

- **To review progress since the 2012 report of the Enterprise and Business Committee: Apprenticeships in Wales** (PDF 403KB)
- Including looking at the role of key players: the Regional Skills Partnerships; the Wales Employment and Skills Board (WESB); and Sector Skills Councils
- The demise of the Sector Skills Councils is producing a detrimental effect on the fitness of purpose of the current Frameworks. The transition to Standards and Trailblazers in England and combined with the reluctance of Welsh Government to speedily adapt to those employer desired Standards has the potential to create a log jam in apprenticeship development. SSC's such as IMI have withdrawn support for WEST and this coupled with the uncertainty of ES requirements needs to be addressed. Awarding bodies and residual SSC's are dragging their feet over the inclusion of particular elements of the Welsh ESW provision and its inclusion in a "Welsh Framework".
- There is no real uniformity of purpose in deciding what is a priority for the delivery of apprenticeships, the foundation economy represents 24% of employment activity in Wales and yet providers are capped at 10% of contract value to deliver to that sector. Employer led demand in that sector is growing, because of the levy, WBL providers in Wales will struggle to meet demand. There must be a single set of clear priorities for Wales and one which meets the demands of trans-national organisations.

The implementation of the new apprenticeship standards in England, of which a majority do not contain accredited qualifications, will lead to Awarding Organisations moving away from offering vocational qualifications which remain in the Welsh apprenticeship frameworks. Unless Welsh Government is proactive in ensuring the Welsh qualification market is attractive to awarding organisations we will be in a situation that vocational qualifications disappear.

- **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?

Careers advice within schools is too late. There is a lack of breath of options discussed. The desire for schools to maintain numbers of students within sixth forms leads to biased advice and guidance.

The current Post 16 offer is confusing, therefore difficult for learners and parents to understand. The Post 16 plan in England has gone some way to try and resolve this issue. A similar plan should be available in Wales which aims to simplify the system. Qualification Wales vocational reviews should underpin the proposals to ensure the changes are fully evidence based.

Opportunities to embrace business communities through the revised Welsh Bac are missed within schools due to the lack of understanding of some teaching staff. If delivered correctly this would improve knowledge of the business community and various careers.

Greater access to schools by FE and WBL organisations in terms of career advice would broaden the range of career destination advice. The current offer is too narrow and restricts true career choice and options

- **Is the Careers Wales' Apprenticeship Matching Service fit for purpose?**

Yes, whilst the principle of the Apprenticeship Matching Service is good, the system requires improvement on the functionality of the system. The current system is cumbersome and difficult for employers and the potential apprentices to complete the full details.

Employers do not like having to reconfigure their vacancy offer into a single CWAMS standard format. CWAMS needs to consider that format in order to encourage employers who recruit apprentices outside the prime contractor network to place vacancies on CWAMS.

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

There has been a shift change in the desire for some young people not incur debt as a result of continuing education. However, the lack of clear IAG within schools will continue to create poor parity of esteem.

There is no lead from WG in terms of that parity. WG should promote the alternative qualification and learning route that vocational and Apprenticeship learning offers. There is still a poor understanding of the range of vocational options available to young people.

Greater promotion of success stories and the development of opportunities to celebrate vocational success in same way as we celebrate academic success.

- **To investigate the main barriers to taking up Apprenticeships?**

One of the principal barriers is the complexity that results in understanding that to be an apprentice you have to be in work. Prime and Sub Contractors take great pains to firstly recruit employers and then recruit apprentices. There is no "pool" of young people primed and ready to go onto an apprenticeship programme.

An ATA model or a variation of the Australian model of apprenticeship delivery could solve that position by having a transitional scheme where there would be students available to employers as apprentices.

Continue to invest and promote the apprenticeship brand highlighting career opportunities that result from apprenticeship provision. Promoting the Junior Apprenticeship developments may also encourage learners that are potentially at risk of disengaging to remain in education and training by providing high quality routes into employment.

- **How accessible are Apprenticeships for people with disabilities (all ages)?**

The requirement of apprenticeship to be employed does bring the in complexity of the employer to offer the employment opportunities to people with a disability.

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

Often the costs of entering employment for the first time is underestimated. Therefore, support with travel and subsistence, advance payments to cover the first month of employment, provision of suitable business clothing for interview and initial employment period would significantly help to remove barriers to entry into apprenticeships.

It does seem strange that provision exist to assist the post 60 generation but not the young who are new to the world of work.

Promotion of Junior Apprenticeship programmes and extension of this delivery model may provide additional opportunities for learners from lowest income families.

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

As with the disability response, apprentices are employed therefore education of employers to encourage the employment of underrepresented groups needs to take place address the gender stereotyping.

As a college we have proactively promoted apprenticeships to underrepresented groups and this has been meet with some success, examples are female apprentices in construction and engineering. Support from the WG to further enhance our promotion would be beneficial.

Greater links with schools and work experience would help to address some of the stereotypical images presented.

- **To scrutinise the development of higher level Apprenticeships, with the support of further and higher education institutions?**

We welcome the opportunity to develop the higher level apprenticeships. Management skills within Wales as significantly lacking. However, as this a work based qualification which needs to be delivered to employed apprentices, who at this level often struggle with the time commitment. A modular and more flexible approach to the funding would be a much more attractive programme to employers and potential apprentices. Allowing them to build on the qualification over time.

- **How effective is progression between other work-based learning and Apprenticeships and between Levels 2, 3, 4 and above Apprenticeships?**

The current data for progression is not robust to make sufficient comment on the full effectiveness of progression across levels. In some sectors the qualification requirements between levels does mean that there has to be a break in learning to allow time apprentice develops skills, or access career opportunities to meet the entry level of the next level. This means that they are not captured as a progression. Improved data capturing of destination over time would improve the evidence of progression.

- **How can employer engagement with Apprenticeships be improved?**

The introduction of the Apprenticeship levy has led to significant increase of employers wanting to the engage with Apprentices. However, they do not want a cross board divide with the apprenticeship offer. Flexibility to offer the framework or standard which the employer wants needs to be in place.

The current commissioning of work based learning is too long and complex for employers to understand. Currently approved providers have to submit tenders up to 18 months prior to the start of a contract period. The contract period could last up to 5 years. With the tender a prime contract must provide forecast starts by sector, age and local authority. It is impossible to accurately forecast employer demand in 6 years' time. Therefore, a more flexible approach to commissioning based future employer demand and therefore giving the employer the freedom to choice the provider which best suits their needs would improve the uptake of apprenticeships and the ability for providers to respond to changes in the economy.