

ACH Meeting Notes and Actions

Date: Fri 7 Mar 2025

Time: 10.00am – 12.00pm

Location: Online

Attendees:

- Secretariat:
 - ColegauCymru – Jeff Protheroe (JP)
 - NTfW - Lisa Mytton (LM) - Chair
- Medr:
 - Geoff Hicks (GH) - Director of Development, Investment & Performance
 - Heather Davidson (HD) – Head of Apprenticeships
 - Carly Davies (CD) - Head of Tertiary Performance and Coordination
 - Catherine Jenkins (CJ) - Senior Regional Performance & Coordination Manager
 - Nikoleta Stastna (NS) - Senior Regional Performance & Coordination Manager
 - Amanada Bennett (AB) - Senior Planning and Coordination Manager
 - Catherine Winter (CT) - Part Time & PLA Manager
 - Emma Evans (EE) – Administrator
- Providers:
 - ACT - Richard Spear (RS) and Zoe Goodall (ZG)
 - B-WBL - Berni Tyler (BT)
 - Cambrian Training Company - Faith O'Brien (FO'B)
 - Cardiff and Vale College - Alan Mackey (AM)
 - Edu8 Group – Grant Santos (GS)
 - Gower College Swansea – Paul Kift (PK) and Stuart Woodward (SW)
 - Grŵp Llandrillo Menai - Sophie Martin (SM)
 - Grŵp NPTC Group - Nicola Thornton-Scott (NT-S)
 - Itec Training Solutions – Gareth Matthews (GM)
- Apologies:
 - Coleg Cambria - Vicky Barwis (VB)
 - Medr - Rhian Edwards

1. Welcome and Introductions

- LM welcomed everyone to the meeting, and the apologies were given and accepted.

2. Notes and Actions

- **Action** – 'Carry-over Learners' – Lisa/Jeff to request data needed from Geoff on the percentages of carry over learners and impact on starts by 1st February. **Not Completed**
- **Action** – Deployment of the 'additional £2.0m' – Geoff to see if it can be used to support starts by next meeting. **To be covered in this meeting**
- **Action** – Provider Profile information – Geoff to send out profile information by end of January. **Completed**
- **Action** – Insurance Frameworks – Sarah to inform Heather of issues. **Completed**
- **Action** – Other Framework issues - Rachel to Inform Heather of issues with Frameworks. **Completed**
- **Action** – Framework Information spreadsheet(s) – Heather to send out before the end of January. **Completed**
- **Action** – Framework Steering Groups – Heather to send out before the next meeting. **Carried forward**
- **Action** – Apprenticeships Week '25 – all providers to share information on planned activity with Heather. **Completed**

3. 2025/26 Budget Discussion, Geoff Hicks, Director of Development, Investment & Performance, Medr

Geoff Hicks (GH) outlined that the final budget has now been agreed by the Welsh Government. Medr are expecting their Funding Letter from the Welsh Government on 21 Mar 25. Medr will then be in a position to confirm contract allocations to providers by end of March beginning of April. Overall value expected to be £134.5m (£147.5m delivered in 2024/25). There is an expected impact on the number of starts. Looking at a three-year contract (up to Jul '26). Some providers are 'under-performance' based on the current tolerances.

4. Proposed Change to Contract Performance Management, Catherine Jenkins, Senior Regional Performance and Coordination Manager, Medr

Catherine Jenkins (CJ) led the group through the presentation slides (attached). Key points raised/discussed were:

- Medr will likely keep the 'one-month data lag' principle
- Proposal is to introduce a fixed value threshold with option to reclaim any under-performance against that value.
- The approach to performance management will be based on:
 - Close contract management
 - Monitoring and frank discussions
 - Informal discussion initially, then formal if needed
 - Approach from Medr will be one based on discussion
- Next steps
 - Profiling templates out next week – with discussion around these at next week's contract management meetings
 - Introduce end of March

The following points were raised in discussion:

- Faith – we do not have a three-year contract; we have three yearly contracts. The cumulative nature of this causes issues
- Geoff – the basis of the performance management is the providers own profiles. We cannot run the risk of any underspend going back to the Welsh Government where there is valid over delivery or potential of redistribution. The aim is to re-allocate any underspend in a strategic and timely manner
- Nicola – agree that contract management is needed. However, Medr need to understand the challenges of providers being able to realistically manage sub-contractors and avoid adverse impacts on the wider sector and programme. Providers are having to manage a significant reduction in budget from 2023/24 to 2025/26.
- Geoff – The issue for Medr, is the under-delivery against the providers own profiles. To assist this, Medr needs to know, in detail, what providers plans are to pull back any under-delivery. Recognise that Medr need to understand what providers doing/planning are more closely.
- Richard Spear – support the principle of re-allocating the contract value around. Percentages are better than financial tolerances. If there are issues, reduce the percentages. We need complete transparency across the Network.
- Faith – Echo what Richard said. The Network now works far more collaboratively, and would not wish to see that be risked, if the Network becomes far more competitive.
- Grant – What is wrong with the current system? Is it that it is not applied correctly?
- Alan Mackey – Agree with others. Would prefer a percentage tolerance as opposed to a financial figure. Maybe we don't need a new approach, we may need to look at the percentage tolerances and apply.

- Geoff – Thanks for all the constructive feedback. Hear that there is a need for a re-distribution exercise. Currently looking at a £3.5m underspend (although some are over-delivering) – net £1.3m underspend. Contract Managers will ask all providers if they are happy to share (regularly) at future meetings. Will look at percentages again and agree that whatever is agreed is applied. The question is, how do we re-distribute (based on priorities). The risk of over-delivery is held by the providers. Will come back with a final proposal at next meeting.

5. **Medr Apprenticeships Policy, Heather Davidson, Head of Apprenticeships, Medr**

Heather Davidson (HD) led the group through the presentation slides (attached). Key points raised/discussed were:

- Apprenticeship Frameworks – New Framework Library launched. ACW will continue to issue the certificates. Current Framework reviews:
 - Creative
 - Construction
 - Ongoing discussion and development work going on behind the scenes. Dean (QW) meeting with all providers. Action – If he hasn't been in touch, let Heather know. Should have a plan of action by end of March.
 - Early Years
 - Social Care (L5)
 - Building Services
 - Engineering
- Medr's Strategic and Operational Plans – Medr's Strategic Plan will be published on Wed 12 Mar 25. A one-year Operational Plan will follow. Four individuals now recruited into the Medr team.
- The Future Apprenticeship Model - Extensive engagement through 2025.
- Essential Skills with Apprenticeship Frameworks - England – new legislation in place by September.
- Employer Incentive Scheme - £400k available this year to spend – Is it working? A review to be undertaken by Gary Jones.
- Shared and Supported Apprenticeships – more funding to be allocated into the budget to support these – again, Gary leading

Action – Essential Skills with Apprenticeship Frameworks - a workshop to discuss/agree an approach to be convened ASAP

6. **AOB**

- Learner Outcome Reports publication – LORs are to be published in March.
- Additional Learning Needs (ALN) funding – Siân Dorrington currently looking at with provider representatives.

7. **Actions and Next Steps**

- **(Carried Forward) Action** – Framework Steering Groups – Heather to send out before the next meeting. **Carried forward**
- **Action** – Action – Essential Skills with Apprenticeship Frameworks - a workshop to discuss/agree an approach to be convened ASAP

8. **DONM**

- Fri 9 May 25 (10.00am – 12.00pm) – Hybrid (TBC)