

## Inquiry into the Implementation of the Learning & Skills (Wales) Measure 2009

### Evidence from the National Training Federation Wales



Developing the Network to Deliver Excellence in Vocational Skills  
Datblygu'r Rhwydwaith i Gyflawni Rhagoriaeth mewn Sgiliau Galwedigaethol

### Evidence to the Children and Young People Committee Inquiry into the Implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 from National Training Federation for Wales (NTfW)

#### Introduction:

1. NTfW is a pan Wales membership organisation. We have 109 membership organisations which include independent training providers, further education colleges, local authority training departments and third sector organisations. Our members include 26 of the 27 Welsh Government quality assured work based learning organisations who provide mainstream funded Traineeship, Steps to Employment and Apprenticeship training throughout Wales. We also have associate members ranging from Awarding Bodies to the Open University.
2. Throughout the response, sections written in italics are comments received directly from members in response to our consultation exercise used to inform NTfW's response to the inquiry.

#### The effect that the implementation of the *Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009* has had on young people aged 14-19 years;

3. On a simple level, young people now have a wider choice of vocational and academic courses than they had before the measure. Some of the courses introduced as a result of the 14-19 measure are now linking the world of work more closely to education. Some young people are also experiencing other learning environments due to increased collaboration between schools, colleges and in limited cases, work based training providers following the measure however, the situation is complex.
4. A greater range of vocational courses has been offered but the appropriateness of some, their relevance to the occupational sector they are linked to and the value employers or further education or apprenticeship providers place on some of these qualifications is questionable. Planning of vocational course provision and the learning offer often occurs at curriculum team level within a local network or sometimes within a local school. Consultation with sector skills councils who represent employers or with higher level learning providers (FE, HE, Work Based Learning [WBL] /Apprenticeship providers) is limited at best. This can result in courses offered that can be delivered within the school environment, maximising the use of existing staff and resources and meet the required number of vocational course offers at the necessary level. However, whilst meeting the measure that course may well not be valued or recognised outside of the school learning environment or within the world of work. This can cause an issue with work based/ vocational progression when the learner leaves school, with the pupil assuming the qualification provides a far stronger passport to the next level/stage than it actually does. Sector skills councils, awarding bodies and the Welsh Government have worked together to develop Principal Learning Qualifications which are vocational courses linked to the Welsh Baccalaureate which can provide a progression pathway into further learning, an apprenticeship or employment in certain occupational sectors. These courses require formal collaboration

between schools and other learning providers (FE or WBL) and employers as they require elements to be delivered which are related to the workplace and as such no-one provider can meet all course delivery requirements. Despite Welsh Government pump prime funding being available for the implementation of these courses into schools, the take up of these has been limited and patchy across regions for various reasons including complexity, cost and adopting a radically new approach to course provision.

5. Across Wales NTfW members are running small 14-19 programmes, all with great success and glowing reports from the networks but provision is patchy and piecemeal. Many of these courses are run as loss leaders so providers can showcase their provision to schools and to show schools the positive outcomes from our programmes. Some examples are:

Several NTfW members collaborated with Cardiff Business School and schools in Cardiff to offer twilight Leadership and Management programme, for post 16 pupils and more able and talented pre 16 pupils. This has included work experiences with respected large employers and learners gaining Institute of Leadership and Management qualifications. The pilot of this course was possible because providers offered their services at no cost and negotiated savings with awarding bodies etc. This pilot was highly successful with excellent completion rates and feedback from the pupils, schools, education and training providers and employers involved. As a result, this programme is now being funded from the ANDP.

A generic employability programme across one local authority. This short course is in its second year and to date over 400 disengaged learners have completed the programme with over 90% achieving the full suite of nationally recognised qualifications. Subjects include: BTEC L1 Award in Workskills, Fire Safety, Food Hygiene, Manual Handling, Health & Safety, First Aid, Alcohol Awareness, Entrepreneurship, Managing your money.

Most of the 14-19 course collaborations with work based learning and training providers are for pupils who are disengaged or at risk of this, or demonstrating behavioural problems. There are limited exceptions such as a 2 year Business and Administration programme for key stage 4 (14 year olds) with alternate classroom and work place elements. Although early days, this programme is showing fantastic results and the school staff, pupils, employers and training provider are seeing the benefit of learners going out into the workplace to reinforce their classroom learning and develop their wider people and employment skills.

6. However, various factors have meant it has been notoriously difficult to open these doors despite the need, the opportunity for progression into employment or further training and the quality of the programme.

*Historically, 14-19 networks were a closed shop to training and apprenticeship providers and NTfW have an important role to play here including undertaking special projects to develop relationships and transformation between 14-19 networks and the work based learning network and NTfW members. NTfW has experienced some successes in helping break down these barriers although there are local and regional variations. We read about calls from the Welsh Government to reduce the number of courses with no credible outcome or delivery of courses by teachers without specialist training in that vocational area, but in reality will this happen?*

**Whether the implementation of the *Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009* has had any effect on the numbers of young people choosing to stay on in education or training after the end of compulsory education at age 16;**

7. Some NTfW members have been involved in courses which have resulted in young people remaining in education or training post 16. For example:

*A training provider runs ANDP funded Summer schools for one local authority: 3-4 weeks engagement programme for learners with the potential of leaving school with no qualifications and becoming NEET. Since running this programme only 3 of the 58 learners have not moved directly into employment, education or further training. This programme won a National training Award in 2010 and is going from strength to strength, producing truly amazing results*

8. Pan Wales, Careers Wales Destination figures show that more young people are remaining in education or training at the end of compulsory learning at 16 and as such the levels of those not in education, employment or training (NEET) at 16 has reduced. However, we have no evidence to show that the Learning and Skills (Wales) measure has had a positive effect in encouraging young people to progress to Welsh Government funded work based learning programmes at 16, in fact, since 2005 the number of 16 year olds entering work based training and /or employment has decreased, although we have also experienced a period of economic recession so causal relationships are difficult to establish. (See appendix 1)
9. Whilst a reduction in NEET levels at 16 is welcomed by all parties, NTfW is concerned that rather than addressing the NEET issue, the implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure may be inadvertently delaying and thus compounding the NEET issue at 19 plus. Our initial examination of Careers Wales Pupils destination data at years 11, 12 and 13 between 2005 and 2010, appears to show a trend in NEET at year 13 increasing slightly (from 5% to 7%) at the same time that NEET at Year 11 has decreased from 7% to 5%. [See Appendix 1 for further details] Interestingly during this time entry into work based learning non-employed (Skillbuild/Traineeship) and employed programmes (Apprenticeship) has remained very low and almost static. Whilst analysis of data is often not as clear as it first appears and several factors could be affecting this, we believe this area warrants further investigation. We are all aware that youth employment up to age 24 is at a record low. Anecdotal feedback we receive from employers is that young people applying for jobs with them often lack employability and basic literacy and numeracy skills which becomes clear at application stage. Whilst employers do not expect young people to have a raft of work experiences and skills developed during these, some applicants are struggling to fill in forms, follow timetables etc. This is also reflected during the application process for apprenticeships and further education colleges report a similar trend in applications for their level 3 courses. Work based learning providers and colleges have to spend increasing amounts of time and money addressing literacy and numeracy needs so that young people can undertake the courses. This issue is not isolated to young people who are disengaged and NEET but also is seen in young people with GCSEs, A levels and degrees. Whilst the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure has encouraged more young people to remain in school completing vocational courses post 16, it could be argued that these are not always appropriate for progression and for some learners, their employability and basic skills issues are not being addressed and progression onto colleges or training providers who have the specialist support available to address these issues is being delayed.

**Whether young people aged 14-19 have a wider choice for academic and vocational courses as a result of the *Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009*;**

10. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some schools have moved some of their post 16 offer to BTEC courses from 'A' level to cater for learners who would drop out at the end of year 12 (17 years) at 'A/S' stage as they are not academically able to meet 'A' level standard. However, they are remaining in a setting geared to progression onto university (which is a completely suitable route for many of their 'A' level students) but not for these learners who are already showing they cannot meet 'A' level standard. A school may alter its offer from an academic to vocational course for that learner, utilising their existing staff and resources but their knowledge of those pupils' potential progression routes is limited, with progression to university still being a main focus and sometimes no links made to apprenticeship providers or even further education course progression that is highly relevant. It could be argued that referral to the local college or training provider courses at 16 would have been far more appropriate, allowing the pupil to benefit from their much greater links with employers, the world or work and high quality links into these through work experience and/or competitions etc. Is the measure inadvertently encouraging such pupils to choose options which are not of optimal benefit as schools are promoting their post 16 vocational offer to learners already within their school?
  
11. In some areas options are increasingly transparent, for example the Swansea Guarantee website but in others, options are presented in a booklet that is individually tailored to each school. As such the information on non school post 16 options is often incomplete, very narrow and easily overlooked, if it even exists at all. Independent advice and guidance from the careers service is becoming increasingly targeted to those most in need due to risk of disengagement and as such this role is defaulting more and more to school staff who are not, and cannot be expected to be, aware of all post 16 options and thus at times, information pupils and parents receive is unintentionally biased at best. NTfW members' inclusion in awareness raising events is also limited and patchy across Wales. NTfW worked closely with three 14-19 networks at their local authority careers events, to ensure a range of training providers had interactive stands focused on a range of occupational areas to promote the benefits of Traineeships and Apprenticeships in these areas and vacancies. This received positive feedback from all involved including pupils but these events were limited not only geographically but also some events were only targeted at pupils at risk of becoming NEET. All schools have option evenings explaining post 16 options to pupils and parents but NTfW members are often not invited to these and so pupils and parents are not aware of the Traineeship and Apprenticeship opportunities available post 16. Where providers are invited, this is often on a piecemeal basis and not all relevant providers will be aware of the event.
  
12. In a few areas vocational option courses available with training providers at KS5 (post 16) are included on the 14-19 options menu. However, referrals are such low numbers that courses do not run. As these are new courses and there is difficulty promoting the benefits of these programmes to learners, providers are finding it hard to get the ball rolling. No doubt, once it has been delivered for a year schools will see the benefits of the programme. Some of these courses are considered the minimum operating standards for anyone wishing to work in growth sectors e.g. Health & Social Care.

**What practical problems have been addressed in order to implement the *Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009*?**

13. 14-19 curriculum planning is undertaken by local 14-19 networks. The makeup of these networks varies from authority to authority, with many having individual variations on a strategic group, an operation or curriculum group, a learning support group etc. As such, for training providers working across several geographical areas the picture is complex and it can be very difficult to make networks aware of how training providers can support them. Training provider representation on networks was historically patchy and often individual rather than representing the wider provider network in that local area. NTfW received Welsh Government Transformation funding 2009-2010 to employ 4 officers pan Wales to develop greater links with 14-19 networks. This was generally very successful in opening doors and ensuring NTfW wider representation on networks, although post project, the picture is still patchy with local variation regarding representation. From August 2011, the work based learning mainstream Traineeship programme was introduced and Welsh Government informed providers and networks that the Engagement strand of the Traineeship programme was now officially part of the 14-19 option menus as a post 16 choice. In some areas this has correctly led to the traineeship providers sitting on the 14-19 networks, often for the first time. However, representation continues to be patchy and in some areas they are not represented at all or are not on the correct groups to have any influence or share their knowledge and skills with working with disengaged and potentially disengaged young people. As such there is a risk that this important part of the curriculum offer will not be fully utilised in local curriculum planning, leading to duplication, needs being unmet in a timely way and potentially greater disengagement as the Traineeship programme's funding is available to 16 and 17 year olds only
  
14. NTfW have always believed that the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 was too limited in scope in that work based learning provision including Apprenticeship was never included as part of this. NTfW raised this during consultation at the time and was concerned its exclusion would lead to 'vocational' courses which do not meet employers' needs being delivered by inexperienced and unqualified staff. This means that 14-19 planning has always been undertaken without including apprenticeship provision in the area and without using the knowledge and experience of the high quality work based learning training provider network pan Wales. Networks often are not aware of the range of apprenticeship opportunities available locally or who the apprenticeship providers are. NTfW continues to raise awareness of this amongst networks but with limited success as it is outside the scope of the measure and therefore not included in any key performance indicators that networks are measured on. There is a lack of planning between networks and training providers in the area regarding sharing information on supply and demand of local apprenticeship opportunities in order to create planned pathway progression into apprenticeship. NTfW and Regional Provider Advocates continue to lobby networks to develop this and some interesting talks are taking place but this concept is in its infancy. This is reflected in NTfW's inability to meet the inquiry's request to find an employer in Wales who has changed their apprenticeship recruitment or taken on an apprenticeship as a result of the Measure.
  
15. The understanding of what vocational means - within the WBL sector it has a different meaning to how the schools have interpreted vocational choices as indicated above. Within 14-19, the term 'vocational' needs to be better defined to meet the needs of employers with whom these young people will eventually be seeking employment. E.g. currently young people coming out of school with IT qualifications but can't use common IT packages.

16. The definitions of levels in vocational courses differ from that in Apprenticeship and work based learning. For example, in vocational courses Level 2 is the standard GCSE equivalent level and Level 3 the progression level and equating to 'A' Level. In work based learning and apprenticeship, level 2 is a standard operational competence level with no automatic progression onto Level 3 as this is a supervisory level. To use a production line analogy- Level 2 would be the production line worker, who is able to work without assistance and make limited decisions themselves, whereas Level 3 would be the supervisor of that line and possibly several other lines too. Level 4 would be the factory manager and Level 5 the director who oversees several factories. This difference in levels is confusing to teachers, pupils and parents alike and is often not explained in options booklets when pupils are choosing their vocational options, which would allow them to develop awareness and plan their pathway of progression. Pupils may have completed a vocational Level 3 course in school and then be disillusioned and demotivated when they want to undertake an apprenticeship and have to do so at Level 2 Foundation Modern Apprenticeship as they lack suitable qualifications and experience and need to develop their skills to work at an operative level. With time, experience, skills development and increased competence, they may progress onto a Level 3 Modern Apprenticeship, as they are able to gain promotion and employment to a supervisory level in order to demonstrate competence and achieve a Level 3 Modern Apprenticeship. NTfW has worked closely with some 14-19 networks since the measure was introduced to explain this difference and understanding is improving among most network members but it remains an area for confusion still amongst pupils and their parents.
17. Training Providers have developed a greater understanding of the different points values relating to funding of qualifications provided through 14-19 funding. The main issue/problem yet to be faced by networks is the sustainability of these projects as ANDP funding is withdrawn.
18. Another potential issue is young people who drop from school or FE course part way through year 12, after the Careers Wales Pupil Destinations snap shot has been taken in October. Historically we have always seen peaks in NEET levels in January and July. NTfW Members fear we could potentially see an increase in NEET in this area, with learners having begun a programme of learning at level 2 or above in school or college and because of this, when they drop out, can only access engagement traineeship not level 1. It could be argued that these learners would have been better off leaving the school environment at 16 to progress to mainstream work based learning traineeship programme which is funded by Welsh Government. The learner would then have been able to access the specialist support needed on this programme to address their educational and social barriers to learning and progression onto higher learning (with a training provider or in college) and/or employment. (see point 10 above)
19. SEN and ALN progressions and options are an issue, as a key performance indicator of the measure focuses on Level 3 options at post 16. These young people often need Entry or Level 1 qualifications and already face multiple barriers and disadvantages to progression to higher level learning or employment
20. There is a real need for independent advice and guidance when pupils are choosing their options post 16, as well as at 14 when choosing courses with a view to progression at 16. The Careers service has traditionally fulfilled this role but as their funding and support needs to be focused to those with the greatest need who are at risk of disengagement, a potential vacuum could develop. The latest Edge/ You Gov Annual Stakeholder Survey report<sup>1</sup> reflects that generally parents remain the strongest influence on a pupils option choices, so it is important all

are independently informed of options. This survey also reflected a high proportion of parents and teachers feel they do not understand what an apprenticeship entails but are more familiar with the requirements of an A level or degree route and feel vocational qualifications are more suited to less able individuals. In Swansea, the 'Swansea Guarantee' an innovative new mechanism has been introduced to inform pupils, parents etc of their options. This initially focuses on what the young person wants to do, interests and progression rather than the usual initial qualification focus. As such, helping young people and their parents make an informed choice from a variety of qualifications options rather than focusing on an initial more narrow range of qualifications which may mean they unintentionally ignore other potentially suitable qualifications and progression pathways. There are definite regional and local variations in the area of pupil and parent awareness of the range of options available. Anecdotally, far too many young people 'stumble' into a work based learning Steps to Employment or Apprenticeship programme in their twenties when other options have failed for them, rather than being aware of it and making it an active first choice. The current average age of an apprentice is 26 years old. Careers Wales destination data shows that over the last 5 years, entry into work based learning from school has been consistently low and decreases at years 12 and 13 (See appendix 1)

21. Currently 14-19 networks have been funded through the Annual Network Development Plan (ANDP) as a pump priming measure to allow schools time to reallocate resources to allow new 14-19 vocational options to be mainstreamed. Funding is an issue and a dependency on the 14-19 ANDP has developed. Post ANDP it is questionable whether the 14-19 provision currently available can be sustained. Schools general funding is allocated individually to each institution and as such, this can act as a barrier to reallocating resources and preparing for further collaboration and course transformation post ANDP. Planning within and between schools can still be very influenced by institutional interests rather than the interests of young people pan authority, leading to varying degrees of duplication, wasted resources. This can act as a blocker

*I have sat in meetings where schools have said they do not want to offer any additional vocational options because it would mean they would lose a teacher, despite the course being something they do not offer, in a growth sector and with credible outcomes into employment and apprenticeships.*

*Schools may want to grow their vocational offer to meet the measure but will not always start that planning process by looking at what other sectors could offer to support this collaboratively. They might have an award winning college or training provider in their local area with excellent progression figures and high quality training and resources on offer. Rather than explore how provision could be sourced to meet the learner's needs, the school will explore how they can use existing underutilised staff and physical resources and find accreditation to suit. Whilst saving money for that individual school in the short term, it is wasteful long term both for the individual institution as staff are kept on the pay role who are not fully utilised and very wasteful for Wales education budget as a whole which is already paying for a high quality course in FE or Work based learning that the young person could have directly accessed at 16 (but would have had to leave school and so affect school income) or the young person ends up leaving school and taking a more protracted route before entering further courses or apprenticeship or employment – a career progression that could have taken 3 years takes 5-6 etc. For the young person concerned they were not aware of this at the time and become frustrated at their slow progress etc*

22. The way collaborative courses are planned and facilitated is still a challenge in some areas. Some localities have common timetabling to allow for greater collaboration between schools, FE settings and WBL providers. However, often transport then becomes the challenge as the pupils are transported to courses rather than the tutor travelling to the pupils or using e

learning methods (due to constraints on infrastructure or data protection issues). The common solution for this is to use taxis, not only to save time in a constrained timetable but also to address a 'fear' held by some curriculum planners that they are ultimately responsible for the learners and so need to reduce all risks to ensure pupils (not just 14-16 but often 16-19) get to the destination. Hence the proportion of transport budget allocated in ANDP and used for taxis is not only substantial part of the funding allocation for 14-19 provision but does not prepare young people for the reality of using public transport to access learning and work or develop and practice the skills needed to plan a journey once they leave school based provision. This often leads to young people entering work based learning who need support to develop travel skills and are not prepared for the weather, waiting for the bus or having to walk a short distance, thus creating another barrier to employment or further course progression.

23. In conclusion, the Learning & Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 has opened some doors with its emphasis on the need for networks to work in collaboration with training providers and colleges however, it is notoriously difficult and schools continue to look towards further education colleges first (as encouraged by the Measure which doesn't mention work based learning) without realising what training providers in their area can offer, both through mainstream funded courses and collaborative provision. On a surface and piecemeal level, the Measure has achieved its aim of increasing the amount of vocational courses on offer and reducing NEET at 16 and networks have met their performance indicators regarding the amount and types of courses on offer. However, in reality the offer is not always reflected in actual delivery due to take up issues and the full potential to develop a greater collaborative, embedded and sustainable solution to vocational training and ultimately increasing young people's employment opportunities not been optimised. Whilst individual schools and networks are working hard to find collaborative solutions to extend their vocational offer and develop learning pathways which can lead to employment, they are constrained in their scope by a Measure which has an essential flaw by excluding work based learning and by competitive funding systems which can act as disincentives to greater school, college and work based learning provider collaboration.

## References

<sup>1</sup> EDGE Annual Programme of Stakeholder Surveys Report for You Gov 2009 available from [http://www.edge.co.uk/media/17099/yougov\\_benchmarking\\_surveys\\_-\\_attitudes\\_to\\_learning.pdf](http://www.edge.co.uk/media/17099/yougov_benchmarking_surveys_-_attitudes_to_learning.pdf)



## Appendix 1

Destinations of Yr 11, 12 and 13 School Leavers across Wales from 2005-2010. Data sourced from Careers Wales Pupils Destinations Surveys, available from <http://careerswales.com/prof/server.php?show=nav.3844>

		All figures shown are percentages and rounded up					
		2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Year 11</b>	Continuing FT education	76	76	78	79	82	83
	Work Based Training (non Employed)	7	7	5	5	6	6
	Work Based Training (employed)	2	2	3	2	1	1
	Employed	5	4	4	3	2	2
	Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)	7	6	7	7	6	5
		2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Year 12</b>	Continuing FT education	87	87	87	88	90	89
	Work Based Training (non Employed)	2	2	2	2	2	2
	Work Based Training (employed)	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Employed	5	4	5	4	2	2
	Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)	3	3	3	3	3	3
		2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>Year 13</b>	Continuing FT education	79	80	80	80	80	79
	Work Based Training (non Employed)	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Work Based Training (employed)	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Employed	11	10	11	9	8	9
	Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)	5	5	5	6	7	7

The figures above appear to show a downward trend into employment across all three age groups in the last 5 years, which could be linked to economic conditions and high levels of youth unemployment. However, these learners are not being picked up by work based training either through non employed programmes such as Skillbuild and now Traineeship or through employed programmes such as Apprenticeships. There is a static and worrying trend in low levels of young people from all three year groups into work based learning, with the percentage decreasing through the year groups.