



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

Cofnod y Trafodion The Record of Proceedings

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[The Economy, Infrastructure and Skills
Committee](#)

17/05/2017

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The proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included. Where contributors have supplied corrections to their evidence, these are noted in the transcript.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Hannah Blythyn Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur Labour
Hefin David Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur Labour
Russell George Bywgraffiad Biography	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Conservatives (Committee Chair)
Vikki Howells Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur Labour
Mark Isherwood Bywgraffiad Biography	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Jeremy Miles Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur Labour
Adam Price Bywgraffiad Biography	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
David J. Rowlands Bywgraffiad Biography	UKIP Cymru UKIP Wales

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Rachel Bowen	Cyfarwyddwr Polisi a Datblygu, Colegau Cymru Director of Policy and Development, Colleges Wales
Sarah John	Cadeirydd Cenedlaethol, Ffederasiwn Hyfforddiant Cenedlaethol Cymru National Chair, National Training Federation for Wales
David Jones	Prif Weithredwr, Coleg Cambria Chief Executive, Coleg Cambria

Yr Athro/Professor Julie Lydon	Is-Ganghellor a Phrif Weithredwr, Prifysgol De Cymru Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive, University of South Wales
Leon Patnett	Pennaeth Cyflenwi Gwasanaethau, Gyrfa Cymru Head of Service Delivery, Careers Wales
Jeff Protheroe	Cyfarwyddwr Gweithrediadau, Ffederasiwn Hyfforddiant Cenedlaethol Cymru Director of Operations, National Training Federation for Wales
Kieron Rees	Cynghorydd Polisi, Prifysgolion Cymru Policy Adviser, Universities Wales
Shirley Rogers	Cyfarwyddwr Cyflenwi Gwasanaethau, Gyrfa Cymru Director of Service Delivery, Gyrfa Cymru
Nicola Thornton-Scott	Prifathro Cynorthwyol – Sgiliau, Grŵp Colegau NPTC Assistant Principal – Skills, NPTC Group of Colleges

**Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance**

Robert Lloyd-Williams	Dirprwy Clerc Deputy Clerk
Gareth Price	Clerc Clerk
Anne Thomas	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:17.
The meeting began at 09:17.*

**Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau, Dirprwyon a Datgan Buddiannau
Introductions, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest**

[1] **Russell George:** Bore da. Good morning. Welcome to the Economy,

Infrastructure and Skills Committee. Welcome to Members and members of the public watching in. Item 1: there are no apologies this morning. All Members are present. Are there any declarations of interest? No, there are none.

Gyrfa Cymru: Prentisiaethau yng Nghymru 2017 **Careers Wales: Apprenticeships in Wales 2017**

[2] **Russell George:** I move to Item 2, and this is in regard to our apprenticeship in Wales inquiry. This is our first public session in that inquiry, and this morning we've got evidence from Careers Wales, and I'd like to ask the two colleagues just to introduce themselves for the record.

[3] **Ms Rogers:** Okay, thank you. Good morning. Bore da. My name's Shirley Rogers, I'm the director of service delivery for Careers Wales.

[4] **Mr Patnett:** Good morning. Bore da. My name's Leon Patnett, and I'm head of delivery for the south-east region, and I have a policy lead on work-based learning as well for the company.

[5] **Russell George:** Thank you. I'd like to welcome you both here this morning. We don't want to go on beyond 10 o'clock; we want to try and complete this before 10 o'clock because we've got quite a heavy schedule today. So, the first set of questions. We've got about six subject areas that we want to cover this morning. For the first subject area I come to Hannah and Vikki. Hannah first, I think.

[6] **Hannah Blythyn:** Thanks, Chair. Welcome. I'm just going to start with a couple of general questions, really. I think in your evidence, you talked about the correlation between clients having the information about what's available there in terms of work-based learning and whether they take it up, and I think from the conversations we've had previously, there seems to be still barriers there to people actually knowing what's out there. So, how do you think that could be addressed in general?

[7] **Ms Rogers:** I think our evidence is right. I think there are still barriers for young people and older people in terms of getting into apprenticeships. If you take, probably, our priority client group—our young people in schools—when they're making decisions around their post-16 options, they have access to careers advisors, and our unique selling point, obviously, is impartial careers information advice and guidance, so we will be impartial

with our advice whether they're in an 11 to 16 school or an 11 to 18 school.

[8] Parents are a massive influencer on young people's decisions—teachers, and a variety of other people. But what is stark, still, I think, is that, even for a careers adviser, if they're sitting with a young person in school, or they're accessing a young person digitally or working with a young person digitally, they may have a shiny FE prospectus, they'll have lots of information about sixth-form courses, but there's not that collective information about apprenticeships and work-based learning that will market things and that kind of route to young people. I still think that that was lacking in 2012, and it's still not necessarily there now. We, for Welsh Government, work with Welsh Government colleagues to develop a common area prospectus online, where all post-16 options would be online and visible to all young people. Now, that is dependent on providers putting their information onto that prospectus, which doesn't always happen. So, there is an option there for us in Wales to actually look at how do we improve access to that information for young people, but we need to be better at doing it. I don't know if you've got anything to add.

[9] **Mr Patnett:** I suppose, in terms of barriers, our main intervention in education is key stage 4, with a focus on, maybe, year 11. In year 10, we undertake a survey of as many young people in year 10 to determine their ability to manage their career, and the type of routes they're interested in going into, but we haven't had much access to them at that point, and, at that point, our evidence is showing that the traditional apprenticeship stereotype still exists. So, three quarters of those interested in apprenticeships are male—engineering, construction are the main routes. So, there's work to be done, potentially, at a younger age, in key stage 3, to help young people and parents form more of an opinion about apprenticeships. Because, once they're making their mind up in year 10, they've already done year 9 choices, and they're on that path. So, it's that early intervention as well, I think, that could be improved.

[10] **Hannah Blythyn:** Yes, because one of the things we—. When we met with some apprentices last week, being aware of their options at an earlier stage before they consider their GCSE choices, and that there are different pathways, would have been beneficial for them and their peers. Do you think Careers Wales should be able to make interventions at an earlier stage, then?

[11] **Ms Rogers:** We would like to, but that's dependent on resource. I think careers education in schools has the lead role there, and I think our partners

in schools need to be, perhaps, more concerned with providing that kind of information much earlier on in the school, and even down into primary schools, to be honest, for young people to be able to be well informed in making those decisions at that stage. But there is also the work with parents. We need to find a way to convince parents that this is a viable option for their young people.

[12] **Hannah Blythyn:** I'll let Vikki come in, but, one more question—sorry. When you talked about the stereotypes of what an apprentice is, and I think there's probably still—we got this from our questioning of the young people—that kind of idea that, you know, if you have ability, then you go down the traditional academic route and you go to university. Whereas, actually, there are so many options there now with apprenticeships these days that you can then get a degree eventually, or an equivalent, and earn as you learn as well. So, do you think—? I think one of the things they were doing was young people going in as ambassadors. Do you think we need to do more of that, to have young people who have taken up apprenticeships to go into schools and talk about why they've done it and how it's been useful for them?

[13] **Mr Patnett:** I think promotion and marketing of apprenticeships as a whole could improve. From our perspective, the product of apprenticeships, the programme of apprenticeships, is Welsh Government provided, and we have provided this evidence, I think, back. We've delivered, through our opportunity awareness programme last year, the objective of which was to raise awareness of work-based learning and other post-16 options, the whole array, and we've definitely found an appetite for young people to have access to employers and apprentices to understand what it's all about.

[14] **Ms Rogers:** The opportunity awareness programme was a programme that we developed in partnership with our Welsh Government colleagues and was additionally funded to our core contract last year, and it has proved to be incredibly successful in bringing together employers and schools to work at, really, advertising and supporting young people's decision making around apprenticeships. It has been a very, very, very successful programme, and probably over 37,000 young people have participated in that programme, either in schools, at an employer's premises, at very big events where there are multiple employers and multiple schools coming together, and it's been incredibly successful.

[15] **Russell George:** Vikki Howells.

[16] **Vikki Howells:** Thank you. There's a lot of rhetoric and discourse around the Welsh Government's agenda of refocusing on high-level apprenticeships. That should lend itself a lot more easily than in other parts of the UK to bridging this gap in parity of esteem between the vocational and academic qualifications. But, certainly from the evidence that we've taken so far, that still seems to be quite a substantial barrier. So, I just wondered what your thoughts were about how we can try and break that down. Because, certainly from the apprentices that we've spoken to, there were a number of them, for example, who'd gone to university and then dropped out after the first year. And when you question them about the reasons behind that, it's because, in their heart, they felt that an apprenticeship was always the right thing for them, but the guidance they received, based on their projected grades, was to go down that academic route—that's guidance from Careers Wales, but also from parents and from teachers as well. So, what are your thoughts around that and how we can really tackle that, because that's a huge issue, isn't it?

[17] **Ms Rogers:** It is, but I think—not being defensive, but I think if a careers adviser has sat in front of a young person, they wouldn't have said, 'That's the best option for you'; they would have helped the young person make that decision for themselves by presenting all the options. But you're absolutely right—if you're in school, if you're in an FE college, but probably more if you're in a school sixth form, what you will find is that the driver is literally GCSEs, AS, A-levels, university. And we need to work with our schools—and we in Careers Wales do through our careers and the world of work co-ordinators—to support them to develop curriculums that are much more broad based with regard to providing young people with that information on apprenticeships and different routes after year 11, year 12 and year 13.

[18] Looking at the destination statistics of school leavers over the last few years, we are seeing a rise in the number of young people at year 13 going into work-based learning, and in particular into apprenticeships, which is quite encouraging, I think. However, it's not enough, and, again, I think where we need to focus our attention as a partnership, when people are working with young people, again, has to be around ongoing careers education, and good, solid careers education that provides young people with those experiences of the world of work that helps them make that decision, and bringing parents into that decision-making process more so than they are at the moment.

[19] **Mr Patnett:** I also think employers have a role to play because, traditional university routes, if you look at—. While students are studying in university, there are lots of opportunities to do placements, internships and understand the world of work while they're doing their degree. To plan, then, their progression from higher education, well, if we're looking at pupils in key stage 5 progressing to apprenticeships, I think employers need to be engaged more in offering that work experiences, that finding out about becoming a higher level apprentice post key stage 5. So, I definitely think there's work to be done there, because it's a newish way of doing things, you know. People can visualise the route through school to university and into work, and I think we need more employer engagement at that level.

[20] **Vikki Howells:** Thank you. Just one more question, based around the common area prospectus. I was wondering what your thoughts were about the impact that that has had on awareness of vocational courses in schools.

[21] **Ms Rogers:** It had the potential to have a massive impact. I'm not quite sure it's lived up to its expectations, and that, primarily, I think, is because perhaps providers of post-16 learning and training haven't always signed up to the ethos of that prospectus.

[22] **Vikki Howells:** So, do you think that it should be made mandatory, for example? Would that overcome some of the barriers?

[23] **Ms Rogers:** I think that would be a way forward.

[24] **Vikki Howells:** Thank you.

[25] **Russell George:** Jeremy Miles.

[26] **Jeremy Miles:** We'll just stay with this topic for a moment if we may, and let's just accept for the time being that awareness amongst students in school of the world of work and their vocational options are poor, at best. You said in your report last year that you'd achieved all of your KPIs. Isn't it your job to make sure that that level of awareness is much higher if you're an organisation that says it's meeting all of its KPIs?

[27] **Ms Rogers:** We have a contribution to make to that, and if you look at the KPIs, they are very high level and they're more about our contribution to the overarching KPI, rather than us being solely responsible for achieving

that, because we couldn't be.

09:30

[28] It's about the partnership of education providers, employers, Careers Wales and parents working together to ensure that young people have the information that they need, in a timely fashion, to make those decisions. Now, we definitely do that within the resources that we have.

[29] We currently are working predominantly with key stage 4 young people. As you are probably aware, we have been through a fairly severe shrinking of our service over the last five years, but we think, in terms of the service that we provide to the clients who are our priority clients, who, over the last few years, have been those young people in year 11 who're going to enter the labour market, or potentially not be in education, employment, or training, then I think we've done a very good job of providing them with the information they need to make a decision and to move on in the labour market. What we don't necessarily have the resources to do now is to work as intensively as we did in key stage 5 and further education.

[30] **Jeremy Miles:** So, you're describing a world in which your effectiveness has gone from there to there, because of a resource cut, in broad terms. Is that fair?

[31] **Ms Rogers:** I'm not sure it's our effectiveness, but I suppose it's our capacity to deliver to a wider audience.

[32] **Jeremy Miles:** That's part of effectiveness, surely.

[33] **Ms Rogers:** Yes, okay. I'd accept that.

[34] **Mr Patnett:** And I think for us now, our prioritisation in school is that the wider careers family, the careers and world of work curriculum and schools would play a role in providing careers education to young people, and it's a collective approach. We found, through our opportunity awareness programme last year, that, as well as raising awareness of the options to young people, we had a whole approach to supporting teachers and providing resources to teachers. And, interestingly, when we evaluated that, 98 per cent of teachers who engaged in that felt that they'd found out more about apprenticeships, which indicated a gap in their knowledge, potentially.

[35] **Jeremy Miles:** We'll come on to that in a second, if we may. You made proposals about how to address some of the issues around, I suppose, plugging that gap. One of which is to set up a steering group to provide careers advisers with timely and accurate information on sector opportunities, careers routes and work-based learning opportunities. I'm slightly alarmed that that doesn't already exist. What's the situation there? Why doesn't that exist to the extent that it needs to at the moment?

[36] **Ms Rogers:** That was a survey—well, a report that we wrote back in 2012 on the parity of esteem between vocational and academic, and that was one of the recommendations. That does now exist.

[37] **Jeremy Miles:** So, that objective has been met.

[38] **Ms Rogers:** Yes, absolutely. And I think one of the successes of that is the publication of our 'Spotlight' publications, which are looking at opportunities in different areas in different sectors in Wales and are being used quite widely throughout the schools, the colleges and through work-based learning and also our digital presence is supporting that.

[39] **Jeremy Miles:** Okay. Looking at the question that you were taking us on to there, on the awareness of apprenticeships amongst school leavers in particular, that's at—. Well, the number of people going into work-based learning is about 1.6 per cent of the year 13 cohort. In fact, if you cut it in different ways, it's as low as 0.6 per cent, 0.8 per cent. So, that's at the very high end of that, and yet, in year 11, 7 per cent of students are indicating an interest in apprenticeships. So, they're getting the interest, but why is that happening? That's a very serious gap between the 1.6, or the nought point something, and the 7 per cent who are keen to do it. Why is that happening?

[40] **Ms Rogers:** I know. I think, you know—. It's a long time since I was 16 or 17, but, at 16 or 17, there is pressure from your school, your peers and your family to continue to do something, and by that I mean that, if you apply for college, you know you're going to start in October, and if you apply for sixth form, you know you're going to go back in September. If you apply for apprenticeships, well, you can only apply for an apprenticeship when an apprenticeship is available. You can understand what an apprenticeship is, but if there's nothing available to you at the point that you're leaving school, that's very scary when you're 16 or 17, because you're almost saying, 'You've got to become unemployed for a little while and hope that an apprenticeship comes up'.

[41] **Jeremy Miles:** Yes.

[42] **Ms Rogers:** When we looked at the number of apprenticeships on the apprenticeship matching system in May, there were just over 200, and I think it's been pointed out to me that that's less than one apprenticeship per school in Wales, if you were going to look at it like that. So, the available—

[43] **Jeremy Miles:** So, it's a pipeline issue, effectively, rather than a perception issue, or a change in demand.

[44] **Ms Rogers:** Absolutely, yes.

[45] **Jeremy Miles:** Do you have—you may have—data for this analysis? How do you know that that is the case?

[46] **Mr Patnett:** The apprenticeship matching system.

[47] **Jeremy Miles:** Okay, right.

[48] **Mr Patnett:** You look at the availability of apprenticeships across the school year, and, whilst young people may drop out of year 12 or 13 to take an apprenticeship, ideally, you want apprenticeships available in the same timeline as college places and sixth-form places become available, because then it minimises that risk, and it seems a natural progression.

[49] **Jeremy Miles:** Okay, so two things just on that point: that tells you that the level of demand is constant, from the 7 per cent, more or less.

[50] **Mr Patnett:** Yes.

[51] **Jeremy Miles:** Okay. So, you're effectively saying, there needs to be clarity earlier in the school year of the level of desire on the part of the employer to engage in an apprenticeship programme, in broad terms.

[52] **Ms Rogers:** Absolutely, yes. Definitely.

[53] **Jeremy Miles:** Okay. Can I just finally ask you about the question of gender stereotyping, if you like, and in particular the shortfall of women taking up apprenticeships in STEM areas generally? Do you have numbers for the proportion of students that you're talking to in those sectors who are

female, as opposed to male? What initiatives can be pursued to make those numbers more equal?

[54] **Mr Patnett:** I would suggest asking—. We have numbers of the young people in the interests. We can comment on gender sort of issues from a guidance perception, but from an uptake, I would suggest that's Welsh Government colleagues who—

[55] **Jeremy Miles:** But from your contribution to that strategy, what's your take on it?

[56] **Ms Rogers:** Our contribution to that strategy is that we allocate quite a lot of resource to providing the full range of options to all young people, okay? But we will focus a lot of our attention on STEM, particularly through our spotlights, our LMI information and our website. It's difficult to say that we will prioritise girls over boys, boys over girls, whoever. We will provide the same information to everybody, ensuring that young women and young men are absolutely—. They know what's out there, they know how to access it.

[57] **Jeremy Miles:** But the nature of the advice that you'd give to a young woman in that situation must be different, surely, to cater for the different perceptions, perhaps, of the role of women in STEM sector jobs. Is that the case? Is the nature of your advice different, or is it neutral to gender?

[58] **Ms Rogers:** The nature of our advice wouldn't be different, but if a young woman is presenting to us a barrier that being a women means that you can't get into an apprenticeship or into engineering or construction, whatever trade, or vice versa for a young man who's saying, 'Caring's not for me, it's a woman's job', we will tackle those barriers with that individual.

[59] **Jeremy Miles:** Okay.

[60] **Mr Patnett:** On our website we have case studies, and our PR activities are about showcasing those who have gone into the, sort of, opposite-gender sectors and succeeded. So, we do have a throughout-the-year message around gender stereotyping, particularly in relation to STEM. But it goes back to my point earlier about perceptions. Our survey in year 10: 100 per cent of respondents who identified childcare as an apprenticeship route were female, and 95 per cent for hair and beauty. That's ingrained at an earlier stage.

[61] **Ms Rogers:** Without a doubt, there's a job to be done still around that.

[62] **Mr Patnett:** Definitely.

[63] **Jeremy Miles:** Thank you.

[64] **Russell George:** Mark Isherwood.

[65] **Mark Isherwood:** How can disability stereotyping be tackled within apprenticeships where there's growing awareness of, and demand for, disability and autism-aware apprenticeships within those relevant communities?

[66] **Ms Rogers:** Sorry; could you repeat that?

[67] **Mark Isherwood:** How can disability stereotyping within apprenticeships be tackled, where there's growing awareness of apprenticeships and demand for disability and autism-aware apprenticeships within those communities?

[68] **Ms Rogers:** I think there's a job for the employers to do there in actually encouraging and marketing their services to that group of young people, and to enable that group of young people to engage with the apprenticeship programme or the work-based learning programme. There's a massive job for employers there.

[69] **Mark Isherwood:** Isn't it a bit chicken and egg, though? Who takes the initiative? Who sells the benefit to the employer of accessing this pool of talent?

[70] **Ms Rogers:** I think we all need to do that, don't we, as a partnership within Wales? It needs to be out that we're all working to support those young people to move through into whatever career they choose to do. We need to help employers to find ways to support young people into those careers, but I don't think it's a one-cap-fits-all solution to that. I think all organisations working with young people with disabilities and employers need to come together to support that agenda and to support those young people.

[71] **Russell George:** David Rowlands.

[72] **David J. Rowlands:** Yes. Throughout the employers' briefing notes, there's a recurring theme with regard to the reluctance of schools to actually encourage the apprenticeship route. Now, my colleague has touched upon the fact of your budget being quite drastically reduced over time. So, obviously, when you're going into schools, there's less one-to-one engagement with pupils in schools, and obviously that means that a great deal of your interaction now is through the internet services that you provide. What is worrying to us, I think, is how impartial the advice coming from the schools themselves is, and how you can bridge that gap with regard—. And there are criticisms being raised about the matching service that you've been providing—the apprenticeship matching service online. One of the things is that it's very difficult to access and to use. What improvements have you had with regard to that, recently?

[73] **Ms Rogers:** Okay. If I go back to the first part of your question, which was about schools' reluctance to engage in supporting or promoting post-16 options that are perhaps not, particularly if it's an 11 to 18 school, their own sixth-form programmes. One of the areas that we provide is support for teachers. So, we have a team of people who will work across Wales with teachers and lecturers in FE to support the development of the careers and the world of work curriculum. So, we will provide resources; we will provide training; we will provide support for teachers to deliver that curriculum and to enhance the delivery of that curriculum. That's our contribution to trying to support schools to provide young people with the array of options that are available to them after 16; not to just, perhaps, funnel them into the sixth forms. One of the reasons to do that is to reduce the drop-out rate and to increase the positive progression from post-16 learning. So, we are very much aware of that, and we are working with our partners in schools to support them to develop an appropriate curriculum, and I think the curriculum for Wales is going to go a long way, hopefully, to support that as well.

[74] Now, in terms of AMS, this is a Welsh Government system, as you know, that we simply host. So, any improvements to AMS are by our colleagues in Welsh Government, in the department that have devised, developed and managed the AMS system. What we can do is feed back the comments that we're having from training providers, employers and, more importantly, young people, about their experiences of trying to work within the AMS process. And I think it's fairly well documented that it can be slightly overcomplicated.

[75] **David J. Rowlands:** Yes. It's true to say that the last committee raised a lot of these concerns way back in 2012. It's rather worrying, isn't it, that we're still having the same issues coming up now, five years down the line, and there has been a lot of money spent, through yourselves and with the Welsh Government. We would have expected much better outcomes than, apparently, is being shown to us here.

[76] **Mr Patnett:** Ultimately, it's our Welsh Government colleagues who have the specification, who have the processes for employers and work-based learning providers to engage. The back-room stuff is all Welsh Government design; we just host the end product. So, really, you know, again, all we can do is keep feeding back when we receive any positive or negative comments about the system.

[77] **David J. Rowlands:** But haven't you been charged with the delivery of this system?

[78] **Ms Rogers:** We host it, and it's supposed to be an unmediated programme. So, all we do is put it on our website.

[79] **David J. Rowlands:** Yes, but the total engagement I'm talking about now, with getting the schools to encourage this route, et cetera.

[80] **Mr Patnett:** In terms of promotion, we have, I think, improved this year. With appropriate advice, guidance and promotion of the service itself, we've significantly increased traffic into the system, through our combination of on-the-ground events, advice and guidance, digital marketing. You know, the stats are there in the paper we provided. But it's the product, at the end, that we're not in control of. We just host that product. So, I would say that for the bits we're in control of, we are, I think, showing an improvement.

[81] **Ms Rogers:** Yes.

[82] **David J. Rowlands:** Thank you.

[83] **Russell George:** There are some issues there that we can take up with—. I think there are some issues there, David, that we can take up with the Minister, following your line of inquiry. Adam Price.

09:45

[84] **Adam Price:** Only 13 per cent of employers currently employ apprentices. I'm still pretty shocked by that figure. Do you think I'm right to be shocked? Should we be satisfied? What's your view of that figure?

[85] **Ms Rogers:** I don't think you should be satisfied at all. I think we've got a big job to do to ensure that employers fully engage. I think things are improving, I really do. And despite what we've been saying this morning, I think the whole concept of apprenticeships for young people, particularly young people who are in year 12 and year 13, and particularly around the earners who learn agenda, is starting to have an impact. What we need to encourage our employers to do is come on board with timely opportunities, so that young people are able to apply for apprenticeships at the point that they're leaving education.

[86] **Adam Price:** You say things are improving, but the National Training Federation for Wales, which we'll be hearing from in a few minutes, have said that there's been very little change in terms of the perception or use by employers of apprentices since the committee's 2012 report. Do you disagree with that?

[87] **Ms Rogers:** They're in a much better place to give evidence on that than us. All we can talk about is the work that we do with employers, and the reception we get when we talk about apprenticeships. Whether that then goes on to the employer becoming an apprenticeship employer is something that perhaps needs more work. And I think the National Training Federation for Wales also have a job to do, and I know they're doing a very good job in trying to engage employers in apprenticeships. But, again, I think it's something that we all need to come together on. And one of the things that I think has been a real success this year is the Welsh Government programme Have a Go. The Have a Go programme is basically supported by Careers Wales, and we take virtual reality equipment into schools, we work with employers to present that to young people, and young people can almost have a go at being an apprentice. And employers, the more that they are engaging in that, the more encouraged they are to take up a young person as an apprentice.

[88] **Adam Price:** The federation has also said that one of the practical problems that has arisen recently is a consequence of the change in your own area of responsibility and this issue of how placements are now vetted, which I believe you—

[89] **Ms Rogers:** Work experience placements

[90] **Adam Price:** Yes, work experience placements. So, you were responsible for that.

[91] **Ms Rogers:** And we're not now.

[92] **Adam Price:** That's been scrapped. As a result of that, we saw reports in the media, on the BBC recently, about hundreds of school pupils, as a result of that, who won't get work placements. Was that a disastrous decision by the Welsh Government?

[93] **Ms Rogers:** I think we've done a lot to support Welsh Government in engaging employers with schools, and there are lots of ways that young people can have experience of the world of work. I think work experience is a fantastic opportunity for young people. I think it should still be offered, but that's a personal opinion. What Careers Wales have done over the last year, again through our remit with Welsh Government, is to start to develop an employer engagement database. It's not a work experience database the way that we used to manage the work experience programme, but what it will become is a database of employers who are willing to engage with schools and colleges to support the careers and the world of work curriculum, and to support young people in terms of their journey to become effective employees. So, we will hopefully have, by the end of this year, a database with considerable numbers of employers on the database that schools can access, and schools can then link with the employers to provide, whether it's work experience, an enterprise event, mock interviews, whatever it is that school needs, or the pupils in that school require, and they can then access those employers and arrange that through our employer engagement database.

[94] **Adam Price:** We know, and I think anecdotally there is other evidence, that shows that work placements are an important part of introducing young people to the possibility of apprenticeships and driving up those low percentages that we're not satisfied with. But just help me a little bit here. As a result of the fact that your remit no longer includes this crucial—when we're talking about young people in work placements—step of vetting placements. That was working really, really well. It's not working anymore because you're not doing it.

[95] **Ms Rogers:** We're not doing it. It wasn't just the vetting, it was the fact

that we organised, through our work experience database, the matching of young people to an employer, as well as vetting the placements. So, I think it was a massive loss when that was withdrawn.

[96] **Mr Patnett:** In line with the comments I made earlier, I think the intention was that our withdrawal from that service would be replaced by the wider careers family, namely schools, in delivering that service. Schools have their own agendas in terms of budget, priorities, et cetera. I think we're seeing now that us withdrawing hasn't been matched by something coming back in. But I would agree that work experience is hugely critical to this agenda.

[97] **Ms Rogers:** It is. I think there's a lot of research that suggests that if a young person has more than two, less than four, activities with an employer, then they're less likely to drop out post 16.

[98] **Mr Patnett:** We are delivering some work experience through our European social fund project across Wales. So, there's small levels of work experience for young people most at risk in education. So, there is some activity delivered by us, but it's not massive.

[99] **Adam Price:** One final question. I think I know the answer to this one, but, if this committee were to recommend that, actually, your remit and your role in co-ordinating this workplace vetting function was restored, would you be willing to take up that responsibility once again?

[100] **Ms Rogers:** If the budget followed that, absolutely. Yes.

[101] **Adam Price:** Thank you.

[102] **Russell George:** In regard to that vetting, is there anything that's positive by the fact that that vetting is no longer taking place?

[103] **Mr Patnett:** I don't think we'd have information on that.

[104] **Ms Rogers:** We wouldn't, no. I wouldn't be able to comment on that.

[105] **Russell George:** Okay. An argument that's put—I'm not saying that I agree or disagree with it—is, sometimes, employers find it too onerous if there's a lot of criteria that are put on ahead of a work placement potential. And, taking it away, there's an argument—some say, 'Well, look, there's

more of a chance an employer will employ somebody now, or have somebody for a work experience placement’.

[106] **Mr Patnett:** I think that’s a statement for all activity where an employer needs to volunteer or offer something to any young person. The easier that process is, the more likely it is to succeed. I would say that’s a comment across the board.

[107] **Russell George:** Okay.

[108] **Ms Rogers:** One thing that we did do, when we were managing the process, is we tried to make it as easy for the employers as possible. So, we supported the employer as well as supported the school and the young person.

[109] **Russell George:** Okay, thank you. Hefin David.

[110] **Hefin David:** A student comes to you and says, ‘I’d like to do a degree-level apprenticeship’. What do you tell them?

[111] **Ms Rogers:** We wouldn’t tell them anything. We would explore the reasons why. We would encourage them to consider all opportunities, because that’s what we need to do, that’s our role, that’s what we do as professionals. And then, if they make the decision that that’s the right decision for them, we would support them.

[112] **Hefin David:** And would you explain to them the difference between higher-level and degree-level apprenticeships?

[113] **Ms Rogers:** Our careers advisers would be able to do that, yes.

[114] **Hefin David:** What do you think the difference would be?

[115] **Mr Patnett:** I wouldn’t have—. I’m not an on-the-ground deliverer in that area, so I wouldn’t be able to comment on that.

[116] **Ms Rogers:** I think that, sometimes, we can all get a bit confused about higher-level, degree-level, et cetera. But that’s, again, a role for our colleagues in work-based learning to ensure that organisations are clear about the framework for apprenticeships. But our careers advisers would be able to do that.

[117] **Hefin David:** Okay. I just picked up on a comment that you made at the beginning about marketing work-based learning. And I think we need some clarity as to what you're marketing.

[118] **Ms Rogers:** Well, whether that's traineeships, the engagement strand of traineeships, level 1, level 2, level 3—. We're responsible, obviously, for supporting young people at 16, 17 and 18. The only referral that we make—direct referral—is to the engagement strand of the traineeship programme, where young people are not level 1.

[119] **Mr Patnett:** We market the same as a college programme, or a sixth-form programme—we market the provision that other providers provide us the information to market. So, it depends on the sector, it depends on the routes. We would engage with the various partners. Shirley mentioned earlier our labour market information spotlight leaflets on our website that show the whole array of routes into a certain sector, the equivalents in—. So, it's really sector-specific and—

[120] **Hefin David:** So, with that in mind, what is the kind of route into a higher-level apprenticeship?

[121] **Mr Patnett:** The route into a higher-level apprenticeship—. Well, it's obviously going through the stages of education to give yourself the appropriate level to get into that level of learning, the same as university, the same as—it depends on the entry requirements to get into that higher-level apprenticeship. So, we would understand the route they're looking to go into. That's a similar question, I think, to saying, 'What's the route into university?' Well, there's a band of entry requirements to get into various courses that we would understand at that young person's level, and provide them with the appropriate support.

[122] **Hefin David:** So, what would be the most popular higher-level apprenticeships, do you think?

[123] **Mr Patnett:** I haven't got that information.

[124] **Ms Rogers:** We wouldn't have that information at the moment. I could get it for you.

[125] **Hefin David:** Okay. Let's look at that route again, then. What about

progression from level 3 to level 4 to level 5 to level 6—do you think that there's a smooth transition or do you think that people kind of drop off after level 3 and don't progress on to higher-level apprenticeships?

[126] **Ms Rogers:** We would give you perception there, because we don't monitor that. It would be our work-based learning colleagues who would report and monitor that.

[127] **Mr Patnett:** Or our higher education colleagues.

[128] **Ms Rogers:** Or our higher education colleagues.

[129] **Hefin David:** But not having that information, wouldn't it lead to some confusion in schools?

[130] **Mr Patnett:** We have that information as a company, as Careers Wales. We don't have that information right now.

[131] **Hefin David:** Okay, okay. Tell me if I'm being unfair, but I take it from your answer there's still some confusion as to what higher-level apprenticeships are and what degree-level apprenticeships are.

[132] **Ms Rogers:** I would ask that we asked our careers advisers that question rather than asking perhaps myself or Leon, who have not for a very long time carried out a careers information advice and guidance interaction with a young person. But I think there is something in what you're saying, and you are testing us and we are fluffing. So, you know, there are some—. I would say potentially, then, if we're a little bit confused, our careers advisers won't be but parents will be.

[133] **Hefin David:** Okay.

[134] **Russell George:** Okay. Jeremy Miles.

[135] **Jeremy Miles:** Can I just develop that one step further? Let's say I'm in my 40s, let's take that for a moment—

[136] **Hefin David:** Early 40s. [*Laughter.*]

[137] **Jeremy Miles:** —and I'm in the workplace and I think I want to get a promotion or change direction and a higher-level apprenticeship is the right

route for me. Do I come to you for advice?

[138] **Mr Patnett:** You can come to us, via—. Well, you can look at our website—there will be information on how to do it through our website and our telephone helpline. If you're currently employed, that's, to some extent, where your support would start and finish, because of our remitted priority groups.

[139] **Jeremy Miles:** Sorry—just on that, does that, effectively, mean that you're not, as it were, marketing yourself to people outside the age-range cohort that you're remitted to focus on?

[140] **Ms Rogers:** We market our digital services but not our face-to-face service.

[141] **Mr Patnett:** We promote ourselves as an all-age service, but then we have varying levels of support depending on your current situation. But you would get significant support from the telephone helpline, particularly, and the website.

[142] **Jeremy Miles:** Thanks.

[143] **Russell George:** We're drawing to an end now. Can I just ask how you can support, or—how do you think younger people from lower income families can be supported to do apprenticeships?

[144] **Mr Patnett:** I think there's similar—there would be a similar response to general, high-level aspiration for people from lower income families, so, looking at other things going on in education like the Seren project and so on. So, there's all that information out there. But at a real, practical level, it does boil down to finance, things like eligibility for extended child benefit, and, with apprenticeships being classed as employment, parents in low income families, I think, would not then be eligible to receive that child benefit, which is sometimes a significant part of their income, making that route more risky compared to college or staying in sixth form. There's travel—the cost of travel compared to income earned. In some areas of Wales, you could be looking at up to £30 a week on travel potentially, out of a £95 to £100 a week income—again, staying in local schools, staying in college, you're making that save. This is real practical level—. So, there's the wider raising aspiration for people in low income families, which I think is well publicised, but then there are those practical issues around finance,

really, and the risk that an apprenticeship presents.

10:00

[145] **Russell George:** As a committee, we'll be making recommendations to Welsh Government. Are there any recommendations you think we should include, or are there any additional comments that you want to raise that haven't come out in questions?

[146] **Mr Patnett:** Again, I'd have to check this, but, for something like traineeship engagement, there is travel subsidy. I'm not convinced that that type of thing exists for apprenticeships, even as part of work-based learning. I'd have to double check that. So, just basic things like support for travel, in the first instance or for a fixed period of time. Little things like that, I think, could make a difference for low-income families.

[147] **Ms Rogers:** If you're talking on a more wider scale—

[148] **Russell George:** I am, yes.

[149] **Ms Rogers:** —about the inquiry, I think one of the things that we would encourage is more support for employers to engage with this agenda. It's not about educating employers, it's just enabling them to provide the support that's necessary to engage with apprenticeships. Being a nation, as we are, of small and medium-sized employers, it's not always easy for your smaller employers to find the time that's needed to, No. 1, engage with the process, to appoint an apprentice, and then to support that apprentice. But, similar to the work experience database, when we used to manage that, we would support the employer and the young person. Perhaps what we need is more support for those small and medium-sized employers to actually engage with apprenticeships, through people like Careers Wales holding their hand through the process, really.

[150] **Mr Patnett:** One quick one, because I'm conscious of time. Even though the young person, on paper, is eligible to undertake apprenticeship learning—maybe at level 2, because they have AS-levels, A-levels, and so on—there is sometimes reticence from employers to take them on if they haven't got basic skills—so, even a general business administration apprenticeship. So, if there was a way of equipping that young person, if they haven't already got it, or testing their readiness to go into the workplace, to start their learning through some pre-learning, potentially, I think that might

support employers to know that, as well as being academically able to undertake the learning, they have some of the basic skills to do the job that that apprenticeship requires.

[151] **Ms Rogers:** I think, hopefully, the changing curriculum in Wales will go some way to providing schools and colleges with the direction and support to do that, to look at the young person in the round, not just the young person who's going to go through an academic pathway and pass exams, but to actually become a young person who can leave education and be well equipped to enter the world of work.

[152] **Russell George:** We're out of time. I'm very grateful, though, for those additional comments. If there are other comments that you think of in the next couple of weeks, please do let the committee know. Thank you very much for your time this morning.

[153] **Ms Rogers:** Thank you very much.

10:03

**Ffederasiwn Hyfforddiant Cenedlaethol Cymru—Prentisiaethau yng
Nghymru 2017
National Training Federation for Wales—Apprenticeships in Wales
2017**

[154] **Russell George:** We remain in public session but I'm just running through the subject areas for the next witnesses. I'll open, and then I've got Jeremy leading the next subject area, then Vikki, Mark Isherwood, David, Hefin on 13, and Hannah on 15 to finish.

[155] Good morning. I almost think you're a member of the committee, Jeff.

[156] **Mr Protheroe:** Good morning, Chair.

[157] **Russell George:** But, just for the record, Jeff, if you could introduce yourself and your role and then I'll ask Sarah to do the same.

[158] **Mr Protheroe:** Good morning, bore da, Jeff Protheroe, director of operations for the National Training Federation for Wales, NTfW, representing all work-based learning providers that deliver apprenticeships in Wales.

[159] **Ms John:** Sarah John—I'm chair of the NTfW and I'm also a director for one of the training providers contracted for the delivery of apprenticeships.

[160] **Russell George:** Thank you. The previous committee, the Enterprise and Business Committee—we're all new members here, none of us were on that previous committee—I know you worked a lot with that committee in the past. There was a piece of work in 2012 that was carried out that you'll be aware of, which made recommendations—the committee made recommendations and Welsh Government accepted many of them. How's the Government doing with those recommendations—the past Government and this Government, I should say, perhaps?

[161] **Mr Protheroe:** I certainly think, and it's in our written submission as well, that a considerable amount of progress has been made to the apprenticeships offer over the last, particularly, four years, and certainly since 2012. So, in terms of what is able to be delivered, there have been significant changes, and we've seen the development and advent of higher apprenticeships, particularly at level 4 and above. But what we're not seeing is the issue where young people, coming directly out of school, are aspiring to and going on to an apprenticeship. So, I think, certainly within our written submission, that is the biggest issue, where, as we see it, no progress has been made in the last four years or four and a half years.

[162] **Russell George:** And how much of a concern is that?

[163] **Mr Protheroe:** It's a huge concern. I think it's a huge concern to the provider network. I think also what the Welsh Government has done in that period, as well is—we've now got a very robust apprenticeships skills policy plan, which the National Training Federation for Wales and its members completely subscribe to. I think the vision for the apprenticeship programme in Wales is a sound one, but I think the reality is that where we currently are is a long way from where we want to be in four or five years' time. I think we've got an opportunity now, over the next two to three years, to make sure that that system is right, but one of the key things that we all need to address—all stakeholders involved in the delivery of apprenticeships in Wales—is making sure that young people in school are aware of the opportunities.

[164] **Russell George:** What about the reduction in the funding to Careers Wales? Has that, in itself, had an implication on whether those

recommendations were completed or not?

[165] **Mr Protheroe:** I think it would have, yes. I think particularly the role that Careers Wales advisers would have played in schools, as the professionals offering impartial careers advice and guidance. I think what we've seen is a roll-back of that service within schools. So, I think that would have had an effect, certainly.

[166] **Ms John:** The relationships that the careers advisers had on a regional basis with work-based learning providers and the college network—those were quite good, and the work experience opportunities that young people were able to access. I think the decline in that has had a detrimental impact.

[167] **Russell George:** Jeremy Miles.

[168] **Jeremy Miles:** Thank you, Chair. I think it was implicit in what you just said that, whilst it's good to have a fit-for-purpose apprenticeship programme, unless that's translating on the ground into people taking it up, it will have limited effectiveness, obviously. Looking at the number of school leavers going into work-based learning, including apprenticeships, that's about 1.6 per cent of the year—. Do you happen to know what the breakdown is between apprenticeships and work-based learning more broadly within that?

[169] **Mr Protheroe:** Well, I think—and we've made reference to it in our written evidence—in the Careers Wales pupil destination from 2016 there's the figure of 401 individuals from key stage 4 going directly on to employment with work-based training. We don't know 100 per cent that that is apprenticeships. You know, how will that sort of destination—

[170] **Jeremy Miles:** That's what I'm getting to.

[171] **Mr Protheroe:** I think certainly one thing, which is a very simple thing to do, I would guess, is to make sure that that is determined as an apprenticeship, because employment with work-based training doesn't necessarily mean an apprenticeship.

[172] **Jeremy Miles:** So, there's a task there in getting a level of granularity, basically, then.

[173] **Mr Protheroe:** Yes, absolutely.

[174] **Jeremy Miles:** Okay. So, the evidence we've just heard from Careers Wales is that the year 11 cohort—around 7 per cent of them demonstrate an interest in taking apprenticeship and obviously the number that actually does that, as we've just discussed, is considerably lower from what is, in any event, not a particularly high number, I would guess. Their view of that is, as far as they can tell, that the demand remains constant, pretty much, but it's just that it's a pipeline issue, effectively—so, there's a question of the sequencing and the time within the school academic year when apprenticeships become available. Is that an issue that you recognise?

[175] **Ms John:** As a work-based provider network, we work on a roll-on, roll-off basis, so, as an example, there is one large employer that we know is recruiting between April and October nearly 200 IT engineers and they just want to have a constant flow of young people applying because they have such a great demand for that sector. So, we can't really say to employers, 'No, you can't recruit now', because their business needs—there'll be pressure to recruit young people and their workforce development plans might show that they've got a number of people retiring at certain stages.

[176] I think, with the onset of the levy, we're finding that a lot more of the larger employers are analysing their workforce development plans and putting those plans into place, and making those adverts available. If we were to stop that, and make that a September intake only, I think maybe we would lose some opportunities, and employers wouldn't welcome that.

[177] **Jeremy Miles:** So, that challenge isn't really solvable completely, under most scenarios—it's just a thing that we need to try and minimise the impact of. Is that fair?

[178] **Mr Protheroe:** Yes, it's something that I think most of the actors are aware is a potential issue. And I know Welsh Government, and the provider network, are looking to work with employers to try and get employers to align their recruitment practices to the sort of school-leaving years, both at September, October, and back to February, March as well. So, there is some work with doing that. And I think this comes back to the point as well, in terms of where Welsh Government—and, indeed, the network—wants its apprenticeship programme to be. It's more about recruitment in of young people to the future workforce, as opposed to where we currently are, which is upskilling predominantly. So, I think, as the provider network moves towards more recruitment in, then there's the opportunity for the provider

network to work with employers to influence some of their behaviours.

[179] **Jeremy Miles:** Okay. So, two questions, developing that theme—the first, really, what you’re describing there depends on much more proactive promotion of vocational routes on a student’s school journey. You’ve proposed that there should be Estyn inspection of careers guidance, and I’m assuming that, within that, you would—perhaps clarify if I’m misrepresenting you—but I think you’re also saying that there should be mandatory requirements on schools to provide that, against which Estyn would inspect. Is that correct?

[180] **Mr Protheroe:** Yes.

[181] **Ms John:** Yes.

[182] **Jeremy Miles:** Okay. What’s your picture of why schools are not providing that impartial vocational advice on the school journey, firstly? And secondly, is it your view, or is it your experience, that schools that offer tertiary sixth form education behave differently than those that don’t when it comes to providing impartial vocational education?

[183] **Ms John:** Okay. So, the first question around our perception of what’s being given as advice in schools, I think a lot of teachers haven’t done anything other than education. They’ve gone through education, they’ve become qualified teachers, and they teach. So, I think it’s quite a challenge for them to ask them to be able to give really good, robust advice and guidance to young people about the outside world, when they perhaps haven’t had that experience themselves, which is where the Careers Wales advisors did have that sort of independent role, and have that wider understanding and knowledge. So, from our point of view, to have it inspected would mean that it would be exposed, and we’d be able to identify improvements that could be made perhaps, and Estyn could make recommendations. It’s better that it’s done by an independent body and that, perhaps then, those recommendations will mean that that advice and guidance will be improved or changed.

[184] In terms of tertiary, we haven’t really got any statistics in terms of the—

[185] **Mr Protheroe:** No hard sort of evidence, if I’m honest. But I think there is evidence around that sort of suggests that schools that are 11 to 18 see

less progressions directly on to apprenticeships than those schools that are 11 to 16. You could look at maybe some of the behaviours within the schools around that. But I think, coming back to the point in terms of maybe why there's some sort of lack of progression, I think there is a job of work to be done, and it's maybe something that the network and the providers can do as well, to engage with schoolteachers, to make sure they are aware of what the apprenticeship offer is. Because there is clear lack of awareness amongst the teacher workforce.

[186] **Jeremy Miles:** You've talked about setting an additional target for pupils progressing into an apprenticeship—as a national target. How would you see that cascading down to individual schools, and what challenges do you see in getting to that target number, and do you have a view of what it should be?

[187] **Mr Protheroe:** I think what—and we see it within the work-based learning provider network as well; you know, targets do generally tend to drive behaviour. And I think where you have a situation where only 401 individuals—1.6 per cent of the school cohort—go directly on to employment or work-based training, there's clearly something that needs to be done to make sure that there is a targeted intervention for schools to see where their young people are progressing on to. I guess there are some barriers that would need to be addressed, particularly around how schools engage with that as a concept. I would guess, in terms of how that target—whatever that target may be—cascades down to individual schools, I would imagine it would be on a similar sort of basis. I guess, in terms of identifying the target, we don't think it's a role for NTfW or the provider network to do that; it's obviously a discussion for Welsh Government, I guess, to have. But ultimately, if we're trying to achieve parity of opportunity, then it's got to be something that is fair, but it's certainly got to be a lot more than 1.6 per cent.

10:15

[188] **Jeremy Miles:** And more than the 7 per cent, which just demonstrates an interest—

[189] **Mr Protheroe:** Yes, and that point you made earlier as well, Chair—that 7 per cent of that school cohort, there's probably 2,500 kids there who aspire to do an apprenticeship, but only 400 actually go on to do it. There's something within that element as well where there's a drop-off, and it's how

you ensure that that pipeline is continued into real starts. But, yes, it's certainly got to be a lot more than 1.6 per cent.

[190] **Jeremy Miles:** Thank you.

[191] **Russell George:** Vikki Howells.

[192] **Vikki Howells:** Thank you, Chair. The biggest difference between the Welsh Government's apprenticeship scheme and that of other parts of the UK is obviously the focus on high-level apprenticeships, which I think is something to be applauded. But on the ground when you speak to students, that doesn't seem to be filtering through, and particularly with regard to our more able students, it seemed very much that the academic route is where they should be headed. How can we really try and tackle those kinds of stereotypes?

[193] **Ms John:** As NTfW, what we've done is we've recognised that there is a need to communicate more with schools and pupils in particular, and we've put a creative solutions document to the Welsh Government's apprenticeship team. And part of that is to get support for regional ambassadors that will be able to go into schools and work with employers as well, and connect up their confusion or clarify some of the questions that young people will have around what are apprenticeships and what are high-level apprenticeships—'What does it mean to me?' Because we have seen an increase in high-level apprenticeships; it's been a real growth from 16 per cent to 25 per cent in 12 months.

[194] What we need to do now as a network is to be more focused on the pathways and creating them with employers, so that young people can see that there is a route for an accountancy apprenticeship up to chartered status, which is equivalent to what the engineering route is, and what qualifications sit within those. Because in higher-level apprenticeships, you don't just have diplomas and certificates—you also have higher national certificates, foundation degrees, higher national diplomas, and they are equivalent at level 4 to first-year degrees and level 5 to the second year of a degree. And, of course, we will have degree apprenticeships sometime in the future.

[195] So, I think we all recognise that more needs to be done in that space to communicate with young people. Skills Cymru is a great event that happens in the north and south of Wales once a year, but it's not mandatory

that schools send their pupils there. And that attracts a lot of large employers as well who are promoting their higher-level apprenticeship programmes with, perhaps, level 3 entry, but we need to do more in terms of getting the message into the schools and talking to pupils and parents about what the opportunities are, because there are some great opportunities out there right now.

[196] **Vikki Howells:** That was going to be my next question, actually: to think about the other key influencers, so parents, for instance. From my own time teaching and delivering careers advice in the sixth form, I know there's still that misconception that apprenticeships are really for your less able. And it's all well and good students having a fantastic hour or two being exposed to these opportunities with apprenticeships, but these are the kinds of decisions that pupils then go home and chew over with their families, and also talk to a wide range of teachers about, not just the teachers who are really clued up on careers advice. So, how can we tap into those wider influencers, particularly parents, and the wider teaching cohort, where you've got secondary school pupils who maybe have 10 or 12 teachers and will talk often not to the one who has the most experience of delivering careers advice, but to the teacher who they feel most connected to? How can we overcome those kinds of barriers? They're quite difficult, aren't they?

[197] **Mr Protheroe:** Can I just come back to the first point you mentioned, Vikki, around the development of higher-level apprenticeships? I think what we've got now within Wales is the commitment to a minimum of 100,000 high-quality all-age apprenticeships. And I think what people need to understand is that what is meant by 'high-quality' is the apprenticeships that have a higher rate of return for the individuals, or for the businesses that employ them. So, when the network is talking of 'higher level', what, in essence, we mean is level 3 and above. Now, within that offer you will have higher apprenticeships, at level 4 and above, which are the HNC/HND sort of level. And what we've seen since the last inquiry—the four and a half years—is a significant shift in terms of what is delivered in that apprenticeship offer.

[198] So, if you look at the academic year 2012–13, only 46 per cent of apprenticeships that were delivered were level 3 and above, where there are known to be good returns. If you look at the last set of verified data, 2015–16, it's 64 per cent. So, over that four-and-a-half year period there has been a significant change within the provider network to deliver higher-level skills. Sarah's made reference to 25 per cent of those apprenticeships now being higher apprenticeships at level 4 and above. So, we're now moving to a

situation where we are delivering more. What the network now needs to do—and we are working with Welsh Government on this as well—is to widen the offer of the availability of higher apprenticeships, because within that figure of 6,000 higher apprenticeships that were started last year, there's still a high proportion within management, within social care and within business administration, as wide as that may be. We need to do more in engineering, manufacturing, STEM—but that takes time to build capacity and capabilities within the network. That is where I think we've got the vision of where the apprenticeship programme wants to be in the future, and we need time to develop it.

[199] So, we're moving that sort of offer, and I think whilst we're doing that, there is now the opportunity to speak to those additional influences—definitely teachers, definitely their parents—to inform them that you can go to university and you can develop higher-level skills, but it's not necessarily full time at university. There are now other options. So, we've got that message to get out there as well. I think it's about informing individuals and people that the offer has changed, and developing more, and a wider opportunity in terms of routes that people can follow.

[200] **Russell George:** Vikki, is it all right if Hefin comes in? I'll come back to you then. Hefin.

[201] **Hefin David:** Just on that point, I asked the question of Careers Wales: what's the difference between higher-level apprenticeships and degree-level apprenticeships? There was some difficulty in explaining that to me.

[202] **Mr Protheroe:** Well, degree apprenticeships are new, to be fair, and in Wales we don't have a degree apprenticeship offer currently. There are aspirations to have a degree apprenticeship offer, and some work is currently ongoing with Welsh Government and HEFCW on that.

[203] **Hefin David:** We'll come back to that later, perhaps, but with regard to higher-level apprenticeships, should they be clued up on what higher-level apprenticeships are?

[204] **Mr Protheroe:** Yes.

[205] **Hefin David:** Right, okay.

[206] **Russell George:** Back to Vikki, and then I'll come to Adam after Vikki.

[207] **Vikki Howells:** I think that was about it, actually. Let me just look—what about gender stereotypes? When we went out and spoke to apprentices last week we had a really good range, with some female apprentices as well, but in general there seems to still be this preconception that apprenticeships are for male-dominated sectors. How can we break that down, both in terms of showing that there is a wider range of apprenticeships that can appeal to all sorts of careers, but also in encouraging more females to take up apprenticeships in the male-dominated sectors, too?

[208] **Ms John:** Welsh Government have done quite a lot of work in this area through apprenticeship ambassadors, allowing young people to go back into the schools that they came from and talk about how they became apprentices and how successful that was. Particularly females in engineering sectors have been identified and used in that way. So, I don't think there's an issue in terms of wanting to drive that agenda forward.

[209] I think in our last report, 54 per cent of the apprentices were female, but they were in perhaps more traditional areas that you would expect females to be in. So, we still need to move that.

[210] **Mr Protheroe:** Yes, absolutely. And that is the point—I think there are more females on an apprenticeship programme in Wales than there are males. I think the issue that we're all trying to address here is coming back to this recruitment of young people on to an apprenticeship. I know in terms of the Careers Wales data that was submitted around the amount of young males aspiring to do apprenticeships, I think it was 76 per cent. But we're not talking big numbers there, and I think it's very easy to change that to more of a balanced position just by explaining the whole apprenticeship offer to a whole range of schoolchildren. So, I don't think it's going to be difficult to change that. Sarah's absolutely right—if you look at some of the people who have won the Apprenticeship Awards Cymru over the last year, you've got Maria Brooks, an engineer within Ford; you've got Nick Petrakis, who set up his own business in hairdressing. So, those individuals are out there who are challenging those stereotypes. We just need to get them in front of kids and say, 'Look, this is what I can do'. So, it's not a difficult thing to do, and it's not going to cost a great deal of money to do that. We've just got to get those messages out.

[211] **Vikki Howells:** Thank you.

[212] **Russell George:** I'll come to Hannah, because I know Hannah's got questions around that, before coming to Adam. Hannah Blythyn.

[213] **Hannah Blythyn:** Thanks, Chair. I'm just going to pick up on what you just said earlier about linking those kind of gender stereotypes and perceptions to the whole broader misconception of what an apprenticeship can and could be. Do you think it comes down to, perhaps, this idea that the apprenticeship is something traditional that is about getting your hands dirty and that it's not—if you're getting good grades at school, then apprenticeships aren't for you, and the whole gender stereotyping is linked in with that misconception broadly of what an apprenticeship is?

[214] **Ms John:** I think those are just traditional stereotypes and we're just constantly breaking those down all the time and talking about the wider opportunities and the great professional careers individuals can have, and we've just got to keep getting that message out there, really.

[215] **Hannah Blythyn:** [*Inaudible.*—when we were meeting with some apprentices last week, some of them were engineers or doing more practical apprenticeships, and some were doing them in IT and—. I think it's that idea that schools probably don't know that you can do an apprenticeship in all these many subjects where there aren't as many stereotypes about.

[216] Just one other thing I want to touch on is: do you think there is perhaps a need for employers and colleges to offer more bilingual apprenticeships so young people can access apprenticeships and workplace learning through the medium of Welsh?

[217] **Ms John:** We're all encouraged to offer all apprenticeships bilingually, so I think that's just an open door; there's no issue there. Employers will support an individual to follow their apprenticeship totally through English, bilingually or totally through Welsh, so that already exists.

[218] **Mr Protheroe:** I think there is a job of work to do, Hannah, in terms of challenging misconceptions. One of the things that we're discussing at the moment is cyber security apprenticeships. These are things that people would just not associate with an apprenticeship offer, and this comes back to the issue of getting out there, getting in front of school children, regardless of if they're more able and talented or less able—it's making sure everybody has the same message and offering that as an offer.

[219] **Hannah Blythyn:** And perhaps doing it at an early age as well.

[220] **Mr Protheroe:** Absolutely—at an earlier age.

[221] In terms of the bilingual point that you raise, and I mentioned earlier about targets driving behaviour, if we look at what the network has done in the last four years—and we have a work-based learning bilingual champion who's done a considerable amount of work to try and work with providers to get their own capabilities and capacities up to deliver—we've gone from a situation where, probably four years ago, we were at 2.7 per cent in terms of Welsh-medium and bilingual learning, and that's now nearly 12 per cent in that short period of time. Providers will have, within certain sectors, targets to achieve in terms of bilingual and Welsh-medium provision within certain sectors such as construction, childcare and hospitality. So, targets do play a role in driving behaviours, and the network, to give them their dues, are very good at responding to those stimuli and changing their apprenticeship offer. So, there's a great deal of work to be done to get that up to a higher percentage. We're linking it to the 1 million speakers by 2050, and what we now need to do is capitalise on those young people coming from the school system who want to continue their education through the medium of Welsh. And this comes back to this point that the network is moving from upskilling the workforce who are already employed, to recruitment in. So we can now influence employer behaviour and also can direct schoolchildren to employers who are recruiting apprentices through the medium of Welsh.

[222] **Russell George:** We've got about 20 minutes left and I've got four speakers: Adam, Mark, David and Hefin. So, we've got about five minutes for each. Adam Price.

[223] **Adam Price:** I was just wondering if you could say a little bit more about the sectoral breakdown of the apprenticeships studied in Wales. You mentioned engineering and manufacturing, and I dug out some figures that show that manufacturing in 2011–12 was 4 per cent of all apprenticeships studied. It's now down, in the last year for which there are confirmed figures, so 2014–15, to 2 per cent. If you go back to 10 years ago, it was 6 per cent. That's a considerable decline. Engineering, 10 years ago, was 10 per cent, and it's now down to 8 per cent. In fact, if you look at the hard figures for the years that I mentioned, agriculture is down, construction is down in terms of numbers—2006–07 to 2014–15—manufacturing is heavily down, hospitality is down. The only one that I can see that's really up is healthcare and public services. So, actually, are we doing even worse? Outside of the

public sector, are we doing even worse than we were 10 years ago in terms of the profile of apprenticeships in some of the key wealth-generating sectors of our economy?

10:30

[224] **Mr Protheroe:** I think there's a point, I guess, to appreciate, and that is that apprentices are employed-status individuals. So, if the economy of Wales and if employers in Wales are recruiting apprentices within those sectors, then that will have an impact in terms of the percentages against the other apprentices that are on offer. There is a move, Adam, towards getting back to where we were, I guess, in terms of seeing the apprenticeship offer as part of that driver for the economy. I think what we've seen over the last few years is apprenticeships moving from more of an educational piece to more of an economy piece, and that's been apparent in terms of where apprenticeships fit within the Welsh Government. It wouldn't be widely known to most people, but I think it's an important statement that the Welsh Government sees the apprenticeship programme as an enabler and a driver of the economy in Wales. So, the nature of employment in Wales has changed over that sort of period as well, and there is a move to get more into those STEM subjects. But also, what we're going to see as well is, if we are broadening the offer into things such as cyber security, project management, accounting et cetera, then those percentages from the traditional will change slightly anyway. But I guess we've got to look at the overall number. I think there is a point—and it's probably not for the inquiry at this stage—but the way that work-based learning, particularly apprenticeships, has been funded over the years—and it has a great deal of cross-party support—has been through various budget negotiations. So, we've had differences in terms of the amount of funding for apprenticeships over that period as well. We just need to get to a stable position where we know what it is that we want to deliver.

[225] **Adam Price:** I'm quite familiar with those negotiations—your point is duly noted. Can I just finally ask you—? One of the interesting suggestions that you made in your evidence is that the committee considers writing to the Welsh Government in terms of its procurement policy and making it a stipulation that if you're a supplier to the Welsh public sector, then you do employ apprentices. That actually was a recommendation of the committee inquiry report back in 2012, and it was accepted in principle, but has it not been actually implemented in the way that you might have hoped?

[226] **Mr Protheroe:** I think—and it goes beyond that as well—there is a recognition within procurement practice that recommendation should be made to recruit trainees and apprentices. I guess the issue is following it through and somebody making sure that that has actually happened. Sarah has made reference to the business case we've got with the Welsh Government at the moment for these regional development programme managers. Somebody on the ground needs to ensure that a large contractor has actually seen that through to recruiting apprentices on the ground. I guess what we've got to look at—. It's interesting if you look at Swansea bay tidal lagoon; what they're looking to do as well is put apprenticeships at the heart of their skills workforce. So, we are seeing some changes with that, but we've just got to make sure that somebody is on the ground, ensuring that it happens.

[227] Also, what we've looked at—and we've spoken to the Welsh Government and others about this as well—is about a whole-systems approach to apprenticeships. The provider network alone cannot achieve the aspirations of the Welsh Government in terms of its apprenticeship programme. Careers Wales on their own can't do that. So, what we've all got to do is ensure that the Welsh Government is pulling together all of the resources at its disposal, in terms of the Welsh NHS, in terms of local authorities, in terms of the fire services. All those organisations—they should all be talking about apprenticeships, and they should all be ensuring that their supply chains are talking about apprenticeships. The economy development departments within the Welsh Government should be talking about apprenticeships. We need to get apprenticeships into the DNA of the economy in Wales. So, we've got an aspiration, we've got a vision; we just need this whole-systems approach.

[228] **Adam Price:** Okay. Right. Thank you.

[229] **Russell George:** Mark Isherwood.

[230] **Mark Isherwood:** Thank you. Although there's a huge appetite for work and independence amongst disabled people, the proportion of disabled people in work is well below the general population, even lower for those people on the autistic spectrum. To what extent can disabled people negotiate competitive recruitment procedures and access disability and/or autism aware apprenticeships?

[231] **Ms John:** NTfW employ an equality and diversity champion, supported

by the Welsh Government, and she's been in post now for a year, and part of her role is to look at the diverse nature of individuals who access apprenticeships and how we can support, and we intend to extend that. She's been doing some work with Welsh Government and Remploy, for example, bringing the network of providers together to talk to Remploy about opportunities. One of the programmes that we've suggested in our business case to Welsh Government is like an access to an apprenticeships programme, which I think would enable us to work with employers more about supporting individuals who perhaps they would not have given an opportunity to previously. I think that will make a big difference. But, as far as the network are concerned, there are no perceived barriers to employment as an apprentice, because we've got plenty of legislation around that. It's understanding what individuals' needs are, and how we can help inform employers about how they can accommodate individuals who, I think, would give great value to organisations. So, I think that's sort of where we are on this.

[232] **Mr Protheroe:** Again, it comes to the point that apprentices are employed-status individuals, and there's a whole range of employment law that is the responsibility of the employer to ensure that are no barriers, accessibility to recruitment, et cetera, being one of those. I guess what we're seeing and what we will see more of is less of the provider network delivering apprenticeship programmes to those who are already employed, and more moving towards working with young people and disabled individuals, and individuals from a whole range of diverse backgrounds, and encouraging them to access the apprenticeship programme as well. So, it comes back to this position that unless we are able to tell people about the offer—be they disabled, be they black, Asian, and minority ethnic, be they Gypsy, Roma/Travellers—unless we get out there and tell them, then they're going to not access it. So, Humie is doing a fantastic job at the moment, getting out there and explaining to people the benefits of apprenticeships, and how to access that programme. Sarah's made reference to a very early meeting between Welsh Government officials and Remploy, which NTfW facilitated, and, as a result of that first interaction, five individuals signed up to an apprenticeship. So, I know that's only five, but that's a start. But that is about getting people around the table to talk about the offer and then putting people in—you know, just joining the dots, I guess.

[233] **Mark Isherwood:** We've taken evidence from young people who've told us how they dropped out of apprenticeships because they suffered physical or mental health problems during the apprenticeships and there'd been a

lack of support from their training providers. How can that be addressed?

[234] **Mr Protheroe:** It's addressed, I guess, by giving the work-based learning network, and the assessors and the trainers, et cetera, the confidence and the knowledge of how to deal with those issues. Now, I'm not sure if—yes, some of the members of this committee sit on the children and young people committee. You've got the whole Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill going through at the moment, and that's a 0 to 25 agenda. Now, work-based learning doesn't factor in that, in terms of additional learning needs and supporting individuals. But it's giving what the NTfW can do with the provider network, and it's doing it through Humie; it's giving the practitioners the knowledge and understanding of what support is out there, be it Access to Work with the Department for Work and Pensions or a whole range of other mechanisms that are developed and in place to ensure that people stay in work. So, there's a bit of work that we've got to do there, Mark, so—. But we're dealing with that.

[235] **Mark Isherwood:** And finally—and, in part, we've had the answer to this—what support, additionally, is available for people from low-income backgrounds to access an apprenticeship?

[236] **Ms John:** It's an interesting one; we listened to that earlier with Careers Wales. All apprenticeships are employed status; they all carry a salary. So, in terms of support for the individual to get the job, it's really about a one-to-one support between the provider and the individual. So, the process at the moment, where we're talking about recruitment in, is that the apprenticeship-matching service is used by the individual to identify an opportunity, they apply for it online, and the training provider then will speak to the individual. If they talk about any barriers, then the provider will try and support them as best as they can, but there is no financial support available currently other than for traineeship programmes. For the apprenticeship, if they're successful at interview they'll have a job. I suppose it's about how long it takes before they can get a salary, and that might be—. That's an interesting—.

[237] **Mr Protheroe:** I'm not aware of any additional support for individuals from low-income families to access the apprenticeship programme. Now, some of the barriers are very practical in terms of travel—bus travel, et cetera—and also preparing individuals for interview, simple things—buying a suit, those sorts of things. I'm not aware of any additional support where providers, or indeed individual apprentices, can draw down funding for those

purposes.

[238] **Russell George:** Okay. We have to move on to David Rowlands.

[239] **David J. Rowlands:** We're told that only 13 per cent of employers actually employ apprentices or have apprenticeships. Alluding to Adam's figures earlier on, it seems that a large number of those would actually be within the public sector. Now, we've been told that the apprenticeship levy may increase awareness amongst employers of apprenticeships, but the truth of the matter is that, apart from a few of the bigger organisations in Wales, one of the only ones to be paying this apprenticeship levy is, again, the public sector. So, how can we engage the SMEs in this business of creating apprenticeships in all the smaller—? What sort of incentives can we give them to engage?

[240] **Mr Protheroe:** Involve supply chains and—.

[241] **Ms John:** Yes. Certainly, what we're trying to do as a network, when we're talking to large employers, is encouraging them to move the apprenticeship support down through their supply chain. So, for example, if we have a large employer that's delivering engineering apprenticeships—so we know that they work with a lot of specialist contractors in the area—then we're saying, 'Well, why don't you allow those smaller businesses to send their apprentice, or recruit an apprentice and send them on your training, because they're delivering your services?' Welsh Water was an example. I had a presentation from them not long ago and they found that, when they actually scrutinised the qualifications of the contractors they worked with, some of them didn't have the same level of qualification as their apprentices did. So, they've already started that process of saying, 'Okay, how can we work with you to get you and your staff up to the level of our own apprenticeship programme?' So, I think we need to do more of that. The levy, certainly, has raised an awful lot more awareness, and, in England, in 12 months' time, employers will be allowed to use their digital account to support the cost of apprenticeship delivery for their supply chain. So, I think that will become the norm as we grow.

[242] **David J. Rowlands:** I understand that, in England, with this apprenticeship levy, there is a set figure of 10 per cent, isn't there, that is allowed for downstream suppliers. Is that right? Do you think that possibly the Welsh Government could introduce something like that?

[243] **Mr Protheroe:** Employers in Wales could encourage all their SMEs; it's not restricted.

[244] **Ms John:** Yes, we've got no cap in Wales—

[245] **Mr Protheroe:** There's no cap.

[246] **Ms John:** —so, it's great. So, 100 per cent of their SME chain could do it.

[247] **Mr Protheroe:** I think what you mentioned there, David, about the 13 per cent of employers in Wales who offer apprenticeships, that's come from an employers' perspective survey in 2015. I guess what's known little is that only 9 per cent of employers actually have an apprenticeship programme, so the figure's worse than you think. So, 13 per cent offer it, 9 per cent actually have. Micro and SME businesses within certain sectors are a big contributor to the apprenticeship programme in Wales, and I think the challenge is going to be getting some of the larger ones to engage. That will happen, I think, with the apprenticeship levy. But I guess coming back to the point around what more can be done to engage micro and SMEs in apprenticeships—and I think that's an inquiry in itself—I think it's fair to say that the costs associated with recruiting an apprentice, particularly a young person of the future, are going to be more significant and more pronounced for micro and SME businesses. They need assistance with recruitment, they need assistance with maybe the wages and the costs and they'll need assistance in terms of getting their individual tools to do the job. So, there is possibly some exploration to be had in terms of financial incentives for micro and SMEs.

[248] **David J. Rowlands:** Just one other point: the remit of Careers Wales now means that we have fewer people undertaking work experience. What impact do you think this might have on, actually, the recruitment of apprentices and people being involved—?

[249] **Russell George:** We're tight on time. Could I just ask one of you to answer that, briefly?

[250] **Ms John:** Very quickly, we need the work experience programme to be more robust because we need employers to understand the value that young people can bring, and also vice versa, so that we can create those opportunities.

10:45

[251] **Russell George:** The last five minutes to Hefin David.

[252] **Hefin David:** Who are the main training providers for higher-level apprenticeships?

[253] **Mr Protheroe:** I think it's very difficult to tell because I don't think those data are readily available. I think, if you look at the higher apprenticeships that are delivered, or were delivered, in 2015-16, 97 per cent of them are either within management and professional, social care, or business administration. Those types of apprenticeships can be delivered by a whole range of organisations, but I think the key thing to consider, really, is that there are—examples abound in terms of collaborative work between private training providers and further education institutions, private training providers and higher education institutions, and FE and HE. I think our position, from a sector point of view, is that it's pretty irrelevant who delivers them so long as they are delivered, and so long as there's collaborative work.

[254] **Hefin David:** I'd say it probably would be relevant, though, if higher education aren't engaging with levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 and you want to have degree apprenticeships.

[255] **Mr Protheroe:** Yes. There's an opportunity for higher education to engage with the apprenticeship programme now. They don't have to wait for the advent of degree apprenticeships.

[256] **Hefin David:** No. Are they?

[257] **Mr Protheroe:** Yes. There are models where independent training providers are working with HE institutions to deliver higher apprenticeships now. So, ultimately—and I've read the written submissions from the HE sector as well—there are opportunities for all universities in Wales to get involved with the apprenticeship programme now.

[258] **Hefin David:** Okay. And are degree apprenticeships worthwhile to develop? Is it worth while developing degree apprenticeships?

[259] **Mr Protheroe:** Absolutely. Absolutely.

[260] **Ms John:** Yes.

[261] **Hefin David:** And what prospect have we of developing them in the near future?

[262] **Ms John:** Well, interestingly, because levels 4 and 5 already exist, we're already delivering at levels years 1 and 2 of degrees. So, to have a degree apprenticeship would just round that off and give us the third year, and then maybe a Master's would come eventually as well. It's really—you know, we're driving it; we're telling the Welsh Government that employers want it, and they are talking to the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, and, hopefully, in September 2018 we'll have some pilots.

[263] **Hefin David:** Okay.

[264] **Mr Protheroe:** There are three areas that are currently out, I guess, for tender within HEFCW. That's ICT, I think creatives, and engineering. So, they're out there. So, there is the opportunity for universities to engage with developing that degree apprenticeship programme. I think our position, though, from an apprenticeship provider's perspective, is that it has to be a real apprenticeship. It just can't be a repackaging of something they already deliver.

[265] **Hefin David:** Yes, I was noting that on the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service site they talk about there being two ways of developing a degree-level apprenticeship—either you could design a fully-integrated course, co-designed with professional bodies, or you could convert existing degrees into an apprenticeship programme.

[266] **Mr Protheroe:** No—the needs of apprentices are far greater than somebody attending a part-time course.

[267] **Hefin David:** Okay.

[268] **Mr Protheroe:** It's the pressures of work, it's the pressures of life, you know.

[269] **Ms John:** Employers need to be involved.

[270] **Hefin David:** So, in your view, adapting existing degree programmes wouldn't be sufficient to develop.

[271] **Ms John:** No. You need to involve employers. If it doesn't meet employment needs, then they won't take them up.

[272] **Hefin David:** Okay. Thank you.

[273] **Russell George:** Jeremy Miles, a quick question.

[274] **Jeremy Miles:** Just on the last point that you made in your last-but-one answer—you talked about, effectively, the higher apprenticeship programmes meeting the equivalent of the first and second years of an existing degree, but would you also accept that having a degree-level apprenticeship has a dynamic effect on this question of parity of esteem, that it is a step change? Rather than just adding an extra year, there's a sort of qualitative change that that would bring about within the system. Would you accept that?

[275] **Ms John:** It would be something that parents would be able to latch onto and understand. High-level apprenticeships have become a brand that people recognise now. But parents would get degree apprenticeships and understand the vocational route as opposed to just the academic route that would be available to young people. Yes, the fact that we're getting involved in it means that at least we're ready for it.

[276] **Jeremy Miles:** Yes. No, I understand that. Okay.

[277] **Mr Protheroe:** I think this comes to another topic as well. This is about a continuum of apprenticeships, and that apprenticeship is probably the only programme that will transcend independent training providers, FE institutions and HE institutions. I think we need to start moving away from different sectors and look at the apprenticeship programme in its entirety. I think what we're seeing here now is degree apprenticeships being a route to higher-level skills. You don't necessarily need to go to university for three years to achieve them, and you're earning and learning.

[278] **Russell George:** Sarah and Jeff, can I thank you for your evidence this morning? Can I also thank you for facilitating the committee meeting real-life apprentices last week? That was invaluable, I think, to the committee members that were present, right at the start of our inquiry. So, we're very grateful for that. If there are other areas that you want to add over the next couple of weeks, then by all means please drop the committee a note. Thank you very much, both.

[279] **Ms John:** Thank you.

[280] **Mr Protheroe:** Thank you, Chair; thank you, Members.

[281] **Russell George:** We'll take a short break and we'll be back at just before 11:00.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10:50 ac 11:01.
The meeting adjourned between 10:50 and 11:01.*

Colegau Cymru—Prentisiaethau yng Nghymru 2017 Colleges Wales—Apprenticeships in Wales 2017

[282] **Russell George:** Welcome back to the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee. We're very grateful to the Members this morning who have agreed to be with us to take evidence in regard to our apprenticeship inquiry. I'd just be very grateful if you could just introduce yourselves for the record.

[283] **Mr Jones:** Bore da. David Jones, **Mr Jones:** Good morning. David prif weithredwr Coleg Cambria. Jones, chief executive of Coleg Cambria.

[284] I'm David Jones, chief executive of Coleg Cambria. Good morning.

[285] **Ms Bowen:** I'm Rachel Bowen, I'm director of policy and development at ColegauCymru.

[286] **Ms Thornton–Scott:** Nicola Thornton–Scott, assistant principal of skills at NPTC Group of Colleges, based in Neath.

[287] **Russell George:** There we are. Great, thank you. I should, perhaps, declare an interest: I was a member of the Coleg Powys board, before it became a member of NPTC.

[288] **Ms Thornton–Scott:** Before we merged with Coleg Powys.

[289] **Russell George:** Yes, that's right. And I attended the college myself in my younger days. There we are. If I could just say that there is translation equipment, so, Members, you can ask questions in Welsh or English. You might notice Members using technology as well. They use that during the

course of their work during the committee session. If I could ask—none of the members of this committee were members of the previous Enterprise and Business Committee, but you would have all been, I think, familiar with the previous committee's work on apprenticeships. The previous committee made a number of recommendations, which the Welsh Government accepted. I'd be grateful if you've got views on how those recommendations that were accepted by the previous Welsh Government have developed, or not developed.

[290] **Mr Jones:** Okay. If I just start things off, and then colleagues will come in with their views. I do think there's generally been significant progress in apprenticeships over the last few years. Certainly, the word 'apprentice' or 'apprenticeship' is used a great deal. I think, at a Wales level and a UK level, there's been a huge focus on the area, but I would still say it's very much work in progress. There's a great deal to be done. I think if we'd got there just by floating big numbers around and having this chase to say, 'Who can do the biggest number of apprenticeships?', then I'd think we'd got it all wrong, to be honest. So, yes, good progress has been made, but I'm really pleased that this committee is looking at apprenticeships again, because, certainly, I would say, as a whole sector, we need your support to take us forward and to improve the offer even further.

[291] **Russell George:** Before I ask other Members to comment, are there any recommendations that were accepted by the Welsh Government that you don't think have developed?

[292] **Ms Bowen:** I think that we haven't seen the developments that we would have liked to in terms of gender parity and making progress. You know, we still have very gender-segregated apprenticeships. I think that's one of the ones that stands out for me.

[293] **Ms Thornton-Scott:** And I guess the interaction with schools, I would say, needs far greater improvement—between the work-based learning provider and the engagement with schools, and trying to get that knowledge, raising awareness and benefits of the apprenticeship programme out to all ages, from even primary, not just maybe secondary school.

[294] **Russell George:** Okay, thank you. Vikki Howells.

[295] **Vikki Howells:** Thank you, Chair. You say in your evidence that the advice to potential apprentices is still patchy. Certainly, from the anecdotal

evidence that we've gathered as a committee, we would agree with that. What do you think is the most significant barrier that potential apprentices face in not being able to access the right source of information?

[296] **Ms Bowen:** Do you want to take it?

[297] **Mr Jones:** I think it does start at schools; clearly, a large number of the apprentices are young people. I think it's fair to say that too many people who work at our schools—as good a job as they're doing—or those associated with schools, are still stuck in a fairly traditional way of looking at education that goes from primary, secondary, GCSEs, A-levels, degree, possibly a job, but that's more difficult. So, there's not enough people in those influential, formative roles who get apprenticeships. They don't understand them. Maybe it's not something that they've done or their families have done. So, I think there's a real gap there in terms of the knowledge. I do think there's progress being made, but it's very, very incremental. I think, if we continue at the pace that we're making improvements at the moment, it's going to take decades to get to where we want to. But, yes, it's very much at that point—huge influences on young people and their parents.

[298] **Ms Bowen:** Yes. Schools and young people aren't necessarily getting that whole range of options that are available to them, partly for the reasons that David said. If you don't have experience of apprenticeships—if, as a teacher, you trained through the traditional route, there's no reason why you would have encountered that. So, yes, there's just that paucity of advice. We also have reports from colleges that, sometimes, schools are reluctant for colleges to come in and talk about that whole range of different options that are available. One of the points that I would like to make is that, while we're looking at apprenticeships today, they're not the sum total of our vocational offer to young people. You know, apprenticeships aren't the be-all and end-all; there are other vocational schemes. The education landscape is wider than that and our young people, and our adult learners, aren't getting the full range of information to allow them to make the best options for them at the moment.

[299] **Vikki Howells:** Can I just come in there, Rachel, and ask you specifically: do you see a difference in the way that schools with a sixth-form offer would interact with colleges around apprenticeships and all other sorts of vocational qualifications, compared with schools that don't have a sixth form? Is there a difference there because of the competitive nature of

wanting to keep those pupils on?

[300] **Ms Bowen:** Anecdotally, yes. I don't have anything concrete I can point to, but there seems to be a set of circumstances whereby schools that have a sixth form are naturally keen to keep hold of their students, whereas what we're keen to see is what's in the best interests of that learner.

[301] **Mr Jones:** Can I just add to that? As a head of a provider, absolutely, it's stark, it's there. Where you have 11 to 16 schools, they've just removed that competition and the genuine learners' needs—and what then go with that, the community and local economy needs—come first. Whereas, in reality—. I'm not blaming anybody, it's the reality of what we have. When you've got a sixth form that's under pressure and competing with a training provider or a college then, clearly, the 16 to 18-year-olds are a big part of their organisation. Where that's removed, I think it makes a big difference.

[302] **Vikki Howells:** Is there anything that Welsh Government can do to step in and try and address this, because it's a pretty fundamental issue, isn't it?

[303] **Ms Bowen:** I think making sure that colleges are able to go into schools. Maybe that needs to be mandated in some form, because we have anecdotal discussions with colleges where they want to engage with schools, they want to go in and talk about the courses that schools don't offer so that young people have a genuine choice, and they seem to encounter barriers, time and again, and that needs to stop. I'm not sure, Nicola, if you've got anything to add.

[304] **Ms Thornton-Scott:** I've just written three things here. One thing was 'parents', because parents play a fundamental part of that learning journey for those pupils coming through school. I've been in work-based learning over 20 years. When I first started out in work-based learning, we used to be invited in, in the evenings, to have formal presentations with parents. So, we could talk to them and help parents make an informed decision, which would obviously guide their son or daughter. In probably the last 15 years, that hasn't happened to my knowledge—certainly not in my area. So, it's how do we get to speak to the parents for them to have an understanding of what the apprenticeship programme can offer their son or daughter.

[305] The other thing I wrote down here was 'impartial'. Whilst careers teachers in school, or schoolteachers, have an element of responsibility for careers advice and guidance, is it impartial or is it just their perception of

what they believe is better or best for that individual pupil? So, I would question the word 'impartial'.

[306] And 'starting points'. You could produce a whole plethora of marketing materials on apprenticeships, but only when you actually have that young person in front of you can you give real, robust advice and guidance to that individual, because everybody starts at a different point. So, a brochure is good for starting, but you really need to speak to that individual. You talk about what their past experiences are, what their ambitions are, what their goals are, and you're setting an individual plan and a learning pathway for that individual. It's very difficult to put all those individual cases in one particular brochure. So, that's why it's important for the provider to have access direct to the individual and direct to the parent.

[307] **Vikki Howells:** I'd like to just draw out some more from what you've said there, Nicola, because you mentioned the importance of impartial advice and also face-to-face advice. What impact do you think the change in the remit and resources of Careers Wales has had on the provision of that sort of advice?

[308] **Ms Thornton-Scott:** My understanding and my perception is that, with the reduction in the resources to the careers service, they're only able to target the most at-risk pupils in the school, which is obviously preventing the impartial advice and guidance going to the more able and more talented. So, I would question, then, are all the pupils in the school getting the same advice and guidance. Because I think there still could be a perception around apprenticeships are a pathway for the pupils who perhaps need extra support or are a less able individual as opposed to more able and talented.

[309] **Vikki Howells:** Just finally, to all three of you, then, with the importance of that face-to-face advice—obviously, there have been lots of changes within Careers Wales—do you think this is just a changing environment that we live in and there's scope for other sources of information and other people to come in, face to face, such as colleges? Or do you think that we need to really return to the older model, the more traditional model, where Careers Wales was able to give that face-to-face advice to every student?

[310] **Mr Jones:** I'm not convinced that Careers Wales have the capacity or the capability to do that to the standard that we require. Listening to the evidence this morning, when they were in talking about links with employers

and so on, it struck me that that was an example of duplication. I think we need to work a lot more together. Lots of training providers and colleges are already working with employers. It strikes me that, if you want to get employers involved in training, the last thing they want is Careers Wales phoning them up, and a college, and others. We've got to work together more to make it work, and build on what is there.

[311] But, certainly, to make your point, I do think that having that access to the learners—at year 11 in particular, and beyond, but also at year 10—is vitally important. Your question about does it work better if we have a tertiary setup—yes, it does. But, equally, I wouldn't be here as a college—even though I think tertiary colleges are great, I wouldn't advocate it. It would be a sledgehammer to crack a nut to say that the solution to this is to have tertiary colleges right across Wales. Different parts of Wales—rural areas—have different requirements. It's an information piece about being able to speak to the young learners and their parents.

[312] **Ms Bowen:** I think, in terms of Careers Wales, its core budget has been cut so much over the past few years that we need to be clear about what its future remit, if any, is going to be and what level of funding is needed to adequately deliver that remit, if it has a future. Because you can't expect an organisation to undergo so much change and so many cuts and still deliver all the things it used to. But you also have the weight of expectations and people thinking, 'Oh, but I thought Careers Wales did that', when it doesn't anymore.

[313] **Ms Thornton-Scott:** I think it's a process of collaboration. I'm rolling out a programme at the moment in my local area where we've had the opportunity to go into four schools and pilot a work-related activity with year 10s and year 11s. We're helping those schools with that resource that they don't have any longer. We can go in, as a provider with that experience, to help prepare people for employment. We're helping them with job-search activities, we're helping them to look at the labour market, to look at where the jobs are, we're helping to steer and helping them to make those informed choices. So, we're trying to partner with the school to combat that issue, as opposed to everybody working in isolation and then the resources are not best used.

[314] **Vikki Howells:** Thank you.

[315] **Russell George:** Jeremy Miles.

[316] **Jeremy Miles:** Can I just pick up on that point that you were developing there, David, about the kind of provision varying in different parts of Wales and the theme about the effect of having a sixth form on the likely outcomes in terms of impartiality of advice? The solution to that, presumably, is a regulatory solution, in which schools then are required, mandated, to provide the impartial advice, Estyn inspects that, and sixth forms and FE colleges face a level playing field in terms of how they are evaluated. Isn't that the way of solving that problem, essentially?

[317] **Mr Jones:** I think that would be a good way forward.

[318] **Jeremy Miles:** Okay, thank you.

[319] **Russell George:** Hannah Blythyn.

[320] **Hannah Blythyn:** Thanks, Chair. I just want to start by picking up on one of the last points that Vikki made, in terms of the changes to the remit of Careers Wales. The National Training Federation for Wales, in some of their written evidence, said what they believed was one of the unintended consequences of that was that fewer school learners are undertaking work experience. Is that your experience as well, and what sort of impact does that then have on learners taking up vocational courses, or apprenticeships?

11:15

[321] **Ms Thornton-Scott:** I haven't seen any evidence to suggest that the work experience that the pupils were undertaking in school was hugely beneficial to them. I would like to see some evidence on that. I think that targeted work-related skills, where you've got an element of practical and theory, could be a solution. As I just mentioned, we're doing that with four schools in our area at the moment. So we'll be able to evaluate that to see what benefit those individuals had through that programme. But work experience has been eliminated, as part of the changes with the careers service. It's about how we look at something new and something different and something innovative, and collaborating not just with the school and ourselves as work-based learning providers, but with employers as well. Because we've got a couple of corporate companies that have come to us now because of the apprenticeship levy. We're utilising their resource as part of that work-related activity within the school, so that the pupils have the benefit of finding out what goes on within those organisations, behind the

grey buildings. One of them is the health board. We've spoken to some schoolchildren and we've said, 'What jobs would you perceive to see within the health board?', and they say, 'Doctors and nurses', and then that's it. They don't see then the plethora of opportunities and jobs that the health board can offer through the apprenticeship programme. So, it's about trying to bring those employers into the schools so that they can talk about the opportunities that they can obviously present and offer.

[322] **Ms Bowen:** We need a better system for work experience that isn't confined to the existing social capital of the parents of the learners, because in so many cases, it's kind of what your parents do or who your parents know as to where you might think about doing work experience. You know, in terms of thinking beyond your everyday experiences and kinds of jobs you know about, we need a work experience system and a careers advice system that opens the eyes of all learners—not just the ones with actively engaged parents—to think about the whole range of careers that are available to them, and allows them those good quality placements to try those out.

[323] **Hannah Blythyn:** One of things we've been picking up—it's been brought up regularly in the process of this enquiry—is the need for learners to know about what an apprenticeship is at an earlier stage, so before they take their options. Do you think the same would apply to getting that introduction to the world of work, and what's out there? Traditionally, I think it's been done in year 10, and then maybe year 12. Do you think learners need to have that experience a lot younger in their education experience?

[324] **Mr Jones:** I think it's okay to do that—if you can do it earlier, that's great. But, equally, you've to be clear that if you bombard companies with requests for work experience at so many levels, the companies then—some of them—get switched off and the young people don't get the right experience. It actually works against what you're trying to do in the first place. But I think the key thing is to join things up. It's to join up work experience with apprenticeships so that that will be showing people the routes through—showing them the options. And as Nicola said, it's that real focus on impartial advice in everything that we do.

[325] **Ms Bowen:** I think there's some research from FSB Scotland that shows that if a young person has three or more interactions with an employer, then they're statistically significantly much less likely to become NEET. I think it's the FSB Scotland report 'School ties' that makes that reference. So, absolutely, it's not about bombarding employers, as you need a co-ordinated

approach, but it is about recognising—whether that’s employers coming into schools and colleges and talking about what they do—that those three engagements can make all the difference in somebody’s propensity to go on into further education, employment and training, or not.

[326] **Hannah Blythyn:** I want to move briefly now to the amount of employers offering apprenticeships. I know, at the start, we said that good progress has been made, but it stands at around 13 per cent of employers who employ apprentices. Generally, how do you think this can be increased? To link to that, we see great examples of large employers offering lots of apprenticeships. We went to BT last week and, in my area, Airbus offer a significant number of apprenticeships. In your evidence, you mention the shared apprenticeship scheme and trying to get SMEs to take on apprenticeships. How can we build on that and how can we encourage more employers who aren’t the big employers with those resources in place already to see the value of really good apprenticeships?

[327] **Mr Jones:** I think one of the ways is to look at the funding models for the whole plethora of education from the Welsh Government. The colleges themselves, as Rachel has just said, are offering vocational programmes, but I don’t think enough of the young people who are doing vocational programmes—your BTECs and the like at colleges at level 2 and level 3—actually then progress into apprenticeships. So, I ask the questions then: if you’ve spent the last two or three years doing social care and you end up doing something totally different—? We know there are positives in doing that, but equally, I think a larger proportion should be progressing into apprenticeships. So, maybe that’s something to do with the funding around apprenticeships.

[328] I do think apprenticeships deliver massive value, I have to say, but arguably it’s a little bit on the cheap as well. I think if we really want to be getting more in there, we need to be incentivising it for employers, and maybe if you’re looking for key areas, link perhaps to the growth deal areas of Wales, the three areas, or looking at enterprise zones and so on. We need to be really saying, ‘Okay, where are the demands for training in Wales? Where do we need more apprenticeships?’ If you look at Anglesey and Wylfa Newydd, if that comes off there’s a massive demand up there. Then, really, it’s trying to make sure that no barriers are put in place. In fact, it’s quite the opposite. I’m all for incentivising in whatever way—funding or otherwise—involvement in priority areas, but at the same time, not just making it attractive for those big engineering areas.

[329] We mustn't forget things. I've mentioned social care already, but there's a massive time bomb, as I'm sure Assembly Members will know, about social care now and moving forward, whereas for some people, social care apprenticeships are not seen as adding value. Well, my God, they do; hugely. I do think we need to make sure we don't forget sectors like that and look at their economic impact as well.

[330] **Ms Thornton-Scott:** When we were just talking about the importance of face-to-face engagement with pupils, it is as important, face-to-face and one-to-one, with the SME network, because they need that hand-holding through that process. As a network, we need to have more people on the ground to actually engage with the SME marketplace and the SME employers, because they do need a significant amount of advice and guidance around the whole process. I agree with David saying that incentives—. We've had, in the past, a YRP programme that paid an employer a wage subsidy to help support the engagement of apprenticeships. I was in a meeting two weeks ago with Welsh Government and I do believe that they might be looking at doing something similar again. So, any financial support to help the SME network of employers would definitely help.

[331] One other thing I wrote down here is that the marketing material that we seem to produce when encouraging employers into the apprenticeship programme is very much targeted at the corporates. It's not targeted—. I was looking at some marketing materials yesterday and I couldn't see any case study of a one-man-band plumber in a particular area that has engaged in the apprenticeship programme and has taken on an apprentice. It was very large, corporate companies. So, if I was an SME, would I look at that marketing material and say, 'Well, apprenticeships can't be for us because they must be for larger employers, not for me'?

[332] **Ms Bowen:** We've got some European-funded research that we'll be publishing later this year, which has been around SMEs' experiences of working with colleges and that sort of thing, partly around apprenticeships. One of the reasons that small businesses identified for not taking on apprentices wasn't that they didn't want to or they thought that young people wouldn't be up to scratch or wouldn't have what they need, but it was more on the, 'But we don't think we have enough to offer an apprentice in order for them to meet the full range of skills that they would need. We're too small. We couldn't give them everything'. In terms of the figure of 13 per cent, I think when I had a look at that, that was for data relating to 2011-14,

so if that is the case, it would be useful to know whether that 13 per cent has improved over the past three years.

[333] **Russell George:** Mark Isherwood.

[334] **Mark Isherwood:** Diolch. I think I should start by declaring, as David knows, that three of my children went to colleges in the Coleg Cambria group. So, that's out in the open. And they all did very well because of it. Developing that further, can I just slip in a question, as David's here? Given that you and other border colleges are working cross-border, and particularly with your involvement and focus on Mersey-Dee and beyond, what are the cross-border implications for apprenticeships of that?

[335] **Mr Jones:** How much time have you got? It's really complicated. It's a major issue because, in England, they're changing the apprenticeship standards significantly—I'm giving it away by using the term 'standards'. In Wales, we've got apprenticeship frameworks. In England, they're moving from frameworks to standards. So, at the moment, there's two different approaches. I think the aim is to get a point where we just have standards. Now, it's just a term used for something similar, but the point I'm making is that it's something different.

[336] So, for instance, there's a large multinational construction industry company based in north-east Wales that we are working with. They want us as a local provider to do their apprenticeships but, like a lot of employers, they want a one-stop shop across the UK. The trouble we're having is that, for the learners that they have down in the south-east of England, they've now got different standards. Regardless of whether we can work around the bureaucracy of slightly different standards for, effectively, the same trades, the employer just wants all of its employees to do the same thing. So, I do think there needs to be a discussion. I know we've got devolution and different priorities and I fully support that, but I do think we need to find ways that we don't create barriers just because we're in another country with different frameworks. That has to be a two-way thing.

[337] The other thing is around the whole levy thing and the way that the funding for apprenticeships now takes place. Like Nicola's college—NPTC Group—Coleg Cambria and a few others in Wales, I think about half a dozen organisations in Wales, including a couple of universities, are now on the Skills Funding Agency's register of approved training providers. That means that we can now deliver in England, but that means not trading, effectively, in

money; it means trading in apprenticeship vouchers—e-vouchers. That's another complexity that comes into it.

[338] But if you want to be a responsive college, based right on the border—and I'm sure, hopefully, everyone in this room knows where we are; it's not like down here, where there's a big gap around the Severn bridge before you go over, even though I know there's lots going on there with Cardiff and Vale College. Up in north-east Wales, we cross that border every day, and 25 per cent of the staff of the college live in England. It's not a border. So, any barrier, anything that makes it more complicated for training, is really not good for north Wales.

[339] **Mark Isherwood:** Thank you. Apologies for digressing from the script, I think it was important we got that point while you were here.

[340] Higher level apprenticeships. Who are the main training providers in Wales and what are the primary sectors?

[341] **Mr Jones:** I'll just start and I'm sure my colleagues can come in with a bit more detail. Higher apprenticeships—clearly, we've been running them as providers, colleges, for a number of years, and they've tended to be some of the bigger employers in areas like engineering, certainly up in north-east Wales. We do all the work for Airbus and others. So, that means that's very much been a part of what they do. They work pretty well.

[342] I think the problem now—and I know it's been discussed this morning—is about degree apprenticeships and that distinction between a higher apprenticeship, where you're talking about a framework with a level 4 or level 5 qualification, and now moving, as they're now doing in England—back to that cross-border thing again and parity across the UK—to degree apprenticeships, where we're looking at going up to much higher levels. We have local employers who want that offer and we don't have frameworks and we don't have the funding in place to make that happen.

[343] I'll use Airbus as an example again. We do a degree apprenticeship with them because of the standards they want. They're a very demanding company. That now is a partnership between Airbus UK, Coleg Cambria and Swansea University. We've developed a centre at the college that builds on the great work that Swansea are doing in advanced manufacturing materials. So, it's a great, if you like, made-in-Wales solution to help Airbus. But funding that is a nightmare. It's a nightmare because the company wants a

BEng course, which we're now delivering with Swansea up in north-east Wales, but the funding just isn't within the framework. So, we end up having to work—. Well, the company has to pay for it, effectively.

[344] Now, you might say, 'Let them pay for it'. I'm not sure that's fair, particularly if the company can see, in England, that it can get it funded through the levy system. So, you know, companies based in Bristol as well may end up getting to a point where they say, 'Do you know what, if Wales can't offer me the same deal as England, then maybe we need to do our training through an English provider'.

[345] **Mark Isherwood:** What is the role of higher education and work-based providers in that higher-level provision?

[346] **Mr Jones:** It's crucial. Ultimately, so many of these companies, particularly in advanced manufacturing, but not uniquely—I'm sure Nicola will pick up the health sector shortly. But if we're going to offer those top-class twenty-first century services in those areas, to be competitive, to be responsive, then we need our people to be skilled at that high level. So, it's absolutely essential. At the moment, the fact we can't move fast enough is causing a major problem. Nicola, do you want to come in on that one?

11:30

[347] **Ms Thornton-Scott:** I'm doing quite a lot of work with our local health board at the moment, and they are demanding degree apprenticeships, and, obviously, we're unable to respond to that at the moment, so it is causing a little bit of an issue. One of the major degrees that they're looking at is a degree in nursing. And I know that, in England, probably about four or five months ago perhaps, they launched their degree in nursing. We don't seem to be going down that route at the moment in Wales. I sit on a number of workforce development groups within the health board, and they are very concerned that talent from Wales will be lost to England, particularly around the nursing strand. Because if we're only offering the academic route, where individuals have to pay, and nursing degrees are offered in England, then talent from Wales will be lost to England, in order to take up a subsidised programme in England to follow and reach a nursing qualification. So, our health board is very concerned about the slowness for us as a provider, and as Welsh Government, in responding to not just degree apprenticeships, but particularly in nursing.

[348] **Ms Bowen:** I think there's a wider point here; the degree-level apprenticeships in Wales are very underdeveloped. We'd want to make sure that they are developed in the right way, and that's to be vocationally led. They can't just be what HE, for instance, wants to provide, or rebranding existing higher education courses. They need to be genuinely vocationally led, by employers, by industry, to make sure that they're meeting what industry needs.

[349] **Mark Isherwood:** Thank you. And in terms of progression into higher level, is this primarily coming from level 3 apprenticeships, or, if not, where from?

[350] **Mr Jones:** Yes, in most cases, that's the way it would come. However, again, if you choose some of the engineering apprenticeships—the ones I mentioned—I think it's about giving young people another option. Even if they choose to do A-levels, because it's the right thing for them, it's about saying, 'Well, actually, at the end of A-levels, the traditional route is maybe to go away full time and do a degree for three or four years, but, do you know what, there's an alternative option; it actually doesn't leave you with fees to pay, you get paid while you do it, you work with one of the leading companies in the world'—obviously, I'm talking about Airbus again—'you get a degree from Swansea University, and you have the pleasure of going to Coleg Cambria as well'. Now, to me, that's a pretty good option.

[351] But the point I'm making is that it's different routes, isn't it? It's different routes forward. So, it's not just about apprenticeships and coming in to the higher apprenticeship, it's also about recognising that, for some people, doing A-levels—. And we're talking about young people who are getting two As and a B, and things like that, in their A-levels—maths, physics and chemistry—who are then becoming the leading engineers at those companies. And there's going to be more demand for that. My involvement with the enterprise zone in Deeside is highlighting that as an issue as well. So, I see more companies wanting that sort of offer.

[352] **Ms Thornton-Scott:** Although progression from level 3 can be restricted, moving to a level 4 or a level 5, because the job role would have to match the criteria of a level 4 or level 5 higher apprenticeship. So, if they are currently not working at that particular level, it can restrict them somewhat. I would endorse, and I would like to see, a modular approach to that higher apprenticeship, so perhaps aspiring people not quite at that job role could maybe undertake the knowledge part of the apprenticeship, with

that opportunity then for promotion within their workplace, and then, obviously, would pick up the competence part once they move into that job role that best suits them, being able to demonstrate they can do the job.

[353] **Russell George:** Have you finished your line of questions, Mark? Jeremy Miles.

[354] **Jeremy Miles:** Thank you, Chair. With the demise of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, there are challenges that come, in terms of planning and collaboration, and all sorts of other aspects as well. What's your understanding of the potential role of the Wales Employment and Skills Board, in terms of planning in the area of apprenticeships generally in Wales?

[355] **Ms Bowen:** I think that Colleges Wales has been invited to join the WESB, which has been reconstituted. In a former life, when I was at the Federation of Small Businesses, we were represented on the Wales Employment and Skills Board, but it was quite telling that universities and colleges weren't. I think in the revised WESB they will be; I think Universities Wales have been invited to sit on it as well, which is welcome. I think in the 'Aligning the apprenticeship' document that was produced by Welsh Government recently, we need to be clear about what the role of WESB can be. If it's going to be that strategic, high-level overview board bringing together employers forums and providers and education, that's very different from those people deciding on what exactly the content of an apprenticeship framework should be. So, I think we need to make sure that we're asking people to make the right sorts of decisions, rather than people who maybe would have been me in my former role, trying to pick over what should be in a level 5 apprenticeship in engineering, which I think is probably too operational for that board.

[356] **Jeremy Miles:** And how would it relate to the work of the regional skills partnerships, do you feel?

[357] **Ms Bowen:** I'm not clear yet how the regional skills partnerships would relate to WESB but, obviously, they need to be joined up. In terms of regional skills partnerships, at the moment there seems to be some questions over what's going on in north Wales in terms of—. With the potential growth deal being offered to north Wales, there's a suggestion that the regional skills partnership could be absorbed into being part of the system there—being underneath the joint committee of local authorities—which doesn't seem to

have been discussed or consulted on with external partners. The last thing we would want is for that sort of agenda to be overtaken by the city deal agenda. So, I think there are questions over how those things continue to work and their relationship in terms of what's happening with skills in future growth deals and city deals.

[358] **Mr Jones:** Can I just add quickly—? With the RSPs, they've developed quite quickly over the last few years; the north Wales one was the first one. I think it's very early days in terms of their role. I think we can't get carried away just because we've got three groups and say, 'Well, that's sorted that, then'. I think we really need to scrutinise them very, very closely. I'm not convinced that they've got enough private sector business input; too much from perhaps our sector and others in the public sector. And certainly, as Rachel said, some of the recent draft documentation that seems to show these RSPs feeding into the local authority boards that may be leading on the city and the growth deals—I find that very worrying, because that's not where the expertise is.

[359] **Jeremy Miles:** But are they meaningful players in the apprenticeship world generally at this point?

[360] **Ms Bowen:** They're under-resourced. They don't have a great deal of people behind them to produce the documentation and the statistics. So, it depends—again, we need to be clear about what we can expect from them with their level of funding. I'm not certain of their degree of engagement with apprenticeships.

[361] **Mr Jones:** It's not specifically looking at that level. What they're doing is looking at local market information and distilling all that so you end up with an informed regional plan, which I think is a very good part of it. It's like a lot of things—it's being clear about the terms of reference, their remit, what they are doing and what they're not doing.

[362] **Jeremy Miles:** So, there's no real role—. I mean, it's obviously skills planning and forward look and all that kind of stuff, but nothing—. You'd distinguish that from the delivery aspect. Clearly, they don't deliver, but you would not even see them conceptualising their work in a way that particularly supports apprenticeships, as opposed to any other part of the skills agenda, really.

[363] **Mr Jones:** There's an argument—

[364] **Jeremy Miles:** That's your personal view.

[365] **Mr Jones:** Yes.

[366] **Jeremy Miles:** Okay.

[367] **Russell George:** Adam, did you want to jump in on this one?

[368] **Adam Price:** Jest ar y nodyn yma, a dweud y gwir, yn eich tystiolaeth ar rôl y partneriaethau sgiliau rhanbarthol, rydych yn cyfeirio ym mharagraff 7 at gyfleoedd i'r cyrff yma ddod yn fwy amlwg ar ôl Brexit, i'r pwynt lle rydych yn cyfeirio at fodel y LEPs yn Lloegr, sydd â rhyw rôl cydlynol nawr o dan y cyd-destun prentisiaethau yn Lloegr. Rydych yn gweld bod yna bosibilrwydd y byddan nhw'n datblygu i'r pwynt yna, ond a fydddech chi'n meddwl bod hynny yn beth positif yn y pen draw? Mae ychydig bach yn gwrthddweud beth rydych chi newydd ddweud ynglŷn â'u hyfywedd neu eu gallu nhw—eu capasiti nhw, a dweud y gwir—i chwarae rôl mwy blaenllaw.

Adam Price: Just on this point, in your evidence regarding the role of the regional skills partnerships, you refer in paragraph 7 to opportunities for these bodies to become more prominent post Brexit, to the point that you refer to the LEPs in England, which have some kind of co-ordination role in the context of apprenticeships in England. You see that there's a possibility that these will develop to this point, but do you think that will be a positive thing ultimately? It slightly contradicts what you've just said about their viability or their capacity to play a more prominent role.

[369] **Ms Bowen:** I think that comes back to deciding, in the new landscape of skills, and in the context of things like city deals, what is it that we want regional skills partnerships to do in the future. If we want them to take on a bigger role where they could become much more involved in apprenticeships and looking at that—so, taking it beyond the identifying future skills needs and developing those plans—if we wanted them to do that, we'd need to think about what sort of resources they are. In terms of future opportunities, the world in 2017 is a very different place from where it was in the original apprenticeships inquiry in 2012. We're looking at, potentially, the loss of European funding and UK Government funding post 2020, so is it time to have a complete rethink about where we want to go with skills and the role of regional skills partnerships? Do we want them to have a different role to

what they do now? What's their capacity to develop?

[370] **Adam Price:** Jest dau gwestiwn byr, byr. Rŷch chi hefyd yn cyfeirio yn yr un paragraff at y cytundebau chwyddedig—*overinflated*—gan y sector breifat. Hynny yw, rydw i'n cymryd mai cyfeirio at ddarparwyr y sector breifat ydych chi. A ydy hynny yn broblem ddybryd o fewn cydestun prentisiaethau a dysgu yn y gweithle? Hefyd, a fedrwyd chi ddweud ychydig bach yn fwy am y ddarpariaeth yn ddwyieithog neu drwy gyfrwng yr iaith Gymraeg? Faint o ganran o brentisiaethau, er enghraifft, sydd yn cael eu darparu ar hyn o bryd yn ddwyieithog neu yn Gymraeg yn unig, a sut ydych chi'n gweld hynny yn cynyddu, gobeithio, dros y blynyddoedd sy'n dod?

[371] **Mr Jones:** Fe wnaif i ymateb, efallai, i'r rhan olaf o'r cwestiwn yna. Nid yw'r ystadegau ddim gen i, ond fe allwn ni rannu'r rheini efo chi ar ôl y cyfarfod. Ond mae o'n rhy isel ar y foment, buaswn i'n dweud. Mae yna le i wella faint o bobl sy'n dysgu drwy'r Gymraeg neu'n ddwyieithog yn fawr iawn. Rwy'n credu mai'r peth i wneud ydy canolbwyntio ar y meysydd yna ble mae gwir werth i fod yn ddwyieithog o fewn y maes dysgu. Felly dyna beth rydym ni'n ei wneud. Er enghraifft, yn ardal Wrecsam rydym ni'n gwneud yr ochr gofal, arlwyo, trin gwallt ac ati. Mae'n naturiol bod rhywun yn dod a chael y gwasanaeth yna—os mae rhywun yn dod ac maen nhw'n siarad Cymraeg,

Adam Price: Just two very quick questions. You also refer in the same paragraph to the overinflated contracts by the private sector. You're referring now to private sector providers. Is that a serious problem in the context of apprenticeships and work-based learning? Also, could you say a little bit more about the bilingual or Welsh-medium provision? What percentage of apprenticeships, for example, are currently provided bilingually or only through the medium or Welsh, and how do you see that increasing, hopefully, over the years to come?

Mr Jones: I'll respond, perhaps, to that last part of the question. I don't have the statistics, but I can share that back with you after the meeting. But it is too low at the moment, I would say. There is room for improvement on how many people are learning through the medium of Welsh or bilingually. I think the thing to do is to concentrate on those areas where there is real value to being bilingual within the learning experience. For example, in Wrexham we've looked at the care sector, catering, hair and beauty, for example. It's natural that people come to get that service and if they speak Welsh they want to have a conversation through the medium of

maen nhw eisiau cael sgwrs Cymraeg Welsh about something quite am rywbeth eithaf ymarferol, a practical, in all honesty. So, that's an dweud y gwir. Felly dyna rhan bwysig important part of it. y peth.

[372] Jest i fynd yn ôl at y pwynt y Just to go back to the point that you gwnaethoch chi ynglŷn â'r LEPs, beth made regarding the LEPs, what is sy'n wahanol gyda'r LEPs ydy bod different with the LEPs is that LEPs yn wahanol iawn i ranbarth are very different to the region of gogledd Cymru, neu'r ffordd o north Wales, for example, or the way weithio sydd gyda ni yng Nghymru ar that we're working in Wales at the y foment, oherwydd mae gan y LEPs moment. Because the LEPs have lot mwy o rym fel rhan o'r broses much more power as part of the datganoli sydd wedi digwydd yn devolution process that's happened in Lloegr. So, o fewn LEP mae gennych in England. So, within a LEP you have chi'r cydweithio yma ar lefel addysg this collaboration on an education ar ôl 16, ond hefyd mae gennych level, post-16 education, but you chi'r parthau menter yn cael eu also have the enterprise zones being cydlynu drwy hynny hefyd, ac i co-ordinated through that, and to raddau hefyd mae rhywfaint o some extent, re-organisation of local aildrefnu cynghorau lleol wedi councils has happened within that. digwydd drwy hynny. Felly, mae'n So, it is a comprehensive strategy, I strategaeth gynhwysfawr, rydw i'n think. Whereas in Wales, I think we credu, ble, yng Nghymru, mae have enterprise zones, we have the gennym ni'r parthau menter, mae developments on a regional level, gennym ni'r datblygiadau and they're all separate. I think in rhanbarthol a phethau, ac maent i bringing them together, the LEPs gyd ar wahân. Efallai, drwy eu tynnu perhaps have a better opportunity nhw at ei gilydd, mae gan y LEPs than parts of Wales. And, of course, gyfle gwell na rhai rhannau o Gymru. going back to where we are in the Wrth gwrs, yn mynd yn ôl at ble north-east, it is quite a threat to us rydym ni yn y gogledd-ddwyrain, because that means then that the mae'n dipyn o fygythiad i ni, achos area of Chester and Warrington can os mae hynny wedyn yn meddwl bod take advantage of this. This is some pobl yn ardal Caer a Warrington yn sort of threat to us over the border in manteisio ar y peth, wrth gwrs, Wrexham and Deeside. mae'n rhywfaint o fygythiad i ni dros y ffin yng Nglannau Dyfrdwy a Wrecsam.

[373] **Russell George:** Can I just—? I realise we're just about out of time, but

if I could ask Members if they've got any final questions. I know Mark Isherwood's got one. But if I could also ask our witnesses if they've got any final comments to make.

[374] **Adam Price:** I did just ask about overinflated contracts from private sector providers. I'm sure private sector providers will probably want to respond, but could you just evidence that claim?

[375] **Russell George:** If I could just ask Mark to ask his question, and if you could incorporate your final comments and address Adam's point as well. Mark, did you have a question?

[376] **Mark Isherwood:** Yes, please. In the context of Rachel's comment about north Wales and the growth deal—we know the bid's about to go in, and with David here, he was a signatory to the growth vision for the north Wales economy, and you're a growth deal partner—what model do you envisage—not just you, but the partnership—as things go forward?

[377] **Russell George:** I'll come to Rachel first to address Adam's point and make any final closing remarks, and then to David and then to Nicola. Rachel.

[378] **Ms Bowen:** In terms of the comments about private sector contracts, I think that's a reference to how Welsh Government currently lets work-based learning contracts and the process that that goes through, how complex it is, and the way that maybe we don't always make the best use of time and money around that. I'm happy to pick that up at a later date and go through that in more detail.

11:45

[379] In terms of final points, just a plea that apprenticeships are really vitally important but they are not the entirety of the skills offer and the training that Wales needs in order to improve its economy. I've only been in post eight months and this is the second time I've been in to talk to you about apprenticeships—our skills agenda is much broader than that.

[380] **Russell George:** Okay, thank you, Rachel. David.

[381] **Mr Jones:** In terms of the north Wales deal—clearly, with the general election coming up, as it is now, as well, it's sort of pushed that a little bit backwards. But, clearly, there's a proposal going to be submitted. I do think,

in terms of the skills element of that, I would say it's work in progress and we need to find the right way through it that builds on the success of both of the colleges in north Wales—Grŵp Llandrillo Menai and Coleg Cambria—and that we don't end up with a model that stifles the great work that the colleges have done with the private training providers as well. We don't want to be stuck in some bureaucratic growth deal that takes us back 15 years.

[382] **Russell George:** Nicola, do you have any final comments?

[383] **Ms Thornton–Scott:** Just one final from me, please, and that would be to try and help break down the barriers and to introduce the parity of esteem between academic and vocational. One way to do that would be to introduce the junior apprenticeship at 14. If that was introduced at age 14, then it would be firmly embedded within the school offer. I think it would be a very respective offer for both pupil and for parent.

[384] **Russell George:** Can I thank you very much for your evidence this morning? Diolch yn fawr.

11:46

Papurau i'w Nodi Papers to Note

[385] **Russell George:** Just while we're changing our witnesses, can I just ask Members if they're happy to note the papers under item 6—the letter from the Welsh Language Commissioner regarding the committee's inquiry on apprenticeships? Are Members happy to note that? Thank you.

[386] In the next session, if we can try and finish at around about 12.20 p.m., it will give us five or 10 minutes just to debrief at the end. Otherwise, if we go up to 12.30 p.m., I'm conscious that everyone's going to rush off. So, in this next session, I'm coming to Mark first and then Jeremy on 24, Hannah on 25, Adam 26, Mark 27.

11:48

Prifysgolion Cymru—Prentisiaethau yng Nghymru 2017
Universities Wales—Apprenticeships in Wales 2017

[387] **Russell George:** Bore da. Good morning. I'd like to welcome you both to give evidence to our inquiry this morning on apprenticeships in Wales. I'm grateful for your time with us this morning. I wonder if you could introduce yourselves, just for the record.

[388] **Professor Lydon:** Hi, I'm Julie Lydon, I'm vice-chancellor of the University of South Wales. I'm here representing my colleagues in Universities Wales.

[389] **Mr Rees:** I'm Kieron Rees, I'm a policy adviser for Universities Wales.

[390] **Russell George:** Thank you. You are invited to answer questions in either English or Welsh. I hope you've had some training on the translation equipment. I'm very grateful. In that case, I'll move to Mark Isherwood first.

[391] **Mark Isherwood:** Thank you. We're seeking to understand your role in the growth of higher-level apprenticeships since 2012. Which sectors and occupations, in your experience, are most suited to higher-level apprenticeships—that's 4 and above, but also degree level 6 and above?

[392] **Professor Lydon:** Talking about degree apprenticeships, we know, from both the experience in England and Wales, that there are particular sectors that, at the moment, seem to have a greater propensity to explore these routes as a way of widening access and building economic growth. Those routes, in England, appear to be around chartered management status and around digital and technology. The third area, which is relevant in Wales, is engineering. So, I think it is a reflection, perhaps, of where those sectors are and how they're seeing this form of development of their staff as a way of developing their businesses.

[393] **Mr Rees:** Yes. As Julie mentioned, the growth in degree apprenticeships—that's apprenticeships that provide an undergraduate degree or a Master's degree—in England has been driven by three in particular, which are the chartered manager, the computing degree apprenticeship and engineering-related apprenticeships. When you look at where interest has been expressed in the development of degree apprenticeships in Wales, it does correspond with those areas, as well as broader areas such as, for example, compound semi-conductors.

[394] **Mark Isherwood:** Which higher education institutions are providing higher-level apprenticeships so far, and to what extent?

[395] **Professor Lydon:** I'm going to let Kieron answer the specifics in terms of detail in a second, but I think the work that universities do—and all universities do this in various shapes and forms—actually, in terms of working with our employers, working with our network of FE colleges, and private training providers—. Actually, we may not have always called them degree apprenticeships, but there are lots of ways that we engage with businesses in terms of the development of their workforces. Whilst the number of what are called degree apprenticeships may look modest, it has actually been an area of growth over the last few years, as opposed to the more generalised decline in general apprenticeships being taken up in Wales. Kieron, do you want to just talk about the specific numbers?

[396] **Mr Rees:** Yes. Picking up Professor Lydon's point, the work that universities do in the vocational area is broader than apprenticeships. So, for example, every year, there are around 6,000 students studying a higher national certificate or a higher national diploma—so, level 4 and 5 qualifications—in Wales. Also, when you look through the existing higher-level apprenticeship frameworks in Wales, a number of them are underpinned by qualifications awarded by Welsh universities. Where there is scope for growth and development in this area is particularly in the degree apprenticeship area, where there have only been a handful of level 6 and 7 qualifications being delivered through an apprenticeship pathway in Wales. There are three degree apprenticeship frameworks currently in Wales, and that's where there's the real opportunity to grow and meet employer skills needs.

[397] **Mark Isherwood:** Are you able to tell us which universities are primarily involved, or is this across the piece? Is everybody equally involved?

[398] **Mr Rees:** It's almost entirely across the piece and, actually, the interest from higher education providers and universities in Wales is a broad spread, because what you find is different universities have different areas of focus. So, a degree apprenticeship in compound semiconductors would be very relevant for universities such as Cardiff, whereas we already know there's a level 6 framework on advanced manufacturing in Swansea. So, it's a real spread.

[399] **Professor Lydon:** I think the context is important too, behind your question—sorry, I think that’s what you’re trying to get at, actually. One of the things I think universities do well, and would want to continue to do well, is to work in partnership with other organisations. So, both the scope of our mutual horizons and the specifics of the work that we do actually mean that we’re part of the glue or part of the hub of making that happen. So, for example, Cardiff University and ourselves recently had a conversation with the Office for National Statistics about degree apprenticeships. We are at an early stage of that discussion. I don’t know quite where that’s going to lead in terms of the mechanics of who does what exactly, but it was important that we were both at the table, because we’ve got a variety of expertise to bring to that consideration, which, mutually, are beneficial for that particular organisation, and of course for Wales in the wider sense of establishing ourselves and continuing to be recognised as a major centre for data science. So, I think that’s why the degree and extent varies.

[400] In the case of my own university, we have been substantial in our support for FE partnerships and our work in vocational qualifications. We provide about 35 per cent of part-time degrees for the whole of Wales. It’s part of our heritage and history, so we tend to naturally occupy some of that space. But we’ve moved to look at what would be called a postgraduate apprenticeship—so, working with the financial and professional services sector, which of course is a critical part of our growth in south Wales. Actually, we’ve been working with four major companies to develop a postgraduate programme, which is taking graduates. So, you could say that those people are already qualified, but actually they’re doing a form of apprenticeship, through a two-year programme, which actually is being supported by the Welsh Government, which enables them to be more effective in role.

[401] The critical thing about apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships is actually it’s part of how the employer is really stepping up to the plate in terms of their engagement in terms of their workforce development. I think that’s the lesson that’s coming out of England and Scotland, and it’s work that we’re already doing in Wales. I’m confident that we can build on that capability. That’s why we can’t say to you it’s only particular universities, because you will find it happening in every university to some degree, and in some sectors, and with a range of partners.

[402] **Mr Rees:** To put that exact point in context, when the higher education funding council put out a call for plans on the development of degree

apprenticeships, I believe that every university in Wales responded.

[403] **Mark Isherwood:** What information, if any, do you have on the demographic of the higher-level apprentice—age or otherwise?

[404] **Mr Rees:** I don't have to hand specific information on the demographics. We do know that 16 per cent of all apprenticeships are a higher-level apprenticeship. Where data perhaps aren't quite as clear is at what level apprentices are studying higher-level apprenticeships—whether at level 4, 5 or 6, or indeed 7. But, looking at the implementation of degree apprenticeships in the rest of the UK, it does appear that it's quite a wide demographic, which spans from those who are first entering the workplace, via the degree apprenticeship, to those who are retraining or upskilling through a degree apprenticeship.

[405] **Mark Isherwood:** Thank you. Do you have further information you could share with us?

[406] **Mr Rees:** We should be able to provide the committee with something.

[407] **Mark Isherwood:** That would be helpful, thank you. What are the advantages and disadvantages, both for the young person and the employer, of a higher-level apprenticeship compared with a degree apprenticeship or a foundation degree?

[408] **Professor Lydon:** I'm struggling a bit with the 'higher' versus 'degree'. Sorry, I don't understand what the difference is.

[409] **Mark Isherwood:** I was hoping you might say that, because that's—

[410] **Professor Lydon:** So, I'm going to be unequivocal about this: I think the growth of encouraging work-based learning and employers to actively work to upskill their workforce is ultimately about productivity and it's about economic growth. I think we'd all agree that that's the backcloth to this, and, actually, the growth will come from having people who are qualified at degree level.

[411] The evidence from the Confederation of British Industry is very clear about the impact that degree-level makes. That is not to say you don't need people having stepping-off points, and that is not to say you don't have people starting at different points on the programme. I've described

postgraduate apprenticeships with our financial and professional services. Equally, clearly, it's really important that people are doing HNDs and HNCs and continuing to do that.

[412] So, I don't know whether I can answer your question, because I'm not sure I'm differentiating here in terms of what they're about. But I think what we're starting with, and what we would expect to see happening, which has already been evidenced in England, is that, actually, it is opening up a new demographic to be able to participate in higher education.

[413] So, it is complementing the success of higher education with its partners in terms of full-time participation, it's complementing the work that we've done around part-time, and it is enabling employers to work with us to make sure that their workforce are appropriately developed. For some demographics, the attraction of being paid while you study, I think, is one that we should not ignore. I think it will be opening up new routes for people. I passionately believe in people from all backgrounds, regardless of their postcode or who their parents are, actually being able to participate in higher education: a view that is shared, I know, by all my colleagues. We see this, positively, as another way of opening up those doors. For certain parts of Wales, I think it'll be really important. In my own hinterland around the Welsh Valleys, I do see this as being something that will be significant, and it will not be only young people. So, you said, 'young people'—again, I'm not quite sure what you might mean by 'young people', sorry. The universities say that young entrants are people are under 21 coming into university, some people might say young people are people between 14 and 16. So, I think we are looking at this being an all-age approach.

12:00

[414] **Mr Rees:** On a fundamental level, a higher-level apprenticeship is any apprenticeship delivered at level 4 or above, and that includes degree apprenticeships. A degree apprenticeship is specifically an apprenticeship at the end of which you have either an undergraduate degree or a Master's degree. So, upon completion of your apprenticeship, you have, for example, a Bachelor's or a Master's. That's not the case with all higher-level apprenticeships. Those at 4 and 5 will result in different qualifications.

[415] **Mark Isherwood:** Should we, therefore—I'll finish here—rebrand level 6 and above as degree-level apprenticeship, given your comments?

[416] **Russell George:** They'll have to be very quick answers on that, because we're a bit pushed for time on subject areas.

[417] **Professor Lydon:** I try to make things quite simple, because I think, for most of us, actually, the world's complex enough. We know that the experience in England and Scotland is that this work has been labelled 'degree apprenticeships'. We are working with organisations that cross our borders, we're working with populations; I think we need to make it clear and appropriate. So, I would just call it all 'degree apprenticeships', because, actually, whether it's at level 4 or 5, many of those people will want to go on to complete a degree at some point. That's been the experience of the current higher national diplomas and higher national certificates.

[418] **Russell George:** I hope our witnesses won't mind, but, if Members asking questions feel that they're not getting the answers they want, I hope you don't mind that they jump in. That's fine. Jeremy Miles.

[419] **Jeremy Miles:** I want to ask you about that last point that you made, actually, because it seems to me that the whole field of apprenticeships is beset by an absence of reliable data, actually, in terms of all sorts of issues, and this is quite an important area, it seems to me. So, in looking at the question of demand for higher-level apprenticeships generally, you mentioned there that there would be people doing level 4 and 5 who would want to progress to level 6, whether that's rebranded or not. Are there reliable data on that, or is it a judgment, effectively?

[420] **Mr Rees:** I think I'd be wary of the word 'rebranded'. I think what we have to understand is delivery at level 6, at degree level, is very small in Wales, with there only being three frameworks.

[421] **Jeremy Miles:** When you say 'very small', for example do you know how many people are studying on degree apprenticeship courses within those three frameworks?

[422] **Mr Rees:** That information is not available from Welsh Government. Their data talk about those studying at level 4 and above, so—

[423] **Mark Isherwood:** So, it's not broken down.

[424] **Mr Rees:** No.

[425] **Jeremy Miles:** Okay.

[426] **Mr Rees:** In terms of demand, I think there are two areas of demand, which are employer demand and the individual demand. The employer demand, I think—and Professor Lydon can speak of this from her perspective as an institution—is absolutely there. Universities are receiving queries from businesses across Wales about the provision of degree apprenticeships. In terms of individual demand, I think the growth in degree apprenticeships, for example, in England, shows that there is definitely an individual demand for it as well. There will be, at the end of 2017, over 7,600 degree apprentices in England, and that's from a starting point of zero in 2015 when they first began.

[427] **Jeremy Miles:** Okay. So, over two years, it's gone from zero to 7,600, you said.

[428] **Mr Rees:** Yes.

[429] **Jeremy Miles:** Right. Okay.

[430] **Mr Rees:** And I believe I'm right in saying there's now 100 degree apprenticeship standards in England, and that, again, started from a very low base.

[431] **Jeremy Miles:** So, what's your sense of what the—what would success look like, if I can put it in those terms, from the university's point of view, in terms of the numbers of students in Wales in two years' time, from whenever you get to launch things on a serious scale? What does that look like? What would success look like?

[432] **Professor Lydon:** Okay. So, my university has 25,000 students, of which 40 per cent are part-time. I think, in two years' time, I would expect us to have hundreds of students participating in these new ways of participating in HE.

[433] **Jeremy Miles:** Do you mean degree level or do you mean level 4 or 5?

[434] **Professor Lydon:** I mean on routes that lead to them getting degrees.

[435] **Jeremy Miles:** Right, but to do that—

[436] **Professor Lydon:** Some of them will choose to start—. Sorry, I'm back to—. I don't want to sound like a broken record here, but actually I think we need to ensure that there is flexibility for the employer and there's flexibility for the individual as to where they start and where they finish, and that everything has value. But the employers are clearly talking in terms of degree apprenticeships, so I think their aim would be that they get people who are qualified to that sort of level with that sort of experience and base.

[437] **Jeremy Miles:** Okay, so just under 1,000 or something would be a success, from your point of view, on a degree-level basis.

[438] **Professor Lydon:** Yes.

[439] **Jeremy Miles:** Okay. Okay. And to what extent can you outline to us the relationship that you have as a HE sector more generally, and Universities Wales, specifically, I guess, with regional skills partnerships, in identifying what needs might arise in future?

[440] **Professor Lydon:** I think universities, as you know, are geographically spread across Wales, so I think we reflect the range of regional skills partnerships well. We've been engaged and productively working as part of that network. I can talk specifically about south-east Wales and south-west Wales, but, ultimately, we'll have a talk about more of it. I think we've welcomed the introduction of those skills partnerships as a single body that helps Government in terms of policy and looking ahead in terms of skills projections and skills needs. We've welcomed them being part of the dialogue with employers and employer sectors, and, in the case of both city deals, they've clearly been part of the evidence base that supported putting together the city deals in the south-west and the south-east.

[441] **Jeremy Miles:** Okay, and does any of the work that you do with them support a particular view that you might have about the level of demand for higher-level apprenticeships, including degree apprenticeships?

[442] **Professor Lydon:** Yes, it does, and I'm sure, outwith the committee, we can provide that evidence, and through the Welsh Government that can be provided.

[443] **Mr Rees:** Across Wales, the picture is much the same as Professor Lydon described in the south-east. Every regional skills partnership has a higher education representative who is nominated from the providers in the

region, and then every skills partnership also has a specific providers group, made up of further and higher education providers in that area. So, across the board, universities are engaged with regional skills partnerships.

[444] **Jeremy Miles:** So, you're effectively, then, identifying which frameworks you need in place for your degree apprenticeships based upon discussions and evidence coming out of those bodies.

[445] **Professor Lydon:** I would say it started earlier than that. So, yes, that is an outcome of this.

[446] **Jeremy Miles:** But it has been clear for some time where the demand would come from.

[447] **Professor Lydon:** Yes. I think it has been broader than just apprenticeships, sorry, as you might expect, so it's the whole question of what are the future needs of the sectors that are both here and incoming sectors, potentially, and how does Wales collectively gear up to be able to ensure those are in place. And that includes, of course, the workforce, the people.

[448] **Mr Rees:** What's quite interesting and serendipitous is, when you look through the skill and employment plans produced by regional skills partnerships, a lot of the areas of demand or shortage that they identify align with where growth in degree apprenticeships has taken place elsewhere in the UK, for example in professional services, engineering, computing. So, there is actually—. Already, the needs being identified by the RSPs do seem to align with where the growth has been in degree apprenticeships.

[449] **Jeremy Miles:** Okay, thank you.

[450] **Russell George:** Hannah Blythyn.

[451] **Hannah Blythyn:** Thanks. I think we've already focused quite a bit on the growth or the development of degree-level apprenticeships, but I was wondering if you had any views on how—perhaps to expand on how the HE sector would perhaps like to see them develop in Wales, and if there are any lessons we can learn from elsewhere as well.

[452] **Professor Lydon:** I think it is timely that we're having this conversation. I certainly feel that this is an area of work. The label around

apprenticeships is gaining traction and, certainly, employers in Wales are wanting to have this dialogue, so I think it's timely. Your question was about how we engage with those employers and how we take things forward in terms of frameworks. I think we can learn from the experiences in England and Scotland. I think we have a strong track record in Wales in terms of working collaboratively and effectively to make sure the quality and the sustainability of those opportunities are there. The last thing you want is for somebody to start on a programme of work, a study programme, and then find actually it's not the quality they expect or it doesn't produce the sort of outcomes that they want.

[453] Universities have got a long track record of providing degrees—I think that's an important part of this—and a long track record of working in collaboration with employers and colleges and other training providers. So, I'm confident that actually we've got the mechanics in place, and I think with Government and the work that Government is doing—we've given evidence, we know the Government are actively looking at how they promote, for me, this third way of—. So, we're perhaps very familiar with full-time, we're very familiar with part-time, those labels, and, actually, how do you develop real work-based development? And I welcome that.

[454] **Mr Rees:** Yes, and I agree with what Professor Lydon was saying on the use of a collaborative model and I think what Universities Wales would want to see in the development of degree apprenticeships is—we know universities in Wales have the quality, they have the experience of awarding and delivering degree qualifications and they have the relationships with employers—so we'd really expect to see universities in a central role in the development and delivery of degree apprenticeships in Wales.

[455] On the second part of your question around lessons learnt, there are quite a few lessons to be learnt from the development of equivalent programmes in England. For example, there was a long debate in England over where accountability for quality of degree apprenticeships sits before it was recognised, very recently, that it should sit with the higher education funding council, as do the rest of degree quality arrangements. Similarly, a piece of research by Universities UK found that one of the biggest barriers universities encountered when developing and delivering degree apprenticeships was around reporting requirements and having to adapt to systems that were designed for different sectors rather than the university sector. So, there are things that can be done in that area as well to make the development as smooth and effective as possible.

[456] **Hannah Blythyn:** Okay, and I understand that the degree apprenticeships in England are delivered by the university so the apprentice can gain a degree while employed at no cost to the apprentice. Do you envisage that it'd be the same here in Wales as well?

[457] **Professor Lydon:** Yes, it would, although recognising this is all a relatively recent development, sorry, so I'm sounding as if it's been happening for years. As we know, 2015 was the start of the apprenticeships in England. Universities UK has recently done some survey work on this and—correct me if I get my facts wrong, Kieron—71 per cent of that delivery of degree apprenticeships involves other partners. So, whilst the university might be—I talked about hub and glue—at the heart of this, they're not necessarily the only people involved in the delivery, nor would you expect them to be, sorry, because the employers are clearly part of it, as are other training providers.

[458] **Mr Rees:** And seeing as they're apprenticeships and the person would maintain their status as a paid employee rather than a student, we wouldn't expect that the apprentice would be making a financial contribution.

[459] **Russell George:** Adam Price.

[460] **Adam Price:** Rydw i eisiau troi, os gallaf i, Cadeirydd, at y cwestiwn o ymwneud gan y sector addysg uwch â'r sector addysg bellach o ran prentisiaethau. Rwy'n gwybod bod yna rai prifysgolion â phartneriaethau hirdymor gyda cholegau addysg bellach ac, a dweud y gwir, yn fy ardal i yn sir Gâr, wrth gwrs, maen nhw'n rhan o'r un sefydliad—hynny yw, Coleg Sir Gâr a Choleg Ceredigion, wrth gwrs, yn rhan o Drindod Dewi Sant. Felly, a allwch chi sôn rhywfaint am y cydweithio sy'n digwydd ar hyn o bryd â'r sector addysg bellach o ran prentisiaethau addysg uwch?

Adam Price: I want to turn, if I may, Chair, to the question of higher education sector and further education sector engagement with regard to apprenticeships. I know that some universities have long-term partnerships with FE colleges and in my area, for example in Carmarthenshire, they're part of the same institution—Coleg Sir Gâr and Ceredigion are part of Trinity Saint David. So, can you talk about the collaboration that's ongoing with the further education sector in terms of apprenticeships in higher education?

[461] **Professor Lydon:** Shall I start? Do you mind if I—? So, perhaps I'll talk— . You've talked about some of the south Wales examples. I think I'll talk a little bit about universities across Wales. So, Bangor, for example—let's take the nuclear development—a lot of close collaborative working with the colleges in north Wales. I know you heard from David Jones just before we came in. I think, for us, the aim must be about seamlessness and it being workable. So, actually, for me, the whole point of that collaboration, in its variety of forms—I happen to have Merthyr Tydfil college as part of the university—is actually to ensure we're delivering the quality in a timely and appropriate fashion, and one that works.

12:15

[462] So, coming back to your question, I think there are lots of examples. They may not all be the way that we do things in the future, because what I think is really exciting about the degree apprenticeship development is that it will challenge all of us to think about different ways of actually working and delivering, because sectors like financial and professional services I referred to—I probably, two years ago, wouldn't have expected them to have wanted postgraduate apprenticeships. Yet, there they are, saying, 'This is what makes our business better and more viable.' So, I think that that close working, using our expertise—in the case of the universities in Wales, we value very much the collaboration with the FE sector. I think it is part of our DNA to talk about that seamless progression route, and there are lots of examples of it, and that's why I would see that as a significant feature of the apprenticeship landscape going forward.

[463] **Mr Rees:** Very much, I think, what both higher-level apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships offer is an opportunity to build on the collaboration already inherent in our education system. As Julie mentioned, universities work very closely with further education colleges across Wales. If the committee wanted, we'd be happy to provide some examples of that kind of collaboration. But then, also, it offers a chance to build on the collaboration with employers, because there is a tripartite approach to be looked at when it comes to high-level apprenticeships.

[464] **Adam Price:** Okay.

[465] **Russell George:** Mark Isherwood.

[466] **Mark Isherwood:** How can people find out about higher-level

apprenticeships and how, if at all, should this be changed or developed if higher-level and particularly degree-level apprenticeships continue to increase?

[467] **Professor Lydon:** I think that's a very fair question. I think, at the moment, most people find out about degrees through university websites and through talking to people. Obviously, we do extensive work in terms of schools and colleges liaison—if you like, their currency is quite well known. So, I think this is going to be an area where, collectively, we've got to look at the right ways that we provide both the information and the guidance and advice. Honestly, I think we've got work to do to make sure that's effective. I would expect us to use existing channels of communication to be working together. The big difference for me will be the employer's place in this, because apprentices are employed, and therefore, whereas we might go out into schools and colleges and talk about prospective degrees and encourage young people to think from their backgrounds as to the possibilities, I see us needing to do this work much more collaboratively with employers, because the employers will of course be employing those individuals.

[468] **Mr Rees:** I don't have anything to add.

[469] **Mark Isherwood:** Thank you.

[470] **Russell George:** Can I ask if you have any final comments? Obviously, our committee will be making recommendations to the Government and if you feel that there's recommendations you think we should include, or you have any further comments that haven't been addressed via questions, then please do speak now.

[471] **Professor Lydon:** I don't want to delay you—I've already said I think it's timely. I think we have the ability in Wales; we are a small enough community to be able to connect and do this well. I think we do need to move on with this now. I think the final thing I'd say is: let's keep it that we're using existing expertise. So, Kieron gave the example of England going around the houses about how they were going to accredit degrees, when, actually, they'd already got a body that had that responsibility. So, I think I would ask for us to be pragmatic about how we can get this working well. We need to move on with it now—that's the final point I'd make. Thank you.

[472] **Russell George:** Okay, thank you. Kieron.

[473] **Mr Rees:** I'd absolutely agree with what Professor Lydon said. I think a recognition of the role that, in particular, degree apprenticeships that result in an undergraduate degree or a Master's degree can play in improving parity of esteem for vocational pathways, particularly by ensuring universities have a key role in the development and delivery of the programmes—.

[474] **Russell George:** Okay. You will be sent a transcript of the proceedings, so please view that, and if you do feel that there are additional comments you want to make, then please do let us know. So, thank you for your time this morning, we're very grateful.

[475] **Professor Lydon:** Thank you.

[476] **Russell George:** That brings our meeting to a formal end. We next meet next Thursday.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 12:20.
The meeting ended at 12:20.*