



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT

Title: Work-Based Learning Tender 2011/2014

Date: 14 March 2011

By: Leighton Andrews, Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning

Last summer, the Welsh Assembly Government issued an Invitation to Tender to deliver its Work-Based Learning Programmes between August 2011 and July 2014. My officials have been evaluating the tenders and are now at the point of notifying tenderers of the outcome of the process.

Work-Based Learning covers both our Apprenticeships programme, as well as the successor programmes to our current Skillbuild programme – Traineeships, for non-employed young people, and Steps to Employment, for non-employed adults not otherwise eligible for training through JobCentre Plus.

We have sought, through the tender, to build on a strong foundation of high-quality delivery within the Work-Based Learning network in Wales. The new network will support key Welsh Assembly Government policies, such as the 14-19 agenda and our all-age Transformation policy. We have secured the highest quality learning through a fair, open and competitive tender.

The outcome of the tender means that, in the coming months, the network which is delivering Work-Based Learning in Wales will change, with some providers' contracts coming to an end, some new entrants to the network, and some current providers coming together to deliver as consortia.

At the same time as the outcome of the tender process is being announced, I am also announcing my allocations to the Apprenticeships, Traineeships, and Steps to Employment programmes.

I have chosen to focus support on the Traineeships programme in particular in line with the high priority given by the Welsh Assembly Government to supporting young people into employment. I am, therefore, increasing the proportion of the Work-Based Learning funds allocated to Traineeships above the historic level of the allocation to the Skillbuild Youth programme.

Within the Apprenticeships programme I am also focussing the support available on young people as well as on those sectors identified as priorities within the Economic Renewal Programme, and in line with the priorities agreed between myself and the Deputy Minister for Science, Innovation and Skills in our Annual Operating Agreement. I have also set aside £2 million within the Work-Based Learning allocation to support learning in Anchor Companies.

Within both the Traineeships and Steps to Employment programmes, we have sought, through our allocations, to better align our support to the specific need in different parts of Wales, as indicated, for example, by unemployment rates in each local authority area. I am pleased that we have been able to focus our support on our priorities and on the needs of different communities across Wales.

I am conscious that the changes to the network due to the tender outcome have the potential to create disruption for some learners currently in learning. Any current providers who have not tendered or who have not secured future work through the tender have contractual obligations in respect of transition. They are required to support the transition of their in-learning learners to receiving providers.

Any successful tenderers who are receiving providers for learners displaced as a result of the tender have the primary obligation to manage the transition for these learners.

The Welsh Assembly Government has a limited role in the transition but will seek to help ensure that learners who are displaced can complete their learning, working with outgoing and receiving providers. We have established a helpline for any learners affected by the changes, as well as their employers. Learners can contact the helpline either through a freephone number – 0800 496 0591 – or by emailing WBLHelpline@wales.gsi.gov.uk .