

Cross-Party Group Minutes

Meeting Minutes:

Cross Party Group Title:	Apprenticeships
Date of Meeting:	Tuesday 23 September 2025 (6.00pm – 8.00pm)
Location:	Hybrid Meeting – Tŷ Hywel, Conference Room C&D and Virtual via Microsoft Teams

In Attendance (In person):

Name:	Title:
Joyce Watson MS	Co-chair and Senedd Member for Mid & West Wales
Cefin Campbell MS	Senedd Member for Mid & West Wales
Hariett Barnes	Director of Research, Innovation and Skills, Medr
Vivienne Buckley	Principal and Chief Executive, Bridgend College
Rachel Cable	Director of Policy and Public Affairs, ColegauCymru
Heather Davidson	Head of Apprenticeships, Medr
Kelly Edwards	Director for Partnerships and Strategic Development,
Rhys Goode	Strategic Adviser – Policy and Partnerships, ColegauCymru
Jude Holloway	Managing Director, Educ8 Training Ltd
Lucy Hopkins	Communications Manager, ColegauCymru
Sharon James - Evans	Principal, Cardiff and Vale College
Sarah John	Director, ALS Training Ltd
Billy Jones	Communications and Research Officer – office of Luke
Paul Kift	Interim Principal, Gower College Swansea
Gareth Matthews	Director, Itec Training Ltd
Jonathan Morgan	Principal and Chief Executive, Coleg y Cymoedd
Lisa Mytton	Strategic Director, National Training Federation for Wales
Deio Owen	Llywydd / President, NUS Wales
Jeff Protheroe	Strategic Adviser – Work-based Learning and Employability,
Janis Richards	Membership Director (Wales), Make UK
James Scorey	Deputy Principal, Cardiff and Vale College
Karen Smith	Communications and Marketing Manager, National Training
Richard Spear	Managing Director, ACT Training Ltd
Lisa M Thomas	Principal and Chief Executive, The College Merthyr Tydfil
Nicola Thornton-scott	Assistant Principal for Work-based Learning and Skills, Grŵp
Barry Walters	Principal, Pembrokeshire College



Amy Williams	Policy Officer, ColegauCymru
Lleu Williams	Head of Engagement, Qualifications Wales

In Attendance (Online):

Mark Dacey	Chief Executive Officer, Grŵp NPTC Group of Colleges
Ryland Doyle	Research and Communications Officer– office of Mike Hedges MS
Caryn Grimes	Manager, Cardiff Capital Region Skills Partnership
Aled Jones-Griffith	Chief Executive Officer, Grŵp Llandrillo Menai
Chris Laity	Policy Officer, Universities Wales
Jane Lewis	Manager, Regional Skills Partnership South West Wales
Siân Lloyd Roberts	Manager, North Wales Regional Skills Partnership
Faith O' Brien	Managing Director, Cambrian Training Company Ltd
Nitesh Patel	Communication Officer – office of Joyce Watson MS
Marek Zemanik	Senior Public Policy Adviser (UK Nations), CIPD

Apologies:

Name:	Title:
Paul Davies MS	Senedd Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire
Luke Fletcher MS	Co-chair and Senedd Member for South West Wales
Heledd Fychan MS	Senedd Member for South Wales Central
Vanessa Cashmore	Acting Principal, Coleg Sir Gâr / Coleg Ceredigion
Kelly Fountain	Chief Executive Officer, Gower College Swansea
John Nash	Director, TSW Training Ltd
Grant Santos	Group Chief Executive Officer, Educ8 Training Group
Yanina Williams - Willaiy	Chief Executive Officer, Coleg Cambria

Summary of Meeting:

Discussion - The Future Apprenticeships Programme (2027)

The meeting centred on the Future Apprenticeship Programme for 2027, currently under consultation by Medr. The consultation, open until 31 October 2025, seeks to gather stakeholder insights to shape a more flexible, inclusive, and responsive apprenticeship system in Wales.

Heather Davidson, Head of Apprenticeships at Medr, led the presentation outlining the programme's purpose, which is to align apprenticeship provision with the Welsh Government's skills priorities, economic needs, and learner aspirations.

Heather stressed that the programme is part of a broader skills strategy, acknowledging that solutions may extend beyond the apprenticeship framework itself.

Key Themes and Discussions:

Programme Design and Funding Model

Medr is proposing a major shift from the current procurement model to a grant-based funding model, which is intended to:

- Encourage collaboration over competition.
- Enable partnerships in commissioning.
- Support high-quality provision across diverse providers.

Flexibility and Responsiveness

There was general agreement that the new programme must be agile enough to respond to:

- Changing labour market demands.
- Emerging skills needs.
- Regional and sectoral variations.

Concerns were raised about the slow pace of apprenticeship framework reviews (and Qualification Wales led qualification reviews), both of which can hinder the responsiveness and innovation required by employers.

Inclusivity and Welsh Language

Through the discussion, emphasis was placed on:

- Maintaining an all-age programme.
- Reaching under-represented groups.
- Embedding Welsh language.
- Ensuring equity of access across communities.

Employer Engagement

Stakeholders stressed the need for:

- Ensuring a broader employer base, especially amongst micro and SMEs.
- The efficacy of wage subsidies and incentives.
- The need for an employer brokerage service to act as a "one-stop-shop" for employer enquiries.

- A sustained awareness-raising campaigns to promote apprenticeships (to both individuals and employers).

Learner support and careers Information advice and guidance (CIAG)

The importance of wrap-around support for apprentices was highlighted as a key factor for the programme.

Calls for independent, impartial career advice in schools to:

- Challenge traditional academic pathways.
- Promote apprenticeships as a viable and respected route.
- Ensure learners are well-informed from the outset.

Data and Evidence

The role of data in shaping apprenticeship policy and programme design was discussed. There were calls for improvements in tracking learner progression and destinations for up to three years post-completion to assess impact and inform future provision.

Action and Next Steps:

A letter will be drawn up capturing the views of the group, which will be submitted to Medr for them to consider as part of their consultation exercise.

Confirmation of Minutes and Nominations for Co-Chairs:

The minutes from the last meeting were accepted without objections, and the group moved on to discuss nominations for Co-chairs. Heledd Fychan MS nominated Joyce Watson MS and Luke Fletcher MS to continue as Co-chairs, and this was seconded by another member of the group. Additionally, the secretariat position was discussed, with Billy Jones nominating both ColegauCymru and the National Training Federation for Wales (NTFW) to continue in the role, which was also seconded.

Date of Next Meeting: - Wednesday 11 February 2026 – Apprenticeships Fair 2026