

7 January 2026

Buffy Williams MS  
Chair  
Children, Young People and Education Committee

Dear Chair,

## Welsh Government Draft Budget 2026-27

Thank you for your letter (dated 10 December 2025) requesting further information on waiting lists for student places in further education colleges.

As set out in our evidence session with the Committee, there has been an increase in participation in full time education in further education colleges in the 2025/26 academic year. This is due to both an increased number of learners in the 16-19 age demographic and because we have seen a higher proportion of those learners attending further education colleges.

In anticipation of the significant financial pressure resulting from this increase to participation, the Welsh Government agreed to our request for additional funding in the 2025-26 financial year. This enabled Medr to set aside £21m to recognise the cost of increased participation in further education. Whilst we are in the process of finalising institutional allocations for this £21m (based on validated data), Medr took immediate steps to guarantee each college a minimum of a 5% increase to their core full time allocation to mitigate the risk of waiting lists for college places.

In response to your specific questions, five colleges reported waiting lists at the start of the academic year. However, following confirmation of the additional £21m, those colleges have been actively seeking to place learners or signpost them to alternative provision. We are only aware of one college, Coleg Cambria, which is still in contact with 60 unplaced learners who are seeking access to level 1 provision. Coleg Cambria have signposted these learners to other opportunities, such as JobsGrowth Wales+ and continue to offer places where they become available. We continue to work closely with Coleg Cambria to identify possible solutions to place these learners.

It is worth noting that in managing learner enrolments and to avoid waiting lists, all colleges have informed us that learners may not always be placed on their first choice course. This may be

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

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down to learner eligibility, with colleges redirecting learners to more suitable courses, but there has also been unprecedented demand for some courses, such as level 1 and 2 construction, where workshop capacity limits the total number of places available. Where there are capacity issues, colleges have worked with learners to place them on alternative, appropriate courses.

Turning to the Welsh Government's Draft Budget for 2026-27, as highlighted in our evidence session with the Committee, we anticipate there will be significant financial pressure resulting from increased participation in further education. Early modelling for academic year 2026/27 suggests colleges may enrol in excess of 3,000 learners above anticipated funding levels. This equates to circa £30m.

The Welsh Government's Draft Budget for 2026-27 does not include additional funding to support increased participation as it did in 2025-26. Medr will not, therefore, have the in-year capacity to manage increased participation in the same way as we have in 2025/26 with the additional £21m. Having [published](#) our 2026-27 funding assumptions, Medr has had a number of conversations with College Principals and Finance Directors, who are highlighting that without additional funding in 2026/27 every college is anticipating waiting lists at the beginning of the next academic year.

We continue to work closely with the Welsh Government and further education colleges to better understand the potential implications of these financial pressures should additional funding not be forthcoming.

Yours sincerely,



**James Owen**  
Chief Executive