

CCH Meeting Minutes

Date: Fri 8 Nov 24

Time: 10.00am – 12.30pm

Location: Online

Attendees:

- Secretariat:
 - ColegauCymru – Jeff Protheroe (JP)
 - NTfW - Lisa Mytton (LM) - Chair
- Medr:
 - Heather Davidson (HD)
 - Geoff Hicks (GH)
 - Catherine Jenkins (CJ)
 - Nikoleta Stastna (NS)
- Providers:
 - ACT - Richard Spear (RS)
 - B-WBL - Berni Tyler (BT)
 - Cambrian Training Company - Faith O'Brien (FO'B)
 - Cardiff and Vale College - Alan Mackey (AM)
 - Coleg Cambria - Vicky Barwis (VB)
 - Edu8 Group - Jude Holloway (JH)
 - Gower College Swansea - Rachel Jones (RJ)
 - Grŵp Llandrillo Menai - Sophie Martin (SM)
 - Grŵp NPTC Group - Nicola Thornton-Scott (NT-S)
 - Itec Training Solutions – Ceri Murphy (CM) and Gareth Matthews (GM)
- Apologies:
 - ACT - Zoe Goodall
 - Medr - Rhian Edwards

1. Welcome and Introductions

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

2. Notes and Actions

- Providers to inform LM and JP of key issues for apprenticeships - **Completed**
- A revised Terms of Reference to be reviewed by all ahead of the next meeting – Discussed and shared during the meeting

Action – Revised Terms of Reference – Group members to feedback any comments to LM by Wed 13 Nov 24

3. Medr areas of responsibilities, Heather Davidson, Head of Apprenticeships, Medr

- Heather Davidson (HD) spoke through the slides attached. Key points:
- Welsh Government are maintaining responsibility for the marketing and promotion of apprenticeships “for now”. An apprenticeships campaign is planned for the New Year
- Medr Apprenticeships Team:
 - Framework developments
 - Framework funding reviews
 - Delivering on the Policy Statement: Apprenticeships
 - Degree and Shared Apprenticeships now sit with Heather’s team
- Recruiting for a number of new posts in the next few weeks
- Medr Investment and Monitoring Team:
 - Budget management – interaction between Medr and WG
 - Contract management – but with a Tertiary view

- Head of Performance Coordination appointed
- Welsh Government responsibilities:
 - Delivery against Programme for Government commitments
 - Managing Ministerial communications
- The following points were raised in discussion:
 - Timeline for indication of budget allocation for 2025/26 – Geoff Hicks (GH) outlined that Medr is planning on a ‘cash flat’ budget i.e. maintenance of the budget. GH is raising the issue around ‘cost-of-living’ increases to frameworks impacting on the number of apprenticeships starts (i.e. if the overall budget does not change). GH went on to raise the possible impacts of the UK financial settlement – Medr would like to be in a position to make a case when additional funds are (likely) to be made available e.g. addressing digital exclusion. Medr is likely to come out to the Network in due course, to assist in the writing of a business case. A plea was made to ensure that any funding to support learner digital exclusion is mindful of how funding can be vied out to independent training providers.
 - Ensuring Pay Parity – it is recognised that Medr has distributed funding to assist FE and Sixth Forms with pay parity, but this would also be appreciated for all apprenticeship providers too.
 - Conditions attached to the Welsh Government apprenticeships budget – Medr is fully expecting that the Cabinet Secretary for the Economy will be ensuring apprenticeships funding allocated to Medr will be ring-fenced – with any underspend going back to the Welsh Government. Medr is awaiting their funding letter to confirm this for 2025/26. In addition, the opportunity exists for Medr to increase apprenticeship funding but would not be able to reduce.
 - Training Allowance for apprentices who have been made redundant – can the rate be increased?
 - Pressure Point Applications (for the Supported Shared Apprenticeships Scheme) – When would Medr like to receive this information. GH – would need to consider this and come back to the Network.

Action – Ensuring Pay Parity – NTfW to raise the issue directly with Medr

Action – Training Allowance for apprentices who have been made redundant – Medr will look to address this and update the Network

Action – Pressure Point Applications (for the Supported Shared Apprenticeships Scheme) – Medr will look to address this and update the Network

Request – any emails into Medr – can providers copy in both Heather (Policy) and Geoff (Funding)

- Timeline of notification (of funding) – Medr is under an obligation to inform Local Authorities by Jan. 10 Dec 24 – The Welsh Government sets its draft budget, Medr is expected to receive its Funding Letter in January, the third week of January GH will take top-level lines for all elements of the tertiary sector to the Medr Board for approval. Intention is to breakdown by provider level at this stage. End of January – all providers will receive an indication of their 2025/26 budget allocation. Once Final (WG) budget is confirmed, Medr Board will have security to confirm. GH – providers should have a strong indication of budget by the end of January

4. Priorities Discussion

- Lisa talked through the points raised (see attached) Heather responded with:
 - Attainment Rate Target – HD it would be good to understand what the issues are here. Providers responded by outlining that the issue is not specific to H&SC. Particular issue with apprentices facing redundancy, and who leave the employer before being made redundant. An additional issue being faced by individuals who are ESOL, in completing

the non-vocational elements of their framework, and not being able to access 'additional learning needs' support to fully complete their apprenticeship before securing full-time employment and/or leaving to secure employment outside of their chosen sector. There have also been issues associated with the requirement of lead providers to 'take on' displaced apprentices from sub-contractors who have lost funding through the most recent procurement exercise. The employment landscape has changes, which has seen individuals become far more transient between sectors. There is a requirement to re-visit how we measure success i.e. less focus on (arbitrary) framework attainment rates and more focus on impact, such as on moving individuals from lower levels of socio-economic groups forwards. Lower levels of overall funding is seeing existing sub-contractors giving up contracts, which then sees these apprentices being displaced internally between the sub-contractors and lead contractor

- Suggestion that any 'displaced learners' are ring-fenced in the data

Action – Attainment Rate Target - a sub-group to be established to look at this issue in more detail and come up with solutions for Medr to consider

- Welsh Targets – HD – This appears to be more of an 'ambition' rather than 'target' – Is this a case of re-drafting requirements. This is being looked at within Medr currently. It would be useful to look at the administration required to support the achievement of this ambition too. This could be linked to the work that Medr data team is undertaking to rationalise the LLWR fields.
- ESQs – This is being looked at currently. The CITB Pilot is going ahead, and Social Care Wales are showing some interest in following this process too. This could be a quick win for Medr. Nikoleta Stastna (NS) raised the point that with removal of WEST as a mandatory requirement this may reduce the burden on individuals. Welsh Government are looking at the way forwards for WEST currently, and a further meeting is planned in November.
- Business Wales – Simon Phelps is leading on a piece of work to look at this, to establish what it is that employers need. Discussions are ongoing with Business Wales to establish what their position is too
- L2 Construction Apprenticeships – It is recognised that this is a key issue to be addressed. It is on an agenda for a forthcoming meeting with Qualifications Wales. There are impacts on the overall apprenticeship budgets with learners going directly onto L3.

Action – L2 Construction Apprenticeships - the impact of the changes to construction apprenticeships to be re-visited again. A coordinated response would be appreciated. A workshop approach proposed.

- Degree Apprenticeships – Now sits with Heather's. Degree Apprenticeships funding will still be part-funded between the 'mainstream' apprenticeship budget and HEFCW
- Welsh Government Target – 100k this Senedd term

5. ACP Programme Specification

- Work is ongoing to review and update. Will be published once completed. The issue around '61 day reviews' forms part of this work.

6. AOB

- Framework Funding Reviews for H&SC and Childcare – likely that the rate will increase, which will create additional pressure on the overall apprenticeships budget.
- Approach as a result of no PAGS audits taking place. Medr flagging as a considerable amount of public funding, so there may well be a requirement of providers to conduct internal audits and provide evidence to Medr. Further work will be needed – ask the Data and Compliance Group to look at what is currently being undertaken.

7. Actions and Next Steps

- **Action** – Revised Terms of Reference – Group members to feedback any comments to LM by Wed 13 Nov 24
- **Action** – Ensuring Pay Parity – NTfW to raise the issue directly with Medr
- **Action** – Training Allowance for apprentices who have been made redundant – Medr will look to address this and update the Network
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- **Action** – Attainment Rate Target - a sub-group to be established to look at this issue in more detail and come up with solutions for Medr to consider
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8. DONM

- 10 Jan 25 (AM) – Online