

WA Conference Panel Members

Beth Button, President, NUS Wales

Bethan Guilfoyle, HEFCW Council

Rob Humphreys, Vice Chair, Universities Wales

Celia Hunt, Director of Strategic Development, HEFCW

Geraint Rees, Head teacher, seconded to Welsh Government

Richard Spear, Chief Executive, Careers Wales

Chris Taylor, Co-Director, Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data & Methods (WISERD)

Panel Contribution

The panel welcomed the Minister's commitment to raising ambitions for learners and stimulating a conversation about widening access including challenging preconceptions about widening access. Additionally, they noted, in terms of policy development and implementation:

- i. HEFCW should take an evidence-based lead, recognising that the Minister's challenges were fair;
- ii. the need to define WA clearly, its purpose and how to balance priorities and measures;
- iii. tensions existed, and should be addressed, in the broader education system around which sectors were responsible for what aspects of widening access;
- iv. the HE system was only one part of a solution to improving education and employment outcomes;
- v. the importance of a WA evidence-base in developing systemic approaches;
- vi. the importance of acknowledging the costs of widening access when developing new approaches;
- vii. recognition was needed of the benefits and costs of collaborative working;
- viii. fee structures should be part of the WA debate;
- ix. evidence existed that young people lacked confidence and knowledge about HE, rather than aspiration;
- x. the importance of an all-age WA policy with concern around discourses centring on a purely schools agenda;
- xi. recognition of the importance of aspects of WA including: school-leavers being HE-ready and aware of HE pathways; contextualised admissions and fair access; higher level apprenticeships, flexible, part-time provision for maximum participation; family and intergenerational learning; impartial information, advice and guidance (IAG); role models in communities and schools; and defining student success in ways that take account of success in employment.