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| **Date:** | 15th July 2025 |
| **Time:** | 10:00am – 12:00noon |
| **Venue:** | MS Teams |
| **Priority Cluster:** | HFE - Education, Health, Social Care, Childcare and Emergency Services |

**Minutes**

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| **Attendees** |  | **Apologies** |  |
| Bethan Stacey (Education Workforce Council) | BS | Casey French (Care Forum Wales ) | CF |
| Caryn Grimes (CCRSP) | CG | Helen Scarrett (South Wales Police) | HS |
| Dawn Bunn (Clybiau Plant Cymru) | DB | Jon Day (Social Care Wales ) | JD |
| Elaine Carlile \* Guest Speaker (Qualifications Wales) | EC | Matt Brown (WCVA ) | MB |
| Frances Lee \*Guest Speaker (Agored Cymru) | FL | Nick Ounsworth (South Wales Fire ) | NO |
| Jo Moriarty \*Guest Speaker (Qualifications Wales) | JM | Scott McKenzie (Open University) | SM |
| Kathryn Wing (Educ8 Training) | KW |  |  |
| Leanne Jones (Merthyr College) | LJ |  |  |
| Rachel Mooney (HEIW) | RM |  |  |
| Sarah Allbeson (Open University) | SA |  |  |
| Vikki Stroud (CCRSP) | VS |  |  |

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| **Welcome, introductions and apologies** (Kathryn Wing, Educ8) |
| * KW welcomed members, guest speakers and reported the apologies listed above |
| **Actions from the last meeting** (Caryn Grimes, CCRSP) |
| **Actions rolled over from two meetings ago (21st Jan)**  **ACTION: LJ, JD & PML get together to discuss mapping their work & resources to work, across Health, Social Care and Early Years and Childcare.**  **ROLLED OVER - CG to take this action forward and report in next meeting.**  Ongoing. CG to provide VS an update.  **ACTION: LJ to share details on Welsh Government barriers for learners with RC.**  Complete. It was confirmed that the information had been sent by Rebecca, LJ’s colleague.  **ACTION: RC and DB to exchange details about further collaboration**  **CCRSP checking that RC are in touch @ 21/02**  Complete. RC Confirmed on 19th June.  **Actions from last meeting (8th Apr)**  **ACTION: DE to review whether Serco reports show if a participant has previously been in training or education. KW queried that this could be skewing the system.**  Ongoing. VS chasing DE for update.  **ACTION: LiJ to present on Connect 2 Work in ESB update 17th July**  Complete, LiJ booked into ESB Agenda 17th July.  **ACTION: LiJ to share with this cluster group some further information about Connect2Work.**  Linked to the below-see notes.  **ACTION: CCRSP to share the update that LiJ provides to the ESB in July 2025 with this cluster group.**  Ongoing. At present there is limited information that we’re able to share. Whilst we anticipate that Cardiff will take on the accountable body role, this has not yet been confirmed.  We should be in a position to provide more detail at the end of September.  **ACTION: LiJ to share a breakdown of the planned changes, with CCRSP to distribute this information to the cluster group as and when it becomes available.**  Complete. Despite significant cuts to SPF transitional year funding and the removal of Multiply as a priority investment theme by UKG, some local authorities have continued limited Multiply-type activities within their SPF employment and skills programmes. These are now being delivered alongside in-house programmes.  **ACTION: LiJ and CG to facilitate a workshop between local authorities (LAs) and the HFE Cluster Group to discuss Employability Pathways.**  Ongoing. LiJ has not yet been able to connect with Caryn to progress this item. Request to roll the action forward. Caryn to arrange a time to discuss.  **ACTION: SA continue liaison with Francis Cowe with regards to contact development.**  Ongoing. Initial outreach has been made by SA to key contacts at USW and Cardiff University, as suggested by Francis Cowe, to explore potential links with the cluster group. Awaiting responses. Cardiff Met has already engaged, and a contact person is in place. Progress ongoing.  **ACTION: BS bring an update on annual workforce report to next meeting**  NFA. No data available to share at this stage, but the intended publication date will be confirmed at the meeting.  **ACTION: EWC colleague to come to the October meeting to present the Annual Workforce report data. VS to obtain the contact names for Outlook invitations to be issued.**  Complete. Nia Griffiths co EWC is presenting at the October meeting.  **ACTION: VS share with DE the booking link to the stakeholder event.**  Complete. Action completed sent to DE 08/04/2025  **ACTION:  Workshop at the next cluster group to go through a refresh of the plan for this cluster.**  Complete. CG on agenda for today’s meeting “Refreshing the Plan: Cluster Group Input on Opportunities & Challenges”  **ACTION: CG to feed back to Cluster Group post meeting with Phil Blaker.**  Complete. A meeting was held with Phil Blaker to discuss questions related to the qualifications review. Once the review is complete, he has expressed willingness to attend a future cluster meeting to provide an update.  **Minutes were signed off as accurate and complete. The previous meeting minutes are enclosed below as several new members to the group.**  KW praised CG and VS for organising a successful stakeholder event, highlighting the effort involved and the positive experience of the day. CG thanked KW for the positive feedback and informed members that feedback received from the survey and comments during other meetings have been encouraging and positive. |
| **Agored Cymru Update** (Frances Lee, Agored Cymru) |
| * **Frances Lee, Head of Business Development at Agored Cymru** introduced a presentation focused on addressing skills gaps and economic demands in Wales, aligning with the mission of Cardiff Regional Partnerships. The presentation highlighted how Agored Cymru, as an awarding body, embeds these priorities into its core values and operations. Emphasising a learner-centred, inclusive approach.   **Flexible Vocational Qualifications**   * FL explained that Agored Cymru offers flexible, credit-based vocational qualifications. These are tailored to learners’ needs and assessed through practical evidence rather than exams, supporting personalised learning pathways.   **Expanding Network and Qualification Offer**   * Agored Cymru now works with 350–400 approved centres, including 188 schools. Demand is growing, especially for the Learning Core offer, which includes Explorer and Outdoor Learning. The organisation is also approved to deliver three vocational qualifications under Welsh education reforms, including 15 VCSEs, the Skills Project, and Foundation-level qualifications.   **Partnership with NHS Wales**   * Since 2017, Agored Cymru has been the sole provider of assessment and qualification development services for NHS Wales. They collaborate across all healthcare branches and support access to higher education for learners without traditional qualifications, particularly in fields like nursing and policing.   **Apprenticeships and Strategic Development**   * FL highlighted ongoing collaboration with NHS Wales and a strong focus on apprenticeships. Agored Cymru is a headline sponsor for the NTFW event and is working to expand progression pathways and flexible qualification sizes, especially in areas like energy management.   **Digital Skills and Platform Modernisation**   * Digital skills are a key focus. Agored Cymru is investing in new platforms to modernise its digital presence, with updates launching in September. They are also developing digital qualifications in areas like data analytics and user-centred design, including a pilot apprenticeship with Gower College Swansea.   **eSports Qualification Development**   * Agored Cymru is pioneering qualifications in eSports, targeting lower levels and various age groups. KW noted the global growth of eSports, including a recent championship with a £50 million prize pot, and highlighted its appeal to younger learners.   **Foundational Skills for Learner Success**   * FL stressed the importance of foundational skills—English, maths, and digital literacy—for post-16 learners. The Skills for Employment qualifications are designed to run alongside college programmes. A case study from NPTC Group showed a 77% completion rate after implementation.   **Banking and Finance Qualifications**   * Agored Cymru has acquired the full suite of banking and finance qualifications from the former London Institute of Banking and Finance (now Walbrook Institute). These will be available by September, with online assessments and updated content. While aimed at pre-16 learners, there is also a Level 3 qualification attracting interest from schools and training providers. * KW praised Agored Cymru’s responsiveness to sector needs and raised a concern about delivering highly specialised qualifications, such as *Supporting Survivors of Violence Against Women*. She noted that limited demand and high assessor competency requirements make delivery challenging for some providers. * To address this, KW proposed a cross-network collaboration model, allowing institutions to share delivery responsibilities. FL welcomed the idea and suggested involving the product development team to explore solutions for meeting competency standards and enabling collaborative delivery of niche but essential qualifications.   **FLs presentation is available below, FL kindly asks that this material be shared only with group members and kept within their respective organisations** |
| **Update on the VCSE model** (Jo Moriarty, Elaine Carlile from Qualifications Wales) |
| * **Jo Moriarty, Qualifications Manager** & **Elaine Carlile, Engagement Manager** from Qualifications Wales provided an in-depth overview of the development and implementation of national qualifications in Wales, with a focus on Wave 3 qualifications aligned to the Curriculum for Wales. The presentation highlighted collaborative efforts across government, regulators, and awarding bodies to ensure a flexible, inclusive, and learner-centred qualification landscape.   **National Qualification Development in Wales**   * JM presented on the development of Wave 3 qualifications aligned with the Curriculum for Wales. She outlined the collaborative framework involving Welsh Government, Qualifications Wales, awarding bodies like Agored Cymru, and support organisations such as Adnodd. The aim is to create flexible, learner-centred qualifications that support progression and reflect local needs.   + - * **Embedding Curriculum Principles**       * Jo emphasised that coherence, inclusivity, and accessibility—core principles of the Curriculum for Wales—are central to qualification design. The goal is to ensure qualifications are meaningful and accessible to all learners.       * **Overview of Wave 3 Qualifications**   **EC detailed the Wave 3 qualifications:**   * + - * VCSEs: Practical, vocational qualifications for 14–16-year-olds, replacing current Level 1–2 vocational options.       * Foundation Qualifications: For learners not yet ready for GCSE or VCSEs, covering general and work-related subjects.       * Personal Project: Replaces the Skills Challenge Certificate, focusing on personal interests and skill development.       * Skills Suite: Includes Skills for Life and Skills for Work, offering flexible, unit-based qualifications from Entry Level to Level 2.       * Specifications will be available in September 2026, with first teaching in 2027.       * **Learner Entitlement and Digital Assessment**       * EC reinforced the Welsh Government’s learner entitlement, ensuring access to literacy, numeracy, and vocational qualifications. She highlighted the importance of reflective progression planning and the growing role of digital assessment, calling for collaborative solutions to implementation challenges.       * **Clarification on Grading Structure**       * RM raised a concern about grading inconsistencies in the presentation. JM confirmed it was a slide error—both Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications will offer Pass, Merit, and Distinction grades.       * **Curriculum Breadth and Progression**       * JM and KW discussed the importance of a balanced curriculum that includes vocational routes. JM acknowledged the complexity of the current 14–16 landscape and emphasised the need for partnerships to support learner progression. Schools will have flexibility in how they meet curriculum breadth requirements.   **Sector Reviews and Future Planning**   * JM shared that sector-by-sector reviews of qualifications are complete, with future thematic reviews planned. CG suggested a future update on post-16 qualifications. JM agreed to a follow-up meeting in early 2026.   + - * **ACTION: CG to follow up with EC regarding Phil Blakler and/or Jo Richards attending the HFE meeting in spring 2026.**       * **Supporting Schools and Vocational Pathways**       * FL echoed the need for a broad curriculum and acknowledged challenges schools face due to staffing and resources. She noted Estyn’s critiques of limited qualification variety and emphasised Agored Cymru’s role in supporting schools, colleges, and training providers to strengthen vocational offerings.       * FL reinforced the importance of offering a broad and varied curriculum in schools, acknowledging the challenges posed by staffing and resource constraints. She highlighted Agored Cymru’s role in supporting schools, colleges, and training providers to expand vocational offerings through collaboration and targeted assistance.   **EC & JMs presentation is available below.**  [QW NQ CCRSP 1.pptx](https://qualificationswales-my.sharepoint.com/:p:/g/personal/jo_moriarty_qualificationswales_org/EdqcyU827N1FjGvDaPMYT18BjQ6VHt9tkFIWKjYDYBjjaw?xsdata=MDV8MDJ8Vmlra2kuU3Ryb3VkQG5ld3BvcnQuZ292LnVrfGI4NDlkYzJjYTc2NTRmZDU1OGM4MDhkZGMyZTMxM2ZlfDJjNGQwMDc5YzUyYzRiYjNiM2NhZDhlYWYxYjZiN2Q1fDB8MHw2Mzg4ODEwMDI3NjMzMTY3NjZ8VW5rbm93bnxUV0ZwYkdac2IzZDhleUpGYlhCMGVVMWhjR2tpT25SeWRXVXNJbFlpT2lJd0xqQXVNREF3TUNJc0lsQWlPaUpYYVc0ek1pSXNJa0ZPSWpvaVRXRnBiQ0lzSWxkVUlqb3lmUT09fDB8fHw%3d&sdata=YmwrdmpYcGtUaDFBV21OWHpuNU45TkhEeGRkQnZrditCM2grZDZQdC9JST0%3d) |
| **Refreshing the Plan: Cluster Group Input on Opportunities & Challenges** (Caryn Grimes, CCRSP) |
| * **Caryn Grimes, RSP Manager from CCRSP discussed Green Skills Focus and Sector Planning** * CG explained as part of CCRSPs evolving contract with the Welsh Government—which now places a 50% emphasis on the green agenda, particularly green skills—the CCRSP are undertaking a focused review of the current Employment & Skills Plan (sector opportunities and challenges sections only) * CG explained the aim is to ensure the existing list of opportunities and challenges reflects this new priority. This may involve:   + Reviewing the current opportunities and challenges to ensure they remain relevant.   + Suggesting edits to improve clarity and conciseness.   + Identifying additional opportunities and challenges specifically related to green skills across all creative sectors. * This exercise is intended to enhance the existing content, either by refining what’s already there or by adding a supplementary annex focused on green skills. The updated content will support our engagement with the Welsh Government moving forward. * CG asked all members to review and feed in their thoughts on opportunities and challenges for the sector by the next meeting. CG offered to share a copy of the Employment & Skills Plan along with a copy of the current opportunities and challenges after the meeting.   **CG will share:**   * A Word document with the opportunities/challenges. * A copy of the Employment and Skills Plan for context. * Members are encouraged to drip-feed feedback to CG and VS ahead of the next meeting. * The next meeting is scheduled for October, where an agenda item will be added to finalise the updates.   **ACTION:** Members to review the current sector opportunities and challenges to ensure they remain relevant and are clearly and concisely presented.  **ACTION:** Members to identify any additional opportunities or challenges linked to the green agenda within the creative industries.  **ACTION:** CG to circulate the Word document shared on screen in the meeting along with a copy of the Employment & Skills Plan to the group. (Completed 15th July 2025)  **ACTION:** Members to submit feedback and suggestions to CG and VS ahead of the next meeting.  **ACTION:** Include review of proposed updates on the agenda for the October meeting, with the aim of finalising content to support engagement with the Welsh Government. |
| **Cluster Group Member Updates** (All members) |
| **Caryn Grimes: CCRPS Staffing Update**  CG announced that Richard Tobutt has moved to a new role at Medr. Kristin Edwards will take over as the additional Regional Skills Partnership Manager in September, with some flexibility in role distribution. CG expressed optimism about the expanded team and its potential for enhanced support.  **Bethan Stacey co Education Workforce Council**  ***EWC Workforce Update***  BS from the Education Workforce Council (EWC) shared that they regulate 13 registrant groups, including school and FE teachers, youth workers, and adult learning practitioners. She highlighted upcoming workforce statistics sessions in October and shared insights from the CYPE Committee inquiry into teacher recruitment and retention—primary recruitment is stable, but secondary, especially Welsh-medium, remains a concern.  ***Code of Conduct and Qualification Standards***  BS announced the revised Code of Conduct will be published in September, with minor updates and a new leadership principle. She also noted the introduction of a minimum Level 5 qualification requirement for FE lecturers, pending legislative resolution, and the upcoming EWC manifesto for the Senedd elections.  ***Post-16 ITE Developments***  BS provided an update on initial teacher education (ITE) for the post-16 sector. While EWC currently accredits school ITE programmes, similar frameworks for FE are in early development, following the 2023 PSET report. An expert advisory group, including work-based learning representatives, has been formed and met twice so far.  ***Strategic Workforce Planning***  Welsh Government is developing a Strategic Education Workforce Plan, initially focused on schools. EWC is advocating for inclusion of the post-16 workforce. A new National Professional Learning Leadership Body will oversee professional learning, with school improvement responsibilities shifting back to local authorities.  ***Training and Development Initiatives***  BS highlighted ongoing training efforts, including Playwork Level 2, Transition to Playwork, and apprenticeships. There’s a push to engage sixth forms and post-16 learners using tools like the Alto app and Level 1 Playwork courses, supporting skills development in line with early years curriculum priorities.  **Sarah Allbeson co Open University**  ***Higher Education Sector Update***  SA shared a reflective update, noting limited input from other universities due to sector-wide changes and role shifts. Despite challenges, universities continue core activities like graduations and prioritising graduate employability. She also highlighted engagement with the Medr Apprenticeship Review and the new industrial strategy, which are prompting institutions to rethink their roles in skills development and innovation. SA expressed hope for broader input at future meetings.  **Kathryn Wing co Educ8**  ***Skills Manifesto and Regulatory Consultation***  KW highlighted the launch of NTFW’s manifesto, *Building a Skilled First Economy for Wales.* The National Training Federation for Wales (NTFW) is calling on all political parties and 2026 Senedd Election candidates to commit to doubling investment in apprenticeships to support 200,000 apprenticeship starts over the next Senedd term. KW also outlined an ongoing consultation on new regulatory requirements for tertiary education, which proposes a more transparent, risk-based oversight model. Discussions are ongoing about the future apprenticeship contracting model.  ***Consultation on Occupational Qualifications***  KW informed the group of a new consultation led by Angela West at Medr, focusing on how well part-time tertiary provision meets employer needs and investment strategies. The consultation is open until 8 August. SA asked if education providers could contribute; CG confirmed all stakeholders are welcome and encouraged broad participation.  **ACTION: VS to include the Medr Part-time Tertiary Skills Provision Survey link within the minutes.** Completed enclosed here >[Survey - Part-time Tertiary Skills Provision](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfCafETGg2aJAIS82GoIJep8cHIqcKNEFPo5KfQYXSDbuPmTA/viewform) |
| **AOB** |
| **Next Meeting and Closing Remarks**  Kathryn Wing confirmed that the next meeting will be held in person on 21st October, with the venue expected to be at Educ8 Towers. Further details regarding the location will be shared in due course. She thanked all attendees for their contributions and wished everyone an enjoyable summer break. The meeting concluded with well wishes and a reminder that the group will reconvene close to the October half-term.  Meeting closed at 11.46 |