

To review progress since the 2012 report of the Enterprise and Business Committee: Apprenticeships in Wales. Including looking at the role of key players: the Regional Skills Partnerships; the Wales Employment and Skills Board (WESB); and Sector Skills Councils

- Regional Learning Partnerships are variable in their effectiveness for the following reasons. They have often been restructured which will slow down their development whilst new arrangements embed. The information flow is poor, in particular information is not always shared clearly and effectively with work-based learning (WBL) providers. One of the results of poor communication is that providers are unaware of the role of their Regional Learning Partnership and how it will effect/benefit them.
- Sector Skills Councils (SSC) do not keep qualification awards up to date to meet the needs of the employers, skills and technology needs. This is particularly relevant to small-medium enterprises (SME) in which many staff need to be multi-skilled across a wide range of practices. Currently, a small number of qualifications are under review.

To scrutinise the accessibility of independent careers advice on Apprenticeships and other vocational options? Particularly for young people, either in school, from Careers Wales, online or from other sources?

- In most schools, it should be through personal social education (PSE) and careers education that most learners are made aware of apprenticeships. However the quality of information, advice and guidance about apprenticeships is inconsistent, and only a minority of schools provide pupils with an extensive range of advice and information on options including apprenticeships.
- In general, secondary schools for 11 – 18 year olds place too much emphasis on promoting the continuation of pupils' education into the sixth form, rather than exploring fully the range of available vocational and apprenticeship options. There is very little training for teachers involved in delivering careers education to ensure that they are aware of what apprenticeships involve or can lead to. Teachers themselves do not fully understand apprenticeship programmes because there are few opportunities for them to access relevant and up-to-date information. As a result, apprenticeship programmes do not

have parity of esteem with other courses and training options. Parents also do not have up-to-date and accurate information about apprenticeships. This leads them to encourage their children to stay on into the sixth form with the aspiration of attending university, rather than exploring apprenticeships and

other vocational routes. Some of these apprenticeship and vocational routes also offer progression to higher education qualifications but this is not widely appreciated.

Careers Wales' Apprenticeship Matching Service fit for purpose?

- All learners have access to information via the Careers Wales website. However, this resource is not easy to navigate nor does it always contain up-to-date information. Very few apprenticeship applicants will receive an individual guidance interview with a careers adviser to ensure they develop the necessary knowledge to make an effective, informed decision about their future course of action. Generally the apprenticeship matching service works well, but this relies on the learners being aware of apprenticeships in order for them to keep themselves informed of apprentice recruiters. Feedback from employers indicates that they are content with the standard of applicants that they receive.

How can better parity of esteem between vocational and academic routes be achieved?

- Achieving a better parity of esteem between vocational and academic routes is challenging due to a variety of issues. These include parental pressure for learners to take academic routes and the travelling distances/costs for employment or training.
- Black Minority Ethnic groups still do not always value the status of apprenticeship programmes. There needs to be better impartial advice and guidance regarding these pathways for learners in schools, and closer collaboration between schools, colleges, work-based learning providers and employers regarding career options. The Welsh Government needs to develop and communicate clear information regarding the options available to learners, the progression routes and the choices they can make. Schools need to promote education and training opportunities other than sixth form and university to match the aspirations of the whole range of their learners.

To investigate the main barriers to taking up Apprenticeships? How accessible are Apprenticeships for people with disabilities (all ages)?

- For further information, please refer to Estyn's thematic report on Barriers to apprenticeships (2014):

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/default/files/documents/Barriers%20to%20apprenticeship%20-%20November%202014.pdf>

- In this report, we noted a number of barriers to taking up apprenticeships. These included learners reporting that employers did not fully understand their needs, financial and support requirements. Also barriers created when the aspirations of parents or carers differed from those of the young person. Other barriers included inappropriate job offers, and the generally low level skills of potential employees.
- Many work-based learning providers have undertaken adaptations and modifications to their premises or provided specialist equipment to meet the needs of individual learners.
- Learners access a wide range of additional support through partnership arrangements.

How can people from the lowest income families be supported to take-up Apprenticeships?

- There is a tension between travelling distances and associated costs for attending training against the potential longer-term benefits that accrue from training. Where clothing, uniforms, tools, learning materials are not provided by the organisation this incurs additional cost. For further information, please refer to Estyn's thematic report on Breaking Barriers to Apprenticeships (2015) :
<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/default/files/documents/Breaking%20down%20barriers%20to%20apprenticeship.pdf>

What good practice exists and what more can be done to address gender stereotyping?

- Many work-based learning providers have addressed gender stereotyping well. For example, in the delivery of construction and engineering programmes, providers have been successful in recruiting female learners as well as improving the progression opportunities for these learners. Taster days and good links with schools and colleges enable the more successful providers to engage learners and address gender stereotyping. However, despite some of the strategies, many learners continue to choose traditional employment and training opportunities.

To scrutinise the development of higher level Apprenticeships, with the support of further and higher education institutions? How effective is progression between other work-based learning and Apprenticeships and between Levels 2, 3, 4 and above Apprenticeships?

- The level of progression is variable. There is a need to promote and market training programmes at level 1 and 2 because these programmes may lead eventually to the take-up of higher qualifications. There are many employment

opportunities for learners with level 1 and 2 qualifications, particularly in small-medium enterprises (SME) and micro businesses.

- The opportunities for higher-qualified jobs are naturally fewer. For example, care home managers do not have a progression route to further their career. A few of the larger national and multinational companies often recruit apprentices and employ them for the length of the training programme and then let them go once the programme is completed. They will then recruit a new batch of apprentices, thereby controlling the overhead costs of staff salaries for the company.

How can employer engagement with Apprenticeships be improved?

- Employer engagement is generally good because all apprentices have to be employed to participate in the programme. Training providers have good relationships with a wide range of employers. However, in alignment with the Welsh Government's initiative to recruit 100,000 apprenticeships, there is a need to ensure that all employers receive the information about apprenticeship programmes. This should include explanations about the value and benefits of participating in the programmes. However, there is also a need to make sure that employers recruit apprentices with a view to continuing their employment upon completion of their training.