

Jeremy Miles MS
Minister for Education and Welsh Language

Vaughan Gething MS
Minister for Economy

20 September 2023

Follow up from recent joint ministerial session

Dear Jeremy and Vaughan,

Thank you for coming to give evidence to the Committee on 5 July. We appreciate you attending before the summer recess.

Following the session, we have some areas we would like further information on including:

- drop off rates for apprenticeships;
- degree apprenticeships frameworks;
- careers advice; and
- Big Ideas Wales.

Drop off rates for apprenticeships

1. During the session, we asked about the decrease in people completing their apprenticeships, for which the competition rates dropped from 80.9% in 2018-2019 to 66.3% in 2021-22. During the session, the Minister for Economy said that the initial evidence indicates that cost of living pressures are one of the main factors for this decrease. He also indicated that this was an issue of concern, and that “we still want to understand how far, and is it more than the cost-of living crisis or not.”

2. We are concerned that the target of creating 125,000 all-age apprenticeships may be affected by factors that are causing this increase in the drop off rate. We note that the timeline for this target has been extended by a year, but are concerned that the wider pressures for people to get into full

time paid employment may affect the attractiveness of apprenticeships. The pressure to pay bills right now could over-ride the longer-term financial benefits of a completing an apprenticeship.

3. Can you outline what work you are doing to better understand the reasons behind the drop off rates, and if you can commit to share this work with us? We'd also like more information on how the Welsh Government is working to support and encourage take up of apprenticeships as an attractive option particularly during the current cost of living crisis.

Degree apprenticeships

4. We discussed degree apprenticeships and the potential expansion of the number of degree apprenticeship frameworks. During the session the Minister for Economy confirmed that rail would be "online" in September 2024, with construction and digital following in September 2025. Thank you for your further note on expansion of degree apprenticeships which we considered at our meeting on 14 September.

Careers advice

5. Thank you for providing us with the data on the contact between Careers Wales and young people with additional learning needs. We considered this at our meeting on 14 September.

6. As raised during the session, concerns around the quality and breadth of careers advice being given to young people with disabilities has been raised as part of our inquiry: Do disabled children and young people have equal access to education and childcare? We will continue to explore this as part of that work, but at this stage, we would welcome further information on how the Welsh Government can ensure that children and young people with disabilities can get the best quality careers advice to ensure they can pursue the right education and career opportunities that meet their aspirations.

7. This was also an issue raised when I visited Cardiff University on behalf of the Committee earlier this year, to find out more about the Engage to Change project. I heard directly of how people with learning disabilities are not always offered the same opportunities as the wider population and saw how projects like Engage to Change can widen horizons and open up career opportunities that would otherwise not have been available.

Big Ideas Wales

8. We would also welcome some more information on how Big Ideas Wales is promoted, the levels of take-up and the outcomes or any current evaluation on the programme.

I would appreciate if you could provide a response by 10 November.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Economy, Rural Affairs and Trade Committee because of the relevance of this issues to their remit..

Yours sincerely,



Jayne Bryant MS

Chair

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

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

