

Senedd Cymru

Pwyllgor yr Economi, Masnach a Materion Gwledig

Ymchwiliad: Llwybrau prentisiaeth

Cyf: AP37

Ymateb gan: Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Caerdydd a'r Fro

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Welsh Parliament

Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee

Inquiry: Apprenticeship pathways

Ref: AP37

Evidence from: Cardiff and Vale University Health Board



Cardiff and Vale University Health Board Response

- **Pathways between apprenticeship levels**

For the NHS in Wales, mapping out career pathways in health-related qualifications is under the governance of HEIW and is carried out using subject matter experts across Wales. These qualifications are developed where skills gaps are identified and to give a work-based skills development approach to meet the needs of our staff and services.

The development of qualifications is always considered as a pathway approach and not in isolation. However, these pathways can be limited and do not always reach a degree level under the apprenticeships umbrella. The NHS in Wales conducted a consultation in the Autumn of 2023 into Healthcare Degree Apprenticeships. The [evaluation report](#) highlighted a lack of understanding of the apprenticeship funding and delivery models in NHS Wales and the breadth of education and training commission by HEIW on its behalf. Some of the recommendations from this included:

- To Identify and prioritise discussions with healthcare professions who would welcome more information on degree apprenticeships.
- To undertake an options appraisal and make recommendations on the best education delivery model.
- To Engage with Welsh Government and the Commission for Tertiary Education & Research (CTER/MEDR) to develop approaches for agreed degree apprenticeships that would add value to the career pathway for specific healthcare professions.

More work needs to be done around the pathways to healthcare careers so that it is easy to understand how careers can develop in the NHS through Apprenticeships and traditional routes. The NHS is a vast organisation with many different professions so although Healthcare Degrees have been consulted on and recommendations made, we can take advantage of other routes such as Engineering, Data Science etc in the meantime.

Given the specialist nature of some subject areas, training providers do not always have the expertise to deliver the full qualification which pulls on the scarce resources of NHS services and can limit the number of learners on these routes. Examples of where this has occurred are Maternity and Health Informatics.

The ILM suite of management programmes has been a longstanding option under the apprenticeship umbrella and has been used considerably across the NHS. This

pathway is currently limited to Level 5 and there is a lack of funding beyond this where a level 7 does exist. NHS organisations are under continuous scrutiny and must satisfy stakeholders. For our strategic leaders to succeed they must have the capability to act strategically, optimise performance and make evidence-based decisions whilst keeping the workforce motivated, Level 7 would be key in supporting this.

There are limited examples of where a dual approach to providing a qualification has been agreed (Healthcare Science), where training providers work with subject matter experts working within the NHS to assist with delivery and assessment of qualifications, but this requires agreement on how the drawn down funding can be split between both parties, considering the level of involvement on both sides.

There have been views raised about direct draw down of funding straight into NHS organisations. But this has its own draw backs as it would require NHS organisations delivering training to meet Estyn regulations in addition to the other regulations already in place.

- **Economy**

By supporting the use of apprenticeships in Wales we are helping to meet the goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. Apprenticeships are contributing to both a more equal and prosperous Wales through the creation of jobs and skills growth opportunities. Apprenticeships are impacting those leaving compulsory education or looking for a career change and existing workers looking to progress in their roles. For those seeking job opportunities, we are promoting social mobility, ensuring they can enter roles which may have seemed out of reach. For the existing workforce this is enabling them to meet their ambitions through continued learning and development. This all culminates in a more enthusiastic workforce which is fit for purpose, progressive and sustainable for the future. Apprenticeships are future focussed and reviewed regularly to ensure they are relevant and meeting national need. It is important that marketing of traditional routes into further education and apprenticeships are given equal prominence.

Apprenticeships include Essential Skills training for numeracy, literacy and digital literacy. Although this can be seen as an extra step for most learners it is ensuring that the level of core skill meets a national standard and has a positive effect on the economy and levels of numeracy and literacy across Wales. Essential Skills were first introduced by the Welsh Government as a mandatory component of apprenticeships in 2015 and then updated to ensure they were fit for purpose in

2024. [Delivery of Essential Skills Wales qualifications in apprenticeship programmes | GOV.WALES](#)

Examples of where this has worked well:

Introduction of our entry level administration apprentices. We have been able to utilise the new Digital Skills for Business apprenticeship qualification. This is ensuring our new staff can learn about the most up to date technology / software and use these efficiently to have a positive effect on our business practices, but also their employability as they continue their career.

This has also positively impacted the pipeline of new nurses into the Health Board. With the availability of the Level 2 and 3 Clinical Healthcare Support qualifications we are ensuring those who have the ambition to become nurses but do not have traditional qualifications, such as A-levels, can meet the course entry requirements to the nursing degree via alternative routes. These qualifications are allowing us to 'grow our own', whilst providing valuable work experience and knowledge about the role.

Lastly, we have just recruited our third cohort of Estates apprentices. This is a workforce where the public sector struggles to maintain competitive with the private sector. By offering this apprenticeship we can develop these individuals into roles which ensure they feel that their ambitions are being met, whilst contributing to the succession planning of this important area.

- **Employers**

As a macro employer we are fully supportive of apprenticeships, and we have the infrastructure in place to attract and support large numbers of apprenticeships across our organisation. We regularly review current and newly available qualifications and pathways and assess how this will make a positive contribution to the service and either recruit or enrol as necessary.

To encourage the use of apprenticeships with micro employers there needs to be greater communication from Welsh Government and other key stakeholders such as CTER/MEDR and the Regional Skills Partnerships that is directed specifically to them, they can see how this works, the support that is available and the long terms benefits. Ensuring they can hear from employers at their level who have already done it and done it well.

- **Information about apprenticeships**

As a large employer we have developed strong relationships with Careers Wales, Cardiff Commitment as part of Cardiff Council, schools and colleges. We regularly take part in interventions where we discuss roles in the NHS, routes which includes

apprenticeships and how opportunities can be accessed for meaningful work experience and volunteering.

We recognise that this is highly important work as attracting our future workforce means we need to plant the seeds now for the next generation, so that they can plan, investigate and make informed choices when needed.

For some of our younger generation they can readily access this information and live in households where this is actively discussed. However, we must increase social mobility and do this by giving greater awareness to those from deprived areas or disadvantaged backgrounds. We promote apprenticeship opportunities for all and ensure placements, support and access to roles as appropriate.

Suggestions on how this can be improved would be further development of the Careersville platform hosted by HEIW. Apprenticeship routes and opportunities need to be in a more prominent place and weaved through the profession buildings where applicable.

Increased opportunities for young learners to hear about apprenticeships first hand, from those who have started out on their apprenticeship and those who have been successful through a pathway. To be able to pose questions and help them feel more comfortable about the route.

Increased engagement on social media which is aimed at all demographics as all generations access this on different platforms and want the information delivered in specific ways.

- **Equity of support and access for learners**

For Cardiff and Vale UHB, we are inclusive organisation and apprenticeship pathways are for everyone of all backgrounds. Apprenticeships are promoted across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan with a greater focus on areas of deprivation and specific demographics through our work mentioned above. In terms of geography, we do not have any limitations which will likely be seen in other parts of Wales.

Our ambition is to have a diverse workforce which is seen at all levels of the organisations. It is important that the workforce and all areas of the community understand how they can locate these opportunities and apply. We are actively working with all areas of the community including homeless, probation service, care leavers and those with additional learning needs to ensure they can apply for these positions. For some they lack confidence and support is given, through 1-1 meetings and helpful resources for preparing applications and attending interviews.

We recognise that Cardiff especially has many diverse communities, and we want to ensure that they know where to find these opportunities work is actively going on to ensure we have contacts and ways of raising awareness.

Apprenticeship opportunities are advertised on our NHS Jobs page, on social media, on the apprenticeship vacancy service and at the Job Centre. We are always looking for other ways of advertising.

- **The Welsh Governments role**

Overall, the awareness of apprenticeships and the benefits needs to increase across Wales. We still lag far behind the position of England in this regard where qualifications and pathways are in abundance. Apprenticeships need to be given equal standing with other traditional routes, rather than one being seen as better than the other, as they can help suit individual needs and have a greater impact on the economy.

Welsh Government needs to ensure that all key stakeholders are working in partnership, with the introduction of the new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER/MEDR) which is tasked with developing the Welsh provision of apprenticeship ensuring rigorous standards around occupational competence. This organisation needs strong links with Regional Skills Partnerships, which includes employers, higher and further education, training and government representatives. They are tasked with driving investment and will be key to ensuring this is meeting the needs of the wider economy at a local and regional level. By working together, we have a greater chance of success for our apprenticeships.

We have often found that there is eligibility criteria attached to qualifications which significantly affect access to the qualifications for some e.g. by applying an upper age range to the facilities qualification. This can make access unfair and inequitable when looking at other staff groups/qualifications. Where eligibility criteria are applied it would be good to understand the reasons why and the evidence used to apply this.

Taking huge advantage of Apprenticeship Week Wales to raise the profile and opportunities. Taking the example of England, this preparation has a long lead in time for employers to prepare, with social media direction, logos, hashtags, example activities and it has a significant impact. For some years this guidance for Wales has been lacking and meant that we have not had one cohesive message. We have experienced a better service this year but hope this continues to improve over the coming years. Greater guidance for businesses large and small would likely see greater engagement across this week for Wales.