



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT

BY

THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE Task and Finish Group on local collaborative provision at Key Stage 4 submit report to the Welsh Government

DATE 8 October 2013

BY Huw Lewis AM, Minister for Education and Skills

At the start of this year my predecessor established an external Task and Finish Group to consider local collaborative provision at Key Stage 4 (KS4), following the recommendation of the National Assembly for Wales' Children and Young People Committee; which undertook an inquiry into the implementation of the local curriculum as set out in the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 (May, 2012). The Task and Finish Group has now concluded its deliberations and submitted its findings. I am today publishing the Group's report in full and this Government's response to their recommendations. The report is published on the Welsh Government website and can be accessed via the following link:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/reports/review-local-collaborative-provision-key-stage-4/?lang=en>

I welcome the findings of the Task and Finish Group and would like to extend my thanks to the Chair and Group members for all their hard work and dedication in pulling together a coherent and robust set of recommendations. I would also like to thank all those who submitted evidence to the Group to inform this process. The Group has not only sought to raise the bar in terms of the quality of provision being made available to learners at Key Stage 4, but also inform changes that reflect the considerable evolution of the educational landscape in Wales under this Government.

With the support of teachers, and other professionals, young people in Wales have had the chance to study a range of subjects on top of vital areas like Mathematics, English and the Sciences. We have also made available a range of vocational courses, that may have included work experience and learning outside of the school environment. While at school, college or in training, young people have benefitted from a mix of activities and courses to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of the world. This Government remains committed to ensuring all our young people have the best possible preparation for the world of work and their future learning.

The Group's report has highlighted the positive impact on learners that a more flexible approach to KS4 provision has brought about. But it also emphasises the importance of ensuring that the course offer is a quality one; both in terms of the content of courses and the relevance of provision to the learner and local needs. The Group also highlights that the current legal minimum of 30 course choices (of which 5 must be vocational) may be putting pressure on some schools (particularly smaller / rural schools) in terms of the number of choices being offered, which deflects consideration around the quality of that offer.

We want all our schools to focus on the quality of local provision at KS4 and an appropriate range of courses geared to learner and employer needs. That is why I am minded to accept the Groups' recommendation to reduce the minimum size of the offer from 30 courses to 25 (of which only 3 must be vocational), and to move swiftly to consultation on legislative changes to give effect to that. Subject to that consultation I anticipate the changes will be in place so for pupils starting a course of study in the local curriculum from September 2014. As is currently the case, I expect most schools will continue to offer their learners more choice than the minimum legal requirement. But we should trust in our educational professionals and provide them with the flexibility they need to focus more on the quality of provision and meeting the needs of their learners. I expect the consultation period to open in early November.