



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Response to the Estyn thematic report on higher apprenticeships

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.



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Report title:**Higher Apprenticeships in Work Based Learning****Report details**

The report was commissioned by the Further Education and Apprenticeships Division to:

- Provide a national baseline report on higher apprenticeship delivery in Wales.

Summary of main findings.

The report recognises that there has been an increase in the number of learners undertaking higher apprenticeship programmes in Work Based Learning (WBL) over the last five years. Over the last four years, the rates at which learners successfully complete their higher apprenticeship qualifications have increased, but they are still low in comparison with apprenticeships at lower levels.

It is noted that there are very few learners taking higher apprenticeships in the skills priority areas of information technology and engineering.

Most employers promote the programme with their existing staff to ensure a better qualified workforce. In the best cases, employers allocate an experienced mentor to work with the learners, but, in a few cases, learners do not receive any mentoring support from their employer.

Many providers work well with a wide range of employers to promote and encourage learners to join the higher apprenticeship programme. However, a few providers do not engage with a wide enough range of employers to contribute to the higher apprenticeship programmes. In addition, a few providers do not work effectively with employers to match learners onto programmes that link well to their job roles.

Around half of learners attend useful off-the-job training sessions to support their learning, for example with professional seminars and workshops for finance and digital literacy. However, many employers do not support learners to attend these sessions.

Almost all providers gather information through initial assessment about the language ability and preference of learners. However, few learners take up the opportunity to complete their assessments in Welsh, despite being providers with Welsh-speaking assessors and Welsh-language materials.

Most providers have improved their recruitment and initial assessment practices. All providers carry out the Wales Essential skills Toolkit (WEST) assessment process to identify and determine learners' literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs. However, learners say that this assessment process is often time consuming and training providers do not take into account learners' previous literacy and numeracy qualifications as 'proxies' for essential skills qualifications. In a few cases, this means that learners are required to complete essential skills qualifications or WEST resources unnecessary.

Recommendations for Work Based Learning Providers

Recommendation 1

All learners to complete their framework in a timely manner to improve successful completion rates.

Recommendation 2:

All learners are on the correct higher apprenticeship programme to reduce the high number of early drop outs.

Recommendation 3:

All learners to have a mentor to support them in the work place.

Recommendation 4:

Employers provide support for learners to attend workshops and off-the-job training sessions.

Recommendation 5:

They engage with and recruit new employers to participate in training programmes to reduce the over-reliance on existing employers.

Welsh Government response

These recommendations are for Work Based Learning providers and the Welsh Government agrees with their content.

This report will be circulated to WBL providers and the recommendations will be highlighted. The report will be also discussed at future contract management meetings with each provider and at a future meeting of the Quality network, which is attended by senior managers from all Work Based Learning providers.

Recommendations for Welsh Government

Recommendation 6:

Make sure that all providers understand how qualifications can be accredited for prior learning for essential skills qualifications.

Recommendation 7:

Match the number of higher apprenticeships in different sector subject areas more closely to the demand by employer and economy of Wales.

Welsh Government Response:

Welsh Government agrees with both recommendations.

It will re-issue guidance to providers to ensure that they are aware of the qualifications that can be treated as proxies for Essential Skills qualifications, in addition to guidance relating to relevant learner exemptions for the WEST assessment.

The Welsh Government has commissioned the three Welsh Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) to identify the skills needed in the workforce. Welsh Government officials will use this information to direct resource for all

apprenticeship levels (including Higher Apprenticeships) to meet the identified skills need.

Publication details.

The report will be published on or after 20 September 2018 and can be accessed on Estyn's website www.estyn.gov.uk

