



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru The National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Menter a Busnes The Enterprise and Business Committee

**Dydd Mercher, 12 Tachwedd 2014
Wednesday, 12 November 2014**

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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal,
cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.
In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol Committee members in attendance

Mick Antoniw

Llafur
Labour

Jeff Cuthbert	Llafur Labour
Yr Arglwydd/Lord Elis-Thomas	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
William Graham	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Conservatives (Committee Chair)
Rhun ap Iorwerth	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Eluned Parrott	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Gwenda Thomas	Llafur Labour
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

**Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance**

Andrew Cooksley	Rheolwr Gyfarwyddwr, ACT Managing Director, ACT
Mark Jones	Cadeirydd, ColegauCymru a Phennaeth Coleg Gŵyr Abertawe Chair, ColegauCymru and Principal of Gower College Swansea
Jeff Protheroe	Rheolwr Gweithrediadau, Ffederasiwn Hyfforddiant Cenedlaethol Cymru Operations Manager, Training Federation for Wales
Dr Greg Walker	Prif Weithredwr, ColegauCymru Chief Executive, ColegauCymru
Jo-Ann Walsh	Rheolwr CMC, Cyngor Sir a Dinas Abertawe KIT Manager, City and County of Swansea Council
Leanne Ward	Cydlynnydd Ôl-16, Cyngor Sir Fynwy Post-16 Co-ordinator, Monmouthshire County Council
Arwyn Watkins	Prif Swyddog Gweithredol, Ffederasiwn Hyfforddiant Cenedlaethol Cymru Chief Executive Officer, Training Federation for Wales

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

Claire Morris	Ail Glerc Second Clerk
Anne Thomas	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Richard Watkins	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:30.
The meeting began at 09:30.*

**Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions**

[1] **William Graham:** Good morning. I welcome Members, witnesses and any members of the public. The meeting is bilingual. Headphones can be used to hear a simultaneous translation from Welsh to English on channel 1 or for amplification on channel 0. The

meeting is being broadcast, and a transcript of proceedings will be published later. I remind Members and witnesses that there is no need to touch the microphones, as they should come on automatically. In the event of a fire alarm, I ask people to follow directions from the ushers. Today, we have apologies from Byron Davies and Keith Davies. I understand that Keith has been unwell, so could we extend our good wishes for a speedy recovery to Keith?

09:30

Ymchwiliad i Helpu Pobl Ifanc i gael Gwaith—Sesiwn 5 **Inquiry into Assisting Young People into Work—Session 5**

[2] **William Graham:** Our first item this morning is session 5 of our inquiry into assisting young people into work. We welcome Jo-Ann Walsh and Leanne Ward. Could I ask you to give your names and titles for the record?

[3] **Ms Ward:** My name is Leanne Ward. I am the post-16 co-ordinator for Monmouthshire County Council.

[4] **Ms Walsh:** I am Jo-Ann Walsh. I am the Keeping in Touch strategy manager for Swansea council in partnership with Career's Wales. My role is better known nowadays as the engagement and progression co-ordinator.

[5] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. The clerk reminds me that you kindly facilitated the visit in June 2010 for the previous Enterprise and Learning Committee. We are very grateful to you for that.

[6] We will move straight into questions, and our first question is from Mick Antoniw.

[7] **Mick Antoniw:** I would just like to ask you a bit about the background to the way in which local authorities have worked. We had some evidence from the Audit Commission in an earlier session that indicated that there was a degree of inconsistency among local authorities, a certain amount of dysfunction and also that there was a concern that co-ordination with other partners was perhaps not what it should be—sometimes there was a lack of knowledge about what was actually happening and what was being delivered on the ground. Does that resonate with you?

[8] **Ms Walsh:** I think that we are at an advantage in Swansea because those not in education, employment or training have been a priority for Swansea council since 2005, and it was in response to Extending Entitlement. So, in a way, we have had quite a long run-in, I suppose, compared with some other local authorities, which are now trying to respond to the youth engagement and progression framework action plan. I think that, with us in Swansea, it was very much a young people's partnership priority in the first instance. For the first two years, during the pilot phase, time was spent building up the evidence base of the reasons why young people become NEET and the characteristics that they present with. We then tried and tested some interventions that could have an impact. At the end of the two years, we presented the findings to the director of education at the time and he straight away recognised and agreed that we needed a much more strategic approach to the NEET agenda if we were going to achieve better outcomes for all young people. I think that it is because the issue is such a complex one and it is so cross-cutting, that he recognised that we needed that strategic support from the very top.

[9] That actually coincided with the Welsh Government initiating the local service boards. NEETs became a priority for Swansea's local service board in 2008. So, we went from a young people's partnership project to being a local service board priority, and that

really did help to give the project clout. What it also did was discuss very much in detail the governance, leadership and the ownership and accountability—all of these things were tackled and answered, and I think that it was very clear then what rules and responsibilities partners were expected to contribute to this agenda. We very much adopted a project-management approach and we had partnerships set up to help keep partner organisations informed and up to date and be in a position to be able to respond in a timely manner to some of the issues and risks that we had identified. I think it is, like I said, a very complex issue. The issues just keep coming. You tackle one, but you scratch the surface and then you will find more. Without that strategic response, it is very difficult for you to be able to overcome those issues and challenges in a timely manner.

[10] I think that some other local authorities perhaps did not have that experience that we had. They have not had as long a run-in as this. What I think the YEPF implementation plan has helped to do is to speed things up, I suppose. Rather than go through the learning process that we did in Swansea, accountability is very much built into the YEPF plan, and there are also very clear actions for the key stakeholders, which are described and measureable. So, that also helps partner organisations to understand what is expected of them.

[11] **Ms Ward:** It is similar in Monmouthshire. NEETs have always been a priority and we have had provision in place for a number of years for NEETs. It was as a result of that provision that the post-16 steering group was formed in Monmouthshire, which is the multi-agency meeting for all agencies working with those who are post-16. As a result of that, the Keeping in Touch groups—the KITs as they are often referred to in meetings—were formed for operational staff working within the tiers. That has enabled us to be fully aware of what agencies are delivering and what provision enables Careers Wales to understand where best to refer young people. I agree with what you say with regard to the accountability introduced from the strategy, but I feel that we have had things in place prior to this. I feel that we are in good stead to sort of carry it forward.

[12] **Mick Antoniw:** It sounds very much that there is increased co-ordination and monitoring. Of course, previous recommendations were in terms of lead workers, progression workers and so on. Has that actually begun to become a reality because, of course, it is very resource intensive?

[13] **Ms Ward:** Yes, for Monmouthshire, definitely. The role of lead worker and caseworker is embedded in the majority of the work that we do within Monmouthshire at all sorts of levels, to be completely honest with you. If I refer to the Keeping in Touch meetings that we have, the tier figures are released by Careers Wales, and the lead workers are allocated there during these provisions. We currently have a contract with the DWP to deliver a scheme called the Way into Work provision. We embed the ideology of a caseworker into that provision. So, I think that that allows for support for the individual young person but also co-ordination and then, ultimately, accountability.

[14] **Mick Antoniw:** From the experience that you have had—and clearly there has been a lot of progress made, certainly in terms of organisation—what are the two or three things that you think have had the most impact in actually achieving improved outcomes?

[15] **Ms Walsh:** That is actually a good question. It is something that the Welsh Government did ask of Swansea and Wrexham at the time, in 2010. It commissioned Arad consultants to come to work with us to identify the five key characteristics to our approach to reducing NEETs. They said that it was very much the governance arrangements. They were very impressed that regardless of whether they spoke to a cabinet member, the chief executive, the director of education, their deputies, the managers in careers, or the manager of the youth service, people had a wealth of knowledge and understanding around this agenda. They found that people were critical to the process and were as important as the system itself,

and that the people involved had a broad sphere of influence to be able to help counteract risks and issues. They felt that we had the ability to be able to identify and predict those young people most likely to become NEET and to develop our information systems to support that, and to then share that information on that partnership approach to tackling the agenda. These were some of the key things that they found for us in Swansea.

[16] **Mick Antoniw:** Do you agree with those conclusions?

[17] **Ms Walsh:** I do. One thing that they did pick out was that they felt that the role of the EPC was critical to help with improving communication, to help with the partnership working, and to help share the evidence and the information to inform strategic planning and commissioning of resources.

[18] **Gwenda Thomas:** Was there any contact with social services, identifying young people in the care system that were also at risk of becoming NEETs?

[19] **Ms Walsh:** Yes. Social services are represented on the NEET board, and the looked-after children are seen as a priority group within the NEET agenda.

[20] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I was one of those who visited in 2010, and I think that we are coming back next week. I have to say that I remember that visit with great fondness. I thought that it was very good as it helped us considerably at that time to understand the issues affecting young people. The way in which they articulated their situation was a credit to you and to your colleagues. One of the issues that you just raised was about the early identification of young people that could become NEET. I think that it is recognised across the board that the better identification we can have, obviously—it is a bit of a no-brainer—the more able we are to focus resources. I quite agree with your other point that you have to have commitment from the very top to drive things like this. What things are you both planning to do to improve your data systems, the identification of young people who are NEET, and how you will track their progress so that the most appropriate support can be provided?

[21] **Ms Ward:** Within Monmouthshire, we have systems in place where we have school-based youth workers, for example, who work with young people within the comprehensive schools within Monmouthshire, and we have representatives from youth offending, schools, social services and pupil referral services at the appropriate networking opportunities. So, what we do then is that if the young people are NEET, they are identified and their information is then brought to the keeping in touch groups by Careers Wales. What happens then is that services are responsible for particular tiers. So, within the Monmouthshire youth service, we are responsible for tier 1 and tier 2 young people. So then the lead worker is identified and allocated at that meeting. It then becomes the responsibility of the youth service to make contact with those young people and find out whether they are engaged in something or how we can best engage them. With regard to tracking that information, that is very much done through the communication between all parties. What I have noticed personally is that it is as a direct result of meeting and keeping in touch post-16 that agencies are able to share information about the young people, and that tracking is easier to do.

[22] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Okay. What about the role of schools? Do they engage fully with this process within Monmouthshire?

[23] **Ms Ward:** Yes, my line manager is engagement and progression co-ordinator for Monmouthshire, and she is doing a lot of work with the comprehensive schools. I am sorry, but I cannot comment on the progress that she has made, but I know that they are definitely fully aware of it and they are—

[24] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Schools obviously have a critical role to play as a partner. Maybe you

could send us some more information as to how that actually works.

[25] **Ms Ward:** Yes.

[26] **William Graham:** Thank you very much.

[27] **Ms Walsh:** In Swansea, Jeff, on early identification systems, there are two methods. There is the data-led approach, which consists of school data, which are collated by the education department. We have developed something known as a vulnerability assessment profile, and the indicators include things like attendance, achievement, those in receipt of free school meals, looked-after children, special educational needs and things like that. Points are allocated, and young people who score over 11 points are deemed to be the most vulnerable or most at risk. However, those sorts of data represent just one tool. The second approach is very much that practitioner-led approach—that professional input. It is just an indicator that the data provide, which says that these young people could be at risk. However, then you have conversations with key people who can confirm whether that is the case or not.

[28] How are we improving our early identification systems? There are things like the youth guarantee. When you come to the end of year 11, because we have a common application process where young people apply online, you can see at certain times of the year how many young people have applied online and how many are yet to do that, because they may need some extra support to do that. Then, by the end of February in year 11, it is very much the case that those who have not applied by that date move into the red group—we have a traffic light system with red, amber and green groups—and then there is a response to that.

[29] I think that the stage we are at is that, even though the vulnerability assessment profile has been a very useful tool and a very useful development that everyone has understood, information is now shared between partners and schools to help inform the early intervention prevention strategies, but it is also shared with post-16 providers to plan transitional support post year 11 and support into year 12 and equivalent. For us, the VAP as a tool does not help us to measure progress of our early intervention and prevention programmes, because some of those indicators will stay the same throughout school—for those young people in receipt of free school meals, for example, that might not change. So, we are looking at how the data could become more sophisticated and how we could create something that could help us to measure the impact that our early intervention and prevention strategies are having. So, that is this stage we are at currently in Swansea.

[30] **Jeff Cuthbert:** So, that is work that is under way. If I may go on, Chair, I know from a former role that I had that it is quite possible to identify those in danger of becoming NEET as early as seven or eight years of age. Clearly, by the time they are at year 11, you have a very good idea. So, is there work being done to start that process of identification much earlier than year 11?

[31] **Ms Walsh:** Yes. The vulnerability assessment profile data start building up as soon as they are in school, but it becomes richer as the young people get older. So, from year 6, year 7, year 8, the data will become richer. However, there is a strategy for earlier intervention, the transition from junior school to secondary school and support from year 7 onwards.

09:45

[32] The challenge is ensuring that there is enough lead worker support for all the young people who need it. That is why I think, for me, one of the challenges is that, each year, around 350 young people are identified as being most at risk of being NEET at the end of year 11, yet, on average, maybe just under 100 will actually become NEET. We are saying:

can we become smarter and actually predict who those 100 are going to be, so that we can target our resources and even hone in on the young people who maybe need to support most? At the same time, however, you cannot take the risk of not supporting some of the others, because they might become NEET. So, it is getting the balance right.

[33] **Jeff Cuthbert:** In Monmouthshire, is it similar?

[34] **Ms Ward:** Yes, it is a very similar process. We have the red, amber, green systems in place in schools, and I would completely echo what was said with regard to the number of young people who are identified as maybe being potential NEETs as, when we have the figures released, they are maybe not a true reflection of the outcomes.

[35] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Good morning. Can I just ask you to expand on things that you have touched on already, about how effective your relationships are with various providers? You might take them in turn. What works well about your relationships with them, and perhaps you could note where there are some problems? So, shall we start with FE colleges and Swansea?

[36] **Ms Walsh:** We have a very close working relationship. The actual principal of the college is the NEET project champion and sits on the NEET management board as well as the NEET strategy board. I work with a lot of his colleagues. I will give you a recent example. Our work-based learning providers in Swansea are under a lot of pressure at the moment, and the actual demand for work-based learning, before the destination survey at 31 October, outweighed their supply. So, it was very much me, with the relationships that I have with key colleagues in the college, asking them whether they could create more provision, more start dates for the young people who needed them, even though their resources were quite tight, and they did. I think that if the relationship was not there, and the understanding about their commitment to the whole agenda, maybe I would not have had such a positive response, because of the issues that they faced internally, but they did respond and it did impact on us making an improvement on our NEET figure this year. That is just one example.

[37] **Ms Ward:** The relationship is very effective in Monmouthshire. It has actually resulted in a number of joint delivery initiatives. So, with regard to work-based learning, Monmouthshire youth service is subcontracted by a training provider and delivers the work-based learning for the Monmouthshire area. We also co-deliver; we have a housing association with Monmouthshire youth service that will deliver an employability programme, funded through the DWP. So, I think that the relationships are very effective within the authority.

[38] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** You have mentioned a crossover between FE and post-16 learning providers. What about relationships in general with providers in your patch?

[39] **Ms Ward:** So, relationships between—

[40] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Between the council and other learning providers—non-FE college.

[41] **Ms Ward:** Yes, I think that that is because of the representation at certain arenas. The authority understands what we do, and I think that the providers understand what the authority can support an offer with. I think that it is the right people in the right places, delivering the same sort of message.

[42] **Ms Walsh:** It is the same in Swansea: the work-based learning providers there are key to this agenda, and to help them to recognise the role they can play, we actually unpicked all the actions that were described within the youth engagement and progression framework

action plan and asked them to assess themselves against the actions to see what stage they were at in implementing them, what challenges they faced, and what the next steps could be, and then we looked for common themes with regard to the challenges. One of them, for example, was supporting young people on the engagement strand of the traineeship. The engagement strand is very much, for me, to my understanding, like a first step into traineeships. However, what we were witnessing in Swansea was very much a standard sort of package that young people had to fit into, rather than it being tailor made around their needs, which was the ultimate aim. They were very open and honest with us in Swansea about the reasons they could not do that for all the young people who needed it, and it was very much to do with resource issues. However, instead of masking it, they were open about it, and we have responded. The local authority and the partners, through 14-19 funding, have initiated a pilot scheme to see if we can work with them to create more appropriate provision in what we call tier 4 of the five-tier model for young people where the appropriate provision did not exist. We are looking to work with them and the third sector, together, to create provision that could meet unmet needs.

[43] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Is there anything else happening with the third sector that you would like to talk about as well?

[44] **Ms Walsh:** The third sector, for me, is going to be key to the solution, especially for the hardest to reach young people. I think that where we have witnessed a key contribution, or a co-ordinated contribution, to this agenda in the past is when there has been commissioning opportunities; for example, through ESF, rather than just generally, although there is a mapping exercise going on in Swansea and in other local authorities at the moment to see which partners can make more of a contribution to this agenda.

[45] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Are you and Monmouth at a fairly early stage of where you can work with the third sector as well?

[46] **Ms Ward:** Yes. It is in the initial stages.

[47] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** The last one in terms of relationships is Careers Wales. Obviously, you work together. How do things work in Monmouth in terms of—

[48] **Ms Ward:** It is fantastic with Careers Wales. Careers Wales is represented at every post-16 level that we have. We are now aware of what provisions are available within the Monmouthshire area. The Careers Wales role within that is that it will refer young people to where they are best suited in terms of provision. If I take the work-based learning as an example, we deliver the engagement work-based learning for Torfaen Training, and there is a very similar provision that runs within the county. Because of the dialogue that we have, Careers Wales will best know what differentiates us too, so its referral receives the most appropriate support. However, the relationship that we have with Careers Wales as an authority is fantastic.

[49] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** In terms of the level of competition, if you like, between various providers to be able to get in there and offer opportunities to young people, is that altogether positive in that it offers opportunities, or do problems arise from that level of competition and being able to figure out which is best?

[50] **Ms Walsh:** That is a good question. We developed the five-tier model in Swansea. It was very much a communication tool in the first instance to help partners to understand that young people were at different stages of readiness when it comes to engaging in education, employment or training. I developed a tool and actually created the five tiers to describe the different stages of readiness and then mapped the numbers. It was careers data that I used against the tiers.

[51] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Can I just stop you there? Are these the same tiers that we would have heard about from Careers Wales?

[52] **Ms Walsh:** Yes. It has adopted the model. It is a national model now. Then I mapped the provision against the tiers, and it was very obvious straight away that the majority of young people in Swansea at the time were in tiers 1 and 2, but the majority of provision was targeting the young people in tier 3. The young people in tier 3 are those more actively seeking EET. When you speak to the providers about why that is the case, it was very much to do with the fact that they were measured by hard outcomes. Even though the will was there to work with the harder to reach, as time went by, the pressure meant that there was this competition for the smaller pool of young people to get results. From that, we learnt that there were gaps for the young people in tiers 1 and 2, so that data helped to inform the commissioning of new services and the realignment of other services to meet those gaps. However, when we did commission new services or ask other services to target a new group, we were conscious that we needed to make sure that their contribution was measured in a different way. So, for example, young people in tier 1, unknown to us, could be the most vulnerable young people. The outreach team that we employed to work with those young people is measured by how many young people's destinations it ascertains and how many young people agreed to take up its support and be signposted to the next tier. We do not measure the team by how many young people it gets into education, employment or training because what would happen is that its caseloads would just grow and it would end up, in the longer term, looking for the young people where it could get results, and the young people that need its support the most would miss out.

[53] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Is that being addressed effectively in any way now?

[54] **Ms Walsh:** We have seen an ongoing reduction in NEETs in Swansea. I think that that was part of the process. It was part of responding to the evidence of need against the five tiers that helped us to make the difference.

[55] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** I could go on, but I am sure that—

[56] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. I now turn to Joyce.

[57] **Joyce Watson:** We need to talk about the barriers. You have addressed the problems and you have loosely identified what the barriers are. We have had lots of evidence from many different people saying that it is the essential skills, formally known as basic skills, work ethic and all of those things. Rather than suggesting what the barriers might be, would you like to tell us what, in your opinion, they are?

[58] **Ms Walsh:** Well, I can tell you the make-up of the NEET group this year. Looking at destination, for example, the majority of the young people who were NEET destination at the end of year 11 this year in Swansea were those who had been identified as being at high risk of being NEET. It included young people who were educated in places other than in school—they were on alternative curriculum programmes or part of Traveller education rather than mainstream young people. They may have LDD or ALN difficulties—

[59] **Joyce Watson:** May I ask you—. Sorry, with respect, I know that we might all understand what 'LDD' and all these other acronyms mean, but the people who are looking in might not, and it will not make any sense to them.

[60] **Ms Walsh:** No, sorry. I respect that. So, it is young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and additional learning needs and all of the things that go with that. If they have underachieved in school, then they have confidence issues, self-esteem issues and they

lack positive experiences. With regard to EET, there are issues around work-readiness. There are all the practical things about transport, money to get places, whether they have got the right clothes and equipment and all the basic things like that. However, then you have also got things like employers', training providers' and colleges' expectations of them. The young people do not always understand what employers expect from them. For me, I think that there has been a lot of research into the reasons why young people are NEET—the barriers they present with—but there does not seem to be a lot of research into young people's expectations and what they believe it would be like to be in the workplace and their understanding of the workplace or what causes anxiety for them with regard to thinking about EET. For me, maybe if we understood more about what they thought were the barriers, it could help to inform strategies to help them with the transition into EET.

[61] **Joyce Watson:** Can you tell us what 'EET' is? You have done it again. [*Laughter.*]

[62] **Ms Walsh:** Oh, sorry. You can tell I have been in this job a long time now. It is education, employment and training. Sorry, Joyce. Thank you.

[63] **Ms Ward:** I actually asked this question of a group of young people that I was working with on Monday, and the response that I got—. I think, with regard to barriers, it is vast. The common things that we come across in Monmouthshire would be a lack of experience, people lacking relevant references, and transport, which is a huge issue. However, you can kind of filter that down again to the individuals themselves. What I have tended to notice from the work that I have done within Monmouthshire is that you have young people who have a long-term goal, they know exactly what career they want to go into, and that is their passion, their focus, and that is all that they are looking to engage with. I find this particularly with graduates. They have invested a lot of time and a lot of money in that vocation, and that is where they want to go. Then, there are young people who are looking to enter niche markets—gaming seems to be a massive thing that I am coming across. So, if you take the fact that that is what they want to go into with regard to employment and put that on to the back of the transport issue, which means that they cannot necessarily access that, that will be a massive barrier.

[64] At the other end of the scale there would be practical things like DBS, the Disclosure and Barring Service, forms. So, for young people who want to get into childcare, for example, that is a barrier for them—not having that pass to say that they are appropriate to work with young people. As a practitioner, a barrier that I have identified is the understanding of how to navigate the job market in particular. There have been times when I have worked with young person and I think, 'I genuinely can't believe that you're not employed' and then you take a look at the way that they navigate the job market, the way that they do their application forms and CVs and you think, 'That's their barrier'. I believe that, if no-one has ever shown you how to do something, how are you expected to know how to do that? So, for me, when we talk about barriers, it is a vast subject to cover.

[65] **Joyce Watson:** So, you have identified—. Let us take the CV example, because that is easy in a way. Have you found any solutions to that? I was under the understanding, but it might be wrong, that schools and colleges would be teaching some of these skills.

[66] **Ms Ward:** I think that they are touched on. They are taught, yes. However, it is your first step, the CV. Personally, I think you need to give it a lot of time. It is a very important tool to have, and you need to give a lot of time to producing that. With regard to applications and interviews, and the provision that I deliver, I invite representatives from HR to come to speak to the young people and tell them exactly the kinds of things that they would expect to see on an application form and literally go through 'this is how you would fill out the application form and this is the kind of thing that I am looking for in an interview setting.' As that is delivered within a provision, it is safe, so the young people have the opportunity to ask

questions to the right people.

10:00

[67] **William Graham:** Jeff is next and then Gwenda.

[68] **Jeff Cuthbert:** This is particularly to Leanne, and thank you for your written submission as well. In it, you testify to the quality and benefit of Jobs Growth Wales and apprenticeships and traineeships generally, but you point out that as a local authority you have not been able to engage directly with them that much. However, you do have your own apprenticeship scheme Y Prentis, in partnership with Melin Homes. Have you been able to utilise that in terms of perhaps offering work experience places to young people who are otherwise NEET, and have you been able to engage with the Welsh Government's Lift programme, which is all about tackling worklessness in workless households?

[69] **Ms Ward:** With regards to Y Prentis, yes. We have had a number of outcomes from Y Prentis where young people have secured an apprentice opportunity. We try to source—. I try to keep things quite localised with delivery in Monmouthshire, so, when we do explore voluntary work placements and placement settings for the young people, I like to be able to tap into the private sector and local businesses, where there is an opportunity for the young people to flourish within their community. On the transport, personally, no. It has come up in situations that I have been in, but me, no.

[70] **William Graham:** Gwenda is next. Sorry, Jeff, did you have another question?

[71] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Just on the issue of Lift, do you know if the—.

[72] **Ms Ward:** I have heard of it. Sorry, you will have to excuse my—. I have—.

[73] **Jeff Cuthbert:** You are not aware of whether Monmouthshire council is engaging with that.

[74] **Ms Ward:** I would not be able to say whether it is, no.

[75] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Okay. All right. Thank you, Chair.

[76] **William Graham:** Gwenda is next.

[77] **Gwenda Thomas:** Thank you, Chair. May I refer back to what you said about young people with additional learning needs and learning difficulties and expand that to young people with disabilities? How do you focus on their needs? Looking at the statutory responsibility of the authority to provide advocacy for certain groups of young people, do you find that there is an effective provision of advocacy for these young individual people who obviously would need it from time to time?

[78] **Ms Walsh:** In Swansea, I would say 'yes', especially for young people aged 16 to 18. When I monitor the NEET figures, I do not see many young people, if any at all, with disabilities that are actually NEET. So, as a vulnerable group, they are achieving well with regards to EET but, apparently, things change from 19 plus. So, when they leave further education, or the special units that they might be in, there seems to be fewer appropriate opportunities for young people. Even if there is support, in terms of the opportunity to signpost them into further appropriate provision, there seems to be a gap there, but not hugely so. Like I said, it does not seem to be an issue for ages 16 to 18 or 19; it is 19 plus where there could be more young people unemployed with disabilities. It does not seem to be a NEET issue with ages 16 to 18 in Swansea.

[79] **Ms Ward:** I think that that is quite reflective of Monmouthshire as well.

[80] **Gwenda Thomas:** I think that there might be a point there with regard to the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 that we have adopted for the Welsh Government, in that we describe a child as being a person aged from 0 to 25. If this gap is becoming apparent, then we might want to—.

[81] **William Graham:** We will make the point in particular. Thank you, Gwenda. Is either of you aware of how your local authorities determine value for money for the programmes that you run?

[82] **Ms Walsh:** It is very difficult. We have looked at, and spoken to, other areas to see whether anyone has come up with an approach where we can measure value for money with regard to reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training. It was actually Arad Consulting, as part of its research in 2010, which attempted to try to come up with a model to help measure the impact of reducing NEETs and there are figures in that report for Wrexham and Swansea that I would be able to share with the group. In Swansea, at the moment, it is something that we are trying to tackle through the Sustainable Swansea agenda, which is a strategic agenda, which is very much about asking where we need to spend to have impact, where we can make the cuts and where we can get the most value for our money. So, it is a strategic agenda that is being tackled at the moment. However, the only actual research before then was through Arad Consulting.

[83] **William Graham:** That would be valuable, thank you.

[84] **Ms Ward:** Value for money is obviously a huge priority for the local authority. I think, with regard to the post-16 work around NEETs, that it speaks for itself when the NEETs figures decrease quite drastically. I think that that would provide some sort of indication, then, of the work that is being done and the time that has been invested into that, with the results that are being seen.

[85] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. Eluned, you are next.

[86] **Eluned Parrott:** Thank you. I want to talk about the way in which the programmes that you manage are targeted. I wonder whether you could give us an idea of the kind of proportion of your resource that is targeted at those in the red category, if you like, of being at risk of becoming disengaged. Also, what proportion is targeted at young people who are less at risk?

[87] **Ms Walsh:** Things are changing. I think that, because of the economic climate and because of the cuts, the work is naturally becoming more targeted. There is a big agenda for the money to reach the young people who need the support the most. To help us map that and to plan it, we do use the five-tier model that I referred to earlier. So, that gives us an indication of the numbers of young people in each tier and then we measure and make sure that there is enough support for those young people.

[88] Where we are looking to achieve more value for money and to see more impact is that—. In Swansea, we have reduced NEETs so that the characteristics of the typical NEET young person has changed in Swansea; now we are down to what we call a core NEET group—so, it is those who are hardest to reach and those with the multiple barriers to overcome. We have always included them in the strategy, so why have we not been able to make such a big difference with that group and do we need a new strategy to approach that group? There are a lot of things that we are doing to do that. For example, we have commissioned some research through Oxford Brookes University into the lead worker role.

We have had a lead worker function in Swansea since 2006, but we are looking to revisit that, and are asking what we actually mean by ‘lead worker’ and what skills and attributes these lead workers need to have. What activities do they need to deliver in order to have an impact on the hardest to reach? That research has been completed and we are in the process of following up the recommendations on that. However, what it has highlighted is that there is a gap and the gap is that there are lead workers working with young people in Swansea, but there is a gap in terms of the skills and abilities and the flexibility needed for the lead workers to target the hardest-to-reach young people, and so it is about how we can respond to that now for those.

[89] **Ms Ward:** Within Monmouthshire, it is the young people who would fall into the tier 1 category who would be referred to as the most difficult to reach. They fall under the responsibility of the youth service. So, the lead workers are then representatives from the youth service, and they will initiate the contact and make contact with those young people. The provision that those young people would then be referred into could be work-based learning, which is co-delivered through the Monmouthshire youth service. So, the consistent support would be there through the youth service. We also have a transition worker who does a lot of work in the schools and colleges. She, and the team around her, would pick up the tier 4 young people who are the young people who are engaged, but may be at risk of dropping out and becoming NEET. So, it is categorised and very much led by need within Monmouthshire.

[90] **Ms Walsh:** I think that there are gaps in provision and they are quite common across all local authorities—or at least the local authorities that I have spoken to as part of the regional groups. There are gaps in provision in tier 2—those hardest to reach—and in tier 4. The funding opportunities are used to plug those gaps and we are lucky because we are in a convergence area in Swansea, so we have got European structural funds opportunities on the horizon and the funding will go into those two tiers to meet the unmet needs.

[91] **Eluned Parrott:** I am imagining this tiered system as being almost like an escalator model—that you want to bring the young person from tier 1 into tier 2 and to tier 3, and from there to help them build. They are not going to go from tier 1 perhaps directly into a fantastically skilled and rewarding career. We need to work with them over a period of time to make sure that they stay engaged and focused on their education and training needs, and their employment. We have talked a little bit with the Wales Audit Office about the fact that there was a lot of duplication and a lot of funding, perhaps European funding, being used that was duplicating work on particular groups, as you said, in tier 3. To what extent are local authorities around Wales mapping the provision that they have and making sure that they have an appropriate level at each of those stages?

[92] **Ms Walsh:** I think that the five-tier model—because it has become a national model, because Careers Wales is reporting against the tiers, and because that information is shared with local authorities on a monthly basis—is helping them plan appropriately. In terms of making sure of minimising the risk of duplication, I think that we have moved past that. The regional learning partnerships are playing a role. When it comes to forming an ESF expression of interest, they are using their evidence of need and making sure that partners are speaking together and making sure that there is enough support where it is needed, and minimising duplication. So, the regional learning partnerships are acting as a broker to inform the ESF plans.

[93] **Eluned Parrott:** Okay. In terms of those young people who are in the upper tiers—those in tier 4 and tier 5, who maybe just have a few barriers and hurdles to overcome to get them moving on their way—are you satisfied that there is enough provision for them to make sure that we are not dropping people unnecessarily into the trap of becoming NEET?

[94] **Ms Walsh:** It is interesting. For the first time in years in Swansea, we are seeing more young people in tier 3 than in tier 1 or 2, and I am currently looking into the reasons behind that. There is not just one reason, but one of the reasons is that there is that NEET churn, where people move into tier 4, they dip their toe in the water of education, employment or training, and then they drop back out again. We used to be able to respond in a really timely way and re-engage them, because that is one of our performance indicators. If young people drop out, we reduce the average time it takes them to re-engage in education, employment or training. That time just seems to be growing, as you see in this build-up of young people in tier 3. That is due to a number of reasons. One is a lack of appropriate provision in tier 4, and that is definitely part of the solution in the future. We need more appropriate provision in education, employment or training, and that is something that the youth guarantee has been introduced to help tackle. However, it is also about having more flexible provision in tier 4. We have a college at the moment locally in Swansea that is starting to introduce more roll-on, roll-off provision. The difference, as well, is that work-based learning providers are operating differently because of things like the fact that they are measured by much more hard outcomes, and they get paid on results. They are really looking at improving the quality of their provision, which means that there are resource issues. They want smaller groups so that people get more attention, but then they can have less regular start dates. It has become very complicated. It sounds negative, but as soon as you identify the issue, you can see where the solutions lie. If you have the relationships that we talked about earlier—the partnerships and positive working relationships with these providers—then you have a chance of overcoming these issues. It is things like responding in different ways, through initiating these different pilots, as we are currently, which will inform the wider ESF bids. That will help us learn more from these pilots and, hopefully, sustain them, and learn to see what interventions work, and what makes the biggest difference.

[95] We have some performance indicators to help us measure that, which were measured through a Kafka methodology approach, which was a Welsh Government-initiated pilot, and put citizens—young people—at the centre of finding solutions. We learned from a young person's story, and so we have five key indicators to help us measure our progress. If we are going to improve services to NEET young people, these five things are the trends that we need to see. I will be able to share those with you, if they are useful.

[96] **Eluned Parrott:** That would be great, thank you.

[97] **William Graham:** We are just about out of time, but Dafydd has the last question.

10:15

[98] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** I would like to ask something about the different kinds of provision, especially the role of the third sector. We had some very useful evidence from Llamau, down here in the south-east, and also from Barnardo's, with a more all-Wales perspective in relation to how they perceived themselves as being able to be more effective than some other forms of intervention, or other more statutory agencies, because they did not appear to the young people as being part of authority. Do you come across that sort of issue? How does the third sector work closely with you in that situation?

[99] **Ms Walsh:** As I said earlier, they are definitely part of the solution. They can be more flexible, they work with smaller groups, and they have what we call that lead worker support. When we assessed our organisations against the lead worker research that we had carried out, it was the third sector that seemed to have lead workers who were carrying out the lead work roles to the extent that we need them to.

[100] As I said earlier as well, in Swansea, the issue is that when they have been more heavily involved is when there have been commissioning opportunities, when we can actually

commission them to do specific things. Their interventions work well and we see the impact, but then the money runs out. So, it is about how we build on interventions that we recognise do work, so that they become part of the core provision rather than the stop-start provision that we have witnessed to date.

[101] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** How would you see that happening? I am not asking you to suggest that there should be more funding or anything, but organisationally, how do you see that happening?

[102] **Ms Walsh:** I think, because we have more performance management systems in place, we are able to recognise who is having more impact. That will help the funding go in the right direction, and that is where we talk about value for money. We need to invest in the organisations that can make a difference to the harder to reach groups.

[103] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** So, you are suggesting to us pretty strongly that, in our report, we should take a particular look at that sharp end of things.

[104] **Ms Walsh:** I think that would be really useful.

[105] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Very helpful. Thank you.

[106] **William Graham:** We are really out of time, but in view of the way that you have answered our questions and your relevant experience, succinctly, I will just ask whether there are any particular recommendations that this committee should make to Government. Is there any particular item that needs more finance or more organisation or that needs something completely different?

[107] **Ms Walsh:** It is around provision. If we are talking about post-16 and we are talking about tiers, we need more effective provision in tier 2, but that needs to be very closely aligned to the provision in tier 4, because the goalposts seem to be shifting in tier 4. I gave an example of work-based learning earlier with the engagement strand. Because providers are paid on hard outcomes, you get to a point where they will identify the young people who can achieve those hard outcomes, and we have actually got young people who are without appropriate offers of education, employment or training this year. However, if we create appropriate provision in tier 4, and if it is closely aligned to the provision in tier 2, it is so much easier for young people to make the transition from one to another.

[108] **William Graham:** And you would agree with that, Leanne.

[109] **Ms Ward:** Completely, yes. I think that provision within tiers 2 and 4 is something that needs to be—

[110] **Ms Walsh:** And more appropriate support, so, intensive lead worker support on an ongoing basis.

[111] **William Graham:** Splendid. Thank you very much for your evidence today and for the way in which you have answered our questions. I am much obliged to you both, thank you. We will break for five minutes, Members.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10:18 a 10:24.
The meeting adjourned between 10:18 and 10:24.*

Ymchwiliad i Helpu Pobl Ifanc i Gael Gwaith—Sesiwn 6 Inquiry into Assisting Young People into Work—Session 6

[112] **William Graham:** I welcome our witnesses now for the second part of our meeting this morning. Could I ask each of you to give your name and title for the record?

[113] **Mr Cooksley:** I am Andrew Cooksley, and I am the managing director of ACT. We are a large training provider, and I am chair of the traineeship group for the National Training Federation for Wales.

[114] **Mr Watkins:** I am Arwyn Watkins, managing director of Cambrian Training Company, and the chief executive officer of the National Training Federation for Wales.

[115] **Mr Protheroe:** I am Jeff Protheroe, operations manager, National Training Federation for Wales.

[116] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. I will go straight into questions. The first question is from Rhun.

[117] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Bore da a chroeso i bob un ohonoch chi, a diolch am ddod i mewn i siarad â ni y bore yma. Gofynnaf i chi i gyd yn eich tro ynglŷn â'r rhwystrau yr ydych fel ffederasiwn wedi amlinellu sy'n bodoli i bobl ifanc i fynd i mewn i hyfforddiant ar ôl 16 oed. Rydych wedi amlinellu rhai ohonynt yn eich tystiolaeth ysgrifenedig. A allwch chi siarad ychydig bach mwy ynglŷn â beth yw'r prif rwystrau sy'n atal pobl ifanc rhag mynd i mewn i hyfforddiant? Mr Watkins yn gyntaf.

Rhun ap Iorwerth: Good morning and welcome to each of you, and thank you for coming in to speak with us this morning. I will ask each one of you in turn about the barriers that you as a federation have outlined that there are for young people to enter post-16 training. You have outlined some of them in your written evidence. Could you elaborate a little more on the main barriers preventing young people from entering training? Mr Watkins is first.

[118] **Mr Watkins:** One of the big barriers is the huge perception in terms of staying on in school and staying on in institutions, to be honest, with very little understanding of the world of work that is outside in your local communities. There is a perception job for us to do in moving people into work, with parents and peers. Youngsters are not even aware of the opportunities that are available to them on their doorstep, and that is a big piece of work that, collectively, we need to do.

[119] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Would you agree that it is mainly those sorts of social barriers and attitudes that stand in the way of progressing with training and education, or is it more practical barriers?

[120] **Mr Watkins:** More and more of our employers will use the words 'attitude' and 'aptitude' much more now, way over and above 'qualifications' and 'experience', to be honest.

[121] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** What are your thoughts, Mr Cooksley?

[122] **Mr Cooksley:** We meet far too many people under the age of 18 coming on our programmes, and we are taking on around about 3,000 young people, who are probably all NEET before they come to us. So, we are the biggest mopper-upper of NEETS in Wales, I would say. There are a lot of trends there. Overarching, their readiness for work is not what it should be by any stretch, and they really are suffering from some sort of aspirational

poverty.

[123] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** What do you mean by ‘readiness for work’, or lack of it?

[124] **Mr Cooksley:** Well, their understanding of the workplace and their employability skills. It seems as if that has not been touched on. These people are generally dropping off college and dropping off sixth-form, so we are going to pick them up on our programmes. I think, yes, where they are and where they need to be in terms of getting a job, there is a huge gap. When we think about being 16 and 17, I cannot imagine a more important transition in your life: turning from a child into an adult. That is where we are missing a trick in Wales. If you look at the post-18 NEET figure, it doubles—more than doubles. In Swansea, the NEET figure is lower under 18, but it is really high over 18. We have to think about what all that provision is doing. It is really about getting these people into work, and that is the outcome of education. Ideally, you are a more successful human being, but the hard reality is that you need to be useful and earn a living in work. We have not got a system in Wales that really does nail it for those 20% to 30% of young people who are potentially going to be NEET before they are 25.

[125] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** What do you think should happen prior to the age of 16 that could be, if not a magic bullet, then something that could really make a positive difference to the readiness of young people to cross that threshold?

[126] **Mr Protheroe:** The key thing is about giving young people the opportunity to engage with the world of work, be it through work experiences or work taster sessions. Also, through the school sector, pre-16, it would be developing young people’s understanding of the world of work and what employers expect. Ultimately, it is about offering the opportunity for them to go into a real work-experience situation and find out for themselves what the world of work is all about, and then educating those young people through the various different forms of further education that are available, not necessarily through colleges or through sixth forms but also through the world of work-based learning and through the very successful traineeships programme et cetera. It is about giving them the opportunity, developing their understanding and allowing them to get into the workplace to see whether it is for them.

10:30

[127] **Mr Cooksley:** It can be taught. We have to teach these young people to be successful. They are not taught how to do that, really. So, it is really left to them, when they get to 16. For a large part of them, the destination is very clear, is it not? Fifty per cent of young people do very well out of the school system. We need to teach these young people through qualifications and education what it is like to be a successful adult and what traits and qualities they need to have to be more successful. It is confusing, at 16, to leave year 11 with no destination. It must be really frightening. Clearly, we are not. Schools do not touch upon it. We have essential skills, which are literacy and numeracy in the main, but the clear skills to be a successful human being need to be taught. They are all about peer relationships, developing good mental health, and living a healthier lifestyle. They are not really touched upon deep enough. When we get these children, who are turning into adults at 16, I think that it is our job to make sure that the programmes that we are delivering are for the world of work but are also for life, so that they can be less expensive to Wales growing up. The costs are horrific and we cannot afford it.

[128] **Mr Watkins:** May I just add to that? With some of these complex issues that we are talking about, in terms of individuals, these opportunities are known way before they are 16, and way before they come out of what I call the compulsory education system. This is for 12, 13 or 14-year-olds, where, literally, individuals can be identified who might be wavering into potentially becoming a NEET; we could do much more with them at that age. Sometimes,

when they are 16, it is too late.

[129] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** If you think of practical barriers—transport to get to training places, college or whatever, and the confusion that arises at the age of 16 about which direction to go in, and which provider to go to—could those be overcome if the 16-year-old is set up properly to deal with those issues?

[130] **Mr Cooksley:** Easily. Yes.

[131] **Eluned Parrott:** I wanted to come back to something that you said, Andrew. You used the phrase ‘aspirational poverty’. I think that this is a critical issue, because it is not just about providing an opportunity but about belief and a desire to change the future, essentially, which I do not think that we have really talked about previously. Can you tell me what you understand by that idea? Where do you think that this aspirational poverty is coming from—is it something in our society, at home, in our schools, in the education system or somewhere else? What can we do to change that? Clearly, we want our young people to leave the education system with the will and the desire to be doing something really proactive and positive with their lives.

[132] **Mr Cooksley:** We have far too many people leaving year 11—leaving 12 years of education—with a feeling that life is not going to be great for them. They do not really see that they are going to be successful human beings, in terms of getting well-paid jobs and doing well in life—they have kind of failed it. That is just something that we must address. If you lived in Scotland, most young people could name—. They could tell you who invented the television, and they could tell you all these great things about how great Scotland has been. In Wales, we do not teach our children this. We have shaped the world.

[133] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** That is because they get all of their propaganda from the Scottish Government.

[134] **Mr Cooksley:** Yes, precisely. [*Laughter.*] They believe that they can do it, but we will not go into that for two hours. I think that it is crucial that we should be teaching our children that Wales has shaped the world. We did. I am not going to get too carried away here. We have very successful Welsh people who have gone out and done incredible things in the world. Our children do not know that. There is a real lack of raising aspirations in schools; we could have more entrepreneurs, more people leaving education ready to shape the world. That is a big issue in itself. Clearly, when we meet employers—Arwyn touched upon it—and they are successful employers, they really want more people like them. That is what they are saying. It is all those work ethic-type traits—you know, being reliable, being good communicators, and being fast-thinking. There, if you look at the education system, it is not supplying a group of people like that. We are having people who do not think that they can do stuff, and that sums up the aspirational poverty, really. There are far too many young people who suffer from it.

[135] **Eluned Parrott:** What can we do about it, and where is that coming from? Is it the education system that is kicking the stuffing out of these young people or is it a combination of things?

[136] **Mr Cooksley:** Well, 70% of learning takes place at home, so, you know, that is a battle. However, 30% takes place somewhere else, and we could be doing more here. I mean, we should be telling children that they can be someone, and we are not.

[137] **Mr Protheroe:** I think that there is recognition, as well, picking up on what Andy has said, that a lot of this starts at home. Certainly, as a sector, as the work-based learning sector, there is a job of work that we all need to do to try to raise people’s awareness of what

opportunities the work-based learning sector offers. There is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that some of the learners who are coming through the engagement programmes are from second or third-generation workless families. I think that there is an opportunity there to really engage and to say, 'Well, actually, you can get on in life and you can get into the world of work'. So, there is an opportunity that we all have to play a part in here to raise the awareness of work-based learning more generally and the opportunities that it offers.

[138] **Mr Cooksley:** In Cardiff, last year, looking at the destinations of all year 11 leavers, 0.3% of them started an apprenticeship programme; 87% went on to FE and sixth form. It is not good, is it?

[139] **Eluned Parrott:** No.

[140] **Jeff Cuthbert:** What I am hearing—it is not new to me, but it is coming across clearly—is that there is a clear lack of co-ordination in terms of the various services that are meant to help to identify and overcome the barriers and to guide young people into future productive careers. That is very sad to hear, and it is something that we cannot ignore. You touched on the role of employers, and I accept that parental influence, family influence, is crucial for a young person. Again, it is a no-brainer. Is there more that employers can do to raise the profile of vocational learning and vocational routes? We invest an awful lot in apprenticeships, as you know—you are key deliverers of them. Nevertheless, it seems that that message is not getting to families. Clearly, schools and colleges have a crucial role to play here. Do you think that there is a tendency for headteachers perhaps just to keep young people on their books, so to speak, because it is better for them, as opposed to whether it is better for that young person? In practical terms, what do you think we can do about it?

[141] **Mr Watkins:** I think that there is a crucial role for employers to play in the whole of this across the whole of Wales, but for employers to be able to play their part in terms of this, the gates of the school will need to be open. If the gates of the school remain closed and there is no employer engagement, with employers coming into the school, we are never going to break this, if you want me to be frank. We have been speaking around this for long enough, I think, since I came back to Wales in 1998. I think that, with austerity measures and future budgets et cetera, we can ill afford to continue to talk about this, and we need to take some serious action.

[142] **Mr Cooksley:** If you look at Jobs Growth Wales, we delivered that—the private enterprise side of that. Jeff, you probably know the figure better than me, but it is 15,000 places—we have not even broken a sweat doing it. Employers have just come on board, they get it, and it has been well marketed. It is probably a little bit expensive in the long run, but I think that there are programmes like that—. When you compare it to doing a HE or FE degree, if you have the employers subsidising it by far—namely the wage—it is a very cheap way of getting people into work, and it is very successful. I just think, you know, that it is probably 20 times cheaper to put someone through an apprenticeship than it is to put someone through a degree. We have people on Jobs Growth Wales who have got degrees. I guess that it is good for that employer, but you have to query the return on investment and the expenditure going forward. We cannot afford not to have more people finding cheaper ways of getting into work and being more useful and employers putting their hands in their pockets more than they do at the moment, because it is really not successful.

[143] **Mick Antoniw:** I just want to follow that through about individuals and the issue of motivation and basic skills, which are basically to turn up on time in the morning, stay until the end of the day and behave in the workplace. Of course, in the past, when many factories and so on were more labour-intensive, a lot of people in school, at 14 or 15, would do that over Christmas and the summer. There was an opportunity available that is not there now.

[144] I know that those opportunities do not really exist now, so are we now really more dependent on direct training and motivational work with individuals themselves? Is it realistic to think that we can get that level of input from workplaces for individuals to gain that experience?

[145] **Mr Watkins:** Looking forward, there is a perfect opportunity, in terms of the curriculum review that is currently going on, and there are lots of things coming up that have been aligned in terms of that. There is the review of qualifications, with the recommendations in terms of the new GCSEs, literacy and numeracy, and the new Welsh baccalaureate. The enterprise bits are more work-orientated aspects within the Welsh baccalaureate. We have to make sure here that the evidence-based review of qualifications comes up with recommendations, in terms of where we have got to, and they have to be delivered. This is not something that is a token gesture and then is dampened down because it does not fit into the school system or the education system. There is a purpose for the entrepreneurial activity within the Welsh baccalaureate, because it is about getting employers involved, about making it aspirational and linking it back to the curriculum. It is joined up. It is not something that is delivered over there and the work is delivered over here. It is an opportunity for progression, I think.

[146] **Mick Antoniw:** The proposals, of course, are very much about individual-focused support, motivational progression co-ordinators and so on. Is that something that you see beginning to happen or is it something that you think will actually make a difference?

[147] **Mr Cooksley:** Yes, it is definitely happening. In the traineeship provision, which is potentially the pre-apprenticeship programme in Wales, I think that the quality is very good. It is getting more people into work and more people progressing into higher-level learning. The figure is around—

[148] **Mr Protheroe:** It is 67%.

[149] **Mr Cooksley:** It is 67% across Wales, and some provision is over 80%. So, to get the 80% of young people who potentially have not done very well up until now into work is no mean feat.

[150] What we have to do is to dig deeper. We have to make sure that these people are properly prepared for work and are not just quickly rushed through. As I said earlier, it is a really important time and we need to embed stuff.

[151] **Mick Antoniw:** At what stage are we talking about that? Is this a school thing that you are thinking about, with employers getting into schools, or is it something specifically one-to-one, to identify those 10%, 15% or 20% who we know are going to be difficult to get to work with?

[152] **Mr Watkins:** I think that it would be really helpful if those individuals who require that more of a—. This is not a one-size-fits-all model. It would be really helpful for those who are known to be known to the wider skills community at the earlier stage, rather than to individuals within little silos. If we all know about those individuals, then there are lots of other opportunities. A network of service providers, for want of a better word, could create that opportunity.

10:45

[153] **Mr Protheroe:** Also, to answer the question about individuals and their individual needs, I think there is, particularly within traineeships, a programme there that is flexible enough to identify how far that individual is away from the job market in order that they can

have some engagement work, maybe in a centre, to prepare them in readiness for when they actually go into work, in a supervised position with regard to the assessors and the trainers. So, there is flexibility within that programme to manage that transition into work, depending on where that individual is. So, there is an opportunity within the current programmes that we have. However, also, it is about making sure, coming back to the point that I was making earlier, that the school, the community, parents, et cetera have an understanding of the opportunities that are available through work-based learning to identify the best route for that individual into the workforce. As I said earlier, 67% of people coming off a traineeship progress on to further learning, typically an apprenticeship, and we know the results of those as well. So, there is that ability to tailor the provision to the individual.

[154] **Mr Cooksley:** If I may add, a good example of that is that, the week before last, we had our apprenticeship awards in the Celtic Manor. The traineeship learner of the year award went to a chap called Ashley, who had never been to school. He got to the age of 16 completely devoid of any—completely lost. Within just under 12 months, he is with a law firm now in Cardiff, with a swish building, which looks great, he is loving life, and he is doing his apprenticeship. I think that if the programme can do that for him—I mean, there was a whole—[*Interruption.*]*—*that flexible, then I think the provision is there.

[155] **William Graham:** Thank you for that. Joyce is next.

[156] **Joyce Watson:** I have two questions. You have talked about work-based learning and you have suggested that school gates do not have to be closed to businesses, so I want to ask a few questions around that. I cover a rural area, so there are no huge employers and, of course, we have had a massive blow this last week in Pembrokeshire. I suppose that there are multiple questions. First of all, when you are selling an opportunity to a business, are you selling it all, in the right setting, at the right time and to the right people? Let us take the construction industry. I know now that if I said to a youngster, ‘There are opportunities in the construction industry’, they would be thinking about carpentry, bricklaying and plastering, or they might think about plumbing or about being an electrician. What they will not be thinking about is everything that supports that, such as IT provision and clerical work. So, that is my question to you. How do you sell the whole package, rather than what people think an industry is? Do businesses have a duty—and I will move on to supermarkets here, as I know that there are new training opportunities there—to also go into schools and sell the whole package of the opportunity? If that is the only game in town for a child or young person to have a job, then that opportunity should be available and they should know about it in the school. That would be the first part of my question, and I will get on to gender segregation after that.

[157] **Mr Cooksley:** I will come on to that in my answer, then. I think that most people, when they think of an apprentice, they see a picture of a bloke with a spanner and an oily rag and Airbus in the equation—

[158] **Joyce Watson:** Not in our area.

[159] **Mr Cooksley:** No, but I would not be surprised. However, that is most people’s perception. Seventy per cent of our learners on our apprenticeship programme are female, so the reality is that there are over 32 different sectors that you can get training in. So, there is the provision is there. How you take that to people who are going to find it hard to access is the nut to crack, is it not? We need to find ways to engage with those employers in local areas, but we need to get out there and do more, I think.

[160] **Mr Watkins:** One of the reasons that we do the apprenticeship awards Cymru, and the reason we have done them for quite a number of years, now, is because they provide us with real-life case studies that can be utilised within both the Careers Wales website and all of the communication tools, in terms of the real journey, the real story and the real facts. We get

very little opportunity to go into compulsory education settings and to talk about the opportunities that are available. I live and work in a very rural area in the middle of Powys. Lots of the businesses that are taking on apprentices there are microbusinesses, and it is about getting that message across into the schools that these jobs exist. They are more likely to take on individuals than anybody else, from a large-scale point of view.

[161] **Mr Cooksley:** It is very difficult, though, is it not, where we have schools that will not allow us to go in to talk to their leaders about the opportunities outside of the school setting, because they were in the sixth form? That is the cold reality, is it not? If they are in the sixth form, you do not get in there to be able to talk about it. Consequently, it is the first time we are actually measuring sixth form outcomes this year, comparable with what we are delivering. It is slightly late in the day—we are in 2014—but anyway, it is the first time that we are looking at that. So, it will be interesting to see how many drop out of the sixth form and whether they are on appropriate courses. The problem that we face with it all is that, when we meet an employer and we talk to them about taking on young people, the employers are keen to get involved, but if we are only getting referred those people who are really hard to help, their expectations are slightly higher than that, and if we are not getting a stab at those youngsters who have more potential—there is not an easy phrase for it—we could engage with as many employers as we liked, but if we cannot supply them with those young people who are going to be great in their businesses, it kind of falls flat. That is the big issue that we have. We could deliver 40,000 apprentices in Wales, easily—give us a couple of years, mind—but we are not going to do that unless we have proper parity of esteem for vocational opportunities and going into the world of work as against sixth forms and colleges, because you do see 85% of pupils going down that route, and we are left then to deal with all those other pupils, and it is difficult. The answer is that we cannot allow schools to continue to do it. It is not right for the young people, and it is not based around them.

[162] **Mr Protheroe:** I think that it is also, coming back to the question you asked of us, about being able to respond to local need. I suppose that one thing to bear in mind is that, in terms of work-based learning and how it is commissioned, it is on a regional basis, and what you have is a network that is engaging with businesses in a local region and is responding to employer demand. Ultimately, we will only deliver an apprenticeship if there is a need with that industry, employer or sector. I think that there is an opportunity there for the work-based learning sector to work more closely with schools in order to bring employers into those schools, to say, ‘Look, these are the opportunities that are available on your doorstep’. Ultimately, you may be the large supermarket that the school can recognise, but what it will not be able to recognise, as Andrew says, is all those micro and small businesses that are actually taking on apprentices.

[163] In terms of the example that you gave about the construction industry, there is an absolute role there for organisations such as CITB, the Construction Industry Training Board, to come into schools to outline what the scope of that sector is. In Cardiff, you have the financial services and a whole range of organisations, and you can say, ‘Look, these are the opportunities’. There is a sector here, I guess, that has those links with the employers; it is just a case of getting into the schools, I guess, to raise people’s awareness of work-based learning and the opportunities it presents.

[164] **Mr Watkins:** There is quite a profile for enterprise zones, as well, is there not? Specifically, you are talking about the Haven, for example, in terms of that. You know, there has to be some match-up here, in terms of the expectation of economic investment and skills, and that communication has got to be had with our children.

[165] **William Graham:** Dafydd, you have a point.

[166] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** [*Inaudible.*]—answer No. 18 in your paper, where you raised the

issue of a significant lack of brokerage and co-ordination between schools, colleges and other third-party support mechanisms for Welsh work-based learning providers. If you were writing our recommendations in response to that point, what would you like us to say? I cannot offer you more than that. *[Laughter.]*

[167] **Mr Protheroe:** I think that a lot of it is what we have already outlined, really. It is about making sure that there is a connection between post-compulsory education and the world of work-based learning, and making sure that there are opportunities for those to become joined up, inasmuch as providers are going into schools, outlining opportunities. There is a role for everyone, I think, to outline the benefits of work-based learning, particularly apprenticeships, and the opportunities that they bring. That is the key thing, I think.

[168] **Mr Watkins:** I think the one thing that has been an obstacle over the last number of years is the number of programmes in communities and regions around Wales that are absolutely duplicating what I would call some of the backbone programmes of Welsh Government. There is a footprint document in terms of employment and skills on a national basis, and it is broken down into regional and local. I think that is going to be the deal breaker in all of this, so that it literally avoids duplication and it targets European funding support to where it is evidence-based and identified to have the greatest impact, so that we are not stumbling across other programmes that we were not even aware existed that are targeting exactly the same programmes as our core programmes, delivered by a quality-assured network of providers. We welcome the shift from outputs to outcomes. We have been very robust in the way that we deliver our programmes and how we spend public funds that are commissioned to us. It is not about the number of people who came onto your programme but about what you did with those individuals when they were on your programme. If that could feature anywhere in terms of a recommendation from this inquiry, we would welcome it.

[169] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** I think we could manage that.

[170] **Mr Watkins:** Thank you.

[171] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I agree very much with the need to make sure that young people genuinely have proper information about vocational routes, which could well be right for them. I have attended quite a few job fairs and exhibitions over the years. Having said that, I think that most of them tend to be focused on the STEM areas, such as engineering and science. The fairs are very well attended by schools, which is not surprising. If you can make things go ‘bang’ or you send model cars whizzing from one end of the room to the other, that is going to be attractive for young people. Is that perhaps a very practical example of how we could improve the knowledge and awareness of vocational routes by developing that for other occupational areas, because I am not aware of whether we have job fairs more generally? I honestly could not answer that question. Would you be able to?

[172] **Mr Watkins:** A number of years ago, we had a massive Skills Cymru event in the Millennium Stadium. I think it was back in 2009 or 2010. It was a very successful event, but one that was not sustainable in terms of the costs in relation to that. This year, we held a Skills Cymru event in Llandudno and one here in the Motorpoint Arena Cardiff. There are plans for the same next year. In Cardiff, we had 53 schools attending, I think. We can let you have the figures, to be honest, because we have the figures for the number of schools attending, et cetera, if that would be helpful. They were really successful events for those who came along. It would be nice to be able to put those events on much more, in terms of the regional delivery plan. We would like to see one down west, with one in the north and one here. However, we will let you have the figures, because of the impact for year 10 and year 11 pupils and the teachers who came to those events. We had a separate teachers’ lounge, so we allowed the teachers to drop the children off on their tour, and then we could capture the teachers in one

central place and start to—.

[173] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Did employers contribute financially?

[174] **Mr Watkins:** Yes, absolutely.

[175] **Mr Cooksley:** Could I just add one quick thing on that? If I were a parent of someone who is in year 11 now and potentially thinking about what they are going to be doing next summer, generally, I would be liaising with the school, and the school would be telling me, really, what the best outcome would be for my son or daughter. I think we should challenge every local authority to write to every one of their pupils' parents or guardians and say, 'These are the options', and tell those people how to get more information. That would be an incredible start if we could just let it out. We meet people who have never heard of any traineeships or these programmes or that they could do these things. We meet so many people who say 'God, I wish I'd known this a year ago because I've wasted a year of my life'. So, if we could just get hold of those people. Putting a big show on is kind of expensive, but we could really get to them in some other way, I think, and get them the information and leave it to them. If they want to do whatever then, great, but at least they have had the information—but we are not getting that to them at all. That would be one great recommendation.

[176] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. Mick?

11:00

[177] **Mick Antoniwi:** I think my questions have been answered.

[178] **William Graham:** Okay. Rhun is next.

[179] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Very briefly, just picking up on your argument, Andrew, that you are providing best value for money when it comes to reaching the outcomes that we want, and you are clear in your mind, how do we change the monitoring structures and the evaluation structures to prove your point?

[180] **Mr Cooksley:** I saw a graph the other day. I think it is in the report that Jeff has a copy of. It is about return on investment and it is the whole banding of post-16 education. A medicine degree is the top of the tree by the way: if you do that, the return on investment is huge. Next to that is a higher apprenticeship, next to that is an engineering degree, and next to that is an apprenticeship at level 2 or 3.

[181] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** What happened to footballers?

[182] **Mr Cooksley:** It is 'Varsity Blues'.

[183] **Mr Protheroe:** I have included a link.

[184] **Mr Cooksley:** So, it compares vocational training, among everything else. So, we know how much we get paid and we know the outcomes and we know how many people we have put through it. So, the equation is really simple. I am not sure that that equation is being adapted to all of post-16 education.

[185] **Mr Protheroe:** I think it is measuring everyone the same—[*Inaudible.*]

[186] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Is that information that we have, or can we—

[187] **Mr Protheroe:** There is a link at the bottom of our written report.

[188] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** My second point is that I would recommend to Andrew a new book that was published last week called *Cymru Fawr*. It is the story of how a small nation led the world in terms of—

[189] **Mr Cooksley:** We will be putting that on the curriculum. [*Laughter.*]

[190] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** It needs translating into English so that everybody can read it.

[191] **Mr Cooksley:** I will pay for that. [*Laughter.*]

[192] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** It is by Vaughan Hughes. It is absolutely right that we— [*Inaudible.*]

[193] **Mr Cooksley:** Exactly.

[194] **William Graham:** Are there any more questions? Thank you very much for your attendance today and for the way in which you answered our questions, which stimulated much discussion.

[195] **Mr Watkins:** Thank you very much.

[196] **William Graham:** We are grateful to you, and, hopefully, the evidence base that you have given us will enable us to make proper recommendations to Government. Thank you very much.

[197] **Mr Watkins:** Thank you. We welcome the opportunity.

[198] **William Graham:** We will break for about 10 minutes.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 11:02 a 11:14.
The meeting adjourned between 11:02 and 11:14.*

Ymchwiliad i Helpu Pobl Ifanc i Gael Gwaith—Sesiwn 7 Inquiry into Assisting Young People into Work—Session 7

[199] **William Graham:** I welcome our witnesses. Thank you very much for your attendance today. Could we have your names, please, and titles for the record?

[200] **Dr Walker:** I am Greg Walker, chief executive of ColegauCymru.

[201] **Mr Jones:** I am Mark Jones, principal of Gower College, Swansea, and chair of ColegauCymru.

[202] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. We will go straight into questions and the first is from Gwenda.

[203] **Gwenda Thomas:** Thank you, Chair. Good morning—bore da. I would like to explore, please, how further education colleges help young people to prepare for the labour market and what support is most successful and value for money. I wonder whether you could touch on the development of essential skills—literacy and numeracy, of course, but also other work-ready skills—and the role of vocational courses and Welsh Government programmes such as apprenticeships, Jobs Growth Wales, traineeships and work-ready programmes, and also the learning supported by European funds, if there is any.

11:15

[204] **Dr Walker:** Well, in fact, you have listed just there many of the key headings and many of the key programmes that colleges discharge in their communities and regions. If we are focusing on the 19 to 24 age bracket, full-time and part-time programmes for those learners are done through the colleges directly. Also, colleges have work-based learning arms, and are partly funded through public contracts in Wales to do the work-based learning in terms of traineeships and apprenticeships. I think that, having listened to some of the proceedings this morning, what is worth emphasising is that, as well as apprenticeships, 19 to 24-year-olds can also go to college to do part-time courses that, for those who would not be able to go on a full-time apprenticeship, would be quite appropriate for them. So, people with caring responsibilities or childcare responsibilities would be able to reskill and upskill on part-time programmes rather than have to go for a full-time apprenticeship. That is an added value that the colleges do provide and which other education providers do not provide. It is precisely that provision that is potentially under threat because of some of the funding cuts that have been proposed in forthcoming budgets. Those are some of the concerns that have led us to be very, very grateful for being invited today to talk to you about this particular age group.

[205] **Mr Jones:** I think that the difficulty is that we do so much. So, whether it is full-time courses, for, generally, 16 to 18-year-olds, whether it is part-time courses, mainly for 19-plus and for adults, whether it is apprenticeships, whether it is traineeships, whether it is foundation degrees and level 4 or level 5 provision, the range of provision in the colleges these days is so vast that it is a different solution or different answer to all of the questions that you ask. For example, you mentioned essential skills. With full-time courses, essential skills are embedded or contextualised within the vocational programme. So, if youngsters are doing a catering course, they do not have a separate lesson in numbers or in literacy. They have numbers delivered as part of their catering course. We find that they are far more able to work out how to put products together than to sit down and be taught fractions, for example. So, what we are trying to do all of the time is contextualise the essential skills within those vocational programmes, which we find has more success with the individual students. However, I could give you different answers for every different bit of the work that we do, and I suppose that that is part of the complexity and that part of the issue with further education is that wide range: some 85% of vocational provision in Wales these days is delivered within further education colleges, and the range is vast.

[206] **Gwenda Thomas:** Picking that up, regarding the e-mails that you send about ColegauCymru and the achievements of young people, I find them very useful with regard to responding in my own constituency, for example. I find that to be a good way of finding out how skills are developed. I am delighted to hear about the focus on caring responsibilities. I wonder whether you could elaborate a bit on that with regard to young people with learning disabilities or other disabilities within the system, and how we cater for their needs. You mentioned the 16 to 18-year-old group. I am particularly interested in that with regard to the social care workforce, because employment does not start in the social care workforce until the age of 18. Is there anything done to prepare people for careers in the social care workforce, if they show that interest?

[207] **Dr Walker:** On the social care workforce point, obviously, learners will come to their study at age 16 with different achievements at pre-16 level. Often, what will happen is that the learners—as you may well know from your previous ministerial record, Gwenda—will start on a level 1 or level 2 course, whereas a licence to practice or to have a role as a social care practitioner will generally be a bit higher than that. So, usually, there will be some progression within the college, starting at level 1 and going up to a higher level. So, people will, over time, study up to the qualification level that they need in order to get an employed role at 18 in a care home or another setting. That is the general way we do it. Even if a learner

has achieved a level 2 general qualification, they may well have to have experience on a level 1 course in an area, so that they are able to then progress up to a role in a particular professional vocational context, on the social care point.

[208] **Mr Jones:** In response to your question on learning disabilities, most colleges will have a two-pronged approach to that. In many colleges, there will be specific areas for students with maybe more profound learning disabilities, and those students will be guided in terms of level 1 introductory programmes with the opportunity then for those students to progress in future years onto mainstream vocational programmes. I know that, in my previous college, we were getting students going through to higher education as well, over a four or five-year period. Also, within colleges, students are given additional support through what they call students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities funding. These are students who may have dyslexia or dyspraxia issues for whom we are able to put additional support in place. In some cases, this is additional classroom support on a one-to-one basis or on a group basis that gives those students additional support as well to proceed with their normal courses. So, many students have a specific programme put on for them that develops their initial skills, but others are having support all the way through the college. I think that we deal with that really well across colleges.

[209] **Dr Walker:** I do not want to get into an alphabet soup, Chair, but, as a result of Huw Evans's review of qualifications in Wales, which has now been adopted by the Welsh Government, there is now going to be a much clearer distinction between initial vocational education training qualifications and competency-based qualifications, such as introductory vocational education and training, or IVETS, and continuing vocational education and training, known as CVETS; you may hear these acronyms being bandied around. Wales has taken the lead in the UK in making that distinction clearer. I think that it is helpful for learners to get a clearer picture when they start a course or programme to know what, exactly, they are going to get at the end of it in terms of employability outcomes or progression to higher education, as Mark said.

[210] **Gwenda Thomas:** Thank you. I have just one more point. How do colleges monitor and evaluate value for money?

[211] **Dr Walker:** In terms of destination data, which is probably what you are trying to probe, it is a question of chasing up students. When they leave college, we try our best to track for as long as possible—two or three years, usually—where students go in terms of their employment outcomes or moving onto higher education. The more time passes, the more difficult that is. It is a difficult process, because there are large numbers of learners moving in different directions and the logistics required to track everybody consistently are a challenge. We do need to do more in that respect. I think that the sector can raise its game in tracking those destinations of students. There are various reports and discussions about the best way to do that across Wales, such as having a more coherent survey, perhaps, or using Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs data to track the sort of employment outcomes of learners as they move on to different scenarios. However, we need to do more of that, and the Welsh Government is working with us on relevance and value, which I think is the terminology that we work with Department for Education and Skills officials on, to make sure that the right programmes are delivering the right benefits to learners for their future career.

[212] **Mr Jones:** I think that colleges are also aware of the money issues. We have minimum class sizes on courses and, if courses cannot recruit those numbers of students, we are looking to see whether it is best to put the money elsewhere and whether that is the right pathway for students if only four or five want to do it. So, we are constantly looking at all of our courses and programmes, and at how much those courses cost, to make sure that we can squeeze as much as we possibly can, particularly in responding to the financial pressures that we continually face. I think that we look at value for money very well. Estyn used to look at

value for money in its previous inspection cycle, and I think that all colleges were, generally, getting grades 1 or 2 for value for money in those individual areas. Clearly, value for money is first of all driven by value, and the success rates across colleges have gone up dramatically in the last 10 years, from 55% to about 86% these days. So, the value is stronger and the money is managed tightly, as every business is these days.

[213] **Gwenda Thomas:** Thank you, and thank you, Chair.

[214] **William Graham:** I call on Jeff Cuthbert.

[215] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you. I am very pleased to see you here because further education, of course, is the biggest provider of learning post 16, so your evidence is crucial to this. You alluded to the financial situation and that is the reality. We are going to be in austerity for the foreseeable future, so there is little point, probably, in asking for more money, although I do not blame you for trying. *[Laughter]*. However, it is now a question of using what resources we have as smartly as possible, and that means all key partners involved in this issue of helping young people into work working together very closely. We had evidence in the previous session from work-based learning providers—I know that many FE institutions are work-based learning providers as well—about the great difficulties in getting the message across to young people, whether it is via the school or their parents, about the value of vocational routes; that HE, valuable though it is, is not the only route for young people and that there is a need for a much better relationship between employers, schools and key partners like you. Do you share that approach—I think that I know the answer—and, more importantly, what can we do about it?

[216] **Mr Jones:** Yes, we share that approach. It is one of our ongoing problems, which is fundamentally driven by the fact that, if a school has a sixth form, we just do not get access to those students to share information and make them aware, and because we do not get access in many cases, parents do not know or understand what is available. Do they really know what an apprenticeship is? Do they really know that, with an apprenticeship, you can progress to higher education? I am afraid that they do not, in many cases.

[217] What can we do? Well, I think that, in some way, we have to mandate that all students in schools should have access to a wide range of options. They should be aware of all of the information; for me, that is not just a document, but it is about having access to the students and the parents so that we can say, ‘Well, there are these other opportunities’. They can form whatever opinion they want, but, in many cases, the students are only seeing part of the picture. As a result, we are seeing many students arrive at colleges’ doors without a really good understanding of what they want to do, a good understanding of vocational education and, particularly, what you can do with it in terms of salaries and higher education; there is a big gap there. The way to manage it, I think, is, in some way, to mandate that, for all year 10s and year 11s—probably year 10s, a year earlier—there is an independent advice and guidance session that is made available to all schools that all pupils attend. At the moment, we just knock doors and the doors are closed just about all of the time.

[218] Different areas across Wales will run different events. I have seen numbers of those over the years and some have been successful, but, in many cases, some schools will not come. In some cases, they will only bring the students who they think are fit for vocational education. So, these opportunities need to be available to more students—

[219] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I am sorry, but what do you mean by ‘fit for vocational education’?

[220] **Mr Jones:** The badly behaved bottom three or four students will turn up, because they are the ones who are suitable for vocational education, are they not? In many cases that just is not right. Who is making that decision? It needs to be more open and transparent than it

is. That is an ongoing battle that we all have.

[221] **Jeff Cuthbert:** May I follow up on that?

[222] **William Graham:** Yes.

[223] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Is that—

[224] **William Graham:** Short questions, please, Jeff.

[225] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I am sorry. Is that a consistent picture across Wales, or are there parts of Wales that are better than others?

[226] **Mr Jones:** Wales is not consistent. In some cases, there are places that are different. You will not have that issue in Neath Port Talbot and you will not have it in Blaenau Gwent, up in Merthyr or in Rhyl, where there is no competition. However, in most parts of the—. I have worked in a number of areas and I speak to colleagues in lots of areas. Yes, it is a fair picture across Wales. There may be some inconsistency, Jeff; in some cases, some schools will provide the opportunity, but many schools, particularly if their numbers are low, will not provide that opportunity. I think back to my previous college, where, every year, we would run a big event and we knew that, every year, some schools would not come to it, and it would be the same schools every year that would not turn up.

[227] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you.

[228] **Dr Walker:** On that point, Chair, if I may, it is also about making sure that vocational learners have role models to aspire to. The skills competitions that are held regionally in Wales are very important. Skills showcases—on Friday, I will be heading up to the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham to the UK skills show—and the skills Olympics that take place now across Europe and beyond are a good way of showing learners that there are real role models and aspirational things that they can aim for if they do vocational courses. Publicising those properly, and making sure that that is seen as embedded across a college or school, is important as well.

[229] Finally, it is about progression pathways within vocational education to higher level skills, I would say, as well. So, if you enter vocational education, you do not just stop at level 3 or 4, but you have pathways all of the way up to levels 6, 7 and 8—graduate-level apprenticeships—so that people can come out with a graduate level qualification without having to spend three years in a traditional university context. That is another way, I think, to give people a different view of vocational study.

11:30

[230] **William Graham:** Mark, are you saying that, in your own words—we had the same evidence earlier, really—schools no longer encourage professional and business organisations of any kind to visit their sixth forms, and that there is no other third sector involvement?

[231] **Mr Jones:** It is a mixture in different areas. Some schools will hold open evenings where various organisations—private training providers, apprenticeship providers and colleges—will be allowed. Some do and some do not. In others, some sixth forms will just run sixth-form evenings and the only people who are there are from the school's sixth form; other providers are not invited to it. So, the students get one message.

[232] **Dr Walker:** We are finding that, anecdotally, as funding gets tighter at post-16 level, inevitably, the willingness of schools to open up to allow colleges and training providers to

come in to showcase is reducing somewhat, I think that it is fair to say.

[233] **Joyce Watson:** I am going to ask about barriers, and that seems like a major barrier in itself. I want to pick up on another barrier, because you also mentioned earlier that you offer part-time courses for those people who need them because of their lifestyles. I was particularly focused on carers and those with caring responsibilities, and the need that they will have to get back into the job market. Have you come across barriers within that, for example, childcare, timetabling and those sorts of things? If you have, how have you addressed them?

[234] **Mr Jones:** We come across those barriers all the time. I suppose that we start from the premise that we try to be as flexible as we possibly can, so, in terms of location—we all have numbers of campuses these days—and in terms of whether it is a daytime or evening provision. Then, we try to look at options, trying to identify demand and whether a course needs to run here on a Tuesday morning and needs to run there on a Wednesday evening. Very quickly, then, we have the discussion on value added, because you see four students here and five students there, whereas if you put them together, you would have a course that would be value for money. That is the constant balance and challenge that we get all the time. The concern going forward is that we know of our funding allocations; we do not yet know what our volume targets will be for next year. There is likely to be a significant reduction on what we call 19-plus part-time education; all of it going is one consideration that I know has been discussed. So, going forward, we may have real difficulties in offering any of those courses at all, whatever the location. So, we start as flexibly as we can and we are always concerned about balancing that need and local demand. That is what colleges have always tried to do: meet the local needs of our communities with the financial challenges in mind. That is one of our biggest ongoing challenges. However, going forward, it is going to be an even bigger challenge, because it looks like there will be a significant reduction in that area.

[235] **Joyce Watson:** The other issue—and you have addressed it, so I will not rehearse work-ready skills—is transport in a rural area. I represent a rural area. How big a challenge is that?

[236] **Mr Jones:** Again, it is a mixed picture. In my current college, for example, the responsibility or cost of transport is, generally, split. We put courses on and we put buses on from wide areas. The cost is generally split: a little bit goes to the local authority, we pick up just over half and the students, in some cases, pay as well. Clearly, all local authorities are looking at pulling back on their transport charges, so that is something at which all colleges are looking at the moment to make sure that we can balance it and still provide that facility while making sure that it does not cost us more than it does at the moment. I can see a situation where students may well have to pay more for that, going forward, if those subsidies continue to reduce.

[237] Again, it is a different picture in different areas. So, we have buses coming into Gower from all different local authorities, and it is a different mechanism and a different procedure in just about every different area. However, we are trying to provide those facilities as much as we can to get the students in. In some cases, it is discrete buses going to campuses; in some cases it is about jumping on mainstream buses, which means that they have to change once or twice, and it is a different solution across the board, but one that we are continually looking at to make sure that the students do not get inconvenienced by the unavailability of bus transport.

[238] **Joyce Watson:** That is interesting, but that is one area that I do not cover—Swansea. There are not many. So, I would be interested if you have anything to add, Greg, on the more rural areas and provision by colleges.

[239] **Dr Walker:** I think that Mark has mentioned it really, and that is that local authorities are looking to make savings in this area. Each local authority in your area will have a different policy in relation to the provision of bus services for those post-16 students who are going to college. Certainly, the colleges in the south-west are working as best they can to make sure that there is some degree of coherence in the offer that they can give in conjunction with the local authority. It is a particular challenge, as you say, in rural areas where that is more difficult to achieve than in areas like Swansea, perhaps.

[240] **Joyce Watson:** Indeed. Moving on, we have heard that attitudes are a barrier, that people are coming in with the wrong attitude for work and that there is an issue with what they now call 'softer skills'. Are you coming across that, and are you able to help with it, I suppose?

[241] **Mr Jones:** Yes, we are coming across that all the time. For me, that is part of the pastoral, tutorial process that goes outside the main course. So, the students will generally do a main programme of study, there will be some essential skills work, normally contextualised, built onto that, and then they will have a programme of pastoral support. In many cases, we will try to address some of those issues in those areas.

[242] At my current college, we have six staff who have caseloads of between 50 and 60 students each. Those students are the students that we identified as being more at risk. So, as well as the pastoral support, they will generally have half an hour or an hour on a fortnightly basis with one of these support staff, on a one-to-one basis. They will ring them up to get them into college in the morning, to make sure that they are fed, and to deal with all of those kinds of issues. There is a sharp increase in that at the moment and there has been over recent years. So, in many cases, we are trying to develop a programme that is not just their study, not just their main course, but that gives them all the life support as well, to make sure that they come in on time, to make sure that they have essential skills and to develop the basic skills in those students that give them a better opportunity to get into work. Once the curriculum is added to it, those students are better placed to move into employment.

[243] **William Graham:** Mick on this point.

[244] **Mick Antoniwi:** May I just ask how you evaluate the success of that? We have heard a lot of talk about this, but we still seem to have very much the same problem that we had quite a number of years ago.

[245] **Mr Jones:** Well, we do manage it, Mick. We look at a value-added analysis for those vocational students. Again, there is an added-value mechanism in place for A-levels, but colleges have developed different value-added mechanisms. So, for example, when the students come in, we will ask them to fill in a questionnaire that asks, 'How far are you travelling?' and 'Do you have a part-time job?' As a result of that, we are able to assess where they start, and we are able to compare that against what they come out with at the end. In many cases, that will not be a grade A; it will be a grade C at A-level. In many cases, it will not be a triple distinction; it will be a merit profile. But we are able to see the distance that those students have travelled between when they came in, and we were made aware of all the issues, and what they go out with. What we are trying to do all the time is maximise—set targets to maximise the distance travelled as much as we can. So, there are various colleges with really strong value-added programmes, many of which have received recognition and awards, where we do exactly that, because that is what further education does and does really well.

[246] **Mick Antoniwi:** Okay, thank you.

[247] **Eluned Parrott:** I want to talk to you about your work with other partners. We talked

a little earlier about competition for post-16 provision in schools. I want to go into what you believe the motivation for that is because, clearly, one way of looking at it is that it is purely about competition—that schools want to keep hold of their sixth-form students. That would suggest that you cannot get the students out of schools post-16, but that you could potentially get them post-18 because the schools have got no reason to be competitive at that point. Or, is there something else at play here? Is it something to do with perhaps ignorance on the part of schoolteachers as to what FE can offer their students? Obviously, teachers have taken an academic route to their career; they have not taken a vocational route, by and large. So, is there a job of work to be done here to talk to teachers and those individuals about FE as well?

[248] **Mr Jones:** Yes, absolutely. There is a misconception. Looking at school sixth forms, there is a school in my area with 10 students in year 13, so the average class size in there is probably one or two. Our average class size is more like 14. So, immediately there will be a perception that the care is better in that classroom of one or two, compared with a classroom of 14. That will be the perception, because it is a smaller class size. I am not sure whether that is true, because around the main course, we put tutorial support and other support. However, there is a misunderstanding.

[249] Again, what we try to do is to invite teachers into colleges to have that debate and discussion. Again, the response is really poor in many cases. In some cases, there may be a fear and, in some cases, a lack of understanding. However, it needs to happen, rather than just be talked about. So, I think that some of it is because they do not know about it. They did not go through the vocational route and they did not go through further education, so how would they know? So, I think it needs to come together in some way, and we need to make it happen, because it is just getting wider all the time. Underneath it you have got, in some cases, some real competition issues: 'I've only got three in my class; why would I want to make those three aware of the opportunities that are down there, because if those three don't come, I haven't got any classes to teach'. So, you have got that issue as well, and I think what you do have is a mixture of those two things.

[250] **Dr Walker:** You will be aware as well that it is not just in vocational education that colleges have got strengths, but in general education and academic provision. The 'Final Report of the Oxbridge Ambassador for Wales' that Paul Murphy completed this year highlighted a number of colleges' excellent academic provision in getting larger numbers of students into Russell Group and other universities. So, there are strengths, not just in vocational education provision, but in general education provision as well. So, it is a real option for students to move on at 16, not just at 18, to colleges.

[251] The issue at 18, when they are free to go beyond sixth form to college, is that funding provision for post-18 is likely to be limited now to apprenticeship provision on a full-time basis. So, the options at 18 are going to be very limited, given the funding constraints that we are facing in Wales.

[252] **Mr Jones:** We have not got the money to do it all over again. We need to get it right for these students from day one, because if, at 16 to 18, they have had a poor experience, it is more difficult to motivate them at 18. It is possible to put them back on a course, but if they have had two tough years when they were not on the right course, then it is far harder to get them back on track and to give them an opportunity. So, for me, we have to get it right on the first go. We have only got the money to get it right on the first go.

[253] **Eluned Parrott:** What is the role of Careers Wales in encouraging young people to consider a broader range of options?

[254] **Dr Walker:** It is getting more limited, as you will be aware, because of the resources that it has available. The committee has heard from it, I am sure. Within the last 12 months, it

has focused on learners with particular needs and particular disengagement issues that they are having to face. Website support is, therefore, a lot of what it is now offering in terms of advice and guidance to the general 16-year-old or 18-year-old who is looking to move on to progress their options for a career or education. So, it is a very limited and becoming an even more limited opportunity.

[255] **Eluned Parrott:** How effective is a reactive form of marketing at changing opinions and raising awareness of something that young people do not know about already?

[256] **Mr Jones:** It has to be proactive, not reactive. Being reactive is of no use whatsoever. We have to change mindsets upfront. We have got to explain to parents what the range of options is, so that children can still make the best decision for themselves. In many cases, staying on in school is right, but we are too reactive all the time. That is the change that we need to make, which is to make it proactive, and to get in there upfront, so that we can explain the full range of options, so that students can have a real independent discussion on what is best for them as individuals going forward. I am afraid that does not happen well enough in enough cases.

[257] **Eluned Parrott:** We have heard some evidence this morning from local authorities, and Careers Wales has also talked about the five-tier model and how it is looking at individuals who are at different levels of engagement, shall we say. How well is that being used to help to direct young people to the kind of post-16 provision that is going to be most helpful for them in building their career?

[258] **Mr Jones:** I think it is very good. I was in Swansea this morning and the work on 16 to 18 is very impressive, I have to say. We know exactly where all those students are at any time of day, and they are progressing going through.

11:45

[259] So, again, I think that there are some really good examples of where that works, but that is focused on only a small number of students. So, it is focused on your tier 1s, your tier 2s and progressing. However, there are lots of other students who I think would benefit from a wider awareness of what opportunities are out there.

[260] It works at the ages of 16 to 18, because we know where they all are. At the age of 19 plus, it is far more difficult, because the students then fall off the list. So, I think that, from that point of view, it is really important that students understand, at all age groups, the full range of opportunities that are available to them, so that we can channel them constantly through the best route possible. So, it is reactive, again, rather than being proactive, in my opinion.

[261] **Eluned Parrott:** So, are we missing any of those young people at the slightly higher tiers, because they are not hard enough to reach to gain our attention?

[262] **Mr Jones:** That was Greg's point in terms of careers. There is less money, so the money is being focused on the ones who are in most need, but there are others, I believe, who are in need and the money does not stretch, in some cases, widely enough to give them the support that they need.

[263] **William Graham:** One of the privileges of being Chairman of this committee is invitations to outside bodies. I have been around most of the enterprise zones in Wales. A common theme for the Haven and for Anglesey was that they are going to experience major projects, with the prospect of huge numbers of jobs. With the reduction in funding, there was particular concern from your colleagues on both those boards that they were not going to be

able to satisfy the demand that they anticipated. In Anglesey, for example, there could be about 8,000 jobs—a huge number providing tremendous opportunities for the whole of north Wales. Is the reduction in funding going to be a barrier to you providing the services that they need?

[264] **Dr Walker:** Inevitably. There are so many landmark projects potentially launching: the tidal lagoons in Conwy and Swansea, the electrification of the south Wales Great Western line, the M4 relief road in south-east Wales—there are seven or eight major projects, including energy island as you highlighted. Yes, there will be a need for large-scale training and retraining of the local workforce, otherwise we will be attracting in large numbers of workers from England and the rest of the UK and, indeed, from Europe. So, we really need to focus. I know that officials in the Department for Education and Skills are working very hard to make sure that we have a response to those projects as soon as they are confirmed and they go ahead. However, you are right to highlight the fact that there is not a large pot of money that will enable that to happen, and if we are restricted in what we can do over the age of 19, that is going to make it more difficult.

[265] On the other hand—we need to stress the positives—there has been an expansion over a four or five-year period; there has been an increase in work-based learning resources over that time horizon. We just hope that the fiscal scenario that we are facing in the next four or five years means that there are enough places on apprenticeships and other programmes to enable that good work to continue.

[266] **William Graham:** Are there any other questions from Members? There are not. Thank you very much for your attendance today and for the way that you have answered our questions. You have really stimulated debate for us and, no doubt, we will hear from you again. Thank you very much for coming today.

[267] I now close the meeting.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 11:48.
The meeting ended at 11:48.*