

Dear all

Happy new year! Please find below brief updates for this term for each sector as well as wider updates that are relevant to some or all of you.

Further education

We'll be inspecting two colleges in the spring term. We've been keeping in touch with Medr about the publication data for the post-16 consistent performance measures. These were significantly delayed last year which meant the data wasn't available whilst we were on site for either of the college inspections. We did, however, take account of the data in the final reports for both. This year we're hoping we'll have the data sooner, but we're aware that Medr have again had challenges in getting accurate data returns from a very few school sixth forms, so we're not sure at this stage whether data will be published in time for on-site inspection activity.

In our autumn term link inspector visits to FE colleges, we spent some discussing the use of AI with staff and learners. We intend to publish a short report later this term to share our findings.

Apprenticeships

We've nearly completed our visits to all providers to support two Insights reports on: (1) challenges in the delivery of health and social care apprenticeships; and (2) challenges in timely completion rates across all apprenticeships. These reports will be published after the election due to restrictions on us publishing national reports during a pre-election period.

Justice services

We've recently updated our guidance for inspecting adult prisons. On the back of this, we're now updating our guidance for inspecting YOIs. You can find all our inspection guidance here: [Inspection guidance search](#) / [Chwilio am arweiniad arolygu](#).

Other sectors

I don't have any significant updates this term with respect to **adult learning in the community** or **independent specialist colleges**.

Thematic reports and Insights reports

Last term we published the following reports:

- [Literacy, numeracy and digital skills in adult learning in the community](#)
- [The Independent Living Skills \(ILS\) Curriculum in Further Education](#)
- [Implementation of post-16 aspects of Additional Learning Needs](#)

This term we'll be carrying out the fieldwork for our review of **attendance and participation in education in FE colleges and sixth forms**. All FE colleges will contribute to this review and should already have received information about it.

Joint project with QAA on supporting self-evaluation and improvement planning

This project affects all providers funded by Medr. We've worked with QAA and Medr to draft joint guidance to support self-evaluation and improvement planning. We've been sharing progress on this during link visits and when we've had other opportunities in meetings with stakeholders. The feedback you're providing is helping to shape the final draft of this guidance.

Ready Already! [Ready Already! \(post-16\)](#) / [Barod yn Barod! \(ôl-16\)](#)

We're bringing our stakeholder group back together this term that supported the development of our 'Ready Already!' campaign to reflect on the impact it's having and discuss any further steps we can take to support everyone working in post-16 providers.

If you are notified of an inspection this year, please remember to consider and share the resources on our Ready Already! campaign webpage with your staff. This campaign aims to offer clarity on expectations and share detail around practical arrangements to support teachers, lecturers, trainers, assessors and senior leaders in the post-16 sector. We don't want inspection to be overly burdensome but a positive experience that is a natural part of your normal improvement process.

PCET ITE

We're undertaking some work this term to support the Welsh Government Expert Advisory Group for PCET Initial Teacher Education. We're carrying out a comparative review looking at the curricula for PCET ITE programmes currently in use by the five Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and their Further Education (FE) college partners. We're working with the curriculum sub-group of the expert panel and the USCET PCET forum for PCET ITE course leaders. We'll be reporting back to Welsh Government at the end of the term.

Enhanced focus on reading

In November we announced our intention to have an enhanced focus on reading for 3 years from September 2026 across all sectors. We'll be working with you to explore what this means, as contexts of providers and the profiles of learners vary hugely. Please find more information about our national work on reading here:

[Reading: For learners, for Wales / Darllen: Dros ddysgwyr, dros Gymru](#)

Peer inspectors

Annual sector update training for apprenticeships will take place on 29 January. Eligible peer inspectors have been invited to register. The half-day event will be delivered online.

We were planning update training this term for those who work in the justice system, but this will now take place in the summer.

Sgwrs – Estyn’s podcast series

In Estyn’s podcast series, Sgwrs, we explore key topics shaping education and training in Wales.

Through insightful discussions with experts, educators, and learners, we share ideas, experiences, and best practice to support improvement across the sector. You can access all episodes on our website, YouTube channel, Spotify or Apple podcasts. [Podcasts - Estyn](#)

Estyn live events

We are hosting monthly Estyn live webinars throughout the year and encouraging providers to sign up and take the opportunity to pose any questions they may have. The full schedule for 2025/26 can be found at: [Estyn Live events for 2025/26](#).

Changes to leadership roles in Estyn

As part of a change to leadership roles for HMI across Estyn, the following changes take effect from January 2026:

Role	Previous lead officer	Lead officer from January
FE colleges	Ian Dickson	Janine Bennett
WBL apprenticeships	Mark Evans	Matt Williams
Adult learning in the community	Steve Bell	Steve Bell (no change)
Independent specialist colleges	Rachel Hackling	Jennifer Weeks
Justice services	Mamta Arnott	Rachel Hackling
16-19 policy	N/A	Ian Dickson
Post-16 ALN	Rachel Hackling	Kirsten Jones

Having just finished my first year as the assistant director responsible for post-16 inspections, I’m going to be changing roles internally due to business needs in our senior team. From 1 March, I’ll be leading our work with local government education

services, and Mererid Wyn Williams will be leading our post-16 work. We may overlap some of our work during this term to support a smooth transition.

It's been a pleasure working with you and I'll hopefully continue to support improvements in post-16 education and training from the local authority perspective.

I wish you every success in your work this year – for learners, for Wales.

Yours sincerely



Mark Champion

Assistant Director