

Number: WG20174



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## Consultation Document

# 14–19 Learning Pathways policy: the way ahead

Date of issue: **4 November 2013**

Action required: Responses by **4 December 2013**

# 14–19 Learning Pathways policy: the way ahead

- Overview** This consultation seeks views on the future direction for the 14–19 Learning Pathways policy, including the findings in the report from the Task and Finish Group on local collaborative provision at Key Stage 4.
- How to respond** Responses to this consultation should be e-mailed/posted to the address below to arrive by **4 December 2013** at the latest (please enter '14–19 consultation' in the subject matter box).
- Further information and related documents** Large print, Braille and alternate language versions of this document are available on request.  
  
The consultation documents can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at [www.wales.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.wales.gov.uk/consultations)
- Contact details** For further information:  
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## **Data protection**

### **How the views and information you give us will be used**

Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about. It may also be seen by other Welsh Government staff to help them plan future consultations.

The Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. This helps to show that the consultation was carried out properly. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then blank them out.

Names or addresses we blank out might still get published later, though we do not think this would happen very often. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 allow the public to ask to see information held by many public bodies, including the Welsh Government. This includes information which has not been published. However, the law also allows us to withhold information in some circumstances. If anyone asks to see information we have withheld, we will have to decide whether to release it or not. If someone has asked for their name and address not to be published, that is an important fact we would take into account. However, there might sometimes be important reasons why we would have to reveal someone's name and address, even though they have asked for them not to be published. We would get in touch with the person and ask their views before we finally decided to reveal the information.

## Introduction

The Minister for Education and Skills on 8 October announced that he accepted, or accepted in principle, the recommendations included in the Task and Finish Group's report '[14-19 Learning Pathways: Review of local collaborative provision at Key Stage 4 \(KS4\)](#)'. He further noted that the Welsh Government would be consulting on the recommendations prior to any legislative changes.

The full Minister's [written statement](#) and [Government response](#) to the recommendations can be found on the Welsh Government website.

## Background

In 2012, the National Assembly's Children and Young People Committee (CYPC) published a [report](#) following their inquiry into the [Learning and Skills \(Wales\) Measure 2009](#) ("the 'Measure'") which amended the Education Act 2002 and the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

The CYPC recommended a review of the decision to set 30 courses as the minimum number required to form a local curriculum offer at KS4. This was accepted by the Minister for Education and Skills.

Representatives from the relevant educational sectors were brought together to take forward the review through a Task and Finish Group. The Group comprised of Secondary Headteachers, Further Education, Work-based Training, local authority, Careers Wales, and employer representatives, alongside Estyn as observers. The Group also sought direct input from 14-19 network representatives.

The terms of reference of the Task and Finish Group were defined as reviewing and making recommendations to the Welsh Government on the KS4 local curriculum offer. Specifically, the Group were asked to make recommendations on the future number of choices, taking into account:

- any unintended consequences of wider choice of courses;
- the balance between general and vocational courses;
- accessibility of courses in rural areas and the impact on smaller and rural schools;
- the impact on Welsh-medium and bilingual schools;
- alignment with the 14-19 Transport Review and the [Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19 year olds in Wales](#);
- the potential impact of the end of 14-19 grant funding on sustainability; and

- the views of learners.

As part of the review the Group also considered the validity of the requirement of minimum points for a local curriculum offer for KS4 and post-16.

## **Where are we now?**

The key objective of the Measure, which underpins 14-19 Learning Pathways policy, is to improve outcomes and attainment for 14-19 learners through the delivery of a wide range of courses. Existing regulations set out that each local curriculum at KS4 must contain a minimum of 30 courses and score at least 780 points. This must consist of a minimum of 5 vocational courses of study scoring at least 260 points.

For learning post-16 there is also a requirement within the [Local Curriculum for Students aged 16 to 18 statutory guidance](#) for a minimum of 30 courses, of which 5 must be vocational, but with a points score of 1600 points. The Children and Young People Committee did not recommend the review of course choice post-16, and given the introduction of Learning Area Programmes from September 2014 for post-16, the priority remains on embedding these developments over the coming year(s). It is anticipated, however, that the removal of the points score for post-16 will ease pressure on post-16 providers from September 2014, facilitating emphasis on the quality of provision post-16.

The Measure also ensures that young people have access to learner support services which will help them overcome any barriers to their learning. By providing young people with access to a wide range of courses and learner support services the expectation is for:

- educational attainment to rise at both KS4 and post-16;
- a reduction in the number of young people leaving full-time education with no qualifications;
- an increase in the number of young people progressing into further learning; and
- a reduction in the number of 16-18 year olds who become not in education, employment or training (NEET).

In 2012 the then Minister for Education and Skills, in responding to the National Assembly for Wales' Children and Young People Committee's inquiry into the impact of the Measure, noted that much data around the impact of wider choice was inconclusive. The independent Group looked again at available evidence and agreed it was difficult to track a direct cause and effect between wider choice and improved attainment. However, the Group concluded there were positive effects from the wider choice of courses in conjunction with learner support at KS4 (both key components of the 14-19 Learning Pathways policy) in helping to engage learners and achieve their potential.

## **What changes are being proposed?**

The main proposals for change on which we are consulting within this paper were commended to the Minister for Education and Skills by the independent Task and Finish Group.

As representatives from the relevant stakeholder groups were directly engaged in the review process over the last nine months, this consultation is necessarily focused on gaining views on the arrangements for bringing about the changes proposed. However, space is provided at the end of the consultation response form for additional comments.

Evidence presented to the Minister for Education and Skills by the Task and Finish Group indicated that there is scope to improve equality across Wales in terms of KS4 learning experiences. In particular, there are operational challenges for some schools and local authority areas in delivering wider choice under the current arrangements.

The Group's recommendations represent a shift in 14-19 Learning Pathways policy to take into account a more appropriate balance between learner choice and the quality and relevance of learning options being made available at KS4. They also propose that the policy be refreshed to take into account the considerable changes that have taken place in the Welsh educational landscape over the last seven years (e.g. Review of Qualifications and Welsh Baccalaureate developments, the new post-16 Funding System, greater delegation to schools through the Pupil Deprivation Grant and School Effectiveness Grant, and greater support to schools through regional Consortia working).

14-19 Learning Pathways policy documentation, regulations, programme and statutory guidance, local authority / Consortia and learning provider planning arrangements will need to be amended to reflect such changes