

Senedd Cymru

Pwyllgor yr Economi, Masnach a Materion Gwledig

Ymchwiliad: Llwybrau prentisiaeth

Cyf: AP32

Ymateb gan: Ffederasiwn Proffesiynol Perthynol i Iechyd Cymru (AHPF)

-

Welsh Parliament

Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee

Inquiry: Apprenticeship pathways

Ref: AP32

Evidence from: Allied Health Professions Federation Cymru (AHPF)



Allied Health Professions Federation Cymru (AHPF)

Response to Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

Consultation: Apprenticeship Pathways

AHPF Cymru – Who We Are

Our vision: The Allied Health Professionals (AHP) workforce is positioned to improve the health and well-being of the population in Wales.

Our mission: The AHPF Cymru provides collective AHP leadership and representation to influence national policy and guidance at a strategic level.

AHPF Cymru strategic priorities:

1. Workforce
2. Service Transformation/The Future of Health and Social Care
3. Visibility of AHPs/Leadership

Our member organisations:

- British and Irish Orthoptics Society
- British Association of Drama Therapists
- British Association of Music Therapy
- British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists
- British Dietetic Association
- British Psychological Society
- Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
- College of Paramedics
- Royal College of Occupational Therapists
- Royal College of Podiatry
- Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
- Society of Radiographers
- The British Association of Art Therapists

AHPF Cymru – Response

Thank you for the opportunity to give evidence to the committee's inquiry on apprenticeship pathways. Our response addresses equity and access to support for learners and the role of Welsh Government in this space.

Key points

- Given the status of NHS Wales as the largest employer in Wales, it is essential that we exploit opportunities for apprenticeship pathways within the allied health professionals (AHP) sector. This is particularly important both for professions experiencing workforce shortages, including podiatrists, speech and language therapists and psychologists and professions where there are no commissioned courses in Wales such as prosthetists and orthotists.
- There is much learning from the rollout of healthcare degree apprenticeships in England which have been supported by Allied Health Professional (AHP) bodies.
- Current progress on this issue is slow following the publication of the Health Education and Improvement Wales report on healthcare degree apprenticeships in 2023.
- Allied Health Professions Federation Cymru (AHPF Cymru) are calling for the introduction of apprenticeships for AHPs in its manifesto for the 2026 Senedd elections.

Situation in Wales

We and our wider AHP colleagues have been calling for consideration of apprenticeship routes for entry into professions for some time. Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) consulted on healthcare degree apprenticeships in October 2023. The consultation [report](#) included evidence from Colegau Cymru that the degree apprenticeships approved by Welsh Government to date in Wales have been focused on male-dominated areas. They argued that the introduction of healthcare apprenticeships, which disproportionately attracts female applicants, could help to readdress this balance. We have seen limited progress on degree apprenticeships since the publication of this report.

Allied Health Professionals Federation Cymru position on apprenticeships

AHPF Cymru strongly believes that expanding access to the AHP professions through degree apprenticeships is essential for addressing workforce shortages and improving the diversity of the sector. Apprenticeships offer an accessible alternative to traditional university education, allowing individuals to gain hands-on experience while earning a living. This pathway is particularly important for those who may face financial or logistical barriers to higher education.

A further benefit of apprenticeships is that they help promote the recruitment of staff with local knowledge drawn from the community they work in, including Welsh language skills in areas of high Welsh language populations.

AHPF Cymru are calling for the introduction of apprenticeships for AHPs in our manifesto for the 2026 Senedd election.

Learning from England

Starting in 2016, NHS England has designed and implemented degree and master level apprenticeship qualifications for its AHP workforce. As a result of this work, the following professions have a degree apprenticeship training route available:

- Physiotherapist
- Occupational Therapist
- Speech and Language Therapist
- Diagnostic Radiographer
- Paramedic
- Podiatrist
- Arts Therapist
- Dietician
- Prosthetist and Orthotist

NHS Education England (NEE) has recognised the key benefits that the development of these AHP pathways can deliver to the NHS and related organisations. NEE argue that if such pathways and employees are utilised effectively, this can result in enhanced development of the existing workforce, deliver more flexible training routes, attract a wider talent pool from across communities and enable the recruitment of a more diverse and representative workforce. AHP bodies have been closely involved in the development of the apprenticeships model in England and would be keen to share this learning to support a rollout in Wales.

Further information

We hope this paper will be helpful in supporting the committee's deliberations. We would be happy to provide further information if this would be of benefit. Please see our contact details below.

Dr. Caroline Walters, Chair, Allied Health Professionals Federation Cymru
caroline.walters@rcsli.org.

Confirmation

This response is submitted on behalf of The Allied Health Professions Federation in Wales. We confirm that we are happy for this response to be made public.