewed and agreed by members. Young carers are key members of this group, with representatives drawn from the Young Carers Network, plus Carers Trust Wales' Youth Council. Officials are in discussions with Carers Trust Wales about planning for the next meeting of this group.
- Following a competitive bidding exercise in 2019 funding totalling £8.2m has been awarded to support 32 projects through the first year of the three year Social Services Third Sector Grant 2020-23. Grants have been awarded on an indicative basis for 2021-22 and 2022-23 and will be confirmed when Welsh Government budgets for those years are agreed. Of the 32 projects being supported, nine with a grant value of 30% of the available funding, identified in their application that their project would benefit Children and Young People. A further six projects will support Children and Young People as part of a wider client group for their projects. This means that over 50% of the grant funding will support projects that benefit Children and Young People either wholly or in part.
- The Welsh Government continues to provide funding of £550,000 in 2020-21 to fund the "Active Offer" element of the National Approach to Statutory Advocacy for Children and Young People (NASA) to enable local authorities to provide a national consistent approach to advocacy support.
- The ChildLine service provides a free, confidential 24 hour service to young people until the age of 19 in the UK. The Welsh Government has provided a contribution of £90,000 in 2020-21 to support the NSPCC to deliver the ChildLine project, which supports the Welsh Government's strategic agenda for social services.
- MEIC is a Welsh Government funded confidential, anonymous, and free bilingual helpline service for children and young people up to the age of 25 in Wales providing information, useful advice and support need and are open 8am - midnight, 7 days a week, by phone, SMS text and instant messaging. The Welsh Government has provided funding of £535,989 to continue the service to March 2021.
- Welsh Government are currently in discussions with Pro-Mo Cymru who deliver MEIC to establish if anything is needed to ensure that the MEIC service is able to fully meet the needs of young people in Wales for the immediate response to Covid-19.

Agenda Item 9.2

CYPE(5)-16-20 – Paper to note 2

Senedd Cymru

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

Welsh Parliament

Children, Young People and Education Committee

Kirsty Williams MS, Minister for Education

Dyddiad | Date: 18 June 2020

Pwnc | Subject: **Update on ALN reform**

Dear Kirsty,

You will be aware of the Children, Young People and Education Committee's continued interest in the programme of reform underway to support children and young people with Additional Learning Needs.

To manage the emergency response to the Covid-19 pandemic, we recognise that various workstreams within your portfolio will have been necessarily adjusted. Nevertheless, we are conscious of the important steps that remain to be taken to implement the reforms arising from the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018, and would be grateful to receive:

- an update on the timescales for the implementation of the next stages of Additional Learning Needs reforms, and
- an indication of whether you will be publishing a response to the points raised in last year's consultation on the Draft ALN Code in advance of laying the final version before the Senedd.

Kind regards,



Lynne Neagle MS
Chair

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



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CYPE(5)-16-20 – Paper to note 3

Further evidence from the All Wales Heads of Children’s Services for the Children, Young People and Education Committee

Further to the above committee meeting on Monday, May 18th, 2020 in relation to the response of Local Authority Children’s Services during the COVID-19 pandemic, and in particular since the start of the lockdown period, we provide the following information at the request of the committee members. The committee requested further information in relation to the contact that Local Authorities are routinely having with children and young people within their areas.

The following information is a collective response and not specific to one Local Authority.

From the start of lockdown, Children’s Services in Local Authorities have continued to function by seeing children, carrying out assessments, undertaking safeguarding investigations and embraced digital technology - much of which was an enhancement of work that had previously been started. It has not been our experience that children have not been seen, and our social workers have been extremely determined to ensure that children have still been seen during this period. One local authority reports that over 1000 face to face visits had been undertaken to children and young people by social workers between the start of lockdown and mid-May and this continues to increase daily. This is a common picture across Wales.

This is replicated at all levels of services within children’s social care including our Youth Justice Services, early help and prevention, family support and youth services, with staff embracing the new ways of working which they had to adapt to very quickly. It is also clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has been an extremely stressful and anxious time for children, young people and families that we have been supporting. It is our view that children’s services staff have gone over and above to meet our statutory duties as well as provide additional emotional and practical support when many partner agencies have withdrawn from face to face contact. Our teams have been determined that children, young people and their families would be seen and supported, and they have found innovative ways to continue to keep children and young people safe in these unprecedented times.

Arrangements for contact during lockdown have been developed within the context of clear guidance published by Welsh Government. The key messages on contact advised:

- Face to face contact arrangements for seeing children is no longer advised and safe alternative contact arrangements should be made
- In the majority of cases, face to face contact between social workers and families should be suspended
- The frequency of contact with children, care leavers, families and carers should not be reduced unless there are grounds to reduce the frequency of contact based on information about the care needs of the child
- Ensuring that children at risk are safeguarded and continue to be protected however is of paramount importance
- Local authorities and social workers will need to make informed, professional judgements about visiting children at risk, which balance risks to children, care leavers, families and carers and risks to the workforce
- Alternative arrangements that comply with the safe distancing advice, utilising digital and virtual means where appropriate should continue in line with Public Health Wales advice on social distancing
- Court ordered contact arrangements should be assessed on a case by case basis taking into account a range of factors including the UK government's social distancing guidance and the needs of the child. It may not be possible, or appropriate for the usual face to face contact to happen at this time and keeping in touch will, for the most part, need to take place virtually

Local Arrangements

Statutory requirements have formed our baseline standards for seeing children and contact frequency. In addition each case is considered on its own level of risk, the care and support plan for the child, their wishes and best interests, ensuring their wellbeing and working in partnership with parents, carers and other professionals. The reality is that the use of digital media has facilitated increased levels of contact during the pandemic.

Challenges and creative solutions

Regular telephone contact is being made with children and families. Direct messaging by text or 'What's App' is being widely used with older children and care leavers and there has been extensive work done to ensure that children and young people have access to the appropriate digital technology in order to keep in contact, including examples across Wales of purchasing iphones and ipads and extra minutes and data.

Staff have had 'What's App' deployed on work issued phones so that they can ask families to show them around their homes where they attend a property but cannot safely enter, for example when a family report to be self-isolating, as well as speaking directly to the children in those properties. Social workers have also worked with parents to enable them to make contact with their children with appropriate safeguards in place, and this includes parents recording messages/reading bedtime stories for their children where appropriate.

Young people have reported very positive experiences e.g.

- One 14 year old stated that they enjoyed learning from home as they gets to spend more time with their carers, getting to take breaks when they want, eat the food they like and complete school work at their own pace
- One 15 year old stated that they were glad that there was a lockdown as it means that their family is safe.
- A care leaver wanted to praise their Personal advisor as she 'had rang me every day to make sure that I'm ok - she is amazing'
- Two young siblings have flourished in their foster home during this period and report that they 'love being outdoors all the time with X (foster father) and learning to build dens and climb trees. We have sent you photos of our adventures'

Working with schools

We have worked with schools to identify vulnerable learners that can access the care hubs. This has provided an additional layer of welfare checks and support for vulnerable children. Social workers have identified high risk cases across their caseloads and worked with families to offer support through the school hubs. Where families have chosen not to accept this offer, this has informed decisions about increasing contact with those families using the resources of social workers, support workers and social care workers within Children's Services

Risk based approach to supporting face to face contact

Our initial approach was to replace all face to face supervised contact with digital platforms. This has been continually reviewed and a number of authorities have developed a risk based framework to identify cases where it is appropriate and safe to support face to face contact. We continue to review our approach within the context of national guidance, the needs of individual children and families and ensuring the safety of our workforce through the appropriate supply and use of PPE.

The examples that follow portray the work that has been undertaken across Wales, and provide committee members with a flavour of the work that has continued;

- There have been examples of outstanding pieces of work to ensure that the final contact between birth parents and their children took place before adoption, and similarly, excellent work to begin introductions and move children to their forever home during the pandemic by undertaking detailed risk assessments so as to ensure that there are no delays created for the child.
- A young person who had to move placement during lockdown has been visited face to face by their social worker on a daily basis in their new placement
- Social workers have undertaken many home visits to children in care, in and out of county and have participated in activities with them, for example, taking them for walks, learning BMX bike tricks, baking and art and crafts work
- A personal adviser has been providing support to a care leaver who made the decision to stay in university accommodation alone during lockdown despite suffering from anxiety and low mood. The PA worked with the young person to develop a safety plan of support and continued to have contact numerous times a week vis What's App. Video, emails and texts and have long conversation discussing a range of topics
- There has been a wealth of support to foster carer families who have been shielding by social workers going to the supermarket for groceries and collecting medication. Families have made comments that this was vital for their mental and physical health as the social distanced contact with the workers provided them with a link to the outside world.
- Workers have attended at foster carers homes to help with setting up technology so that they can support to undertake video contact with families for babies, children and young people.
- Out of hours and weekend helplines have been set up by fostering teams social workers to offer 24 hour practical and emotional support and advice to foster carers
- The Mind of my Own App has been launched and has been set up for children and young people to be able to share any worries/positive things quickly with their worker
- Community based assessments of parents and their new-born children have continued and have enabled children to remain in the care of their parents. They have continued to be supported by social workers and family support workers through face to face work at the home

- A social worker joined a child's birthday party at the foster carers' home via What's App video
- We have continued to identify and assess risks to children, and have sadly had to remove children under Emergency Protection Orders and proceed to issue care proceedings
- Across Wales, social care staff have supported families with hundreds of visits to foodbanks and deliveries of food packages
- Staff have supported families to have a break by taking children out walking.

These are a few of the numerous examples of how children's services have remained in contact and have continued to see children, young people, families and carers during the lockdown period. We hope that this provides assurances that ensuring contact and seeing children has been a priority from the beginning of the lockdown period and will remain our priority going forward.

Should you need any further information or examples, please do not hesitate to contact us.