



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru **The National Assembly for Wales**

Y Pwyllgor Menter a Busnes **The Enterprise and Business Committee**

Dydd Iau, 24 Mai 2012
Thursday, 24 May 2012

Cynnwys **Contents**

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

Ymchwiliad i Brentisiaethau yng Nghymru—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth
Inquiry into Apprenticeships in Wales—Evidence Session

Ymchwiliad i Brentisiaethau yng Nghymru—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth
Inquiry into Apprenticeships in Wales—Evidence Session

Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog Rhif 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r Cyfarfod
Motion under Standing Order No. 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Meeting

Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal,
cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.
In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Byron Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Keith Davies	Llafur Labour
Julie James	Llafur Labour
Alun Ffred Jones	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Eluned Parrott	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Nick Ramsay	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Conservatives (Committee Chair)
David Rees	Llafur Labour
Kenneth Skates	Llafur Labour
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Andrew Cooksley	Rheolwr Gyfarwyddwr ACT, Ffederasiwn Hyfforddiant Cenedlaethol Cymru Managing Director ACT, National Training Federation for Wales
Dafydd Evans	Pennaeth Coleg Menai, ColegauCymru Principal, Coleg Menai, CollegesWales
Barry Liles	Pennaeth a Phrif Weithredwr Coleg Sir Gâr, ColegauCymru Principal and Chief Executive, Coleg Sir Gâr, CollegesWales
Greg Walker	Dirprwy Brif Weithredwr ColegauCymru Deputy Chief Executive, CollegesWales
Arwyn Watkins	Prif Swyddog Gweithredol, Ffederasiwn Hyfforddiant Cenedlaethol Cymru Chief Executive Officer of NTfW
Helena Williams	Cyfarwyddwr Datblygu Corfforaethol— (Dysgu a Datblygu) Acorn, Ffederasiwn Hyfforddiant Cenedlaethol Cymru Corporate Development Director—(Learning and Development) Acorn, NTfW

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Siân Phipps	Clerc Clerk
Kayleigh Driscoll	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Anne Thomas	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 1 p.m.
The meeting began at 1 p.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Nick Ramsay:** I welcome Members to this afternoon's session of the Enterprise and Business Committee, during which we will continue with our inquiry into apprenticeships in Wales.

Ymchwiliad i Brentisiaethau yng Nghymru—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Inquiry into Apprenticeships in Wales—Evidence Session

[2] **Nick Ramsay:** I welcome our witnesses and thank them for coming here today. Could you please say your names and the names of your organisations for the record?

[3] **Mr Watkins:** I am Arwyn Watkins, chief executive of the National Training Federation for Wales and managing director of Cambrian Training Company.

[4] **Ms Williams:** I am Helena Williams, corporate development director for Acorn Learning Solutions.

[5] **Mr Cooksley:** I am Andrew Cooksley, managing director of ACT Training and board member of the National Training Federation for Wales.

[6] **Nick Ramsay:** In my rush to announce your presence, I neglected to mention the apologies. We have apologies from Dafydd Elis-Thomas and Byron Davies, who will hopefully arrive during the course of the meeting.

[7] This meeting is bilingual. Should any of you need translation, it is available on channel 1 on the translation kits in front of you. Please signal to us if you have any issues with that and we can sort them out for you. The usual housekeeping rules apply. Eluned Parrott has the first question.

[8] **Eluned Parrott:** Could you first give us an idea of how the off-the-job training arrangements complement and support the on-the-job training that employers provide?

[9] **Mr Cooksley:** All apprentices are primarily employed, so we are usually delivering the bulk of what we do within the workplace—whether that is organising sessions, workshops or knowledge-based sessions. As an organisation, we have a network of centres, and people usually come in for a day, a month or whatever suits their qualification. So, they come off the job to what are primarily knowledge-based sessions.

[10] **Eluned Parrott:** How effectively do those off-the-job opportunities dovetail with the nature of the work that the apprentices are doing?

[11] **Mr Cooksley:** In some sectors they are ingrained, but in other sectors the situation is a wee bit more difficult. For example, there are challenges in health and social care, given the challenges posed by the nature of the work, such as shift working and working weekends. So, as a responsive provider of apprenticeships, you tend to need a flexible group of people to deliver them; you just have to make it happen.

[12] **Mr Watkins:** Every aspect of off-the-job training is linked with the apprenticeship framework. So, it is most definitely contextualised to the requirements of the framework. Most of the off-the-job activity links directly to the knowledge-based element within the apprenticeship framework. The apprenticeship framework is very structured and is decided by employers and so on. So, it is intrinsically linked.

[13] **Mr Cooksley:** There is also a lot of value added in terms of certain routes, where you will do things around what the employer wants. So, there is a lot of extra delivery of particular competencies and certificates for things like manual handling and so on. So, there is a lot of stuff on top that we must respond to in relation to the employer.

[14] **Ms Williams:** We spend a lot of time upfront integrating the current training of the organisation. So, we look at what the organisation already does, where accreditation could come across to the framework and where the added value of the training delivery needs to take place.

[15] **Eluned Parrott:** In urban areas, it is relatively easy to achieve a critical mass—you will have enough trainees in a similar subject area to support training provision. How do you approach working in rural areas, where the access to training providers is not so easy and where the number of trainees might be a lot lower?

[16] **Mr Watkins:** I will answer that because we are one of the only independent training providers based in mid Wales. We have our head office in Powys, and we cover the whole of mid Wales. Each learner has an individual learning plan and that is the critical thing, irrespective of whether you are in an urban or rural area. There are economies of scale—there are large distances to travel and so on—but, ultimately, you make sure that you are totally flexible to respond to the demands and the needs of the employer and the learner in the apprenticeship programme. That is the deal. Many of us operate not only across urban areas but across the whole of rural Wales. Quite a lot of us have national contracts with national employers across Wales. It is, therefore, our social responsibility to deal with that.

[17] **Mr Cooksley:** Historically, that is what we have had to do—get out there and deliver the more relevant, cost-effective stuff. We have to face up to our responsibilities in having a work-based learning contract.

[18] **Nick Ramsay:** Just to follow up on that, you said that you are not seeing any of the specific issues around rurality that Eluned mentioned.

[19] **Mr Watkins:** No, other than that there could well be limited choice for some learners in terms of some occupational routes. One would have to say that. However, given the open, transparent network that we have, we can certainly find solutions to resolve that issue. There could be a different issue in terms of contract allocations, the commissioning of a particular apprenticeship programme, whether that fits in with the sector priorities for that area, the difference between convergence and competitiveness, and the restrictions that we have there. Within the format of the commissioning programme, as a network we are pretty much able to deal with most issues there, to be honest.

[20] **Eluned Parrott:** One specific thing that we have had raised as a potential barrier to young people in rural areas taking up apprenticeships is the difficulties that they sometimes face in accessing transport to get to both the employer and the training provider. Obviously, those are often located in different places. Do you think that this is a real issue?

[21] **Mr Watkins:** In my experience, it is actually the training provider who travels to the employer, to where the apprentice is working. It is an employed programme, and from 1 July 2011 it has total employed status. You cannot be an apprentice unless you have employed status. That has been the case since it has been on the statute books.

[22] **Mr Cooksley:** That is what they judge us on as well. If it meets the employer's needs and satisfies the learner, we have done the job. That is our primary aim in delivering the programmes. Instead of them trying to fit in with us, we have to fit in with them, and that is

the bulk of what we do, day in, day out.

[23] **Keith Davies:** Yn dilyn o'r hyn a ofynnodd Eluned, rydym wedi cael tystiolaeth dros yr wythnosau diwethaf bod nifer o bobl ifanc yn gweld cludiant fel gormod o drafferth tra'n wneud hyfforddiant mewn coleg. Wedyn, maent yn penderfynu peidio â mynd am brentisiaethau. A ydych wedi gweld hynny'n digwydd? Dyna beth ddywedodd cyflogwyr wrthom bythefnos yn ôl—bod pobl ifanc wedi tynnu'n ôl oherwydd cludiant.

Keith Davies: Following on from what Eluned was asking you, we have heard evidence over the past few weeks that a number of young people see transport as too much of a difficulty when undertaking training in a college. They then decide not to go for apprenticeships. Have you seen that happen? That is what employers were telling us a fortnight ago—that young people had withdrawn because of transport.

[24] **Ms Williams:** As a training organisation, we travel to the employer, so our apprentice would not necessarily have to come out to attend the college environment—we would go to the employer to deliver the retrospective learning.

[25] **David Rees:** To expand upon that, you say that you go to the employer, but if the employer has only one or two apprentices, do you still go to the employer?

[26] **Mr Watkins:** Absolutely.

[27] **Ms Williams:** The training is wrapped around the employer and the apprentice in an individual learning plan. On set, you plan the learning, you identify any gaps in requirement and how they will be filled through the pathway of the apprenticeship programme, and that is delivered in-house.

[28] **David Rees:** In rural areas, that would be far more difficult because of the distances that you would have to travel to see small groups.

[29] **Ms Williams:** Yes, we currently travel from south to north Wales to deliver learning and pay for overnight accommodation for staff and so on.

[30] **Mr Watkins:** Lots of microbusinesses in rural Wales would never have engaged in the apprenticeship programme in the first place if that was not the case. We have an individual butcher with one apprentice in Powys, and another in Ceredigion and so on.

[31] **David Rees:** You are a private organisation, but you also represent FE colleges.

[32] **Mr Watkins:** Yes. The National Training Federation for Wales is represented in both the independent sector and the further education institutions, in terms of their work-based learning contract, as well as the local authorities.

[33] **David Rees:** Do you find the same response from the FEIs—being able to go out to the employers?

[34] **Mr Watkins:** Absolutely. All of the managers who operate the work-based learning programme and the apprenticeship programme within the FEIs have contributed to our paper, which is in front of you today.

[35] **Nick Ramsay:** Is that okay, Dave?

[36] **David Rees:** Yes; I just wanted to look at what work-based learning programmes are.

[37] **Nick Ramsay:** I should have thanked you for your written evidence. That has been useful in helping us to frame our inquiry.

[38] **Kenneth Skates:** I will ask about the types and levels of apprenticeships. We seek your views on the effectiveness of foundation and craft apprenticeships in developing the skills of existing workforces.

[39] **Mr Watkins:** May I just clarify that you want to know about the effectiveness of foundation apprenticeships?

[40] **Kenneth Skates:** Yes, and the effectiveness of craft apprenticeships in developing the existing workforce.

[41] **Mr Watkins:** The foundation apprenticeship is a craft apprenticeship. It is just that it is at level 2. All apprenticeships are designed and established against national occupational standards, for a competent operator who is operating at level 2, and that is the foundation apprenticeship. Within the foundation apprenticeship it is very much about the operative. It deals with the craft skill in terms of the competency and the knowledge element, and there could be some additionality in terms of that, and most definitely in terms of Essential Skills Wales and literacy and numeracy—we all know how big an issue and challenge that is for us all.

[42] **Nick Ramsay:** How would you rate its effectiveness?

[43] **Mr Watkins:** It is extremely effective. More and more businesses are growing their own people and using the foundation apprenticeship programme to develop the skills of their workforce.

[44] **Mr Cooksley:** The effectiveness needs to be measured by completion rates. To be absolutely frank with you, people vote with their feet. If they do not think that it is worth doing, they will not do it. So, if the programme is of no value to them or the employer, you would see a huge drop-out rate. The drop-out rate is very small within the network in Wales, so that is a bit of evidence to suggest that it is highly effective.

[45] **Kenneth Skates:** What sort of demand is there for higher level apprenticeships?

[46] **Mr Watkins:** One of the issues for progression from level 2 to level 3 is that, within the competent element of that framework, there are quite a lot of units that deal with management functions and supervisory skills. So, for someone to progress directly, in some cases, from a foundation level to an apprenticeship, it is simply not possible, because they are not operating in a job that would provide them with the competencies of being a manager or a team leader. There is a demand, especially in some sectors, for the development of the higher apprenticeships. That is a new programme for us all, which is in its development stage. I do not think that there will be great numbers. Higher level apprenticeships is not a numbers game, but there is definitely a need for those higher level technical and craft skills.

[47] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Gan barhau â phwynt Ken Skates ynglŷn â'r brentisiaeth lefel uwch, mae rhai cwmnïau wedi bod yma'n dweud bod angen i ni ganolbwyntio mwy ar brentisiaethau lefel uwch er budd i'r economi, a, chan nad ydyw'n flaenoriaeth gan y Llywodraeth, bod angen rhoi mwy o adnoddau ar gyfer prentisiaethau lefel uwch. A ydych yn cytuno â'r pwyntiau hynny? **Alun Ffred Jones:** To continue with Ken Skates's point on higher level apprenticeships, some companies have been here saying that we need to focus more on higher level apprenticeships for the benefit of the economy, and, as it is not a priority for the Government, that there is a need to provide more resources for higher level apprenticeships. Do you agree with those

points?

[48] **Mr Watkins:** Just for clarification, in terms of the commissioning of the contracts that we operate in relation to apprenticeship programmes, foundation apprenticeships, apprenticeships and higher apprenticeships are indicated as a priority. The higher apprenticeships are reliant on the sector skills councils developing the higher apprenticeships. We are not in a position to deliver a higher apprenticeship if they have not been developed. Higher apprenticeships in many cases have not been developed. They have in some industries, but they are in the development process. They are not fit for purpose.

[49] **Nick Ramsay:** Why do you think that is? What has caused the delay?

[50] **Mr Watkins:** There has not been the initiative or the incentive to address the need that has now come from employers. We need to develop a higher apprenticeship. Some employers, who are very strong in terms of their whole apprenticeship culture, have, by their very nature, developed that product with a sector skills council for their own delivery. However, I could not say that that applies across all industries.

1.15 p.m.

[51] **Ms Williams:** As Arwyn says, it depends very much on the sector. We have been working with the financial skills partnerships in terms of scoping the requirements for the higher apprenticeships in financial services and utilising our employer base in order to test what should be in the frameworks. We have been working closely with that sector skills council in developing that apprenticeship, which will come online from March 2013 if everything comes through as smoothly as it should. I also think that there is scope where apprenticeships have evolved with employers and they have been focusing on the level 2 and level 3 apprenticeships. The time is now right to look at the progression from level 3 to levels 4 and 5 in the higher apprenticeships structures.

[52] **Nick Ramsay:** Thank you. I now call on Joyce Watson.

[53] **Joyce Watson:** Good afternoon. I apologise for being slightly late. I wish to look at the characteristics of apprentices. I want to start by asking about the balance between the existing employee apprentices and the new recruit apprentices in terms of gender stereotyping and what you do, as organisations, if anything—I know that you are only one cog—to try to unpick some of that gender stereotyping.

[54] **Mr Watkins:** We do quite a bit on this across the whole network, to be honest. We measure annually in terms of the gender balance in certain sectors, and we actively do case studies to try to recruit and promote that apprenticeship profile as an opportunity to shift the balance.

[55] **Mr Cooksley:** We look at that as part of our self-assessment. Equal opportunities and gender make-up is what we will be pinpointing in certain routes. We actually try to attract more males, as health and social care, childcare, and supporting teaching and learning in schools predominantly attract females. Most people think of attracting more female bricklayers and so forth, but we try to counter it the other way. Therefore, we do focus on this considerably as part of our equality development plan in terms of how we market our apprenticeship programmes, the imagery we use, and the type of places we put that marketing material.

[56] **Ms Williams:** Very often the apprentice will come on because they have to be in employed status. The final choice always sits with the employer in terms of who is taken into that apprenticeship programme as an employee of their organisation. So, we can actively

promote vacancies and bring people through to interview. We are very clear about equal opportunities in any of the employer bases that we work with, and about the need to ensure that we look at what they do, as an organisation, and at their current statistics as a company.

[57] **Mr Cooksley:** We are quite keen on attracting younger people into the new-recruit apprenticeship programmes who primarily do not have their GCSE results and have possibly done very poorly at school. As part of our remit, we are trying to persuade employers to give them a go. We might look at all the characteristics of the population, but we also look at the skill levels in order to try to get more young people, who are lower skilled, into the opportunity an apprenticeship provides.

[58] **Mr Watkins:** We are always challenging the whole network in terms of progression opportunities that exist from other programmes, such as pre-employability programmes in terms of moving on to the apprenticeship programme. Obviously, the young recruits programme has been a massive incentive in terms of shifting that age balance and the age profile of an apprentice.

[59] **Nick Ramsay:** Do you have any further questions, Joyce?

[60] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. You have talked about what you are doing, but how do you know whether any of it has been successful?

[61] **Mr Cooksley:** By measuring the make-up of people who are on apprenticeship programmes every year. We look at them every quarter and we look at them every year in terms of our self-assessment cycle. This could have been achieved through marketing events or through the use of fliers, or by asking employers; we measure the evidence to see whether the take-up has gone up or down.

[62] **Mr Watkins:** There is another crucial factor in terms of the success of the programme, namely to have the learner's and the employer's voice by undertaking surveys. When you have in excess of 70% of apprentices on completion of their apprenticeship remaining in sustained employment, that is an absolute success.

[63] **Joyce Watson:** I agree. So, if you have that monitoring information, would you be happy to provide us with it?

[64] **Mr Watkins:** Yes.

[65] **Joyce Watson:** That would be useful. I would also like to hear your views on the effective competition for 16 to 18-year-olds between post-16 education providers, and on the higher staying-on rates in schools and FE colleges and their impact on training providers.

[66] **Mr Watkins:** That is a very good point. I do not know whether young people staying on in school beyond the age of 16 is a good or bad thing, to be honest. The one thing that it has done is to shift the whole of the NEETs age group from 16 to 18-year-olds to 19 to 24-year-olds. That is clearly evident. The post-16 arena is extremely competitive and it has a huge impact on us in trying to secure 16 to 18-year-olds to take up employment status apprenticeship programmes. However, many of us are coming across 16 to 18-year-olds who do not have the right aptitude or attitude for employed status apprenticeship programmes.

[67] **Ms Williams:** The current framework content of apprenticeships has very academic components and the individual pupils who the schools want to stay on in school are also those, as you said, who we would like to have on the apprenticeship programmes and who employers would like to employ to undertake an apprenticeship programme. So, this is also led by the employment offer. However, this comes down to the guidance and support that

they are given to make choices at that very young age and knowing where their future is, whether staying on at school, going to college or taking up an apprenticeship job offer.

[68] **Joyce Watson:** You said that they do not have the right aptitude—I think that that was the word that you used, Arwyn. Would you like to unpick that for me?

[69] **Mr Watkins:** This is about the whole learning curve relating to apprenticeships. With many apprenticeship programmes, there are minimum academic requirements prior to entry. Historically, the people who undertake such programmes are those who are low academic achievers, but we want to attract the high academic achievers. Sometimes, we cannot put an individual on an apprenticeship programme because they first have to do an intermediate programme as they are not at the academic level that would allow entry.

[70] **Mr Cooksley:** The crux of the matter is that there are far too many young people between the ages of 19 and 24 who are NEET and disengaged from the workforce, and apprenticeships are a great tool to reduce that figure. To be honest, we cannot compete with colleges and sixth forms because we do not have their power of marketing and influence over those young people. So, if you are in school and in year 11, you will go on to the school's sixth form or we will be up against the power of the colleges' marketing material. From a parental point of view, that would probably be a good option. We need to get apprenticeships out there and develop that brand in Wales. I guess that that would be a consideration. We have to make apprenticeships a first choice for many more people because it is much more appropriate for them. To go back to the original point, going to college for two years or staying on at sixth form is not getting these people any closer to the job market. We have a problem now and it is only going to keep on going. We need to use apprenticeships as a tool to reduce the NEET figure for 19 to 24-year-olds.

[71] **Julie James:** That seems slightly contradictory to me. We are hearing from you that you want to attract academically able young people and not people who are less academically able and that you also want to stop people from staying on at school and get them into apprenticeships because staying on at school is not quite the right route. I am having trouble making those two things match up.

[72] **Mr Cooksley:** The reason we want to get our lower skilled young people into work is that they are not getting onto college courses or into sixth form, so those are the people who we are trying to get into apprenticeships. That is where the advocates of those young people persuade employers to take them on. It would be a more balanced picture for us if we had more of a cross-section of talented young people and people who are lower skilled. We get far too many people who are difficult to place in apprenticeship employed status on day one. It would be better if we could have those people going to college for a couple of years, instead of them doing apprenticeships, because employers want them.

[73] **Mr Watkins:** To respond to that with regard to what I said, you can stay on in school in the sixth form whether or not you have achieved the A to C benchmark at GCSE level. Do not think for one minute that you can stay on in sixth form only when you have achieved the benchmark in the General Certificate of Education because that is not the case. For many of the apprenticeship programmes, we require people who have achieved GCSE grades A to C. If they have not achieved that benchmark, what are they doing in school for the next two years?

[74] **Julie James:** So, have we got two lots of apprenticeships here? Mr Watkins, you are talking about needing to achieve GCSEs at A to C, but, Mr Cooksley, you are clearly not talking about that.

[75] **Mr Cooksley:** Some employers and providers might put a condition on wanting

GCSEs at grades A to C. In our case, we do not operate like that; we persuade employers to go more on attitude and potential. We try to steer clear of having GCSEs as a benchmark for entering into apprenticeships.

[76] **Julie James:** We have heard quite a lot this morning, and in previous evidence sessions, from employers who preferred to place an existing employee on an apprenticeship scheme, because they have had a chance to look at that employee and decided that they are worth training. Is that something that is distinguished from this conversation? Again, we had some statistics to say that the increasing number of apprenticeships was, in a large part, due to in-work placements of the sort that I have just mentioned. I entirely understand the point about getting more status for apprenticeships—we heard quite a lot about that this morning. There seems to be a contradiction, in that you are talking about young people who are, perhaps, not academic and who ought to do more vocational things or leave school at 16 and go into work-based learning. I still cannot get my head around whether this is a unified scheme or two separate strands.

[77] **Mr Watkins:** There are not two separate strands at all. First, it is about local labour market intelligence—knowing where a particular programme of learning is likely to lead—and, secondly, it is about giving people the opportunity to know what is available on their doorstep. Invariably, we are not talking about age 16; these choices are made at age 14. It is at 14 that they made their choices about what educational activity they were going to undertake between 14 and 16 and where that was likely to lead them. You are right to say that quite a lot of employers have given somebody an opportunity in a three-month work trial, or something like that, for them to showcase themselves. Jobs Growth Wales is hugely effective in this. It gives individuals between 16 and 24 the opportunity to showcase themselves for six months to an employer, and that route will be the progression from Jobs Growth Wales via the young recruits programme or onto an apprenticeship programme.

1.30 p.m.

[78] Employing people is a very expensive business for employers, and it is about getting it right. No-one would want to set anyone up to fail with this. That is what I was leading to on the academic ability in the first instance of those who are currently going on to an apprenticeship programme, because there is quite a bit of academic rigour in the technical certificates in the apprenticeship framework.

[79] **Keith Davies:** However, they do not need to have level 2 qualifications for that. They can get onto the foundation level. There will be a level 2 qualification at the end, but to get onto it, you do not need a level 2 qualification.

[80] **Mr Watkins:** In some frameworks, from the sector, it specifically requires a certain minimum requirement in terms of that.

[81] **Keith Davies:** Is that at level 2?

[82] **Mr Watkins:** Absolutely.

[83] **Ms Williams:** It is the essential skills. It is not necessarily that they have to have a GCSE grade A to C, but they have to have the basic skills ability to be able to interpret communication and numeracy into the framework to achieve the essential skills level. If they are entry level, if there is a little gap, we can work with them, as we do, on a one-to-one basis to get that basic skills level up, so that they can achieve the essential skills element of the framework. If they are quite a few levels below, if they are entry level 1 or 2, they are normally guided to a traineeship programme, which Andrew operates as well. Andrew works with them in that foundation level 1 stage to try to bring their essential skills up to a level so

that they can then progress on to a level 2 foundation framework. So, it is a bit of a case of building blocks. Andrew tends to take a lot of individuals in who may not be at a level that we could work with on an apprenticeship framework. The final benchmark to entry still comes back to the employer requirement to enter their workforce. It is not necessarily the framework that puts the academic level on it; it is the employer that will put that academic level on it. As we work heavily in financial services, such as banking and insurance, the level of person that they look for is very much in the competitive marketplace of those who will be staying on to do A-levels or, indeed, have done A-levels and are now coming out, so they are competing with universities.

[84] **Mr Cooksley:** Some 6% of our youth apprenticeships would request essential skills, so we allow it and it just about persuading the employers.

[85] **Nick Ramsay:** You have answered that quite fully. I would like to bring Alun Ffred Jones in, who has been waiting patiently in the wings.

[86] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Arwyn Watkins, could you elaborate on the point that you made about there having been a shift of young people who are NEET up to 19 years old? You said something along those lines. Did I understand it correctly? If I did, will you explain it a little more?

[87] **Mr Watkins:** Yes, you understood that correctly. Our paper sets out the careers destination of pupils over the past couple of years. You will see a significant shift in staying-on rates among 16 to 18-year-olds.

[88] **Nick Ramsay:** Is that not a direct result of more people staying on between 16 and 18 years of age?

[89] **Mr Watkins:** Absolutely, so it is shifting. What was a problem a few years ago among 16 to 18-year-olds is now significant among 19 to 24-year-olds.

[90] **Keith Davies:** The Children and Young People Committee has looked at that and what Arwyn is saying is quite true, but it has not changed since—I cannot remember—about 1996.

[91] **Nick Ramsay:** We should have Keith as a witness. [*Laughter.*]

[92] **Eluned Parrott:** One key concern is how young people get from a point of being in school and considering their options to actively seeking opportunities with apprenticeships. Is it your opinion that there is sufficient independent and good-quality advice for young people when they are planning their career routes in this area?

[93] **Mr Cooksley:** No.

[94] **Nick Ramsay:** By the way, one-word answers are fine; it helps us enormously. [*Laughter.*]

[95] **Mr Watkins:** No, to be honest; there is a lot more that could be done in that area.

[96] **Eluned Parrott:** It is not just teachers, because career advisers and parents are also major stakeholders in the decision-making process for young people at this point in their careers. What kind of systems would you want to see established to ensure that all those individuals could be better informed about the options that are available?

[97] **Mr Watkins:** There is also peer pressure. I think we need to recognise that as well.

They might know, for example, that those who went before them are now having a great time in Cardiff. So, there is that. I would go back to the age of 14, to be honest. With labour market intelligence and good data collection, when they are making their choices at 14, we should be able to show them what choices the people who went before them made at 14 and what they are doing now. We have to be upfront and tell them that. We should put individual learner need above institutional need.

[98] **Eluned Parrott:** On the esteem attached to apprenticeships as opposed to higher education, higher education institutions spend a considerable amount of time and money on promoting courses and providing not very independent support services for individuals interested in university careers. Is there a role for the private sector in promoting apprenticeship opportunities in that way through schools liaison programmes?

[99] **Mr Watkins:** Absolutely, there is. Post-16 provision is a very competitive environment and I think that we all recognise that. I am pretty sure that you have received evidence—in fact, I have seen some of your written evidence on this—that, on occasion, there is a struggle to get anywhere near an institution to give that advice and guidance because of the very competitive nature of post-16 provision.

[100] **Mr Cooksley:** We are all busy trying to get our intake up. That is what it is about. That is the challenge. We have got to raise our game in terms of promoting apprenticeships. The Welsh Government could play more of a part in terms of promoting Welsh apprenticeships as a great brand. I think that we should be really pushing that out. If I were a young person now, I am not sure whether I would know how to get an apprenticeship. I do not know whether there is a hotline number or anything like that. There is no dedicated URL—website—for apprenticeships in Wales. It is poorly marketed to be honest and we should be doing more about it.

[101] **Eluned Parrott:** Obviously, the fragmented nature of the providers and the complexity of the product available to young people are complicating factors in the marketing and promotion of a clear idea to young people and their advisers. Would a marketing campaign overcome this or do we need to look at simplification of the product itself?

[102] **Mr Watkins:** I do not think there is a need to simplify the product. It is a case of going into the education environment and talking about and demonstrating the outcomes, explaining that if someone follows a particular route, it leads to a particular place and explaining what job opportunities are available in the local community. There are apprenticeship opportunities available in every single travel-to-learn area in Wales. There are work-based learning providers delivering apprenticeships in every single travel-to-learn area in Wales.

[103] **Eluned Parrott:** However, would you like to see the Welsh Government taking a lead by setting up a specific information point for apprenticeships?

[104] **Mr Watkins:** Yes, absolutely.

[105] **Ms Williams:** That can only be helpful.

[106] **Mr Cooksley:** Do remember that the apprenticeship matching service is relatively new. I think that it will gain some momentum in the years ahead. It is a great tool, but it is early days for that. That is just one part of it, but a great campaign could work wonders.

[107] **Nick Ramsay:** Thanks, Eluned. We are into our last five minutes, and David Rees has some questions.

[108] **David Rees:** To follow on from that, effective engagement with employers is critical in this. Clearly, there are going to be employers who have come through the traditional apprenticeship route and understand the process. What engagement do you have with such businesses and particularly with new start-up businesses run by people who have not taken that route and may be unaware of the opportunities it might provide to young people?

[109] **Ms Williams:** We have employer engagement teams that go out to communities to talk to employers. We send fliers out and we do press advertisements. We talk to employers about what apprenticeships are. The sectors I can talk about from our experience are predominantly sectors that are not traditionally linked to apprenticeships, such as retail, customer service, contact centre environments, insurance, banking, and obviously the care sector. So, that is predominantly through our direct support of those employers and working with the BETS team. If new organisations come into Wales, we will work closely with that team to promote apprenticeships and to get that culture of understanding what the apprenticeship system is. We also engage on a national platform with employers. So, from that point of view, we are spreading the word of engagement in apprenticeships to the sectors that have not traditionally used apprenticeships.

[110] **Mr Watkins:** Another thing that needs to be emphasised is that the local intelligence in the communities that you are talking about is very much at the core of the federation. It is about that employer engagement and relationship. So, if any new businesses started up in our communities, we would know about it and engage with them.

[111] **David Rees:** Do they get the message about what an apprenticeship is, compared with on-the-job training, given that there is a clear difference between the two?

[112] **Mr Watkins:** Yes, absolutely. They fully understand the difference. The thing to recognise is that any apprenticeship agreement is a tripartite agreement between the employer, the provider and the apprentice. The whole framework is spelt out in that.

[113] **David Rees:** The statistics at the back of your document clearly demonstrate that a large number of people are staying on in employment when they have finished their learning programme. Could you clarify what you deem to be a learning programme? Learning programmes can cover many things.

[114] **Mr Watkins:** This document is specifically for your inquiry, so, we are talking about apprenticeships.

[115] **David Rees:** I just wanted to clarify that that meant apprenticeships. Turning to skills, the lack of skills of children leaving school has been highlighted by nearly every person who has given evidence. That is one of the reasons why people tend to take them on as employees—they can see their progress before they move on. Will this change the Pathways to Apprenticeship programme? Is it making it better for young people to look at apprenticeships as a consequence?

[116] **Ms Williams:** We are actively engaged with the Pathways to Apprenticeship programme, and have been probably for four years prior to the drive on the Pathways to Apprenticeship and school liaison. It is very much about what we are allowed to influence in the programme. We have had pathways running that link to employers and young people for one or two days a week for a year, so we deliver elements of the programme to those young people while they are still in school. However, it very much depends on our access to employability skills. Not all schools embrace the support that is available to them.

[117] **David Rees:** What about getting work experience opportunities for those people? Are they easy to get? Are employers willing to take people on for work experience?

[118] **Ms Williams:** Through the pathways that we run or generally?

[119] **David Rees:** Well, you mentioned that soft skills are a problem, and clearly work experience would help with those skills.

[120] **Mr Watkins:** Work experience is a big issue; I think that it is broken.

[121] **Ms Williams:** Yes, as it is currently run. The effectiveness of the compulsory work experience element in the current system is questionable.

[122] **Mr Watkins:** In fairness to employers, in any given travel-to-learn area, having everyone out on work experience for the same two weeks of the academic year is nonsensical. That can hardly lead to meaningful work experience, because there are not that many employers to accommodate all of that in some areas.

[123] **Nick Ramsay:** We are now in our last minute. Have you finished with questions, David? You have. Great.

[124] I thank our witnesses for coming today to give evidence; it has been very helpful. We will be feeding your comments into our inquiry, and if there is anything that you would like to add beyond this evidence session, feel free to get back in touch. I thank Andrew Cooksley, Arwyn Watkins and Helena Williams for being here today.

1.45 p.m.

Ymchwiliad i Brentisiaethau yng Nghymru—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Inquiry into Apprenticeships in Wales—Evidence Session

[125] **Nick Ramsay:** I welcome our witnesses. Thank you for coming here this afternoon to give us evidence for our ongoing inquiry into apprenticeships in Wales. I should point out that, if you require translation at any point during this session, it is available on channel 1 on the headsets that are in front of you, and that the microphones operate automatically. Would you like to give your names and your positions in your organisations for the record, first of all?

[126] **Mr Walker:** I am Greg Walker, deputy chief executive of CollegesWales.

[127] **Mr Liles:** Barry Liles wyf i, **Mr Liles:** I am Barry Liles, the principal of pennaeth Coleg Sir Gâr. Coleg Sir Gâr.

[128] **Mr Evans:** Dafydd Evans wyf i, **Mr Evans:** I am Dafydd Evans, the principal of pennaeth Coleg Menai. of Coleg Menai.

[129] **Nick Ramsay:** I propose that, because we have a number of questions, we go straight to those rather than have any opening statements. The first question is from Byron Davies.

[130] **Byron Davies:** This is a general question. In the submissions that we have had, Grŵp Llandrillo Menai says that it has

[131] ‘piloted some particularly innovative ways in which a range of employers can be involved in the apprenticeships programme. Cwmni Prentis Menai Cyf (CPMC) is one such vehicle: it helps the area’s engineering industry by facilitating the creation of high quality employment’.

[132] Could you assist us further by elaborating on the types of provision and the current role of further education colleges in apprenticeship off-the-job training?

[133] **Mr Evans:** Cwmni Prentis Menai Cyf was set up for a very specific purpose in a very specific instance—we have Ynys Ynni, the Anglesey Energy Island, and a potential new-build nuclear power station and need to skill up in terms of engineering skills in the area at a time when we have had Anglesey Aluminium Metals Ltd close as well as the current Magnox power station declining in terms of numbers. Therefore, it was felt that there was a need to make an intervention to fill a gap. We have decided to de-risk taking on an apprentice for the employer and the college is carrying some of that risk together with its partners in the public sector, that is, the two local authorities, supported by Horizon Nuclear Power. So, we become the employing agent for a place with an employer and therefore the employment risk is taken away from the employer. The apprentice is offered on a two-for-one basis: if the employer doubles the number of apprentices that it takes, it has to pay only for one.

[134] **Byron Davies:** This is a question to you all. Can you give us some information on your relationship generally with private training providers and employers?

[135] **Mr Liles:** I would rate it as excellent. With employers, it is critical for the employment of young people and it is essential that we maintain that contact. We spend and devote a lot of our budget on that particularly important employer engagement. With regard to work-based learning providers, critically, we are those ourselves as colleges, but we also work with a host of providers as subcontractors. So, we would deliver the off-the-job training element, including key skills in certain cases. That relationship is all about joined-up thinking to put the learner first, so it is essential.

[136] **Mr Evans:** Many of us as colleges have configured ourselves in such a way that we are more accessible to employers. We have specific employment arms. At Coleg Menai, we have Linc Menai, which is now a brand that is known to employers, who have their own 0800 number to contact us directly. So, employers are not trying to find their way through the morass of the faculties and departments of the college. There is an employer-engagement arm with which they can engage directly.

[137] **Byron Davies:** That is useful, thank you. I would like to ask you about the ways in which European funding supports apprenticeship provision. Can you enlighten us on that?

[138] **Mr Liles:** Yes. To kick off with the pre-apprenticeship stage, European structural funds are essential for the Pathways to Apprenticeship programme. Also, a significant proportion of the funding from the Welsh Government is derived from Europe. On that basis, without it, I would imagine that we would not have the numbers that we have now.

[139] **David Rees:** To take that point a bit further, you talked about the numbers that you have now. Are all those likely to get employment afterwards? In other words, are we taking on too many simply to make the numbers look good?

[140] **Mr Liles:** No. What we have observed is a decline over the past 15 years, David. I am certainly seeing a significant upturn at the moment in key sectors within our region. It is a balancing act, and working between the providers, the sector skills councils and the Welsh Government, it is always a fine line to balance that particular number. You will not always get it right in each sector, but as long as we have the flexibility to move from sector to sector, or perhaps from traineeships, as we have done recently, into apprenticeships, that is okay. Despite putting a tender in some 15 months ago, we are already finding that certain sectors, such as engineering, are now recovering and we have to move particular apprenticeship places to cover that. So, at the moment we are facing a bit of a dilemma because the demand from employers exceeds the feedstock coming through.

[141] **David Rees:** Since we are on the subject of sectors, I might as well go on to the next question. Coleg Menai indicated that the focus on priority areas that has been pushed by the Welsh Government has a benefit for those areas, but may have an impact on others. Is that something that we need to look at very carefully? Should we look at more flexibility to meet local needs rather than focusing on areas for more general reasons?

[142] **Mr Evans:** Certainly, there is some truth in that, in that national priorities do not always fit a local area's economic needs. There should be something more. In our paper we talk about regional planning, and linked to that, colleges have a key role in that kind of regional strategic planning and linking to economic development departments within our regions so that we have some joined-up thinking in the sectors that we target and are able to train up for, so that we are making the best use of public money by having all the public sector agencies working to the same goal in terms of economic development.

[143] **Mr Walker:** I just want to add that that strategic leadership role within the regions has been exemplified by what we discussed around Cwmni Prentis Menai Cyf. There is also Constructing Carmarthenshire Together, which was mentioned this morning. It is not that we want to monopolise provision in the regions or have an undue influence, but we have the capacity and the role, potentially, especially with transformation affecting more and more FE colleges, to take that strategic leadership role within the regions and push forward some of the agendas more rapidly.

[144] **Mr Liles:** To go back to the point that you made, what is required, I believe, is a fleetness of foot here to identify and to work. We became alert some 18 months ago to a growing demand in the care sector through the regional learning partnership, which had established labour market intelligence. Our own intelligence might not have alerted us to the volume required in that sector, but by working collaboratively across the region we were able to put in appropriate figures to satisfy the need of that particular sector.

[145] **David Rees:** Do you work with the sector skills councils in those areas, then?

[146] **Mr Liles:** Yes.

[147] **Mr Evans:** Yes.

[148] **David Rees:** Thank you for that. I also want to look at skills. Clearly it is a big issue, and we have asked the same question of everyone else. Could the skill levels that you see—not just of young people, but of people across the age range—be the reason why there are fewer people going directly into apprenticeships and more into some form of employment? How do you see the skills of people coming in to your colleges and schemes? How could other programmes benefit the development of those skills, particularly soft skills, given that they have been mentioned heavily?

[149] **Mr Liles:** On soft skills, the concerns that we have had have been well-evidenced. The issue that is we have to work with the school sector and increasingly we find ourselves working with young people at 14 years of age and preparing them not only for the education sector, but the world of work as a whole. I know that Members have visited particular areas where this development is quite acute to identify the skill requirements for particular sectors. It is not about knocking that particular sector—it is about working together and working smarter to prepare the young people.

[150] **David Rees:** When you find them to be short of those skills, do you work with the Pathways to Apprenticeship programme or other schemes?

[151] **Mr Evans:** Every apprentice that comes in has to go through an initial assessment, and therefore we do not just rely on their qualifications in terms of GCSEs, and so on. They go through a basic skills assessment and we identify individuals who need specific support. They will be given that support in one-to-one coaching, or within groups if they are on day release, to get their numeracy and literacy up to a level that meets the requirements of getting through Essential Skills Wales.

[152] **Mr Liles:** It is crucial, I feel, to the tracking and the skills assessment undertaken. Previously, a significant number of young people would have left school to go straight into an apprenticeship. I see ourselves providing a service as a buffer in preparing young people for the world of work. Health and safety is a major part of that, to ensure their safety in the workplace, but we also provide them with the softer skills to prepare them for the world of work.

[153] **David Rees:** You heard the last questions on work experience. What is your view on work experience?

[154] **Mr Liles:** It is absolutely critical. As you can see in the paper, we are keen advocates of Pathways to Apprenticeship.

[155] **David Rees:** The last witnesses felt that the system was broken.

[156] **Mr Evans:** The concept of Pathways to Apprenticeship is excellent. At 16, an individual is probably too green to go straight into employment. Having that year at college to get them work-ready to go down the apprenticeship route is critical. There is some fine-tuning to be done and sometimes we get lost in certain details, for which it is criticised, but the concept is actually very strong. There is some work to be done in conjunction with the sector skills councils, looking at the content of some of those frameworks to make them more appropriate, but the concept of a full year at college is one that we really need to push forward.

[157] **Mr Liles:** The evidence that we are finding—and it does take time—is that employers now wish to engage because they can then influence what the young people do back in college. We are also increasingly finding Pathways to Apprenticeship individuals who cannot complete the year because, once they are out on a work placement, they impress the employer and they get to know each other, and they leave the programme earlier than required, because the employer has identified their potential and wants them in earlier to secure them.

[158] **Nick Ramsay:** It is interesting that you describe yourself as a buffer between the earlier level and the employer, and that people are getting to you without some of those literacy and numeracy skills. You are obviously having to put a lot of resource into that that could go to other areas if it were dealt with earlier on.

[159] **Mr Evans:** Yes, definitely.

[160] **Julie James:** We almost had a diametrically opposite view of that from some of the sector skills councils, who felt that, once you had them for a year, you wanted to hang on to them, and you were pushing a particular set of apprenticeships onto employers and offering on-the-job training for other people, and running a bit of a cartel. That was the impression that I got. I have no view one way or the other, but that is definitely what we were being told.

[161] **Mr Walker:** I listened to that evidence, but I am not sure what type of provider Jacky was referring to. She did not say FE colleges.

[162] **Julie James:** No, she just said ‘learning providers’, to be fair. She did not necessarily mean colleges, but you clearly fit some part of that.

[163] **Mr Walker:** It is true, but I am not sure whether she was making a generic criticism that included FE colleges. I would not want to interpret her words.

[164] **Julie James:** To be fair, we did not ask the question, but she definitely had that view of learning providers in that first year and the transition.

[165] **Mr Liles:** At the end of the day, we put the learner first, preparing them for the world of work and working with them—and we are significant work-based learning providers ourselves.

[166] **Mr Evans:** The strength that we have as CollegesWales is that we have access to all the funding streams: work-based learning contracts, apprenticeships, full-time FE and the more academic side with A-levels. Therefore, we are in a position to put the learner first and to ensure—and we are all after success and there are key performance indicators that we have to reach—that we put the right person on the right route. That is critical to getting our own success stories, so it is a win-win situation for everybody.

[167] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Mae’r gyllideb ar gyfer Llwybrau at Brentisiaethau yn dod i ben yn 2014, os wyf yn deall yn iawn. A oes angen ei hadnewyddu neu brif-ffrydio’r arian?

Alun Ffred Jones: The budget for Pathways to Apprenticeship comes to an end in 2014, if I understand correctly. Is there a need to renew that or to mainstream the funding?

[168] **Mr Evans:** Mae hynny’n hanfodol. Mae patrwm yn dechrau datblygu. Rydym newydd drafod y broses hon o bobl ifanc yn gallu mynd i goleg am y flwyddyn gyntaf, i’w gwneud yn barod am y ffrwd brentisiaeth. Mae’r patrwm hwnnw yn llwydiannus, a byddai’n drychineb pe bai’r math hwnnw o gynnig yn cael ei dynnu allan o’r system yn awr. Byddwn yn mynd ymhellach a dweud bod angen ehangu’r gyllideb fel y bydd llwybr llawn amser i bob ffrwd prentisiaeth.

Mr Evans: That is essential. A pattern is starting to emerge. We have just discussed this process whereby young people can go to college for the first year, which prepares them for the apprenticeship route. That pattern is successful, and it would be a tragedy if that kind of offer were withdrawn from the system now. I would go even further and say that the budget needs to be extended so that every apprenticeship route has a full-time option.

2.00 p.m.

[169] **Alun Ffred Jones:** A yw’r gyllideb hon yn ychwanegol? A oes cronfa benodol?

Alun Ffred Jones: Is this budget additional? Is there a specific fund?

[170] **Mr Evans:** Oes, ac mae targedau penodol ar ei chyfer.

Mr Evans: Yes, and there are specific targets attached to it.

[171] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Gan fynd yn ôl at bwynt cynharach, rydych yn sôn am dargedu unigolion neu grwpiau o unigolion sydd â sgiliau diffygiol. Os ydych chi’n gallu gwneud hynny, pam nad yw’r ysgolion yn ei wneud?

Alun Ffred Jones: Going back to an earlier point, you have been talking about targeting individuals or groups of individuals who have gaps in their skills. If you are able to do that, why do schools not do it?

[172] **Mr Evans:** Cwestiwn i’r ysgolion yn hytrach nag i ni yw hwnnw.

Mr Evans: That is a question for schools rather than for us.

[173] **Mr Liles:** Rwyf wedi gofyn y cwestiwn hwnnw fy hun. Yr ateb a gefais i oedd bod ganddynt ormod yn y cwricwlwm yn barod.

Mr Liles: I have asked that same question myself. The answer that I got was that they already have too much in the curriculum.

[174] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Os nad yw pobl yn gallu darllen a rhifo, nid ydynt yn mynd i wneud yr un pwnc ar wyneb y ddaear.

Alun Ffred Jones: However, if people are unable to read and count, they will not be able to do any subject whatsoever.

[175] **Mr Liles:** Rydych yn iawn.

Mr Liles: You are right.

[176] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Gofynnaf un cwestiwn arall am lefelau prentisiaethau. Clywsom beth tystiolaeth nad oes digon o bwyslais ar brentisiaethau lefel uwch, a bod rhai cyflogwyr yn teimlo bod angen rhoi mwy o bwyslais arnynt os ydym i symud yr economi yn ei blaen, gan nad oes digon ohonynt i'w cael na digon o gyllid iddynt. A ydych yn cefnogi hynny, ac a oes datblygiad yn y maes hwnnw y byddech yn hoffi ei weld?

Alun Ffred Jones: I will ask one more question on apprenticeship levels. We have had some evidence that there is not enough emphasis on higher-level apprenticeships, and that some employers feel that more emphasis needs to be given to them if we are to get the economy moving, as there are not enough of them available or enough funding. Would you support that, and is there any development that you would like to see in this area?

[177] **Mr Evans:** Yn sicr, dylai'r Llywodraeth wneud hyn yn flaenoriaeth, nid yn unig o ran yr angen am sgiliau uwch yn benodol, ond am y byddai hefyd yn codi proffil prentisiaethau yn gyffredinol. Gwelwn enghraifft yr Almaen. Rwy'n gwybod eich bod wedi clywed llawer o sôn am y *parity of esteem* rhwng lefel A a phrentisiaeth. Yn rhywle fel yr Almaen, nid yw'r math hwnnw o beth yn bodoli, ac rwy'n meddwl y byddai cael y cam clir hwnnw i lefel uwch, drwy'r ffordd prentisiaeth, yn mynd rhan o'r ffordd tuag at leihau'r broblem honno. Byddai'n codi proffil prentisiaeth hefyd a rhoi statws iddi pe bai'n bosibl gweld llwybr clir at addysg uwch drwyddi. Nid yw hynny yno ar hyn o bryd.

Mr Evans: Certainly, the Government should make this a priority, not only because of the specific need for higher-level skills, but also because it would raise the profile of apprenticeships generally. We see the example in Germany. I know that you have heard a great deal about parity of esteem between A-levels and apprenticeships. In somewhere like Germany, that sort of problem does not exist, and I think that having that clear stage for the higher level, through the apprenticeships route, would go some way towards reducing the problem. It would also raise the profile of apprenticeships and give them status if you could see them as a clear route into higher education. That is not there at the moment.

[178] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Mae rhai yn nodi nad yw'r gair 'prentisiaeth' yn addas i'r math hwnnw o beth ac y dylid sticio rhyw label arall arno. A fyddech yn cefnogi hynny?

Alun Ffred Jones: Some have said that the word 'apprenticeship' is not fit for purpose and that a different label should be given to it. Would you support that?

[179] **Mr Evans:** Yn bersonol, rwyf yn anghytuno â hynny, oherwydd mae'n gyfle, fel y dywedais, i godi statws prentisiaeth. Byddai ei galw'n rhywbeth arall yn cymhlethu'r darlun ym myd addysg sydd eisoes yn gymhleth i gyflogwyr a phobl ifanc.

Mr Evans: Personally, I disagree with that, because it is an opportunity, as I said, to raise the status of apprenticeships. Calling it something else would only distort the already confused picture that employers and young people have of education.

[180] **Mr Liles:** Nid wyf yn cytuno fy hun.

Mr Liles: I do not agree myself. I left school

Gadewais yr ysgol i fwrw prentisiaeth, felly to serve an apprenticeship, so I have come
rwyf wedi dod drwy hynny fy hun. through that route myself.

[181] **David Rees:** I just want to raise a point about parity of esteem. You used Germany as an example. The issue is societal, in a sense, because Germany has, historically, had different types of schools operating and has kept them on. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, we saw the demise of apprenticeships as a consequence of societal changes. How do we go about changing that societal view of the role of apprenticeships and their importance in developing the economy?

[182] **Mr Evans:** That is major, with regard to the profile that certain routes of training have in society as compared with others.

[183] **David Rees:** How can you, in your roles, help to make that change?

[184] **Mr Evans:** We are certainly trying to do that, through things such as parent evenings. We call parents in to explain to them and to educate them about the opportunities, routes and options available to young people. Sometimes, our access to young people and their parents is limited. Therefore, independent and impartial advice is a key issue in Wales that we need to address.

[185] **Mr Liles:** It is a particular issue, but it varies from sector to sector. It is a continual battle, but we are certainly targeting to influence the influencers. The statistics that we have from our research show that the influencers are the parents first, peer groups second and then the teachers. We are working extensively—and I will go back again—with the schools to illustrate to the teaching workforce the opportunities that exist for progression. Critically, we can see that with high modern apprenticeships. A young person entering an apprenticeship does not have to stop and not achieve a graduate qualification.

[186] **Mr Walker:** We participate quite strongly in national initiatives, such as VQ Day and National Apprenticeships Week, and so on, which, through publicity and public relations, tries to project the importance of vocational qualifications and the vocational route. We are not naive enough to think that just a couple of initiatives like that will change the whole culture, but we are starting somewhere with these campaigns to raise awareness of the importance of vocational qualifications, to give them some sort of parity with the traditional academic route.

[187] **David Rees:** I have just one more point. I know that it is a bit early to say, but have you seen any change as a consequence of the economic circumstances within the EU—and we cannot just blame the UK—and perhaps with the increase in tuition fees leading people to look at alternatives and seeing apprenticeships as more of a viable option?

[188] **Mr Evans:** Yes, we are seeing that trend, but only very recently. I do not know whether we are representative of all areas, but in our catchment area, the energy island concept has raised the profile of certain routes and certain opportunities. Therefore, that has gained momentum and generated interest in apprenticeships among parents and young people that previously would not have been there. However, I am not sure whether that is true across the whole of Wales.

[189] **Mr Liles:** It varies from sector to sector. One sector in which I have certainly seen a distinct step-change over the past six to nine months is manufacturing in Wales. That has now greater ownership, and has shown progression and created opportunities to get in to the area.

[190] **Mr Evans:** Coming back to the educating process, and to routes and options, the transformation agenda can be helpful here. We are now six weeks into the process of merging

the college to form Grŵp Llandrillo-Menai. We have identified that, as individual colleges, we were spending not insignificant sums of money on marketing in competition against each other. Now, rather than competing against each other, college versus college, the marketing will be more focused on raising people's awareness of routes and vocational training as an option, rather than institution versus institution. So, I think that the transformation agenda can be helpful in, hopefully, helping us to educate the population—employers, parents and young people—about the options available to them.

[191] **David Rees:** So, free markets have hindered you.

[192] **Nick Ramsay:** I want to bring in Keith Davies on this point.

[193] **Keith Davies:** Mae gan y ddau goleg sydd yma heddiw ddalgylch weddol eang. Mewn rhai ardaloedd, fel ym Meirionnydd a Llanelli, nid oes chweched dosbarth yn yr ysgolion. Yng ngweddill y siroedd, mae chweched dosbarth. A yw'n rhwyddach yn yr ardaloedd lle nad oes chweched dosbarth perswadio pobl ifanc 16 oed fod ganddynt fwy o ddewis, ac nid lefel A yn unig sydd ar gael a bod llwybrau eraill? A ydych wedi gweld gwahaniaeth o ran hynny?

Keith Davies: The two colleges here today have a relatively wide catchment area. In some areas, such as Meirionnydd and Llanelli, there is no sixth form in the schools. In the remaining counties, there are sixth forms. Is it easier in areas where there is no sixth form to persuade young people aged 16 that they have a wider choice, that it is not only A-levels that are available, but that there are other paths that they can follow? Have you seen a difference in that regard?

[194] **Mr Evans:** Mae'n bosibl edrych ar hynny yn hollol ystadegol. Rai blynyddoedd yn ôl, roedd cynllun braenaru daearyddol, lle edrychodd rhai ardaloedd ar ba opsiynau oedd orau ar gyfer addysg ôl 16. Roeddwn yn rhan o'r gweithgor a oedd yn edrych ar yr opsiynau ar yr adeg honno. Roedd data a oedd yn cymharu ardaloedd ag addysg drydyddol ag ardaloedd â chweched dosbarth. Yn yr ardaloedd â chweched dosbarth, roedd canran y bobl ifanc a oedd yn dilyn cyrsiau AS a lefel A lawer iawn yn uwch nag ydoedd yn yr ardaloedd wedi'u trydyddu. Dyna'r patrwm o hyd. Yn fy ardal i, fis Medi diwethaf, roedd cynnydd o 5% yn nifer y bobl ifanc a benderfynodd aros yn yr ysgol a gwneud lefel A yn hytrach na chwrs galwedigaethol, ar adeg pan fyddwn yn dweud ei bod yn hanfodol datblygu sgiliau galwedigaethol. Cyfle unwaith mewn cenhedlaeth sydd gennym.

Mr Evans: It is possible to look at that entirely statistically. Some years ago, there was a geographical pathfinder project, where some areas were considering the best options for post-16 education. I was part of the taskforce that was looking at the options at that time. There were data comparing areas that had tertiary education with areas that had sixth forms. In those areas that had sixth forms, the percentage of young people who were pursuing AS-level and A-level courses was far higher than the levels in those areas that had tertiary education. That is still the pattern. In my area, last September, there was a 5% increase in the number of young people who decided to stay at school and study for A-levels rather than pursue a vocational course, at a time when I would say that it is essential that we develop vocational skills. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity.

[195] **Mr Liles:** Rydych yn gywir iawn. Yn sir Gaerfyrddin yn awr, mae gennym dri chlwstwr: un sydd heb chweched dosbarth a dau sydd â chweched dosbarth. Unwaith eto, rhaid imi ddweud—ac rwy'n swnio fel record wedi sticio—rhaid inni weithio gydag ysgolion. Yn y sir, rydym wedi gwneud *joint governance arrangements* gyda phob ysgol, felly mae gan bob plentyn ddewis. Gall

Mr Liles: You are totally right. In Carmarthenshire now, we have three clusters: one that does not have a sixth form and two that do have a sixth form. Again, I must say—and I sound like a broken record—that we have to work with schools. In the county, we have made joint governance arrangements with every school, so every child has a choice. A child can undertake one A-level at

plentyn wneud un lefel A mewn ysgol a a school and a course with us, too. That is
 chwrs gyda ni hefyd. Dyna sy'n bwysig: cael important: to have that across the whole
 hynny dros y sir i gyd. county.

[196] **Joyce Watson:** I want to ask you about small and medium-sized employers and shared apprenticeships. Colleges, we are told, tend to have well-established relationships with larger employers. How can their relationships with SMEs and microbusinesses be improved?

[197] **Mr Liles:** I will make reference to the shared apprenticeship. A critical factor is that employer engagement is now a key feature of college activity. You have to assign a certain proportion of budget to maintain that. It is also about working creatively and smartly on collaborative work. The shared apprenticeship would not have worked had we not taken the lead of linking what are now 32 SMEs, some of which are microbusinesses and some of which are quite large. We are working collaboratively to provide the opportunity at the right time in the right place for a young person. Had we been working on a one-to-one basis with an SME, the key features of the skills requirements would not have been met during the life of the apprenticeship. Working collaboratively as a shared apprenticeship, moving the apprentice from place to place to where the right skill opportunity exists, is the key. As part of apprenticeship development, they are evolving. As you are well aware, Joyce, I am a keen fan of the shared apprenticeship model. It satisfies not only SMEs, but significant employers as well.

[198] **Mr Evans:** As colleges, we are trying to position ourselves as a hub for SMEs to interact with each other in a number of areas—training, product development and so on. For example, the Food Technology Centre at Llangefni is a hub for many food producers in Anglesey and Gwynedd. They interact with each other and feed off each other, they have joint product development packaging and they have joint delivery networks in place. So, I think that colleges can have a key role in acting as a conduit and a hub for SMEs to interact with each other and support each other.

[199] **Mr Walker:** A suggestion has been made to us this morning about producing a very simple how-to guide for SMEs. That would be a helpful way forward. On various college websites, there are routes for employers, and not just for the students—Coleg Menai has a very clear route that employers can follow to find out how to set up an apprenticeship, who to contact and so on. There is a role for us in that as well, but maybe a generic how-to guide for SMEs would be a helpful step as well, as others have said today.

[200] **Mr Liles:** Picking up on the point in the last section here, new and evolving apprenticeships are crucial, because many employers that we now work with are not familiar with apprenticeships. To give you a recent example, we had worked extensively with a pet food manufacturer, in terms of manufacturing the pet food, but we also worked on sales and marketing, introducing a web design apprenticeship. That was never heard of previously. That is typical. You have to evolve apprenticeships to suit the technologies and the practices that exist.

[201] **Joyce Watson:** Members of the Federation of Small Businesses said that there was caution about the administrative costs and destination of apprentices at the end of the shared apprenticeships. There is a possibility that the apprentice will be employed by a competitor company. I want to unpick that with you, Barry, because I know that you have been through that process. How did you deal with that?

2.15 p.m.

[202] **Mr Liles:** It was an issue identified six years ago when we first started. We avoided the issue, to a certain extent, within the apprenticeship period. I think that that was a critical

decision in hindsight, because we created a limited company, of which we are a part, with the 32 organisations. So, during the life of the apprenticeship, the apprentice was employed by the limited company and then moved from company to company. During that time, companies clearly identified young people who were favoured. However, we were there to provide advice for the long haul, because it is not just about gaining employment at the end of an apprenticeship, but about where that young person wants to go in his or her career. So, we give advice on that basis.

[203] We have avoided what could have become an auctioning session at the end of the three-year period, making apprentices available to the highest bidder. That would not have helped the young person or, more importantly, the smaller company. So, during the three years of the apprenticeship, we work with employers—pretty intensively in the last year in particular—to determine what companies can offer beyond simple pay rates. In addition, we have equated pay rates across the sector, so that no-one can offer Joe a higher salary than the next individual. However, progression within employment is important for the young person.

[204] **Joyce Watson:** I have another brief question, Chair, on something that I know exists. We have not touched on helping disabled people into apprenticeships, so I want Barry to tell you how that works within the shared apprenticeship scheme.

[205] **Mr Liles:** You are aware of one or two individuals we have helped in that way. It is crucial that we look beyond a disability and identify the right environment for that individual. We have moved a number of young people with quite profound disabilities and provided them with the right background experience and knowledge. One individual, for instance, is now employed as a quantity surveyor with the local authority. However, to undertake that role successfully, he had to go through practical activity, and we managed that. While his health condition was up and down throughout the period, it is about the level of support that we are able to provide with that ultimate goal in mind. Critically, his role will be something that he can handle with his disability. So, the answer to your question is working together to plan for the future.

[206] **Keith Davies:** O edrych ar eich papur, sylwaf fod y cyfraddau cwblhau wedi mynd o 48% i 58% yn ôl yn 2006-07 i 81% i 83% y llynedd. Beth yw'r rheswm am hynny? Ai'r hyn a ddywedodd Barry yn gynharach sydd wrth wraidd hyn, sef bod sectorau newydd yn dod i mewn, ynteu a ydych chi wedi bod yn fwy effeithiol?

Keith Davies: I notice in the paper that you submitted that the completion rates have gone from 48% to 58% in 2006-07 to 81% to 83% last year. What is the reason for that? Is that because of what Barry mentioned earlier, namely that new sectors are coming in, or is it that you have been more effective?

[207] **Mr Evans:** Credaf ein bod wedi bod yn fwy effeithiol. Mae prentisiaethau a hyfforddiant yn y gweithle yn wasanaethau gwahanol i wasanaethau o fewn coleg. Mae colegau wedi cymryd rhywfaint o amser i addasu eu hunain ac i ddysgu sut i hyfforddi yn y gweithle. Rydym wedi gwella a datblygu fel darparwyr er mwyn inni allu cwrdd â'r gofyn hwnnw. Yn hanesyddol, i fod yn hunanfeiriadol, roeddem yn dueddol o ddweud, 'Na, rydym ni yn y coleg a rhaid i bawb ddod atom ni'. Rydym bellach yn gweithio'n wahanol iawn—rydym yn hyfforddi yn y gweithle, mewn cartrefi hen bobl, mewn cwmnïau ac mewn siopau yn ein

Mr Evans: I believe that we have been more effective. Apprenticeships and work-based training are different service to those provided within a college. Colleges have taken some time to adapt and to learn how to provide workplace training. We have improved and developed as providers so that we can now meet that need. Historically, to be self-critical, we tended to say, 'No, we are in the college and everyone must come to us'. We now work very differently—we now train people in the workplace, in local old people's homes, companies and shops. The results reflect the learning process that we as providers have gone through.

dalgylch. Mae'r canlyniadau yn adlewyrchu'r broses ddysgu rydym ni fel darparwyr wedi mynd drwyddi.

[208] **Mr Liles:** Mae nifer o ffactorau wrth wraidd hynny. Ni allwn edrych o un flwyddyn i'r llall yn unig. Yn y flwyddyn gyntaf, er enghraifft, colodd nifer o bobl eu swyddi, oherwydd bod cwmnïau bach yn cau. Hefyd, fel sector, rydym wedi cael cic i helpu pethau yn eu blaen.

Mr Liles: There are a number of factors accountable for that. We cannot just look from one year to the next. In that first year, for example, many people lost their jobs, because small companies closed down. Also, as a sector, we have been given a little kick to move things along.

[209] **Keith Davies:** I droi at yr ochr arall, mae Chwarae Teg yn dweud wrthym bod cyfran y menywod sy'n cwblhau wedi gostwng.

Keith Davies: To turn to the other side, Chwarae Teg has stated that the proportion of women completing has declined.

[210] **Mr Evans:** Mae patrwm naturiol hefyd. Mae rhai sectorau yn perfformio'n well na sectorau eraill, oherwydd mae trosiad staff uchel iawn weithiau mewn rhai sectorau, fel y sector manwerthu a'r sector gofal. Yn naturiol, lle mae trosiant staff uchel, mae cwblhau'r brentisiaeth yn anodd. Gan edrych ar y sectorau, mae'r sectorau lle mae'r ganran uchaf o ferched yn sectorau anoddach o ran cwblhau'r brentisiaeth. Felly, mae'n ymwneud â'r sectorau yn hytrach na'r rhyw penodol.

Mr Evans: There is a natural pattern as well. Some sectors perform better than others, because there is sometimes a very high staff turnover in some sectors, such as the retail sector and the care sector. Naturally, where there is a high staff turnover, completing the apprenticeship is difficult. Looking at the sectors, the sectors with the highest percentage of women are the most difficult sectors in which to complete an apprenticeship. Therefore, it is about the sectors rather than the specific gender.

[211] **Mr Liles:** Joyce is aware of the efforts that we have made in particular sectors to encourage females into non-traditional employment. It is an uphill struggle. I will not name the employer, but a significant employer that we worked with introduced girls as apprentices in the engineering and manufacturing sector. Everything was going fine until it suddenly realised that there were no showering facilities for females in that work environment.

[212] **Mr Evans:** A nice example is that, this week, we had the ConstructionSkills regional heats, and the north Wales apprentice joiner was female.

[213] **Nick Ramsay:** That is good news. Following on from Keith Davies's question in Welsh with regard to the demand for Welsh-medium apprenticeships, how high is that demand? Do you feel able to meet it?

[214] **Mr Evans:** Yes, we are able to meet it, but the demand is not as high as I personally would like it to be. Employers do not always recognise the value of undertaking the apprenticeship through the medium of Welsh or in a bilingual context. There are some that do, but there is another educating process to be done there. Hopefully, some things around the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the new Welsh Language Commissioner will move that forward.

[215] **Mr Liles:** We are certainly finding an increase in this, particularly in two sectors—the construction sector and the care sector. It is driven by the fact that, locally, there is a £250 million spend by the local authority on upgrading its housing stock. It is critical that it is working in people's homes where the Welsh language is the first language. We are now being summoned to have an apprentice plumber with Welsh language ability to work in people's

homes. It is also increasingly true in the care sector. I am pleased to say that we are finding a higher proportion of young people coming in who have had their education through the medium of Welsh. We now have a far better feedstock to move into that employment area.

[216] **Nick Ramsay:** The previous witnesses spoke about the effect on those who are not in education or training being pushed up to 19-year-olds, because more people are staying on in post-16 education. What do you feel is the effect of competition between post-16 providers for 16 to 18-year-olds? What effect is that having on the profile of apprentices?

[217] **Mr Evans:** We are having issues with regard to certain apprenticeships groups in particular. Engineering is a prime example, where, to be successful and to get up to level 3, you really need mathematics at grade C or above to be a viable candidate. There is, as we referred to earlier, a tendency that, if you have five GCSEs and above including mathematics, there will be pressure on you to stay on in an academic route rather than take an engineering apprenticeship route, for example. Although we have set up Cwmni Prentis Menai, we had more employers with places than we could find young people to take up those opportunities, which was very disappointing. It is a real issue.

[218] **Mr Liles:** It may be controversial, but an interesting piece of research would be to analyse where those young people have been from the age of 16 to 19, or post 19, who are currently NEET. We are now finding that there are significant numbers of graduates in our area working, for instance, in the voluntary sector because they cannot achieve full-time posts. We need to take a second measure. If they are NEET at 20 years of age, we need to identify what the passage has been, and then we can put corrective action in place.

[219] **Mr Walker:** I wanted to draw attention to the fact that the benefit of the higher apprenticeship would be the ability to connect some of the higher level learning to the work-based element that the apprenticeship offers. That would give people a chance to progress through the learning levels in order to be able to avoid the misfortune of being excluded from the labour market. That would be one way of appropriately addressing one of these issues.

[220] **David Rees:** You mentioned the impact of graduate unemployment. Have you seen an increase in graduates wanting to do apprenticeships?

[221] **Mr Liles:** Yes. We are offering the higher modern apprenticeship, albeit in limited numbers, but we work with Tata Steel on that basis. We have a mix of A-level students going in at HMA level and graduate returners. We are currently working with Jaguar Land Rover on a programme of developing cost estimators. The programme is a pre-apprenticeship one because thousands of graduates apply to Jaguar Land Rover, but they have not got the essential skill requirements to move into that sort of domain. So, increasingly we are finding that graduates are undertaking activity in the further education sector.

[222] **Nick Ramsay:** On the previous point that Dafydd Evans made on the question of competition between providers, you would value people coming into those apprenticeships with those sorts of skills, but are you saying that once they are using those skills in another place, they do not necessarily see the apprenticeships as the appropriate route for them?

[223] **Mr Evans:** Yes, and I think that we discussed the process of providing independent advice on options. There is an issue to be tackled there to make those options clear to the young people. Colleges are often criticised for spending significant amounts of money on marketing, but it is our only communication method with the population.

[224] **Nick Ramsay:** The last couple of questions are from Eluned Parrott.

[225] **Eluned Parrott:** I would like to follow-up on that idea of how young people find out

about apprenticeships and how their advisers, parents and teachers get good-quality independent advice. Do you think that there is an adequate source of independent advice to allow young people and their advisers to critically evaluate the different kinds of apprenticeships and options available to them?

[226] **Mr Liles:** Personally, I am not so hung up about the independence of advice; I find that the quality of the information is more important in terms of content and currency. We have to work with so many individuals, including the careers service, the school sector and our own sector; it is important to get over to them what the role entails and the outcomes at the end of an apprenticeship and so on. The quality of the information as opposed to the independence of its source is crucial for us. That is a bigger challenge.

[227] **Eluned Parrott:** Do you think that that information is available to those who are looking for it or does something new have to be introduced here?

[228] **Mr Liles:** I think that more work needs to be done. The apprenticeship matching service is in its infancy and I can certainly identify work that we need to do to enhance that, but I fear that—and this is down to the age that we live in—we are too technology reliant. It is easy enough to say that something is on a website, but that is not sufficient or clear enough. There should be far more face-to-face contact. To go back to the earlier points, what is important is providing experience. Providing experience to someone who is 14 does not mean that that young person is destined to maintain an occupation within a certain sector; it is just about giving them the opportunity to get the experience in order to make a decision—to better arm and inform them to make a career choice, which, at the end of the day, they could be in for 50-odd years.

[229] **Nick Ramsay:** Like Careers Wales, you are saying that face-to-face contact is still an important aspect of this.

[230] **Mr Liles:** I strongly believe that and, unfortunately, as we have seen with budget cuts, less and less of that is happening. We are currently investing more and more staff time into that particular service for our own students.

[231] **Eluned Parrott:** How do you feel that parity of esteem between vocational routes and higher education, for example, could be achieved? We have received a lot of evidence that people believe there to be a bias on behalf of teachers and advisers, particularly to encourage people to follow academic routes.

2.30 p.m.

[232] **Mr Walker:** We have mentioned this problem on page 6 of our evidence. Many advisers were of the view that, to get into an engineering career for example, you had to go down the higher education route. Some of it is about dispelling myths and ensuring that the careers advice is simply factually accurate. To be fair to Careers Wales, it is getting a great deal of information correct and it is providing some good advice to students in many respects. It offers that impartial viewpoint. However, it is as much a cultural issue as it is about directly false careers advice from some sources. Some schools are trying to ensure that students stay on in sixth form rather than considering wider options for a particular funding purpose rather than because the academic route is necessarily the best option for the individual candidate.

[233] **Eluned Parrott:** There is certainly a financial incentive for schools to encourage people to follow an academic route rather than a vocational route at 16. What practical steps would you like to see introduced to help to rebalance that?

[234] **Mr Evans:** Some research is required here. The Welsh Government has the data, but

I have never seen anyone trying to analyse the data to establish the patterns. I mentioned some of the research we did as part of Pathfinder, but that was back in 2005, I think. However, it would be interesting to see, statistically, the patterns of participation in different areas where you have different educational delivery patterns and whether it really makes a difference. At the moment, the problem is that, with regard to the guidance issue, there is a real capacity issue. The information is there, but there is a capacity issue with regard to having a dialogue with young people.

[235] **Nick Ramsay:** I want to bring the meeting to a close shortly, but I think that David Rees has a final question.

[236] **David Rees:** You spoke about your involvement with schools. Should the business world engage more with schools to promote apprenticeships, particularly the larger organisations that clearly have more strength in those areas? I am not talking about further education colleges but the schools. Jon Ferriman in Tata Steel is a perfect example of where apprenticeships can get people. Is there a role for the business sector in this?

[237] **Mr Evans:** Yes, definitely. We need to achieve a change in the culture. As Greg said, there is a cultural issue with regard to the choices people are making. Employers have a key role in changing that culture and the profile apprenticeships have. Again, we do not have any evidence of this, but Barry and I were discussing this on the way in. From what we know anecdotally, we are both of the opinion that it would be very interesting to see what percentage of the fathers and mothers of apprentices were also apprentices. There is that cultural issue. Somehow, we have got to break that down. Employers have a key role in that in making it clear to their businesses and young people that they see apprenticeships as a clear way to a job.

[238] **Mr Liles:** On that point, we have to be careful and, if I dare say it, there should be a slight health warning here for schools because they could become employer fatigued. We encourage people to see us as the funnel for this. When we bring pupils in year 10 in for taster sessions, we bring employers in as well. At that point in time, it is one point of contact as opposed to people dealing with different sectors. Sometimes, with the headmaster, the shutter comes down because of the burden upon them, and I witness that.

[239] **Nick Ramsay:** I am in a good mood so I am going to allow Eluned Parrott to have the last question. [*Laughter.*] She assures me that it is a very quick question.

[240] **Eluned Parrott:** Thank you, Chair. That is very kind of you. If we were to be successful in encouraging greater demand for apprenticeships from young people, would you be able to satisfy that demand?

[241] **Mr Evans:** I think it is about flexibility of funding. We receive funding in silos and for work streams, and it will be about having some flexibility around that and working smart in terms of flexing the resources we have. I think that, yes, we definitely would be able to satisfy the demand. There are still only x number of 16-year-olds out there. It is about training them in a different way. It is about us being flexible and using the resources we have flexibly.

[242] **Mr Liles:** The timing would be critical. You could not switch that on in one great step. We have to work with the industry and the employers who take the apprentices on board and with the schools to create that feedstock. It is not a big bang. It would have to be increased gradually over a period of years.

[243] **Nick Ramsay:** Great, thank you. Thanks to Greg Walker, Barry Liles and Dafydd Evans for coming here today to help us with our inquiry into apprenticeships. If you have any further points that you would really like us to consider, please feel free to get back in touch.

However, your evidence has been extremely helpful.

2.35 p.m.

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog Rhif 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r
Cyfarfod**

**Motion under Standing Order No. 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from
the Meeting**

[244] **Nick Ramsay:** I move that

the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 17.42(vi).

[245] I see that the committee is in agreement.

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.

Motion agreed.

Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 2.35 p.m.

The public part of the meeting ended at 2.35 p.m.