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| **Date:** | 8th April 2025 |
| **Time:** | 10:00am – 12:00noon |
| **Venue:** | Educ8 Tredomen Gateway, Tredomen Park, Ystrad Mynach, Hengoed, CF82 7EH |
| **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** | Dawn Bunn (Clybiau Plant Cymru) | **DB** |
| David Elsmere \*Guest Speaker (Serco) | **DE** | Helen Scarrett (South Wales Police) | **HS** |
| Kathryn Wing (Educ8 Training) | **KW** | Jon Day (Social Care Wales) | **JD** |
| Lisa Jones \*Guest Speaker (Bridgend CBC) | **LiJ** | Leanne Jones (Merthyr College) | **LeJ** |
| Nick Ounsworth (South Wales Fire) | **NO** | Matt Brown (WCVA) | **MB** |
| Rebecca Thomas (Merthyr College) | **RT** | 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 and reported the apologies listed above |
| **Actions from the last meeting** (Caryn Grimes, CCRSP) |
| **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.**  ACTION: VS to contact Emily Draper at Educ8 regarding FacetoFace meetings  ROLLED OVER: VS to contact Emily Draper to move meetings F2F from Jan and July to April and October.  Action complete, all booked  ACTION: CCRSP send NO RAG rated report and NOS for this cluster  Action complete, sent to NO on 21/02/2025  ACTION: DB to send CCRSP copy of the presentation slides for distribution in the minutes  Action complete  ACTION: RC to send the list of 40 employers currently engaged in discussions in Wales to CCRSP.  Action complete  ACTION: CG to send RC PLA list as an opportunity for quick-wins.  Action complete  ACTION: RC to share details of any upcoming Wales launch events with CCRSP for potential attendance and/or distribution.  Action complete. sent to cluster group on 21/02/2025  **ACTION: LJ to share details on Welsh Government barriers for learners with RC.**  **VS chased LJ @ 21/02/2025. Action rolled over.**  **ACTION: RC and DB to exchange details about further collaboration**  **CCRSP checking that RC are in touch @ 21/02**  ACTION: RM to send HS the 1:1 contact details for Medr and WG regarding how to progress the forensic apprenticeship.  Action complete, meeting set up  ACTION: RM share any new working groups with KW  Action complete, meeting set up  ACTION: CG to pursue Qualifications Wales to present at a future cluster meeting.  Action complete, DS & colleagues are set to attend 15th July  ACTION: LJ share the contacts relating to frameworks  Action complete, included in meeting chat post meeting, enclosed below.  **Minutes were signed off as accurate and complete. The previous meeting minutes are enclosed below as several new members to the group.** |
| **Restart Scheme Wales** (David Elsmere, Partnership Manager at Serco) |
| **David Elsmere (Partnership Manager) from Serco provided an update on the Restart programme.**  David Elsmere’s presentation is enclosed at the end of this section, with a summary of the key points provided below; it was noted that all data reported is self-declared and covers Pan-Wales.  **Restart Scheme Overview**  • A 12-month mandatory employability programme commissioned by the DWP for Universal Credit claimants unemployed for 6+ months. • Operated by Serco Employability and Skills in Wales (Prime Contractor). • Offers up to 12 months of programme support, plus an additional 6 months of in-work support. • Referral window: July 2021 to July 2026.  **Participant Data (as of April 2025)**  • Active caseload breakdown includes age demographics and qualification levels. • A notable portion of participants have no formal qualifications. • Data is used to benchmark progress against Welsh Government education and employment targets for 2050. • Participants go to Serco because they have the right to work; they are not attending because they are refugees. • 12,900 participants have been supported into employment. • A key barrier is ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages). A number of students coming into Wales are being declined by USW but accepted by UWE, resulting in a loss of participants to England.  **Participant Compliance**  • Serco, via DWP authority, has the right to apply sanctions (such as suspension of Universal Credit payments) if participants fail to maintain contact or engage with the programme.  **Universal Credit Reference**  • A single claimant typically receives approximately £600 per month under Universal Credit.  **Employment Outcomes**  • The majority of Serco programme participants enter lower-level roles, particularly in retail. Very few progress into healthcare-related employment due to barriers such as lack of a driving licence, unsociable hours in social care, and caring responsibilities.  •It was noted that in Wales, Universal Credit can be accessed from age 16, whereas in England it cannot.  **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.**   * LJ reported that they are finding individuals are coming to their organisation, moving into entry-level jobs, but not sustaining employment and subsequently falling back into unemployment.   **Educational Profile of Active Restart Participants (Total: 7,516)**   * A significant portion of participants have low or no formal qualifications:   + **16%** have *no formal qualifications*.   + **17%** have achieved *Level 1*, and **19%** are at *Level 2*. * **13%** have attained *Level 3*, which is broadly equivalent to A-levels. * Only a small percentage have higher-level qualifications:   + *Levels 4 to 8* (foundation degree and above) combined account for **14%**. * **13%** selected "Other" or preferred not to disclose their education level. * This data highlights a concentration of participants at lower qualification levels, indicating a need for targeted skills development and progression pathways.   **Participants Without Formal Qualifications (Total: 1,146)**   * The majority of participants without qualifications fall within the **25–44 age range**, accounting for over **51%** of the total:   + **25–34:** 293 individuals (25.57%)   + **35–44:** 299 individuals (26.09%) * Other notable age groups:   + **19–24:** 180 participants (15.71%)   + **45–54:** 170 participants (14.83%)   + **55–64:** 151 participants (13.18%) * **Young people aged 16–18** make up a small proportion (46 individuals, 4.01%), while those aged **65+** represent less than 1%. * This indicates a significant skills gap concentrated among *working-age adults*, particularly in their mid-career stages, highlighting the need for accessible upskilling and adult learning pathways.   **Welsh Government Targets (by 2050)**   * 75% of working-age adults qualified to Level 3 or higher. * No more than 5% of working-age adults without qualifications. * 90% of 16–24-year-olds in education, employment, or training. * Eliminate employment and pay gaps (gender, disability, ethnicity).   **Labour Market Statistics**   * UK Employment Rate: 75% | Wales: 69.9% * UK Economic Inactivity: 21.5% | Wales: 26% * Unemployment in Wales: 5.4%   **Labour Market Overview – Context from the Get Britain Working White Paper**   * The UK Government’s **Growth Mission** targets an **80% employment rate**, focusing on boosting labour market participation to support economic productivity.   **Current Labour Market Statistics**   * **Wales:**   + Employment Rate: **69.9%**   + Unemployment: **5.4%**   + Economic Inactivity: **26%** * **UK Overall:**   + Employment Rate: **75%**   + Unemployment: **4.4%**   + Economic Inactivity: **21.5%** * Wales continues to lag behind the UK average in employment, with higher levels of unemployment and economic inactivity, highlighting the ongoing need for targeted interventions to improve engagement with the labour market. * KW inquired about the distinction between the economically inactive and unemployed categories. DE clarified that unemployed individuals are actively seeking work, whereas economically inactive individuals are not working and include students, carers, those with long-term health issues, early retirees, and discouraged job seekers.   **ACTION: LiJ to present on Connect 2 Work in ESB update 17th July**  **ACTION: LiJ to share with this cluster group some further information about Connect2Work.**  **Economic Inactivity in Wales – Key Reasons (Ages 16–64)** *Source: Labour Force Survey / ONS, October 2024*  A breakdown of reasons why individuals in Wales (aged 16–64) are economically inactive — that is, not working and not currently seeking work.   * **Largest group:**   + **Long-term sickness** accounts for the highest share at **33.5%**. * **Other significant reasons:**   + **Looking after family/home** – **24.9%**   + **Retired** – **16.7%**   + **Student** – **13.4%**   + **Other** (unspecified reasons) – **9.8%** * **Smaller categories:**   + **Temporary sickness** – **1.7%**   + **Discouraged workers** (those who’ve given up looking for work) – **0.3%**   Health and caring responsibilities are the dominant reasons for economic inactivity in Wales, suggesting that tailored support for carers and those with health conditions will be key to increasing labour market participation.  **Neurodiversity – Awareness, Challenges & Inclusion in Employment**  **Definition and Prevalence**   * Neurodiversity is a broad term covering natural variations in how people think, learn, and process information. * Approximately **20% of the population** is neurodivergent.   **Common Conditions Under Neurodiversity**   * Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) * ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia * OCD, Tourette’s, Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder * Acquired neurodiversity and mental health conditions   🔗 [Public Health Wales Neurodiversity Guidance](https://phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/healthy-working-wales/workplace-guidance/healthy-work-environments/equality-diversity-and-inclusion1/neurodiversity/)  **Employment Challenges and Inequalities**   * **Unemployment** for neurodivergent adults is:   + **3x higher** than for those with disabilities   + **8x higher** than for those without disabilities * Over **50% of people seeking employment are neurodivergent** * According to ONS:   + Only **22%** of people with Autism are employed   + Just **16%** of those are in full-time roles * **30% of Autistic people** have been asked to leave a public place — highlighting broader societal exclusion.   **Key Insight:** There is a pressing need for inclusive employment practices, better public understanding, and targeted support to address the significant barriers neurodivergent individuals face both in work and in society.  **Ex-Offenders: Key Statistics for England and Wales**  **Prison Population and Receptions**   * **Prison receptions (Jan–Mar 2024):** 18,344 (↑1,102 from previous quarter) * **Total prison population (as of 30 June 2024):** 87,726   + **Male:** 84,043   + **Female:** 3,683   **Probation and Reoffending**   * **Probation caseload (as of 31 Mar 2024):** 239,015 (↑250 from Dec 2023) * **Proven reoffending rate (Jul–Sep 2022):** 26.5% (↑0.7 percentage points from Apr–Jun 2022)   **Employment Post-Release**   * **Employed at 6 weeks after release:** 19.3% (↑1.9ppt from previous year) * **Employed at 6 months after release:** 31.1% (↑5.2ppt from previous year)   **Key Insight:** While employment outcomes post-release have improved slightly, overall reoffending rates remain high, and less than a third of ex-offenders are in work six months after release. These figures highlight the ongoing need for integrated support services and employer engagement to reduce reoffending and improve rehabilitation outcomes.  **Disability Employment Gap – Key Insights**  **Employment Type Breakdown**   * Among those in employment:   + **Disabled people:**     - **59%** work full-time     - **41%** work part-time   + **Non-disabled people:**     - **71%** work full-time     - **29%** work part-time   This indicates that disabled individuals are more likely to be in part-time roles compared to non-disabled peers.  **Employment Rate Gap Over Time (2013–2021)**   * The **employment gap** between disabled and non-disabled people has **persisted over the past decade**, remaining around **30–35 percentage points**. * Despite minor improvements in disabled employment rates, progress has been slow:   + The **gap narrowed slightly** from 34.0 (2013/14) to **32.8 (2020/21)**.   + **Non-disabled employment** has remained consistently higher (around 80%), while **disabled employment** has hovered between 45%–55%.   **Key Takeaway**  Disabled people remain significantly underrepresented in full-time employment, and while the gap is gradually decreasing, structural inequalities persist. Continued focus on accessible, inclusive hiring and progression opportunities is essential to narrowing this gap.  **Key Issues Raised**   * **Economic Inactivity:** Particularly high among women aged 50–64 (35% inactivity rate). Key reasons: long-term sickness, early retirement, caring responsibilities. * **Disability Employment Gap:** Continued focus needed on inclusion and accessibility. * **Gender Pay Gap:** Remains a concern in Wales. * **Neurodiversity & Inclusion:** Emphasis on making workplaces more inclusive for neurodivergent individuals. Public Health Wales resources highlighted.   **DE’s presentation slides are enclosed below:** |
| **Multiply/SPF funding update** (Lisa Jones, Chair of the LA Cluster Group) |
| * Lisa Jones from BCBC provided an update on the Multiply element of SPF funding.   **A summary of the key points provided below.**   * LiJ advised that they are slightly behind due to financial system restrictions imposed by the UK Government. * The UK Government has announced there will be a transition year for 2025/26, CCR will see a total allocation of £103 million — representing a 40% reduction compared to previous year allocations for the region. While the overall reduction is 40%, the focus on people and skills specifically results in a 55–60% cut. * The SPF funding was allocated for the delivery of the *People and Skills* element, supporting activities such as bringing people into employment, working with NEET individuals, and developing skills. *Multiply* funding ran alongside this; however, the Multiply funding has now been withdrawn entirely. Local authorities can still deliver Multiply-type activities, but these must be funded within the 40% reduced SPF allocation. * This significant reduction has created challenges, leading to a difficult period marked by redundancies across local authorities. * Due to these funding cuts, discussions are ongoing around how delivery up to March 2026 can be managed, with a focus on moving services in-house where possible.   **ACTION: CCRSP to share the update that LiJ provides to the ESB in July 2025 with this cluster group.**  **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.**   * In terms of SPF in general for 25/26, LA report on 3 main investment priorities; * Communities and Place (e.g., local regeneration, public spaces) * Supporting Local Business (e.g., innovation, entrepreneurship) * People and Skills (e.g., employability, training, skills development) * Local authorities previously had to report against “W” intervention numbers; however, this requirement has now been scrapped. * Local authorities are now reporting against mission-led schemes: * Employability and progression into employment * Employment-related skills and essential skills (with Multiply now included under essential skills) * LJ reported that individuals who lack literacy skills often also struggle with numeracy skills. This creates an additional barrier to improvement, particularly given the reliance on technology-based delivery methods. * The 2025/26 transition year has recognised the need to bundle numeracy and literacy together, which is positive; however, the budget has not been adjusted to reflect this need. * LJ reported that numeracy was chosen as a focus because many adults aged 19+ do not hold a Level 2 numeracy qualification. Additionally, adults who achieved GCSE or O-Level Maths qualifications in the 1970s and beyond often no longer possess the practical numeracy skills needed today. * KW advised that by delivering a numeracy course naturally this bought with it a literacy improvement due to the scenarios, whereas the same wouldn’t be the same the other way around. * LiJ advised that local authorities would see information in the Spring Budget (June 2025) regarding the forward framework and the potential quantum of funding. However, there is a caveat that local authorities are unlikely to receive full details until October 2025, which is a cause for concern. * LA’s are about to go live with the 2025/26 delivery programme, but they are aiming to close down delivery before 31 March 2026 due to the challenges associated with the closure period. * LA’s need clarity around staff contracts and commissioning work. They are pushing for updates urgently, as commissioning activity cannot wait until Autumn 2025. Without timely information, there is a risk of losing skilled staff, which would create a skills and expertise gap during the critical final delivery phase. * Another challenge from April 2026 is that local authorities expect the Welsh Government to take a more proactive role in funding arrangements. There is hope that this will not introduce an additional layer of bureaucracy. * Currently, the programme is disjointed — for example, an individual living in Bridgend may receive one package of support, while a neighbour in Neath would have access to a different package. It is hoped there will be more alignment going forward. * LJ expects there will likely be a top-slice of funding allocated for Pan-Wales activities under future delivery programmes across People and Skills. * Another unknown is the role of the Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) — four across Wales — which sit above the local authority geographical regions (e.g., the CJC incorporates the Cardiff Capital Region). It is possible that CJCs could take on a role in future funding delivery. * LJ advised that some of her teams are currently finalising delivery programmes for completion by March 2026, while others are beginning to plan for the post-April 2026 period. * The LA Cluster Group meeting on 30 April will provide a further update.   **LiJ opened the floor to Q&A:**   * DE raised the loss of staff as a concern for employability teams. The knock-on effect is also a problem for commissioning and delivery partners. For example, the Quick-Start programme, which supported unemployed or economically inactive individuals, had an 86% retention rate. This was an additional programme that had a positive impact, but it has now ended. * LJ discussed a workshop idea bringing some LA cluster members alongside this HFE cluster group.   **ACTION: LiJ and CG to facilitate a workshop between local authorities (LAs) and the HFE Cluster Group to discuss Employability Pathways.** |
| **Cluster Group Member Updates** (All members) |
| * **SA** is pursuing contacts within other HEI’s to reestablish the channels of communications.   **ACTION: SA continue liaison with Francis Cowe with regards to contact development.**   * **Education Workforce Council (EWC) Update:** BS reported that EWC is the statutory regulator for 13 professional groups across Schools, Further Education (FE), Work-Based Learning (WBL), Youth Work, and, as of May 2024, the Adult Learning sector (funded by local authorities). * **FE Lecturer Qualification Requirements:** The Welsh Government has introduced a minimum qualification requirement for FE lecturers, mandating a Level 5 qualification as defined in legislation. * **Legislation Review:** The current legislation is not considered fit for purpose. EWC, in collaboration with Colegau Cymru and the wider sector, is reviewing the framework to propose a more appropriate model. Planned legislative changes are expected to challenge the existing FE workforce. A three-year transition period is proposed to allow current staff to meet the new qualification requirements, with support measures planned for providers and staff. * LiJ raised a concern about the lack of CAD (Computer-Aided Design) expertise in FE colleges and asked whether institutions can continue to use staff without a Level 5 qualification. The response confirmed that they can — but those staff must be qualified by **May 2027**. * BS reported that the annual registration process, people renewing registrations is taking place today, this feeds into the Annual Workforce report.   **ACTION: BS bring an update on annual workforce report to next 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.**   * **Teacher Recruitment and Retention:** Recruitment to primary schools remains stable, but secondary school recruitment—particularly in priority subjects and Welsh-medium education—continues to be a significant challenge. This reflects a global issue, not unique to Wales. The [Children, Young People and Education Committee](https://business.senedd.wales/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=736) is currently conducting an inquiry into [Teacher recruitment and retention](https://business.senedd.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?ID=591), and EWC is preparing a consultation report. Cluster members are encouraged to stay informed. * Promotion of Careers in Education: BS promoted the Educators Wales platform, launched by EWC. It serves as: * A careers portal for entry into the education sector. * A training portal offering opportunities for both entry and progression. * An all-Wales education portal aimed at supporting recruitment and development across the education workforce. * **CG** provided an update regarding CCRSP Stakeholder conference event on 15th May 2025. DE noted he hasn’t had invitation.   **ACTION: VS share with DE the booking link to the stakeholder event. (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.**   * **CG** highlighted to the group the YPG Roadshows and their purpose. * **CG** highlighted the staff transition of RT departing 2nd May. * **RT** highlighted a new *Nursing Connect* programme aimed at learners who are qualified at Level 3 but do not meet the entry requirements for university. The initiative involves a 6-month programme where participants work between 20–37.5 hours per week and attend college one day per week to study Agored units. Upon completion, learners can apply directly for the March/April intake at USW. Merthyr is opening the programme to the wider community, including existing healthcare assistants within the workforce. * **NO** reported the below updates; * **Cultural Shift in Fire Service**: The Fire Service is currently undergoing significant cultural change, particularly in how training is delivered. A recent survey highlighted various challenges, including a lack of diversity. A new lead, Finn Mooneram (formerly RAF), has been appointed to support this transition. * **Recruitment and Retention**: Recruitment into the Fire Service remains challenging, but retention rates are strong, which reflects positively on the internal environment once individuals are in role. * **Workforce Structure**: The service operates in distinct silos, with apprenticeships offered across a range of areas beyond frontline firefighting, including Human Resources, Fleet, and Engineering. * The Fire Service is reviewing recruitment processes to attract a more diverse workforce and improve Welsh-medium delivery, primarily through work-based learning (WBL). * NO noted that a significant number of 30-year-olds are not driving, which could impact recruitment and service delivery. * **KW** provided the following updates:   + There has been significant discussion around VCSEs and the upcoming involvement of Qualifications Wales from July. KW advised that if any sector groups are recommended, cluster members should actively engage to ensure the VCSE developments are fit for purpose.   + Pathways Discussions: Educ8, NTFW, and others are participating in Senedd discussions focused on 14+ education pathways and careers guidance.   + Essential Skills Qualifications (ESQs): NTFW is preparing a paper on the potential removal of ESQs from apprenticeship frameworks. ESQs are a core requirement for apprenticeships in Wales (similar to Functional Skills in England) and are mandatory for completing an apprenticeship unless the learner has already met the required standard through prior qualifications (e.g., GCSEs). * KW raised a question from Medr “If Health & Social Care is not an apprenticeship” what will it be? * CG advised that she has a meeting in June with Phil Blaker Chief Exec from Qualifications Wales.   **ACTION: CG to feed back to Cluster Group post meeting with Phil Blaker.** |
| **AOB** |
| **Meeting closed at 11:53am** |