

Evidence from UK Hospitality

Introduction

UKHospitality is the voice of a sector that generates £3bn in Gross Added Value for the Welsh economy each year. UKHospitality spearheads hospitality's representation on the strategic, structural and regulatory issues it faces, campaigning for policies to help the sector achieve further growth as a key driver of Welsh economy. These businesses represent 11% of overall employment in Wales, employing 174,000 people. Hospitality has faced myriad cost pressures in recent years which have severely impacted the sector and its potential to grow, yet it continues to play a central role on Wales's high streets and in its communities.

Is the data and evidence being used by the Regional Skills Partnerships timely, valid and reliable? Have there been any issues?

Data collection is currently limited as it requires companies to contribute to surveys which can often lead to low levels of responses. This is because for some companies there is "survey fatigue" as the Government and supportive agencies regularly send out questionnaires to back a wide variety of funded projects. This is likely to mean SMEs in the hospitality industry will fare slightly worse in comparison to larger companies where there would be centralised support for such activity.

How well do the partnerships engage with and take into account the views of those who do not sit on the partnership boards, and how well do they account for the views of the skills providers themselves?

UKHospitality believes that our sector is vital to the health of the economy in Wales. However, generally the sector has not been represented as well on partnership boards as it should have been given its economic significance. We would like to see more engagement by partnerships with the sector.

Are the Regional Skills Partnerships able to reflect current and future skills demands within their regions? What about very specialised skills for which there may be low volumes of demand?

UKHospitality believes that regional skills partnerships (RSPs) do have the capacity to reflect and adapt to the demands of their regions. However, it is important that greater buy in to these partnerships is created and that the support base is widened to ensure they are as effective as possible.

Do the Regional Skills partnerships have sufficient knowledge and understanding of:

- The foundational economy and the needs of those employed within it

UKHospitality supports more engagement with businesses to maximise the effectiveness of RSPs. More hospitality specialists must be consulted as currently the sector is disadvantaged in comparison to other industries where there is institutional support for those participating.

Are the Regional Skills Partnerships adequately resourced to fulfil their growing role?

UKHospitality believes that much greater resource should be allocated to RSPs. Skills form one of the most vital elements of all Government activity post Brexit. Therefore, a greater allocation of resources to RSPs is essential if they are to be effective.

Is the level of operational detail set out by Welsh Government for skills provision in higher/further education and work-based learning providers appropriate?

UKHospitality believes that industry should have more of a say within this work and feed back to the Welsh Government with what it has learned from the process. An approach more focused on industry would be more effective in outlining sector need than one led by the Government. This is linked to the answer above suggesting that more hospitality sector experts need to be consulted.

Have the Regional Skills Partnerships and Welsh Government been able to stimulate changes in skills provision 'on the ground' to reflect demand?

UKHospitality believes that the work of the RSPs and the Welsh Government have been a positive influence. However, there remains much work to be done to ensure that skills provision is addressed appropriately. UKHospitality would be happy to work with the Welsh Government in the future to address the current issues identified within this response.

What, in general, is working well and what evidence of success and impact is there?

As mentioned above, generally we have seen a positive influence from the work of the Welsh Government and the RSPs. Having an advisory level below government that can directly influence investment and attitudes is a good thing. However, it needs to adequately reflect the collective value of the participants and not only be reflective of those that can afford the time to participate or benefit industries that are structured in a way as to allow greater involvement from their members. The current system does not cater appropriately for the hospitality industry, which is multi-faceted and often SME-led but nonetheless offers huge economic and employment opportunities compared to many others.

There are signs that RSPs are working well but they are still evolving and are not meeting the specific demands of the hospitality industry. Currently, they do not yet have enough buy in from individual businesses and have a reputation for being very demanding on time.

Are there any aspects of the policy that are not working well, have there been any unintended consequences, and what improvements can be made?

UKHospitality supports the closer interaction and cooperation between the three RSPs to prevent patchy delivery. We want RSPs to enable genuine, pan Wales industries like hospitality to have a solid platform to achieve skills targets rather than an uneven playing field in certain areas.