

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 “Apprenticeship in Wales” recommendations are detailed in Annex 1.

Recommendations from the 2012 review which have been implemented include:

R1. NTFW undertook a review of the “value of an apprenticeship” to show the benefits to employers and produced a report and marketing material

R2. Progression data is collected by Welsh Government but there is currently no target, measure or publication of this data

R3. Apprenticeship targets have been incorporated as social clauses into public sector contracts. As providers we have not seen an increase in apprenticeship numbers following this inclusion

R4. JGW did increase the number of young people employed by SMEs and some did progress into an apprenticeship

R5. Creative Solutions has now replaced Pathway to Apprenticeship. The opportunities within this programme help young people gain valuable work experience and in the best situations an apprenticeship place

R7. Welsh Government and training providers have prioritised Higher Apprenticeships over the last 3 years and numbers have grown significantly

R10. SASW completed

R11. WG has encouraged providers to have closer links with schools however this is very much up to each individual school

R14 RSP are in place to identify and develop local needs

The North Wales RSP – The Ambitions Board is working effectively as a team across the six counties. There is a skills sub group which is tasked by the board to review key issues on Skills development.

WESB – we have no contact with WESB as an Apprenticeship contract holder. We are unaware of activities they have undertaken

Sector Skills Councils – They have diminished in effectiveness since the changes to the English Apprenticeship model. It appears that they are now prioritising the English Apprenticeship Standards and therefore Welsh Apprenticeship Frameworks are not being supported or developed. This is not true of them all but for a majority.

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?
- Is the Careers Wales' Apprenticeship Matching Service fit for purpose?
- How can better parity of esteem between vocational and academic routes be achieved?

The Careers service in Wales has been reduced in staffing volume with a majority of its service now being available via the online web resources. We do not believe that young people who need Apprenticeship advice access the information from the Careers website – perhaps the information is too general and there is definitely no face to the information.

There are very few situations where a young person can attend an event that promotes all possible progression alternatives in a fair and unbiased way.

The Apprenticeship Matching Service is not currently fit for purpose. Key Areas that generate regular issues:

- The CV builder is not completed by all young people to an adequate standard
- It is not an appropriate method of getting in touch with the applicant as tel. no. is not a compulsory field
- Due to data protection the info given to the employer on the applicant is very basic until you get to interview stage
- The site is within the Careers Wales website and not stand alone and so not promoted independently
- Careers Wales seen as a 16-18 product therefore AMS not used by people over 18
- AMS is not something that comes up on google when searching for jobs

Improvements have been made to the system so large employers can advertise their apprenticeship opportunity and then AMS directs the person to the employer website where the application form etc is located. The positives of AMS for a small employer are that it is free to advertise and the apprenticeship provider does all the admin on the site.

To gain parity we need to show more effectively real live progression through an apprenticeship alongside the progression opportunities through HE so that young people and their parents can evaluate the best route for them.

To investigate the main barriers to taking up Apprenticeships?

- How accessible are Apprenticeships for people with disabilities (all ages)?
- How can people from the lowest income families be supported to take-up Apprenticeships?
- What good practice exists and what more can be done to address gender stereotyping?

Barriers include:

- Parents do not see apprenticeships as a viable option for young people with 5 GCSE grade C and above.
- Only the large national companies advertise apprenticeships in the spring so it can look like there are only a few apprenticeships available.
- Employers are not willing to pay the NMW for the off the job training. The cost is lower if the employer can utilize the Apprenticeship NMW but not all apprentices are eligible for this lower amount. If employers are paying the National Living Wage then also paying for the hours in training is too expensive.

“Apprenticeship” as a product is accessible to all however a barrier could be that the person must be employed. This may be a barrier to a disabled person as our experience is that initially they gain a supported placement and not permanent employment.

It has also been identified that if disabled young people gain an apprenticeship that this will affect the family benefit. However, the young person will, most likely, be on a low income so there is a need for some benefit to still be available. This is especially true for transport costs.

Most FE and Apprenticeship providers offer taster sessions to break down the gender stereotypes. More work is needed with employers to promote positive gender champions including case studies. Celebrity endorsements could also help

It may help break down barriers if employers received an incentive to take on apprentices from key disadvantaged groups like disability, previously “in Care” , deprived localities, low income families etc

An alternative could be that the government fund apprenticeship providers to offer a recruitment facility. Providers could then support those who need help in finding an apprenticeship, including job searching techniques, application support, interview training.

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?

All education institutions promote progression routes including Apprenticeship. The big issue is that a young person must have a contract of employment for a minimum period of 16 hours per week to be eligible for an apprenticeship.

However, direct employment progression may be to a zero hour contract or a job without training until they have completed their probationary period. Therefore current progression data is not reflecting reality. A significant number progress to an apprenticeship after completing a basic period with the employer first.

A key problem moving up the apprenticeship levels is that level 3 and higher require supervisory/management experience. Not all young people at 19+ have job roles that cover the level 3 or 4 competency requirements as they have not gained a promotion as yet.

As a provider we see progression to higher levels happening after a gap in training. The gap allows the young person to gain more experience and promotion into an appropriate role.

How can employer engagement with Apprenticeships be improved?

Young people and employers need to have a website that openly promotes all the apprenticeship vacancies across Wales. This needs to have a web name/ address that will come up on a google search.

Employers need to believe that “training someone up” rather than “employing someone with the skills already” is a cheaper and more effective option.

If the apprentice had to contribute some of their time then perhaps they would value it more. E.g. the off the job training time is in their time and not at the expense of the employer. Or the off the job time is paid at the ANMW rate and not the NLW rate.

Employers need to be encouraged to offer more work experience to enable young people to gain work skills in a real environment and not via a classroom discussion. Two weeks work experience before leaving school or college does not develop young people’s work skills enough

Annex 1.

Recommendations from the 2012 Review “ Apprenticeships in Wales”

Recommendation 1. Do more to convince employers, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, of the importance and cost-effectiveness of apprenticeships as part of a more strategic approach to planning their medium and long-term skills needs.

Recommendation 2. Publish the number of apprentices that progress into employment at the end of their apprenticeship, according to destination sector.

Recommendation 3. Extend community benefits clauses in public sector contracts into subcontracting arrangements in order to promote the employment of trainees and apprentices, although taking note not to adversely impact on micro-businesses.

Recommendation 4. Work with employers to ensure that a significant percentage of Jobs Growth Wales opportunities are converted into apprenticeships.

Recommendation 5. Consider mainstreaming and ring-fencing funding for the Pathways to Apprenticeships programme into the proposed planning and funding system for post-16 education, with safeguards to ensure that the programme is relevant to economic needs and demands within local areas.

Recommendation 6. Encourage employers with well-established apprenticeship programmes to mentor and link up with small and medium-sized employers to advise them on apprenticeship schemes and share training provision.

Recommendation 7. Target funding at higher level apprenticeships in the most appropriate sectors to ensure that the right skills are being delivered to meet the needs of a vibrant, modern Welsh economy.

Recommendation 8. Review the effectiveness of the Apprenticeship Matching Service in meeting the information needs of both employers and potential apprentices.

Recommendation 9. Work at a UK level to ensure that sector skills councils have the capacity to tailor apprenticeship frameworks to meet changing employer demands and the demand for higher apprenticeship frameworks in Wales.

Recommendation 10. Publish the final version of the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for Wales by the end of December 2012.

Recommendation 11. Encourage work-based and apprenticeship training providers to develop closer links with employers and schools to support the development of skills and aid progression into workbased training and/or employment.

Recommendation 12. Tackle problems of esteem and prestige with apprenticeships. This could include: - a reconsideration of the apprenticeship product; - clarification of people’s understanding of the term “apprenticeship”; and - more innovative ways of promoting and communicating an apprenticeship “brand” to young people.

Recommendation 13. Ensure all young people and their parents receive high quality advice about opportunities provided by apprenticeships well before pupils choose their options for GCSE and vocational courses, and encourage schools to promote apprenticeships as a viable alternative to higher education.

Recommendation 14. Consider how apprenticeship opportunities can be better coordinated, promoted and tailored to ensure that local priorities and needs are strategically met.

Recommendation 15. Consider the possibility of grants, including grants for essential travelling costs, being made available to apprentices so that young people from the lowest income households are not deterred from applying for apprenticeships because of the adverse impact on family allowances.

Recommendation 16. Identify and monitor gender disparity in apprenticeships, the reasons for those disparities, and explore the feasibility of setting targets for improving the recruitment of female apprentices in the economic priority sectors.

Recommendation 17. Provide gender equality training for careers advisers and teaching professionals to redress any stereotyping in the advice they give to young people.

Recommendation 18. Ensure that clearer guidance is provided for employers on how to recruit apprentices and what to expect from learning providers.

Recommendation 19. Review the effectiveness of the working relationship between Careers Wales, Jobcentre Plus and sector skills councils as part of its rationalisation of the apprenticeships system.

Recommendation 20. Review the effectiveness of sector-managed apprenticeships for expanding apprenticeship take-up and raising standards of provision.