

Welsh Ministers' Business Scheme

Education and Skills

Annual Update report on implementation of Business Scheme

Date Period covered April 2014/March 2015

Lead Departmental Officials for the Business Scheme:

Teresa Holdsworth Deputy Director Skills Policy & Youth Engagement

Overview of Departmental progress

Equipping learners for life and work is a key priority, and this is reflected in the way that each of the Department's programmes are aligned with this objective.

There are four main strategic documents which guide our actions and structure our interactions with employers and other stakeholders. These strategic documents are:

- The Education Improvement Plan (EIP) - this plan details our strategy for addressing the needs of young people in school aged 3-19.
- The Policy Statement on Skills (PSS) and Skills Implementation Plan (SIP) - both provide a focus on developing a sustainable and competitive skills system for Wales which incorporates Further and Higher Education, Work-based Learning, Regional Skills Partnerships, employers and their representative bodies.
- The Higher Education Policy Statement - this document details the support we will offer to learners in Universities aged over 18.
- The Adult and Community Learning Policy - this strategy is currently under review.

There are common themes detailed within each of the above strategic documents which are in line with our commitments contained within the Programme for Government. These common themes are:

- Jobs and growth
- Equity and equality
- Financial sustainability
- International benchmarking

Further, the CBI report 'First Steps' is a point of reference for the Department. The report sets out the business view on the reforms that are needed to make a successful education system, drawing on international examples and underpinned by a set of core principles.

The Department appointed Professor Graham Donaldson to undertake a comprehensive, independent review of curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales. Work also continues to analyse the PISA results to ensure that the strands of work within the Education Improvement Plan align with the objective of raising the achievement of learners.

The Department has successfully worked with schools to enable students to obtain excellent GCSE results for 2013/14, with 55.4% of 15 year olds achieving the Level 2 threshold, including a GCSE grade A* - C in English or Welsh language and in Mathematics. This is an increase of 2.7 percentage points from 2012/13 and an 11 percentage point increase from 2006/07 when we first started recording this information.

We are continuing to see marked improvement in the qualification levels of our working age adults to their highest recorded levels. Over three quarters now hold good GCSE equivalent (Level 2) qualifications, which is an important threshold for obtaining employment. Over half now hold at least an A level or equivalent qualification (Level 3) and over a third hold degree level qualifications (Level 4).

The Review of Qualifications for 14-19 year olds in Wales concluded in December 2012 and focussed on ensuring that we have qualifications that are understood, valued and meet the needs of our young people and the Welsh economy.

The recommendations contain a clear focus on literacy and numeracy skills and include the development of two new mathematics GCSEs, one covering numeracy and the other covering mathematics techniques. It also recommended that a revised, more rigorous, Welsh Baccalaureate should be developed building on the strengths of the existing model, but with a clear focus on developing the skills that employers and higher education value, including literacy and numeracy. This is being rolled out in schools and colleges from September 2015. There has been significant activity to include the business community in developing real life 'challenges' for learners undertaking the Welsh Baccalaureate.

External engagement remains a priority for all divisions within DfES, who continue to work closely with both businesses and with the Department for Economy, Science and Transport to ensure joined up working and secure the achievement of shared goals and objectives.

Activities

Skills Higher Education and Lifelong Learning Group

1. Employment and European Funding Division

In January 2015, the Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology launched the Employment and Skills Division's Skills Gateway. The Skills Gateway is the central access and referral service for individuals and businesses wishing to

access skills and employment support and underpins the new employment and skills delivery approach.

The Skills Gateway model incorporates a single engagement, assessment and referral system, providing a seamless service for businesses and individuals seeking skills support in Wales. The essence of the Skills Gateway is to assist businesses and individuals to identify skills needs and provide advice and guidance on how to access the appropriate support to meet those needs.

The Business Skills Gateway website is now 'live', featuring information advice and guidance to businesses on skills and training. A prominent feature of the website is the new Skills Assessment tool, an intuitive assessment available to all businesses which can assist in the identification of areas for potential skills development. All businesses that complete the assessment will receive a call from the Business Wales helpline team to discuss the outcomes of the assessment and to agree a skills action plan to take forward.

Although Careers Wales have always offered all-age, all-Wales careers advice and guidance through the helpline and website, unemployed adults aged 25 and over are now be able to access impartial face-to-face support through the network of Careers Wales centres in Wales.

The Skills Gateway will continue to be developed in line with the new national, regional and local employment and skills support programmes as more information is made available throughout the year. Internal and externally commissioned user testing is currently taking place in order to take stock of the initial impact of this service with a view to refine various aspects over the coming months.

Advice for businesses and individuals will be backed by Labour Market Intelligence to ensure it takes consideration of regional trends and local demands for employment.

Further, during 2014-15 the division will commence skills utilisation projects in two key sectors (Creative and Construction sectors) and will be able to update on our initial pilot using their employer networks and discuss how we move this agenda forward in Wales.

ESD also acts as liaison point with the UK Government's Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in relation to the skills policy interface with non-devolved employment policy. This liaison provides an opportunity for the DWP and Welsh Government to share developing policy and delivery issues that may have an implication for each other's areas of responsibility. During 2014/15 issues for discussion have included Work Programme performance as a key focus for the joint *Access to Employment Working Group: Wales*, delivery of an essential skills pilot testing mandation of Jobcentre Plus clients to Welsh Government funded provision and consideration of devolution of employment programmes to Wales following the Silk and Smith Commission report recommendations. Welsh Government has also worked with DWP to

develop some bespoke vocational training opportunities for a number of employers in Wales, through which opportunities have been made available for unemployed people.

2. Further Education and Apprenticeships Division (FEAD)

Post-16 Planning and Funding Review

Following the conclusion of the Planning and Funding Review in 2013, the focus has now shifted to implementation. The department holds detailed discussions with each College and each Local Authority to ensure the curriculum offer is relevant to the area served and alive to the available Labour Market Intelligence. To further support local industries three boards have been created and tasked with drawing up skills plans for their areas, thus providing colleges with information on the case for change in their areas. All three boards have significant employer input.

Sector Qualifications Advisory Panels

Sector Qualifications Advisory Panels represent employers and practitioners and provide a strategic overview of vocational qualifications within a sector. There is a fully operational panel operating for Care, working through The Care Council for Wales and one for Construction. Further developments have been put on hold in order that Qualification Wales can consider the most effective way of engaging with employers in respect of qualification development.

Sector Qualification Priorities (SQP) - Forthcoming Activity 2015-16

For the 2015-16 commissioning period, the SQP specification will consist of two distinct activities to be undertaken by Sector Skills Councils. The first activity will enable sectors to carry out on-line relevance and value checks for identified pending qualifications within their footprint area, based on the second tier Sector Subject Area Classification System (SSACS). The second activity will be a requirement for Sector Skills Council Organisations to review the annual Post 16 Full-time Delivery Plans (based on Sector Subject codes 1 to 15) in line with their sector qualification priorities.

Work Based Learning

Work-Based Learning (WBL) gives new employees the opportunity to learn essential skills on the job. There are a range of work-based programmes aimed at supporting learners or participants that currently support around 65,000 individuals. These programmes are delivered through a network of private training providers, Further Education Institutions and local authorities and include Apprenticeships and Traineeships.

FEAD's Learner Provision Branch is responsible for the procurement of Work Based Learning. A tender exercise has recently been completed to enable the delivery of Work Based Learning for the period 2015-19.

The Branch is also responsible for deriving the systems and processes to ensure accurate funding for post-16 learning is delivered and undertaking contract management processes to ensure training providers deliver in line with their agreements. The latter includes regular discussions and meetings with private training providers, on an ongoing basis.

Apprenticeship System Development

The SIP published in July 2014, outlined the intention to consult on the future of apprenticeship frameworks in Wales.

The consultation was published in the Spring of 2015. It is through this consultation the Department will seek to work with employers and wider stakeholders in gaining their views on how Wales can develop an approach to apprenticeship framework development which reflects our future needs and priorities. The consultation will also provide further evidence to support the implementation of a co-investment policy for Wales. Engaging with stakeholders by establishing an external employer reference group will be the first stage of a planned consultation process.

As part of the drafting process for the consultation, the department set up an external Employer Reference Group to inform and shape the content of the document.

Consultation responses will be analysed during 2015 with a report and recommendations for change being supplied to the Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology.

Skills Policy & Youth Engagement

Wales Strategic Forum for Career Development

The independent report “Future Ambitions: Developing Careers services in Wales” recommended that a strategic forum should be established to help provide strategic focus for the family of careers service providers in Wales.

In response to the above recommendation, Ministers established a Wales Strategic Forum for Career Development, chaired by the Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology. Five meetings of the Forum have now taken place (up to 31st March 2015) with a sixth meeting scheduled for 30th September 2015.

Membership of the forum includes:

Careers Wales; the Higher Education Careers Service; secondary school head teachers; Local authority and education consortia representatives; Further education colleges; National Training Federation Wales; Youth Service; Jobcentre Plus; CBI; FSB; Professional Bodies; Wales Council for Voluntary Action; Estyn and Armed Forces Cadet Groups.

The forum is responsible for:

- providing advice, guidance and challenge, as appropriate, to the Minister and officials on developing and monitoring a strategic approach to career service development;
- providing a focus on high quality delivery and quality assurance of professional standards for career service providers;
- helping to shape future research and guiding the development of recommendations for further work;
- promoting the value of Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG).

Careers Wales interactions with Business

Career Choices Dewis Gyrfa (CCDG) is the all age, professional and independent careers information, and advice and guidance service for Wales. CCDG became a wholly owned subsidiary of the Welsh Government on 1st April 2013. CCDG continues to provide services under the Careers Wales brand.

As well as providing careers information advice and guidance services CCDG is remitted to facilitate and support schools in the delivery of the Careers and the World of Work (CWW) Curriculum Framework and the Welsh Baccalaureate by interacting with employers and business to provide young people in schools with experience of and interaction with the world of work. This includes provision of the National Work Experience Database (NWED) of health and safety checked work experience placements and linking employers with schools using the BITC Business Class model to bring real world examples and experience into the wider school curriculum.

In 2014-15 Careers Wales interacted with business in a number of ways –

- Total number of Visits and other significant interactions with Employers – 17,692
- Number of students placed via NWED – 21,145
- Number of existing employers supporting NWED – 34,099
- Number of new employers supporting NWED – 1,630
- Number of Health and Safety visits carried out – 4,914

In addition CCDG is tasked with the provision of the client facing elements of the Apprentice Matching Service (AMS) and Jobs Growth Wales (JGW) programmes via Careerswales.com and the provision of the Jobs in Wales service for young people in the labour market (aged 16-18) who are not entitled to Jobcentre Plus support. Provision of these services requires significant interaction with employers and business. In 2014-15 CCDG delivered –

- Number of AMS vacancies advertised – 1,644
- Number of AMS vacancies filled – 516
- Number of JGW vacancies advertised – 4,176

- Number of JGW opportunities filled – 4,188

Skills Policy

Activity is continuing in driving forward the ambition for Wales' skills system as set out within the Policy Statement on Skills which was published in January 2014. Key actions with regards to policy and programme development are summarised within the Skills Implementation Plan published shortly after the Policy Statement in July 2014. Key actions over the period of this review include:

- the introduction of three Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) who have now produced Regional Employment and Skills Plans which will be used to inform skills provision at a regional level. The RSPs include representation from a range of stakeholders including employers as well as providers, local authorities and the third sector;
- the launch of two pilot projects in Construction and the Creative Sector focused specifically on reviewing the options for strengthening the utilisation of skills in the workplace and what this could mean within the context of different sectors;
- the publication of the Welsh Government's Skills Performance Measures which will be used as the ongoing reference point for determining the impact of our policies and programmes as we move forward with delivering the long-term ambition set out within the Policy Statement on Skills;
- the delivery of a Flexible Skills Programme to provide targeted skills interventions that will support projects with significant economic benefit. The programme will focus on skills that cannot be met through other existing provision and where there is a clear case for direct involvement by the Welsh Government: and
- the focus on raising employer investment and engagement in skills and how this will be supported by the Framework for Co-investment and Skills published in November 2014. The aim of the Framework is to make clear the relationship between employer and government investment in skills.

We plan to continue to work through our Wales Employment and Skills Board (WESB) chaired by Scott Waddington as the Wales Commissioner to the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) in delivering the reform programme underway across the skills system in Wales. The employer-led WESB has broad membership from across employers, including the FSB, CBI, Wales TUC, DWP, the NHS Confederation, the Recruitment and Employment Confederation and Working Links. We will also continue to work closely with the CBI, FSB Cymru, Colegau Cymru, the NTFW and Commerce Cymru in further promoting the policy and programme changes underway and to inform those areas still in development.

3. Higher Education Division

Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)

HEFCW has funded a range of graduate employability initiatives at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as part of the implementation of the Agreement on Skills and Employability for Wales which was designed to stimulate opportunities for work experience, increase the number of employer approved courses and to further embed skills and employability in the HE curriculum. Employer engagement is a theme running through both the projects funded by HEFCW and the wider Skills and Employability Action Plans which HEIs have been implementing in support of the Agreement.

HEFCW's Innovation and Engagement Fund

HEFCW's Innovation and Engagement Fund is currently funding (to July 2015) a number of projects that support the delivery of employable and entrepreneurial graduates into the workforce:

- (i) The pan-Wales Enterprise Support Programme develops and encourages fledgling entrepreneurs from across the student body in Wales to realise their potential for creating new and innovative businesses and feed into the support available from Welsh Government's business start-up services. The overall aim is to encourage students and graduates from Welsh HEIs and FEIs to cultivate their aptitude and self-confidence to improve their overall employability and entrepreneurship skills.
- (ii) A strategic partnership between Cardiff University and Cardiff Council aims to drive innovation in the Cardiff-city region by:
 - Delivering entrepreneurial and innovative graduates to the labour market.
 - Leading and developing innovation based challenge – led initiatives that will formulate holistic solutions to global challenges
 - Developing a Cardiff Innovation Centre to house innovative graduate start-ups and high growth potential businesses.
- (iii) The CADARN Skills Centre works across the Regional Partnership of North Wales (Bangor, Aberystwyth, Glyndwr and the Open Universities). Its overarching aim is to increase the availability of HE training and CPD provision to employers and their workforces across North and Mid Wales.

Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements in Wales (Diamond Review)

On 18 November 2013, the Minister announced that Professor Sir Ian Diamond, Vice Chancellor of Aberdeen University, had agreed to Chair the Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements in Wales. The Review commenced in April 2014. The Review Panel is tasked with submitting a report that provides clear advice and costed

recommendations for the future funding of the HE sector and student finance arrangements – recommendations that need to be deliverable, affordable and sustainable. In autumn 2015, the Review Panel will produce a factual summary of the evidence collected as part of their work. Their final report, including recommendations, will be issued to the next Welsh Government by September 2016.

Welsh Government priorities for the Review include:

- widening access – ensuring that any future system has widening access as its core objective, is progressive and equitable;
- supporting the skill needs of Wales;
- strengthening part-time and postgraduate provision in Wales; and
- long-term financial sustainability.

During 2014-15 the Review Panel focused on stakeholder engagement and the examination of evidence. A range of activities were introduced to enable business organisations, such as the Confederation of British Industry, the Federation of Small Business (FSB) and others to inform the work of the Panel. A Call for Evidence was launched in November 2014 and ran until 27 February. Focus groups were also held between January and March 2015. Two of these groups were held with business / employer organisations. One captured the views of large private and public sector employers and the other involved representatives of the FSB. The Review Panel also contains a business sector representative - Gary Griffiths, former Head of Early Careers Programmes at Airbus UK.

Infrastructure, Curriculum, Qualifications and Learner Support Group

1. Qualifications and Regulation Division

Policy Development

The Review of Qualifications for 14-19 year olds in Wales aimed to ensure that we have qualifications that are understood and valued and meet the needs of our young people and the Welsh economy. The review ran from September 2011 to November 2012 and the final report made 42 recommendations to the Welsh Government on building a high-quality, robust and distinctive qualification system for Wales. All were accepted and are now being implemented with Qualifications Wales being launched as an independent regulator in September 2015 following the enactment of the Qualifications Wales Bill in August.

The Review of Qualifications was strongly evidence-based and benefitted from a high level of stakeholder involvement, including employers, practitioners and the university sector; the change programme is taking a similar approach with a number of groups established and other activities

undertaken to facilitate engagement with our social partners. Details of these activities appear below.

The Review of Qualifications Stakeholder Reference Group

The group has been led by Huw Evans OBE, Chair of the Review of Qualifications and membership includes representatives of the trade unions and professional bodies representing the education and training workforce in Wales and employer organisations (the CBI Wales, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Care Council for Wales). The group also includes representation from local government in Wales and the Welsh and UK Higher Education sector.

The group meets quarterly Agenda items have included developing the new and revised qualifications for commencement of teaching from September 2015, the communications strategy for the Review of Qualifications implementation programme and developments with Qualifications Wales.

Between April 2014 and March 2015 Huw Evans continued his extensive series of meetings with senior managers from each Higher Education Institution (HEI) in Wales, HEIs in England and Welsh anchor companies to discuss the planned reforms to qualifications in Wales and to obtain feedback from stakeholders.

Revised GCSEs, A levels and Welsh Baccalaureate

The Review of Qualifications had a clear focus on literacy and numeracy skills and its recommendations included developing 2 new mathematics GCSEs (one covering numeracy and one covering mathematics techniques) and revised English and Welsh Language GCSEs. These new GCSEs should build, explicitly, on the levels of literacy and numeracy expected by the end of Key Stage 3 and provides greater assurance of learners' literacy and numeracy skills. The Review of Qualifications also recommended that a revised more rigorous Welsh Baccalaureate should be developed, building on the strengths of the existing model, but with a clear focus on developing the skills that employers and higher education value, including literacy and numeracy. The new GCSEs in English/Welsh Language and Mathematics – Numeracy should be the main qualifications used to assess literacy and numeracy within the revised Welsh Baccalaureate. Other skills (Digital Literacy, Critical thinking and Problem Solving, Planning and Organisation, Creativity and Innovation and Personal Effectiveness) will be demonstrated and assessed within the Welsh Baccalaureate through the Skills Challenge certificate. This comprises 3 Challenges (Community, Enterprise and Employability and Global Citizenship) and an individual Project.

New GCSEs in English Language, Welsh Language, Mathematics – Numeracy and Mathematics, a revised more rigorous Welsh Baccalaureate and revised Essential Skills Wales qualifications will be delivered from September 2015, alongside 14 revised A-levels and revised GCSEs in English Literature and Welsh Literature. Further tranches of revised GCSEs

and A levels are being developed for delivery from September 2016 and 2017.

Vocational qualifications (VQs)

Vocational qualifications (VQs) are designed to provide learners with the knowledge, skills and in some case the occupational competencies to work in a particular economic sector or role. The Welsh Government works with other UK nations and the UK Commission for employment and skills (UKCES) to support UK-wide National Occupational Standards (NOS) which form the basis for VQs and Apprenticeship Frameworks. Welsh Government officials meet regularly with the sector bodies responsible for NOS.

The Review of Qualifications made recommendations to ensure the relevance, value and rigor of any qualifications receiving public funding in Wales. Building on Sector Qualification Priority activities introduced in 2012 whereby sector bodies are invited to provide a view on all new and revised qualifications submitted for use in Wales, the Welsh Government has begun work to implement a new gate keeping process for VQs together with revised quality assurance arrangements. In developing these new and revised arrangements the Welsh Government has engaged in extensive stakeholder engagement with representative organisations including Sector Skills Councils, the Federation of Awarding Bodies, the Joint Council for Qualifications, Colegau Cymru, FE Curriculum Networks, Wales Employment and Skills Board and the Welsh Language Commissioner as well as working towards establishing Sector Qualifications Advisory Panels (As referenced in Section 2.)

Numeracy Employer Engagement Programme

The Numeracy Employer Engagement Programme, launched in September 2013, was established in line with our Programme for Government commitment to improve school attainment by raising standards of numeracy. In essence the programme helps teachers and pupils to recognise the importance and relevance of numeracy within the working world, by exposure to numeracy in context of its real life applications. Through direct contact with representatives from business and industry, pupils can benefit from receiving individual support and attention to develop their numeracy skills in new and varied contexts, in addition to increasing their motivation, confidence, knowledge, self-esteem and communication skills.

In order to provide a brokerage service across all 4 consortia regions in Wales to develop and help facilitate these all important links between schools and business, Welsh Government awarded contracts to three third sector organisations: Techniquest, Techniquest Glyndŵr, and Steam Powered Stories, following a competitive tendering exercise for Numeracy Employer Engagement Grant awards in August 2013. The contracts cover an initial 2 year period, which commenced in September 2013 and will run until March 2015. The programme encompasses a broad range of large (e.g. GE Aviation), medium (e.g. Neath Port Talbot Credit Union) and small-scale

employers (e.g. Dragon Leather Products manufacturing), drawn from a diverse spread of sector coverage, including Sport & Leisure, Energy, Aviation, Creative Industries, the Environment, Agriculture, the Media and Business.

The Numeracy Employer Engagement model supports the key messages of the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF), offering additional opportunity for the development of literacy and numeracy skills within other relevant contexts.

Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF)

We know that improved literacy and numeracy skills are critical to learners' successful progression through primary to secondary school and also to further education and beyond into the world of work. To support the strengthening of learners' literacy and numeracy skills we introduced the statutory LNF for learners aged 5 to 14 in 2013, with assessment using the LNF becoming a statutory requirement in 2014.

Following consultation on Phase 1 of the Curriculum Review, we extended the LNF on a non-statutory basis to support emerging literacy and numeracy between the ages of 3–5 in the Foundation Phase. Similarly, to ensure a continuum of development from Foundation Phase all the way through to Key Stage 4.

The LNF is first and foremost a curriculum planning tool that supports all teachers in embedding literacy and numeracy in their teaching of the curriculum. It sets out clear annual expectations for literacy and numeracy for all learners.

The LNF deliberately sets the bar high and places an expectation on schools to ensure that the teaching of numeracy and literacy skills are embedded throughout the curriculum. A comprehensive range of online guidance and training materials is available to support teachers and senior school managers embed the LNF.

Consultations

As in previous years we have been keen to gather the views of stakeholders so in order to inform the development of the new GCSE Science suite, two online surveys were conducted between November 2014 and January 2015 to canvass views on the proposed changes to the structure and content. Links to the surveys were published on the Welsh Government and Qualifications Wales websites, and issued in the Welsh Government's e-newsletter Dysg. The links to the surveys were also circulated to the WJEC and various stakeholders with whom the Department engaged with during the process of developing the qualifications. In total 550 responses were received for both surveys.

Future Activities

The Review of Qualifications Stakeholder Reference Group and Workforce Impact Group will continue to meet as required during 2015 with both groups winding up their activities by September 2015 with the completion of the change programme and the establishment of Qualifications Wales.

As the CQFW development is a partnership between Welsh Government and HEFCW, steps were taken by Welsh Government officials to establish a task and finish group consisting of representatives from Welsh Government, HEFCW, Careers Wales, Colegau Cymru, Awarding Organisations and NTFW to review the recommendations. The inaugural meeting of the task and finish group took place in August 2014. The task and finish group agreed the priority and impact of each of the recommendations and advised on how best to take them forward with a Ministerial submission. The Minister accepted all recommendations either in full or in part, and a CQFW Advisory Group has now been established.

2. School Curriculum Team

Forthcoming Activity 2014-15

Donaldson Review

In March 2014, the Minister for Education and Skills appointed Professor Graham Donaldson to undertake a comprehensive review of curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales. Professor Donaldson's report, 'Successful Futures', the product of his review was published by Welsh Government on 25th February 2015.

Professor Donaldson "sought to develop a vision of a well-educated young person completing their statutory education in Wales". The report identifies four purposes of the curriculum in Wales - that all our young people will be:

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world, and
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as values members of society.

In his report Professor Donaldson identifies some very real strength in Wales, including, for example, the Foundation Phase and the commitment to the Welsh language and culture. However, the report also identifies the shortcomings in our current arrangements. Professor Donaldson has put forward 68 recommendations; these recommendations mark a radical departure from the curriculum of the last century, a curriculum largely devised before the World Wide Web. His report is clear that the curriculum has become overloaded, complicated and, in parts, outdated.

On the 4th March the Minister for Education and Skills launched the Great Debate on Education. He was keen to find out if people across Wales thought the suggested vision and purposes of education set out in Successful Futures are right for our children and young people. This first stage of the Great Debate will run until 8th May 2015. The Welsh Government response to Successful Futures is expected before the summer recess.

Schools Challenge Cymru

Background

Excerpt from 'Schools Challenge Cymru: introduction for Pathways to Success schools', published summer 2014:

*'School improvement has at its heart the interests of the pupil. The Challenge is based on a belief that **all** children can achieve, regardless of personal circumstance... An important aspect of the Challenge should be the raising of pupils' personal expectations... improving attendance, attainment, achievement... raising aspirations and ambitions to succeed in future learning, the workplace and later in life... further information will be produced on support that pupils can directly access as a core 'Pupil Offer'. This will be focussed on reducing the impact of poverty, and work with partners in the arts, sports and business.'*

Phase 1 – Pupil Offer activity: July – August 2014

- 'Schools Challenge Cymru: introduction for Pathways to Success schools' circulated. Offer to pupil's identified as a core SCC theme - 16 June
- Pathways to Success (PtS) Schools asked to take account of 'Rewriting the Future' when drafting Single School Development Plans - 16 June
- Initial stakeholder engagement with Arts Council Wales, Sport Wales, Institute of Physics, Techniquest and Institute of Directors to start discussing aspects of the 'Pupil Pledge/Pupil Offer' – May to July
- Bespoke offers of support, focusing on raising aspirations and supporting pupils to achieve, made to Pathways to Success Schools – July. These included:
 - Physical Literacy and the Targeted Intervention Support Programme (TISPS): Sport Wales
 - STEM support, including an offer to become a 'Techniquest School': Techniquest and Techniquest Glyndwr
 - 'Getting Girls into Physics' pilot providing bespoke support to limited number of SCC schools: Institute of Physics
 - Support in engaging with Arts institutions to improve curriculum planning and teaching and learning: Arts Council Wales

Phase 2 - Developing the Pupil Offer further: August 2014 – July 2015

The Schools Challenge Cymru team led a task and finish group, featuring officials from across the E&S portfolio and more widely, in order to build on activity to date and develop a coherent, formal Pupil Offer for the programme. This included a period of stakeholder engagement to secure commitment and participation from a wide range of stakeholders.

On 15 December the Minister for Education and Skills announced the Pupil Offer at Heolddu Comprehensive School. This coincided with publication of a Pupil Offer document to guide the thinking of schools and their partners as they began designing and delivering their provision.

The National Event

The Pupil Offer was launched formally on 13th January 2015 at an event at Cardiff City Stadium for Pathways to Success Schools. The purpose of the day was to provide an opportunity for schools and partners to meet in a marketplace setting to begin exploring the process of creating mutually beneficial partnerships. Hearing the voice of the learner was a highlight of the day as 8 pupils from Pathways to Success Schools took part in a ‘pupil panel’. A ‘Headteacher panel’ followed and was led by 4 Headteachers from Pathways to Success schools.

The marketplace setting enabled Pathways to Success schools to meet with the following organisations:

<p>The Third Sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NIACE • CWVYS • CaST Cymru • Children in Wales • WCVA • Into Film Cymru and Achievement for All • Urdd Gobaith Cymru • Ethnic Youth Support Team <p>Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Techniquest • Techniquest Glyndwr • See Science • STEM Cymru <p>Arts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts Council for Wales • Head 4 Arts • Theatr Iolo • Rubicon Dance 	<p>Music</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BBC Orchestra • Local Authority Music Services <p>Culture and Heritage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Council • Cadw • Society of Chief Librarians • Welsh Libraries • Glamorgan Archives and Archives Wales • National Museum Wales <p>Sport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport Wales • Welsh Rugby Union • Golf Union Wales • Cardiff City FC • TVS Education • Show Racism the Red Card 	<p>Cadet Forces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RFCA Wales • ACF • North Wales Training <p>HE/FE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities Wales • Colegau Cymru <p>More Able and Talented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NACE (National Association for Able Children in Education) <p>Careers, business and entrepreneurship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careers Wales • Big Ideas Wales
---	---	--

Directory of Resources

To coincide with the national event, and to support Pathways to Success Schools in the design and delivery of the offer to their pupils, a ‘Directory of Resources’ was circulated. This directory included contact details and information on the support that schools could engage with.

In addition, work has been taking place at both a regional and national level, led by Welsh Government officials, Pathways to Success schools and regional education consortia. This includes:

- **Aspirational Work Experience Week** – This month has seen a group of hard working and aspirational Welsh students from non-privileged backgrounds being transported to London for a rare insight into working life in the City.
- **Mission Discovery** - At the same time, up to 400 pupils in South Wales have spent a week with American astronaut Steve Swanson, and be given the chance to have their ideas for an experiment be carried out on the International Space Station.
- **Supersonic Cymru** - 200 Welsh students were given first hand experience of super computing technology as part of the Bloodhound 1,000 mph land speed record challenge.
- **Cultural Offer** – Some of Wales leading cultural organisations have come together to begin developing a cultural offer for Pathways to Success schools.

Financial support

£5k for each school was made available during the 2014/15 financial year. This was to support the Pathways to Success Schools as they trialed approaches for the delivery of their ‘Pupil Offer’. At the same time, sustainability was emphasised and schools were therefore asked to explore and develop low cost or no cost options, making better use of the knowledge and resources that exist within Wales, and embedding new ways of working as part of their day to day business.

Phase 3: Delivering the Pupil Offer in 2015/16

Each school has been asked to define their ‘Pupil Offer’ in their School Development Plans for the 2015/16 Academic year. Officials are working with the Champions group and a capital panel to quality assure and approve these plans and, in doing so, a range of proposed Pupil Offer activity has already been identified. Some examples have been included below:

Rhosnesni	Working with CAST Cymru to raise aspirations by developing family support provision, parental engagement workshops and community engagement. Delivery of an Army programme for pupils at risk of becoming NEET.
Holywell	Development of community links and a database of local businesses for the delivery of aspirational activities/work experience placements. Collaboration with Holywell Air Cadets and MPTC Army Courses for the delivery of additional curriculum and mentoring/support for efsm pupils and LAC. A series of Community events are also planned.
Ysgol Clywedog	Delivery of Army Courses to support engagement, boost achievement and reduce exclusions. Collaboration with the Arts Council for project working and the delivery of a series of visits from inspirational artists and theatre companies.
Abersychan	Funding for a TLR to create a ‘Raising Aspirations Champion’ to lead the delivery of Pupil Offer activity including delivery of a series of events, trips, visits from inspirational speakers and collaboration with Universities.

St Cenydd	Utilisation of the school hall for Pupil Offer work including clubs, visits, performing arts, parental and family engagement activities, youth clubs and groups. Alignment with PDG funded activities including collaboration with the WRU, STEM organisations, sporting bodies and provision of public transport costs for non-privileged learners.
St Martin's	A focus on music and sport including provision of music lessons and attendance at events as well as access to PE/Sport facilities and events. Support for non-privileged learners to access and complete Duke of Edinburgh award. A range of aspirational visits (culture, business, further education etc.) and year 6/7 enrichment activities.
Tonyrefail	A range of activities for learners across the school including the F1 Challenge, Physical Literacy, Mission Discovery and Personal Development Training.

A more comprehensive analysis of planned Pupil Offer activity will take place later this year, following formal approval of plans and circulation of lessons learned from the pilot phase of the programme.

Next Steps

Sharing what works and celebrating best practice is a central feature of Schools Challenge Cymru and, as set out, officials will look to share the lessons learned during the pilot phase of the Pupil Offer so that Pathways to Success schools can learn from each other and refine their approaches. These lessons will be distributed more widely in the system as part of a series of leaflets/guidance for Welsh schools and practitioners, focusing on central aspects of school improvement in a self-improving system. At the same time officials will continue to work with schools, local authorities, regional education consortia and a range of organisations to develop partnerships and identify new approaches. This will include continued work with the third sector and Schools Challenge Cymru features as a priority in the Third Sector Programme for Action. Building on work with schools and a range of cadet forces in Wales is also a priority and you are scheduled to meet with the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association in September to discuss opportunities for collaboration in the future.

Finally, officials are exploring the potential for widening access to the aspirational work experience week that is being delivered this year in partnership with Judicium; the aim being to systemise this experience by bringing online a wider range of partners to host pupils in meaningful activities that widen horizons and raise aspirations. Coupled with this, officials are considering the development of a national aspirational awards ceremony for Welsh pupils, celebrating their achievements in this field. This might be initially focused on the Pathways to Success schools before opening up to the system more widely.

The Early Years Team

Developing the Early Years Workforce

In Building a Brighter Future the Welsh Government committed to consult on the right approach for the early years, childcare and play workforce in Wales in respect of minimum qualification levels, graduate leadership, continuing professional development (CPD) and career pathways. Through extensive stakeholder engagement, in 2014 the ten-year plan for the early years, childcare and play workforce in Wales was drafted and consulted on during the period October–December. The plan will be updated in light of the consultation responses as well as policy developments such as Successful Futures: Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales (2015) and Professor Graham’s Independent review of childcare and early education registration, regulation and inspection (2014). An ESF operation to support the implementation of the plan by funding practitioners in the early years, childcare and play workforce to gain qualifications was also developed during the year.

Creative Learning Plan

In March 2015 the Minister for Education and Skills and Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism published *Creative learning through the arts – an action plan for Wales*. The five-year plan supports the Welsh Government’s three education priorities of improving literacy, numeracy and reducing the impact of disadvantage, and aims to:

- improve attainment through creativity;
- increase and improve arts experiences and opportunities in schools;
- support teachers and arts practitioners to develop their skills.

The plan seeks to support the delivery of a number of Welsh Government initiatives including *Qualified for Life: an education improvement plan for 3 to 19-year olds in Wales*, by setting out actions to improve educational attainment, to build an education system that will contribute to a stronger economy, greater innovation, greater creativity, and to contribute to the cultural capital of the nation.

The plan is being taken forward by the Welsh Government and the Arts Council of Wales working in partnership, with the Arts Council of Wales leading on the implementation

The first strand of the plan to reach schools in 2015 will be the Lead Creative Schools scheme. The scheme will allow schools to work with creative practitioners to bring about improvements in teaching and learning and to address school development priorities. The scheme is designed to reach around one third of schools in Wales during the course of the five-year plan. Other strands of the plan include the establishment of four regional arts and education networks to share best practice and provide training opportunities, and also the establishment of an arts and creative learning portal on Hwb, the all-Wales learning platform, in order to improve communication and widen access.

Welsh Language Division

Welsh language and Economic Development

The Welsh Language Division has continued to work closely with EST Department to facilitate the work following the Welsh Language and Economic Development Report published in 2014.

The work undertaken by the Task and Finish Group led to a significant element of our Welsh language policy statement (August 2014) *Moving Forward* being devoted to strengthening the role that businesses play in promoting the use of Welsh. Workshops to discuss the role of Welsh in Business and how it can strengthen the business brand and identity are being held across the Teifi Valley in Summer and Autumn 2015. The results from these workshops will inform future projects in relation to Welsh and the Economy, including identifying the gaps in current provision and research.

Business Wales continues to be the main point of contact for businesses in Wales, providing information, advice and support for SME's, entrepreneurs and new businesses through our website, social media, helpline and one stop shops. All these services are available through the medium of Welsh.

In terms of the economy, we have significantly increased our marketing and communications activities to increase the awareness of our Welsh language services. This has led to an increase in those asking for Welsh language services through our various business channels. We have also taken advantage of international events such as the NATO conference and UK Investment Wales Conference and how Cardiff Airport can be a portal to the rest of Wales in order to use Welsh - the language for business, as a marketing tool.

We also continued to implement our action plan to develop the use of Welsh in technology and digital media, including investment of £250,000 in digital projects, which included private sector initiatives.