# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Welsh Government response to the consultation on the restructuring of community based adult learning in Wales** |
| **DATE**  | **12 July 2019** |
| **BY** | **Kirsty Williams AM, Minister for Education** |

In December 2018, we published the summary of responses to the consultation setting out our proposals for the restructuring of the delivery and funding of community based adult learning in Wales. We had a good response to the consultation, and it was clear that adult learning is incredibly important to a number of people. It was also clear how complex and diverse the sector is.

I have taken the time over the last few months to consider all of the responses to the consultation, and think about how it fits with my broader ambitions for education in Wales. This statement sets out the Welsh Government’s formal response to the consultation and our next steps.

Linked to this activity, and as stated in the Progressive Agreement between myself and the First Minister in December, we have committed to exploring how we could deliver a new Welsh right to lifelong learning. I want everyone in Wales to have access and opportunity to learn throughout their lives. Community based adult learning is a part of this ambition.

The community based sector already does so much to be proud of. You only need to look at the Inspire Awards to see the impact of the work this sector does. It delivers across a wide range of subject and levels. Learners can take courses in schools, in community centres, in FE Colleges, at Universities or at home. It is a sector that responds to the needs of learners and delivers provision in venues where learners, many of whom are the most vulnerable adults in our society, can feel safe and secure.

But the provision is not consistent, and it is not equitable across Wales. The reality is that our adult learners currently face a postcode lottery whereby the provision they have available to them depends a great deal on where they live.

This is not acceptable. In order to aid the development of a right to lifelong learning, I must first ensure that those systems that are already in place enable learners, wherever they are, to have equal access to our community based adult learning provision.

After considering all of the options available to me, I have decided that the most effective way of achieving equity is through a central, national body which has a strategic overview of community based adult learning across Wales, and can ensure a consistent and equitable offer for all. But this is not something that can be done overnight. Therefore I am asking my officials to take community based adult learning forward in two important stages.

Stage one will focus on the planning and funding of existent community based adult learning provision across Wales. We will:

* Introduce a revised funding model that ensures an equitable distribution of funds across Wales – taking into account population density, and economic and educational disadvantage.
* Improve the planning of provision to bring it into line with wider FE planning, with a focus on the adult learning priorities of essential skills provision.
* Restructure existing community based adult learning partnerships, to align them with the Regional Skills Partnerships. This will provide a more robust focus on the economic and social demands of the country, feeding into the work of other providers in Further and Higher Education.

These actions will help us to address the immediate problems of equity of funding and provision, and also provide a stronger foundation on which to develop a national strategic body.

Stage two will focus on developing a National Strategic body for community based adult learning in Wales. We will:

* Learn from current national organisations, including the National Centre for Learning Welsh and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, in order to consider how the National body will work.
* Undertake a feasibility study to determine whether an existing provider would be suitable for taking on this future role.
* Work with the sector to develop the remit for the National body ensuring it supports existing provision, builds on good practice and develops a strategic overview that encourages and strengthen the opportunities available for adult learners across Wales.

In time, the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER) will take responsibility for adult learning. Once a National Body for adult learning is established, it will be funded, monitored, and quality assured by the CTER in accordance with the proposals for all other FEIs.

I know that this will begin a period of upheaval, but I am confident that the changes I am introducing will ensure that we have a community based adult learning sector that is ready and willing to face the 21st Century head on and provide our people with the right to lifelong learning they deserve.