

Written Response by the Welsh Government to the report of the Enterprise and Business Committee entitled Apprenticeships in Wales

Apprenticeships continue to be a Welsh Government flagship programme. We are committed to protecting the status and brand of apprenticeships in Wales, and continue to place the programme at the centre of our workforce skills offer. In order to ensure apprenticeships remain effective, they need to adapt to the changing landscape in Wales. Regular review of our practices and our operational policy is essential if we are to ensure we're delivering a "gold standard" programme, able to meet the needs of employers and people across Wales.

Government policy is informed by Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) and deployed through the tendering process for our Work Based Learning (WBL) programmes. This provides us with a strong foundation of high-quality delivery within the WBL network in Wales. The delivery framework for WBL has flexibility to vary our requirements, if required, including through the use of an innovation lot to deliver new types of WBL provision. We have fewer direct contractors – this is intended to encourage increased collaboration within the learning network and delivery of 14-19 learning pathways, widening opportunities for learners.

We continue to focus on young people between the ages of 16 and 24 years in response to youth unemployment, and the Work Based Learning contracts and allocations for 2012/2013 illustrate this. Apprenticeships offer good opportunities to young people to escape the cycle of no experience, no job. We aim to make apprenticeships more appealing to young people and to ensure they feature in career choices at age 14. However, as we offer an all-age Apprenticeship programme in Wales, there is a policy trade off between the investment in young apprentices moving into employment, and those already in the workforce.

We strive to achieve a balance between serving the needs of young people entering the labour market and keeping options available for adults wanting to develop their skills; as there is an ongoing social and economic benefit associated with adult apprenticeships. We recognise the importance of increasing the skill levels of the existing Welsh workforce, so that they have improved promotion prospects. Not only does this action assist business with its succession planning but it also creates opportunities for new young apprentices to backfill subsequent vacant posts.

Currently, apprenticeships for adults are rationed by industry sectors. This restricts access for those who are over 25 years old and are based in a non-priority sector (e.g. Retail). This is expected to continue (in line with current Government policy), as the programme aims to support more young people with their transition into sustained employment. However, consideration will need to be given to priorities around adult Higher Apprenticeships; especially

if business is to attract and grow new talent and if we are to increase skill levels across the Welsh workforce.

With the conflicting demands of focusing support on 16-24 year olds, whilst also raising the average skills level of working age adults, there is a need to ensure we build upon current delivery structures and develop them to ensure they are accessible to young people, robust, responsive and able to meet the needs of employers. This will allow Government to optimise the impact of the programme for people outside of the labour market. The recommendations from the report ask Government to consider and develop solutions to a range of issues, which could be grouped in to three key themes: -

- Increased employer engagement:
 - Improve the ways employers hear about, identify and recruit apprentices.
 - A range of support that ensures WG increases employer engagement levels on the programme, particularly regarding micro and small businesses.
- Engagement with young people:
 - Stimulate demand for apprenticeships from young people and improve the channels of communication, through which young people hear about apprenticeships.
- Apprenticeship delivery:
 - Improve the system through improved and clearer accessibility, clearer branding and the introduction of higher apprenticeships.

The Welsh Government is committed to developing an Apprenticeship programme in Wales to best reflect the needs of the Welsh economy and to improve the career opportunities of people across Wales.

Detailed Responses to the report's recommendations are set out below.

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.

Response: Accept

This inquiry has identified a clear need for increased employer engagement within the apprenticeship programme across Wales. Action will need to be taken to promote and connect with employers that are not already engaged with the apprenticeship programme, or have been disengaged for some time. This is a re-occurring theme across the recommendations (namely recommendations 4, 6, 11 and 20). Detailed below are steps the Welsh Government could take to address this challenge.

- Develop and implement an engaging marketing and communications strategy, which raises awareness and participation in apprenticeships, with a particular focus on small to medium-sized companies. This might include advocacy programmes which will encourage currently-engaged employers to act as ambassadors to promote apprenticeships.
- Work in conjunction with other Welsh Government programmes and departments to ensure a wider and more cohesive employer offer is developed, thereby maximising the impact of the apprenticeships programme. This will enable a more streamlined employer engagement approach. Also, to work strategically to influence and promote the use of apprenticeships via policy developments across the Welsh Government. This is intended to maximise the leverage gained from other activities undertaken across Welsh Government.
- Undertake a scoping exercise with the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Chambers of Commerce and the TUC which will identify perceived barriers facing businesses and establish ways in which these can be addressed, particularly with smaller employers.
- Work with our Work Based Learning provider network and the Workforce Development programme deliverers to facilitate their engagement with employers.
- Work with Work Based Learning Providers, Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and Sector Panels to encourage employers with well-established apprenticeship programmes to mentor and link up with small and medium-sized employers.

Financial Implications – I have asked my officials to scope out the costs associated with this action, ensuring we build upon existing employer engagement structures. It is anticipated that some of the actions as outlined above will be cost-neutral; however, it is acknowledged that there will be additional costs associated with engagement and promotional activities. It is anticipated that these will be met from within agreed budgets.

Recommendation 2

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

Response: Accept in principle

The Welsh Government currently has work underway to 'match' the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) data to Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) records to look at whether newly qualified apprentices remain in employment, whether at the same employer or elsewhere. However, this work is still at a very early stage and, whilst a significant step, it has weaknesses in that it is unlikely that this approach would provide us with

detailed information at a sector level. Long term tracking of destinations with various agencies, is possible but may have significant cost implications. Further scoping work will need to be completed to determine whether this recommendation can be met in full.

Financial Implications – As this work continues, a cost benefit analysis may be required to ascertain whether this recommendation can be met in full.

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 upon micro-businesses.

Response: Accept in Principle

It is important to note that the public sector can not directly enforce employment and training outcomes into subcontracting arrangements. However, we can, and do, promote the employment of trainees and apprentices through the inclusion of community benefit clauses in direct contracts, and work in partnership to positively influence the practices of their contractors throughout supply chains.

In support of the Programme for Government commitment, the Local Government Compact now includes a requirement for all appropriate contracts valued at £2m and above to include Community Benefit clauses; as does the NHS standing orders and all appropriate Welsh Government contracts valued above £2m include Community Benefits. Opportunities to include a Community benefits condition in appropriate Welsh Government grant funding is also ongoing. The Department for Education and Skills' (DfES') 21st Century Schools programme already includes a requirement for the inclusion of community benefits clauses as a condition of funding.

Community Benefits is particularly well established in the Construction industry and anecdotal evidence from the sector suggests that main contractors are already working with their supply chains to embed employment and training outcomes from their sub contracting arrangements. Contracts such as the Church Village Bypass Scheme and Port Talbot Peripheral Distributor Road Scheme have seen training and employment delivered by both the main contractor and by their sub contractors.

The Finance Minister has established the Community Benefits Task & Finish Group, chaired in a personal capacity by Martin Mansfield, General Secretary of the Wales TUC. This Group is taking forward an action to review existing Community Benefits policy and guidance and will look at the opportunity to strengthen guidance on this issue.

However suppliers further down the supply chain are smaller and will work on projects for shorter time periods so additional support may be necessary to

secure their positive outcomes - it is likely that some form of shared apprenticeship scheme would be required. To date such schemes have benefited from DfES funding, and we will continue to support these schemes wherever appropriate.

Financial Implications – I have asked my officials to scope out the costs associated with this action. It is anticipated that some development actions as outlined above will be cost-neutral; however, it is acknowledged that there will be additional costs associated with some activity, for example, any shared apprenticeship models. Any additional costs will be met from agreed budgets.

Recommendation 4

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

Response: Accept

Conversion of a Jobs Growth Wales (JGW) job into an apprenticeship opportunity is the ideal outcome, ensuring not only the continuation of the employment for the young person but also training to develop skills and enhance future employability.

Managing agents delivering JGW are tasked with promoting apprenticeships as a progression opportunity for young people, including the possibility of further subsidised support through the Young Recruits Programme. We have included information on progression opportunities in our guidance documentation for Jobs Growth Wales and have supplemented this with email reminders to managing agents.

We will monitor the conversion of JGW opportunities into apprenticeships and this will be one of the factors influencing future management of contracts. Very early evidence of progression from Jobs Growth Wales onto apprenticeships is encouraging and the first set of progression data will be published in early 2013.

Financial Implications – The cost will depend upon whether these apprenticeship places are in addition to existing recruitment. We have agreed an additional £20m for apprenticeships for financial year 2013-14 via the budget agreement, so the overall apprenticeship programme budget will meet any increased demand resulting from conversions of JGW jobs into an apprenticeship.

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.

Response: Reject

The Pathways to Apprenticeship (PtA) programme was developed in 2009 to support young people during the economic downturn. The programme will continue to operate in its current format until the 2013/14 academic year. The project receives ESF funding. That will cease in line with the current ESF programmes up to the 1 August 2014. It is essential that good practice, emerging from the programme is considered against the developing wider policy context. We recognise the need to migrate successful PtA activity into the future development planning cycle.

Proposals for revisions to the planning and funding system are likely to recommend funding programmes of learning, as opposed to individual qualifications. This would fit with PtA, as it is, in effect, a programme of learning. However future programmes will be worked up with input from the various industry sectors, and may vary from the existing PtA schemes. Also, as the funding system is likely to shift towards programme funding, ring fencing the existing PtA activity could prove awkward.

Financial Implications – Any costs of delivering existing or revised PtA programmes would be met from existing agreed funding for Further Education Institutions.

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.

Response: Accept

This recommendation is linked to recommendation 1 and the developmental work, as outlined in my response to recommendation 1, will include this type of activity.

Financial Implications – As outlined in Rec. 1.

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.

Response: Accept

We intend to develop and expand higher apprenticeship activity in Wales, and work will be undertaken shortly to ascertain what level of funding would be required for this activity.

Draft Higher Apprenticeship frameworks were first introduced in August 2011. However, much development work still needs to be done to establish funding and delivery mechanisms, which will include both the Higher Education sector and work-based learning, and to identify the most appropriate sectors on which to focus activity and to market their availability to both employers and potential apprentices.

The range of occupations covered by Higher Apprenticeship frameworks will continue to be extended as more frameworks are written (over and above the sixteen draft frameworks that have been published so far). The availability of these new draft frameworks provides the promise to extend the range of apprenticeship options available to both employers and apprentices but, because they are new, care needs to be taken to plan their implementation systematically.

Financial Implications – I have asked my officials to scope out the costs associated with this action. It is acknowledged that there may be significant additional costs associated with this activity. We have agreed an additional £20m for apprenticeships for financial year 2013-14 via the budget agreement, so the overall apprenticeship programme budget will meet associated additional costs.

Recommendation 8

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

Response: Accept

The AMS all-Wales pilot was launched in July 2011. The AMS forms part of the wider Work Based Learning evaluation, carried out by a third party organisation. The Evaluation Report is due to be published shortly. Comments, suggestions and user surveys are carried out on an ongoing basis and, if software changes are required as a result of the user feedback, this improvement activity is usually undertaken every 6 months, depending on costs. We will use this information to consider improvement to the programme by September 2013.

Financial Implications – It is anticipated that some actions outlined above will be covered under current development budgets.

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.

Response: Accept

Wales will continue to work closely with Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) to ensure that the depth and breadth of apprenticeship frameworks is available to meet demand. Sector Skills Councils are funded to do this work by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) through their contracts to deliver both National occupational Standards (NOS) and apprenticeship frameworks under the 'Universal Services' commissioning process. Wales is represented by two senior officials on the Universal Services Board where commissioning decisions on framework developments are taken. Additionally, Wales provides funding to SSCs to develop, pilot and test the delivery of new frameworks through the Sector Priorities Fund Pilot programme (SPFP). 17 pilot projects concerned with apprenticeships have either been approved or are under consideration. These pilot projects cover a wide range of occupational areas, ranging from life sciences, the built environment, creative and cultural, food and drink, health and public services.

To date, 16 draft Higher Apprenticeship frameworks have been published in Wales covering the largest areas of occupational demand covering such job roles as management, engineering, construction and I.T. Under the forerunner programme of the Modern Skills Diploma, Care management showed high demand. The Care Council in Wales SSC plan to publish a relevant Higher Apprenticeship care Management framework shortly, using the revised Specification of Apprenticeship Standards.

Financial Implications – The majority of costs to develop HA frameworks will be met by the UKCES, however, there may be specific instances where, in order to meet the needs of niche markets/industries in Wales, HA frameworks will be developed locally at a cost of approximately £25k per framework. We are unable to provide final costing for this activity until 2014-15, at the earliest.

Recommendation 10

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

Response: Accept

The Specification of Apprenticeship Standards Wales (SASW) was published on a non statutory basis in October 2012. This version of SASW has extended the range of draft apprenticeship frameworks to include draft Higher Apprenticeships at levels 4, 5 and 6 and provides a wide range of flexibility to ensure that frameworks can be tailored to meet specific needs. This flexibility includes, for example, the option to include up to six Credit and Qualification Framework Wales (CQFW) credit-based units from the Quality Assured Lifelong Learning pillar of CQFW to target specific employer requirements as well as the option at Level 5 and 6 to include non-QCF competencies qualifications that meet the entry requirements to relevant Professional bodies. Two SSCs are currently being funded by the Welsh Government to develop QALL units for inclusion in Welsh apprenticeship frameworks.

Financial Implications – None. Any additional costs will be drawn from existing programme budgets.

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 work-based training and/or employment.

Response: Accept

There has already been a great deal of consideration and some work undertaken as to how we can encourage this tripartite working in order to maximise apprenticeship opportunities for school leavers.

Within the current work based learning specification, all Apprentices aged 16 - 19 as participants in the 14 – 19 Learning Pathways, are currently entitled to three strands of learning support. These are:-

- A Learning Coach: a named person within the provider organisation or through a third party who will provide the learner with advice on how to maximise his/her own ability and learning skills;
- Access to Personal Support: access to the personal support, via Youth Support Services, to develop solutions to and overcome situations in their lives which are barriers to their learning; and
- Careers Information, Advice and Guidance: entitlement to impartial careers information, advice and guidance. Where careers education is provided, *Careers and the World of Work* framework is the key document which the Provider should use to review and develop their provision. Specialist individual careers information, advice and guidance is typically provided by professional advisers from Careers Wales.

A similar recommendation to this was included in the Children and Young People Committee's report (May 2012), following their inquiry into the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009. The recommendation stated:

"The Welsh Government should identify a list of key actions that it can put in place quickly to promote more consistent and effective employer engagement in the planning and delivery of 14-19 provision. The Welsh Government should also draw up a list of key actions that will ensure that accurate and up-to-date labour market intelligence is more readily available to the 14-19 Networks."

The Minister for Education and Skills accepted this in principle because a range of actions have already been put in place to ensure that there is more effective employer engagement in the planning and delivery of 14-19 provision. The Welsh Government's 14-19 Learning Pathways guidance already sets out its expectation that the 14-19 networks should include representation from either employers or work based training providers.

Statutory guidance has been issued to schools and colleges specifying that due attention should be paid to available market intelligence and local and regional priorities when planning a local area curricula.

Another recommendation from the Children and Young People Committee related to providing young people with comprehensive information about all local available courses and training opportunities:

“The Welsh Government should issue guidance requiring all schools and colleges to produce a joint prospectus containing impartial advice on all the local courses and training opportunities for 14-19 year old learners (including schools, colleges and work-based learning places) to enable learners to have access to all information available to assist with their choices at age 14 and 16.”

The Minister for Education and Skills accepted the importance of making information available. The following is an extract from his response:

“I am not so convinced that it is desirable to publish a joint prospectus for Key Stage 4. I have, however, asked my officials to consider options for publishing the Local Curriculum Offers at Key Stage 4 and post-16 on the Welsh Government website. At Key Stage 4 it will ensure that learners and their parents/guardians will be aware of and be able to compare the local curriculum offered by their school with other schools across Wales.

“In the longer term I have asked my officials to discuss with Careers Wales Online the feasibility and value-for-money of developing a function to support the publication of an electronic common area prospectus for 16-19 year old learners across Wales. This would allow schools, colleges and training providers to publish a combined prospectus and for learners to search for course opportunities in a specified area.

“Therefore I have no plans to issue any further guidance at the moment.”

Officials are currently working with Careers Wales Online to arrange for the Local Curriculum Offers at Key Stage 4 and post-16 to be transferred to the Welsh Government in time for the launch of the new site in February 2013. Options for the development of a Local Common Area Prospectus (including training opportunities and work-based learning places) for 16-19 year old learners in Wales has also been discussed and the best approach for taking this forward is currently being considered.

In addition to this activity, following discussions with local authorities across Wales, the Welsh Government is developing an ‘Engagement and Progression Framework’ to identify effective approaches to supporting young people into sustained engagement, training and employment. The framework has six building blocks:

- Early **identification** of young people at risk of disengagement;
- **Brokerage** of co-ordination and support;

- Comprehensive **tracking** of young people through the system;
- **Provision** and progression aligned with the needs of young people;
- Progression into employment and **employment opportunities**; and
- **Accountability** for continuous improvement and stronger collaboration.

Welsh Government is now working with Local Authorities and partners to trial the development of the framework and apprenticeships will form a key part of the offer.

The Welsh Government Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) Unit is committed to improving the Labour Market Intelligence base available to individuals, employers, providers, policy makers and others in Wales. The aim of the LMI project is to ensure that policy makers become fully aware of the data when they are planning their Local Curricula so that we can ensure young people follow courses which will lead to future employment.

Specific marketing activity will need to underpin the aforementioned activity. We will strive to position Apprenticeships as a positive career choice with a sense of pride and achievement, for potential and successful apprentices and their influences. It is essential that we develop a marketing and communications strategy to increase employer, apprentice and parental engagement and enhance the Apprenticeship brand. All communication channels will be utilised to maximise activities that are delivered through partnerships with the network of referral agencies and training providers.

We shall seek to work with schools and training providers to ensure that employers have a wide pool of suitable and qualified candidates to select from. We will ensure that potential apprentices and their parents have the information they need to consider if an Apprenticeship is the right route for them and have the relevant information to apply, targeting schools with information and marketing packs.

We will establish a Work Based Learning (WBL) Marketing Comms Group quarterly meeting to collaborate more closely with the Network to inform and agree marketing activity for Apprenticeship Campaigns, going forward.

Qualifications are a key element of 14 to 19 provision and as part of the Review of Qualifications, the Welsh Government engaged extensively with employers. This should result in a qualifications system that better prepares young people for employment.

Financial Implications – Costs relating to some of this activity will be met from agreed budgets.

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.

Response: Accept in principle

Whilst much can be done to market the brand more positively, it will only be when employers and young people actively value apprenticeships as a credible alternative to academic advancement that real and lasting change to the image of apprenticeships will occur. We will work via our tendering process to ensure the product is more flexible and relevant to respond to the needs of employers and people across Wales.

The apprenticeship product is already in the process of re-definition. They are now defined by contracts of employment and by the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for Wales, which sets the minimum criteria for the curriculum to be followed, including the national accreditation of competence, knowledge and essential skills required for a skill or trade.

The recent inclusion of Higher Apprenticeships to the apprenticeship offering covering levels 4, 5 and 6, will, for the first time, provide young people with a complete career path to professional status because they offer the option to study relevant Higher Education qualifications as part of the framework. It is anticipated that Higher Apprenticeships will, over time, offer that credible vocational alternative and provide the stimulus to change the current perceptions of value.

It is acknowledged that apprenticeships suffer from some problems of esteem and prestige but also recognise that these stem from generic cultural biases as much as lack of understanding or 'brand image'. In the short term, we will take active steps to further market the apprenticeship brand.

We will seek to work in conjunction with Scotland, England and Northern Ireland on linking the national branding associated with apprenticeships. We will work to simplify the messages associated with the brand, ensuring a clear and consistent message to various audiences across Wales. We will produce comprehensive toolkit and marketing resources for the network these will include press notices, advertising templates for print and online, banners posters and social media channels.

Other proposed marketing activities include: -

- Radio and press advertising campaign to promote Apprenticeships in Wales and the Apprenticeship Matching Service;
- Online advertising: e-mailer, Google pay per click, Facebook;

- A clear referral system linking our Business Skills Hotline to our provider's network will be in place;
- The provider's network has agreed to respond to leads within a 24 hour window;
- Careers Wales will co-promote the activity throughout Wales.

The Apprenticeship Awards aim to recognise and celebrate employers, learners and providers who commit to developing their workforce through Apprenticeships and supporting their employees during their training. The Apprenticeship Awards are a great way to evaluate training and development, as well as a fantastic motivational factor for any workforce or learner. Irrespective of winning, the awards provide a means for entrants to benchmark and improve upon their training and development.

The Awards are used to showcase and celebrate the achievements of those who have: -

- exceeded expectations
- shown a dynamic approach to training
- demonstrated initiative and enterprise, innovation and creativity
- shown an understanding and commitment to the improvement of skills development for the Welsh economy.

A bidding process for funding support for the Network to host events around Apprenticeship Week is being considered.

As part of our strategy we integrate apprenticeships messaging into a range of initiatives such as vocational qualifications day, competitions and WorldSkills. Skills competition networks in Wales aims to raise the profile, promote role models across all sectors and increase engagement and understanding of vocational skills and apprenticeships throughout Wales. These competitions are used in some instances to engage schools this methodology can be increased further through incentives given to organisations and the encouragement to put in place some bite size learning opportunities.

These competitions help us to:

- provide a framework for learners to have the opportunity to participate, benchmark and improve their skills;
- support, feed and promote WorldSkills UK and other high quality international competitions and for Wales to raise the bar on its training through this vehicle; and
- promote the benefits of skills to young people and employers and actively demonstrate the link of excellence with apprenticeships.

Financial Implications – I have asked officials to scope out the costs associated with this action. It is anticipated that there are additional costs associated with the actions outlined above. Depending on the outcome, budget availability will then be considered.

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.

Response: Accept

One of the aims of the school curriculum for Wales is to prepare young people for the challenges, choices and responsibilities of work and adult life. Careers and the world of work (CWW) is a compulsory part of the curriculum for all pupils aged 11 to 16 and provides specific opportunities for all pupils to learn about the world of work.

Careers and the world of work: a framework for 11 to 19-year-olds in Wales the key document that all learning providers should use to review and develop CWW provision for 11 to 19-year-olds. A key component of the CWW framework is 'understanding the world of work' which looks to enhance an individual's future employability and preparedness for the world of work. Through CWW, learners will also receive careers information, advice and guidance, including accurate, up-to-date and objective information on opportunities, progression routes, choices, where to find help and advice.

The school curriculum contains a range of examples where pupils can gain understanding about CWW. For example, through personal and social education, learners will develop an understanding of the opportunities available to them in education, training and employment. Estyn report: Informed decisions – The implementation of the *Careers and the World of Work Framework for 11 to 19-year-old in Wales* reported that nearly all schools give pupils good information to help them to choose subjects in Year 9. This involves careers advisers well and gives parents opportunities to discuss options.

Career Choices - Dewis Gyrfa (operating as Careers Wales) provides independent and impartial information, advice and guidance on learning, training and career opportunities. It is not the role of Careers Wales to promote one route over another.

However, Careers Wales hosts the 14-19 options menu on its website (www.careerswales.com) and we expect schools and local consortia to provide a balanced range of options. Careers Wales is launching an enhanced website in December 2012, and we will be looking to further develop improved Labour Market Information services.

The Welsh Government looks to Sector Skills Councils to work closely with Careers Wales to ensure information on www.careerswales.com is up to date and reflects the most recent information available on sectors.

High quality provision of Careers and the World of Work (CWW) in all schools is essential and should start at year 7. The recent Estyn thematic inspection

of schools' delivery of Careers and the Work identified inconsistencies in delivery at school level. As part of the remit for Careers Wales in 2013-14 the Welsh Government is asking the company to consider how it can best work with schools to support schools delivery of CWW programmes – including Careers Wales' approach to capacity building and the delivery of the Carers Wales Quality Mark.

<http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/thematic-reports/recent-reports/>

We will scope the possibility of developing a teaching pack that could be used by schools careers teachers/advisors. This could include the demonstration of labour market information and post-16 options including apprenticeships and promote equality and gender balances in sectors. A leaflet that highlights subject options at year nine to be distributed to all young people considering their options could also be a part of this pack.

To increase awareness of apprenticeships, we will seek to develop an effective marketing strategy that will deliver inspirational, simple and consistent messages and campaigns that give a clear picture of the programmes that audiences can access – ensuring that all communications and marketing is complementary. Through such campaigns, we would aim to raise awareness of the programmes and engage audiences to help achieve policy targets.

Website content should include promotion of key news stories, events and case studies in addition to co-promotion of key messages and Apprenticeship programme profile-raising on partner organisation websites. Digital marketing activity could include paid search/search engine optimisation to drive target audience to the website, online banner advertising.

In line with other Departments and initiatives across the Welsh Government, we would seek to run a social media campaign to include the development of Apprenticeships, including a Facebook page and twitter feed with daily updates on vacancies, events and news stories. This could be linked to the AMS.

We would aim to have more exposure during Apprenticeship Week 2013, organising some events across Wales to promote the programme and to run an overarching campaign utilising radio and PR campaign utilising advertorials in Welsh regional publications, online marketing, production of a marketing toolkit and templates.

Apprenticeship Awards November 2013 - event promotion including case studies, press releases, promo films, online marketing
Development of new marketing collateral to include pop up banners, leaflets, posters, templates and toolkits for the Network

Financial Implications – I have asked officials to scope out the costs associated with this action. It is anticipated that some actions as outlined above will be cost-neutral; however, it is acknowledged that there will be

additional costs associated with this activity, which could be met from agreed budgets.

Recommendation 14

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

Response: Accept

Officials are working with colleagues both internally and externally to consider how we can better identify local priorities. This includes working with Regional Learning Partnerships and improving contracting arrangements through the use of improved Labour Market Information.

Although contracts are flexible to meet local priority provision, we need to consider why some providers seem reluctant to respond to local need. It is possible that there is a shortage of appropriate qualified trainers and assessors to move into new areas of learning delivery. We will work with NTFW to consider this issue further.

There is a need to seek to develop inspirational, simple and consistent messages and campaigns that will give a clear picture of the programmes that audiences can access.

Financial Implications – Full costing has yet to be carried out but it is anticipated that some actions, as outlined above, could result in some relatively small additional cost. I anticipate that such costs could be managed within agreed budgets.

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.

Response: Accept in principle

The introduction of such support would need to be considered, and the impact of grants on issues such as taxable benefits would need to be fully explored. There is also a need to explore the underlying poverty issues facing apprentices. Subject to staff resource, we will undertake a review of support available to apprentices and consider what action can be taken by the Welsh Government to ensure young people from all areas of Wales are able to access apprenticeships.

Apprentices are employed status individuals. It is for the employer and the apprentice to make the necessary arrangements for covering the cost of travel

and accommodation in accordance with the employer's usual procedures. Neither the employer nor the Welsh Government will support travel and accommodation costs normally incurred as part of the employment (rather than learning). However, if a period of training takes place necessarily away from home which is integral to apprenticeship framework, and the costs are exceptional, it is possible to secure reimbursement of these costs from the Welsh Government.

Financial Implications – I have asked my officials to scope out the costs, benefits and disadvantages associated with this action.

Recommendation 16

Identify and monitor the 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.

Response: Accept in principle

Through the Estyn Annual Remit 2013/14, Welsh Government will be commissioning Estyn to conduct a review on engagement and participation barriers facing black, ethnic and disabled groups entering the apprenticeship programme and the influence of gender and simultaneously pinpoint good practice models and approaches. In addition, they will identify and report on any specific occupational sectors where ethnicity, disability and/or gender issues present potential barriers, including a review of gender balance within occupational sectors. This is a two year project and will start in April 2013 and be completed in January 2015. This project will inform Welsh Governments future policy including the feasibility of setting targets for improving the recruitment of female apprentices in the economic priority sectors.

Financial Implications – I have asked my officials to scope out the costs, benefits and options as a result of this research and bring about specific pilot work that may improve the promotion of equality matters on the apprenticeship programme. Costs would be small and would be met from agreed budgets.

Recommendation 17

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

Response: Accept

There is already robust equality training for all of those providing careers advice to young people in Wales.

Careers Wales training for its advisers includes challenging gender stereotyping. Evidence for this is found in the Estyn Inspection of Careers

Wales Mid Glamorgan and Powys in 2009 which found that *“The company monitors well the participation rates of different groups and there is a wide range of effective initiatives to challenge successfully gender stereotyping in career choices”*.

Tackling instances of gender stereotyping are already addressed within the Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) Standards and Practising Teacher Standards (PTS) that apply to all teachers in Wales.

The overall purpose of the professional standards is to raise standards of teaching and to improve learner outcomes throughout Wales. The professional standards articulate the understandings, knowledge and values that teachers must demonstrate.

The Welsh Government’s QTS Standards must be met by all trainees in Wales who wish to be qualified teachers. The Standards are outcome statements that indicate what students and others on ITT courses or programmes must know, understand and be able to do in order to achieve QTS. They include detailed references to the requirement to address equality of provision, including that relating to gender. Trainee teachers are therefore unable to be awarded QTS unless they demonstrate they have met these requirements.

Once teachers are practising the PTS provide a framework to enable practitioners to identify their performance management objectives and to choose the most appropriate professional development activities. In this way, through the monitoring of performance against the standards, evidence of insufficient focus on tackling gender stereotyping will be identified as a professional development need tailored to the needs of the individual practitioner.

This targeted approach is more effective in addressing gender issues than a 'blanket' approach which may provide generic training to all teachers, many of whom will have demonstrated through their effective practice that they do not require training on this issue.

Financial Implications – It is acknowledged that there may be additional costs associated with this activity. We have agreed an additional £20m for apprenticeships for financial year 2013-14 via the budget agreement, so the overall apprenticeship programme budget will meet associated additional costs.

Recommendation 18

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

Response: Accept

We will seek to produce clearer guidance for the recruitment and retention of apprentices. This will specify areas such as the use of the National Occupations Standards, equality of opportunity and guidance on other areas associated to frameworks and employment law. It will highlight a formal agreement between the employer and the provider and the roles and responsibilities of all parties. We will make it clear as to what employers can expect from our learning providers. In addition, we will work with our provider network to develop employer focused literature more geared toward SME's.

Financial Implications It is anticipated that some actions as outlined above will be met out of current budget allocations.

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 apprenticeship system.

Response: Accept

There has been significant change affecting the organisation and delivery of Jobcentre Plus, Careers Wales and Sector Skills Councils in recent times, which present an ongoing challenge for relationship management.

It is our intention to bring the careers service into public ownership, as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Welsh Government. This provides a new opportunity to improve our relationship with the company and refocus discussions with other partners.

We will also utilise the Joint Employment Delivery Board; and, in future, the Careers Strategic Forum, to improve consistency of relationships across the careers family.

Financial Implications – This action may result in increased demand for apprenticeships numbers. There may be additional costs associated with this activity. We have agreed an additional £20m for apprenticeships for financial year 2013-14 via the budget agreement, so the overall apprenticeship programme budget will meet associated additional costs.

Recommendation 20

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

Response: Accept

This recommendation will be met as a part of the wider employer engagement activity outlined in response to Recommendation 1. I have asked Officials to consider the current Shared Apprenticeship models. Scoping out the need to develop new shared models looking at how we can stimulate the market and

create new apprenticeship opportunities that may otherwise not exist. Some sectors of the economy have been affected by the economic downturn and there is an inability or unwillingness of some companies affected by the recession to employ, and fully pay, new apprentices.

Working with colleagues in Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science, the business fora, provider network and other identified key stakeholders, consideration will be given as to how we can support certain geographical areas, sectors and regional partnerships to offer a limited number of Shared Apprenticeship models where we feel there is a need.

Financial Implications – It is anticipated that some actions as outlined above will be cost-neutral; however, it is acknowledged that there may be additional costs associated with this activity. We have agreed an additional £20m for apprenticeships for financial year 2013-14 via the budget agreement, so the overall apprenticeship programme budget will meet associated additional costs.