

Eluned Morgan AM,
Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning

28 November 2018

Dear Minister,

Following the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee's scrutiny session, which you attended on 7 November, the Committee would like to draw the following points to your attention.

Operation of Apprenticeships

The Committee is disappointed with the lack of transparency surrounding the funding and operation of the £115 million apprenticeship programme and is concerned that this poses a challenge to the effective scrutiny of a flagship Welsh Government initiative.

The Committee therefore requests the Minister provides further details on the administration of the apprenticeship programme and to outline the funding allocations made within it. This general information should be supplemented by information that addresses the following specific matters:

- The criteria used by Welsh Government to make decisions regarding how the funding within the programme is allocated between levels, frameworks / sectors and providers.
- The amount of funding intended to be available in 2018/19 for each level of non-degree apprenticeship (L1-5) and for high-priority and non-priority sectors and any reserve.
- Details on each of the 'pressure points' reported by providers and the amount of additional funding made available to meet them.



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
Bae Caerdydd, Caerdydd, CF99 1NA
SeneddESS@cynulliad.cymru
www.cynulliad.cymru/SeneddESS
0300 200 6565

National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1NA
SeneddEIS@assembly.wales
www.assembly.wales/SeneddEIS
0300 200 6565

- Further details on the 10% fund seemingly reserved for lower level apprenticeships (L2) including the rationale for this sum and an evaluation of its sufficiency.

EU Transition Fund

The Committee also seeks further clarification regarding the rationale for the allocation of EU Transition Fund monies to Airbus, Ford and other companies rather than to the providers of work-based learning. While this funding represents only a very small percentage of income for these companies, £3 million is a significant sum in the context of the Welsh Government's skills agenda and funding for work-based learning and further education. The Committee remains unconvinced, based on the explanation provided on 07 November, that this investment represents the best value for tax-payers money and is therefore keen to establish further facts.

The Committee requests that it is provided with a more detailed case for investing this funding in these big companies, rather than other methods of supporting individuals to upskill.

Regional Skills Partnerships

Finally, the Committee notes that the Independent "Greystone" Report on the Governance of Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs), provided to CYPE Committee on 12 November 2018 called RSP resources 'very tight' and stated that 'if increased responsibilities are delegated to RSPs, careful consideration needs to be given to the resources available to [them]'. The report goes on to make a recommendation on this matter.

Noting the already increasing influence of RSPs, for example the impact their work is having on the distribution of the £10 million Skill Development Fund, their resourcing was a matter raised with you on 07 November.

Your proposal to keep funding at a static level is at odds with the recommendation made in the Greystone report. Whilst the Committee notes and acknowledges the enthusiasm and hard-work of the RSPs, it is not reassured that they are resourced to a level commensurate with the demands placed on them and the influence their work has on the post-16 education and skills system in Wales.

The Committee has agreed to look in depth at the role of RSPs during 2019 and we will take a more detailed look at this – including their levels of financial support – in the Spring term.

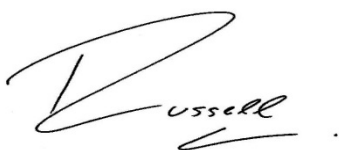


Careers Wales

The Committee was concerned that while the current level of funding should be sufficient to provide a service for all young people and some adults, bespoke support will not be available to all. In the Committee's work on automation, it was clear that in some sectors many of the jobs done by workers in Wales could be eradicated in the coming years. Workers will need support to identify and pursue alternative careers. It is not currently clear that Careers Wales is sufficiently well funded to support this vital preparation for the fourth industrial revolution. Is this something that is likely to be addressed following publication of the review of Digital innovation, AI and automation in Wales?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Russell George', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Russell George
Chair

