

Tŷ Afon, Ffordd Bedwas  
Bedwas, Caerffili,  
CF83 8WT  
029 2085 9696

Tŷ Afon, Bedwas Road  
Bedwas, Caerphilly  
CF83 8WT  
www.hefcw.ac.uk

Cyngor Cyllido Addysg  
Uwch Cymru  
Higher Education Funding  
Council for Wales

hefcw

11 September 2018

Helen Scaife  
Further Education and Apprenticeships Division  
Welsh Government  
Ty'r Afon  
Bedwas Road  
Bedwas  
Caerphilly  
CF83 8WT

Dear Helen

### **Consultation on the delivery and funding structure of adult learning in Wales**

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the delivery and funding structure of adult learning in Wales.

We have read the consultation document, but we have decided not to respond to the specific questions posed as they do not directly relate to the operations of the higher education sector in Wales. However, we have detailed below our observations and thoughts as to how higher education could work more collaboratively to support the delivery of adult learning in Wales.

For the purpose of our response, we refer to adult learning as the broader adult learning sector contribution and Adult Community Learning as either the dedicated Community Learning Grant through Local Authorities (LAs); or as part of mainstream Part-Time provision through Further Education Institutions (FEIs).

Higher education supports the broader adult learning and lifelong learning agenda in Wales, as Universities provide adult learning on both a full-time and part-time basis. Part-time provision may be accredited and helps facilitate access to and progression through higher education. Such provision is recorded on the UK Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) return. It is normally fundable under HEFCW part-time funding arrangements and HEFCW is remitted by the Cabinet Secretary to maintain a focus on part-time learning. [HEFCW's remit letter 2018-19 states](#) "the continued expansion and enhancement of both part-time and postgraduate provision is integral to the success of our reforms". The use of credit facilitates both progression within and between institutions and transfer. All HE providers in Wales use the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) and funding by credit encourages flexible

Mr David Allen  
Cadeirydd/Chair

Dr David Blaney  
Prif Weithredwr/Chief Executive



provision by institutions and the opportunity for students to build towards qualifications. HEFCW's part-time funding method is currently under review.

Non-accredited provision is supported by institutions themselves, sometimes within their fee and access plan investments. Universities are autonomous bodies and make provision available in response to identified demand. We feel it is important that this adult learning provision is recognised as part of the landscape for post compulsory education and training (PCET) lifelong learning in Wales, rather than omitted, as in the current consultation.

Higher education forms part of the [WG policy statement Adult Learning in Wales 2017](#), with an objective to work with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), in particular the Open University, to ensure that there are improved progression pathways from adult learning to and through higher education. HEFCW would be keen to see links and progression arrangements between providers.

We note that there is limited reference within the consultation document to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WoFGA). We are unclear how the proposals meet the five ways of working, with particular reference to collaboration and integration. There is also no detail provided about how adult learning aligns with the seven wellbeing goals and no reference to Public Service Boards and how the findings from the recent wellbeing assessments, particularly in relation to skills and employability, could be used to inform future planning. Another important factor that needs consideration is that Local Authorities (LA) are subject to the WoFGA and Further Education (FE) colleges and HEIs are not. This could lead to different planning approaches being adopted by the different sectors in relation to the WoFGA and may need further clarification and guidance.

We have recently responded to the Welsh Government's 'Public Good and a Prosperous Wales – The next steps' consultation that seeks views on establishing a commission to oversee post compulsory education and training in Wales. In our [response](#) we state that the Commission would have to pay due regard to adult Learning, which features little in the technical consultation document. If adult learning is to increase its presence generally within the post compulsory learning environment, and the contribution adult learning provision makes to society and the economy is to be recognised, we feel that the role of higher education should be included, within the broad range of provider partners.

We consider that any learner protection arrangements should focus on the learner rather than the provider and should ensure a consistency of experience for learners across all parts of the PCET system (including sixth form, Adult Community Learning, work-based learning, and postgraduate students).

HEFCW has long recognised that widening access to higher education is a long-term agenda, requiring sustained commitment and investment to tackle barriers to entry, progression and success in HE. In our 2018-19 remit letter there is a continued commitment by WG in supporting the widening access approach, with an action for HEFCW to work with officials to develop a programme of action for higher education that includes the role of part-time and post-graduate study as key drivers of social mobility for students of all ages.

HEFCW established the Reaching Wider Programme in 2002/03 as a Wales-wide, collaborative, long-term, widening access programme to break down the barriers and widen access to higher education and higher-level skills for people of all-ages from priority groups.

The 2018/19 to 2020/21 Reaching Wider Programme guidance has been updated and includes a focus on the transition points adults encounter in returning to learn. We would welcome an approach to planning that supports greater collaboration between RW partnerships and Adult Community Learning Partnerships across Wales.

Welsh Language adult delivery has not been covered in the consultation document and we would like to understand how Welsh Medium provision will be considered in the proposed Adult Community Learning funding and planning. The Higher Education sector plays an important role in Welsh medium delivery, including adult learning. The latest data shows increases in Welsh medium provision of five credits and above delivered by Universities, which includes part-time learning.

The National Centre for Learning Welsh is responsible for all aspects of the Learn Welsh sector, including Welsh for adults provision in universities, and is part of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David group.

The Welsh Government Adult Learning 2017 policy statement refers to the then unpublished [Welsh Government Employability plan](#). The plan is now published and we feel this plan needs to be considered in the planning and funding of Adult Community Learning to avoid duplication of provision and improve learning opportunities and progression pathways.

As we move towards a more integrated PCET system, taking a whole-system view, that includes Welsh higher education will hopefully lead to more seamless and effective pathways and transition arrangements for adult learners. This supports the Welsh Government's proposals for the role of the proposed Commission, and should help to open up post-compulsory learning opportunities for all.

Finally, in relation to the proposed changes in delivery and funding, we would expect an equality impact assessment to be conducted and published to ensure learners and staff with protected characteristics are considered in the decision making process.

Yours sincerely



**David Blaney**