

**Joint Cross Party Group – Cross Party Group on Universities and Cross Party Group on Further Education and Skills**

**Wednesday 12 July 2023 / 12.30pm - 1.30pm (In person and online)**

**Minutes**

Hefin David MS (Chair) welcomed all guests to the meeting.

**1. AGM - Cross Party Group on Further Education and Skills**

- John Griffiths MS was elected as Chair.
- Colegau Cymru were elected as secretariat.

**2. Universities Wales**

- Professor Maria Hinfelaar provided an update on Universities Wales' view on Hefin David MS's report.
- It was noted that collaboration between FE and HE should be welcomed, and CTER presents opportunities for closer, clever working, and building strong, fluid pathways through schools, FE colleges and Sixth Forms, into Higher Education.

**3. Colegau Cymru**

- Mark Jones provided an update on behalf of Colegau Cymru, and noted the commission presents new opportunities.
- It was noted that the recommendations in Hefin David MS's report are clear and unambiguous, although there are some areas where progress is needed, and we need to look forward, unpack, assess why changes have not been happening in the sector and work to remove barriers.

**4. Hefin David MS**

- Hefin David MS presented his Transitions to Employment report.

**5. Discussion**

- Kathryn Robson (Adult Learning Wales) suggested that the report could have recognised more around adult community learning, in terms of its importance

around supporting the economy and skills agenda. There is a ready market across Wales which is prepared and ready to upskill.

- Professor Cara Aitcheson noted that work on degree apprenticeships has been successful, however there is more work to be done on this topic and a chance to work together.
- Hefin David MS noted the good work of Cardiff MET and USW, and flagged the importance of vertical alignment.
- Elaine Carlile (Qualifications Wales), noted that there would be opportunities to work closer between schools and Further Education.
- Dafydd Trystan (Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol) noted his optimism about the partnership between FE and HE. It was suggested schools and colleges funding is very competitive, and this is an increasing challenge.
- Professor Cara Aitcheson raised the issue of tuition fees, and the challenges facing universities in terms of funding.
- Hefin David MS suggested that the reliance on international students was not a long term solution.
- Lisa Childs (NUS) suggested the relationship between schools and colleges has changes, language is key and parity of esteem is crucial.
- Iestyn Davies (Pro Vice Chancellor University of Wales Trinity St. David) noted that there needs to be collaboration beyond just FE and HE, but also students, employers, independent training providers, as well as with advice and guidance in schools. He remains optimistic of co-operation to create pathways, and feels there is not the same level of tension between the sectors as there has been previously. Competitive funding between schools and colleges at 16-19 level needs attention, can there be a mutual benefit to sharing resources.
- John Griffiths MS suggested that the conversation and dialogue should continue, as issues are not going to be solved overnight. He noted it would be good to have another discussion six months or so - Hefin to bring back to Senedd in New Year, and perhaps invite Minister.

## 5. Meeting close

The next meeting date TBC.