

## Final Report of the Equalities Task and Finish Group

### Response to the Report's Recommendations by the Minister for Education and Skills

The Equalities Task and Finish Group was established in April 2009 to examine a range of issues which influence the educational performance and well being of young people in Wales.

The Group's Final Report was published in October 2011 and may be found at <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications>. The Report includes details of Group members and the three objectives in its terms of reference.

The Minister for Education and Skills has welcomed the Report. The following table sets out the Minister's response to each of the Group's twelve recommendations. Where appropriate, examples of current and future work programmes are included to amplify the response.

Recommendation	Response
<p><b>Objective 1</b> The Group recommends that the Welsh Government should:</p>	
<p><b>1</b> set up a literacy initiative to effectively eliminate illiteracy in all primary schools in Wales within ten years;</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>Raising literacy standards is a key objective of the School Effectiveness Framework and crucial in breaking the link between low attainment and poverty.</p> <p>A National Literacy Programme which focuses on learners aged 5 to 14 years is under development. The programme includes a National Reading Test, implemented on a voluntary basis from September 2011 and which is proposed to become statutory from September 2012, with first sitting in May 2013.</p>
<p><b>2</b> implement a national strategy to counter underachievement, especially in boys, in all schools throughout Wales.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>In response to the Group's recommendations a three-year national programme to counter the underachievement of boys is set to begin in autumn 2011.</p> <p>The programme will support the Welsh Government's aims under the National Literacy Programme to raise the literacy levels of learners who are at risk of becoming disengaged from education. It will establish a national programme of interventions to address the wide range of issues which undermine and form barriers to boys' achievement in schools.</p>

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<p><b>Objective 2</b> The Group recommends that the Welsh Government should:</p>	
<p><b>1</b> build upon existing strategies to develop inclusive systems of support around the needs of young people rather than services;</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>The Welsh Government aims to support young people aged 11-25 to learn, access training and employment, and make a contribution to their communities. Our approach to Youth Support Services includes a range of national-level activities and also those delivered locally through Children and Young People's Partnerships. The approach is young person focused and provides for different levels of support to be provided to individuals, depending on their circumstances and needs.</p> <p>Officials are currently exploring ways in which our approach to supporting young people might be made more coherent at both national and local levels; options will be discussed with Ministers in the autumn.</p> <p>The Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan, published in January 2011, recognises the importance of an individualised approach to providing support for young people.</p> <p>Actions contained within the revised behaviour and attendance action plan aim to put in place specific training and development modules on behaviour and attendance, improve the way that attendance data are analysed and used to improve performance and develop holistic approaches to supporting pupils with behavioural and attendance problems.</p> <p>Planning is underway on a comprehensive reform of the statutory framework related to children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN).</p> <p>The evaluation of the outcomes of four pilot schemes related to ALN reform will be available in early 2012.</p>

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<p><b>2</b> require multi-agency work at the highest levels within and between local authorities, the third sector and the Welsh Government;</p>	<p><b>Agreed in principle.</b></p> <p>The Welsh Government recognises the importance of multi-agency work, for example in <i>Children and Young People's Partnerships (CYPP)</i> and <i>Integrated Family Support Services (IFSS) / Integrated Family Support Teams (IFST)</i>.</p> <p>Further development of high-level multi-agency work, built around the needs of young people, will be considered in response to future priorities.</p>
<p><b>3</b> in areas with the greatest socio-economic problems, develop a cross-sectoral strategy to counter the low aspirations prevalent in those areas;</p>	<p><b>Agreed in principle.</b></p> <p>Along with improving levels of literacy and numeracy, tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment is one of the three ministerial priorities for school effectiveness.</p> <p>A new Unit has been established within the Welsh Government to drive the youth engagement and employment agenda forward by implementation of the Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan.</p> <p>It is important that schools work closely with community based services to ensure that children and young people receive the maximum coordinated support available. Children and Young People's Partnerships have an important role to play in this. Officials are also investigating the potential for an enhanced role for youth work (both local authority and voluntary sector-based) in contributing to a reduction in the levels of young people who are NEET through increased non-formal learning support.</p> <p>Low aspirations and lack of opportunity in areas with socio-economic problems will be tackled by actions such as the development of an Intermediate Labour Market programme to be delivered in Communities First areas as part of the Pathway to Work.</p> <p>This programme will provide supported employment opportunities for young people in some of the most deprived communities in Wales.</p>

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<p><b>4</b> implement a strategy to counter disengagement from learning which provides early intervention, from pre-school, and an appropriate continuum of support which addresses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the different tiers of support needed</li> <li>• the need to build the capacity for universality</li> <li>• the stages in the lives of children and young people which are identified as critical in tackling disengagement</li> <li>• the incidence of unofficial exclusions and work with local authorities to eliminate this practice;</li> </ul>	<p><b>Agreed in principle.</b></p> <p>The Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan aims to counter disengagement by supporting children and young people from birth to age 24, with particular emphasis on critical stages in a young person's life.</p> <p>The aim is to develop an integrated approach to assisting families whose children may be at risk of disengagement; to strengthen the planning and provision for young people making the transition from primary to secondary school and from education to employment.</p> <p>Officials are currently exploring the possibility of developing a holistic preventative approach where supportive interventions can be provided at key points in children and young people's lives as soon as their behaviour suggests the likelihood of disengagement.</p> <p>Officials are exploring methods of analysing school data in order to detect where there may be a possibility that unofficial exclusions are taking place.</p>
<p><b>5</b> review existing provision in all aspects of Personal and Social Education and specifically the support available to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teenage mothers</li> <li>• young people who misuse alcohol and/or other substances.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Agreed in principle.</b></p> <p>Personal and Social Education (PSE) is a statutory subject in the school curriculum for Wales, served by a non-statutory framework. The provision of PSE will be reviewed at the next cycle of curriculum review and development.</p>

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<p><b>Objective 3</b> The Group recommends that the Welsh Government should:</p>	
<p><b>1</b> ensure gender and socio-economic stereotypes are challenged by those engaged in providing subject and careers advice by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reviewing existing provision and establishing a model of best practice</li> <li>• implementing a training strategy;</li> </ul>	<p><b>Agreed in principle.</b></p> <p>The careers service in Wales has recently been the subject of a detailed report (<i>Future ambitions: Developing careers services in Wales</i>, Sept 2010) which refers to the ‘family’ of career service providers when recommending how careers services in Wales can become more closely integrated.</p> <p>The Estyn Remit for 2011-2012 states “<i>The implementation of the Careers and World of Work framework should be inspected on a thematic basis by Estyn, paying particular attention to the comprehensiveness and quality of school delivery [2 years: 2011-13].</i>”</p> <p>This work will help develop models of good practice and inform future developments.</p>
<p><b>2</b> ensure learners understand the full range of options available to them by improving subject and careers advice to provide awareness of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• career progression opportunities and pay levels</li> <li>• employment opportunities resulting from the skills needs of Wales;</li> </ul>	<p><b>Agreed in principle.</b></p> <p>Recommendation 12 in <i>Future ambitions</i> is ‘EBPs should work with SSCs to feed in local labour market information (LMI) that can be used to complement regional and national employment trends and for this to be made accessible to careers service providers and their clients, as appropriate’.</p> <p>The Ministerial Response noted that ‘DCELLS will explore opportunities to synthesise existing sources of labour market information into straightforward messages for people of all ages and abilities that will emphasise the employment opportunities linked to specific courses of study and learning. These messages will be sensitive to the Welsh economy’s needs at both national and regional levels’.</p> <p>Specific work is under way to improve work experience and skills requirements for young people, via the ‘<i>Real Conversation</i>’ project.</p> <p>As above, feedback from Estyn will provide a sound basis for future development of careers services in Wales.</p>

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<p><b>3</b> ensure a greater emphasis in the work of education and training providers on the development of 'employability skills' including interpersonal, communication, ICT and other key skills;</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>The Deputy Minister for Skills has launched a Review of 14-19 Qualifications in Wales. The Review will be underpinned by the need to: identify qualifications which have greatest value in terms of relevance and progression routes; ensure those qualifications are available to learners; and guide learners to follow learning pathways which are most likely to meet their needs as well as those of employers.</p> <p>The <i>Traineeships</i> (for young people) and <i>Steps-to-Employment</i> (for adults) programmes were launched in August 2011. These are designed to help meet the Welsh Government's priorities to provide more opportunities for young people and deliver the skilled employees the Welsh economy needs.</p> <p>The core content of <i>Apprenticeships</i> includes the Essential Skills of <i>Communication</i> and <i>Application of Number</i> at the appropriate level.</p> <p>The <i>Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification</i> (WBQ) is now embedded as a key feature of 14-19 learning in Wales. Around 70,000 learners are following WBQ courses in approximately 240 centres across Wales. The WBQ develops the skills and attitudes that employers value, including all six Key/Essential Skills Wales.</p> <p>Since September 2010 all learners in Key Stage 4 have had an entitlement to develop and apply their ICT skills, and to have their achievements recognised by an accredited qualification.</p>

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<p><b>4</b> further extend efforts to limit the impact of stereotypical views by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing further guidance for Foundation Phase practitioners and Early Years workers</li> <li>• strengthening awareness in environments such as the home, community and workplace;</li> </ul>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>Particular care has been taken to avoid the use of stereotypical examples in Foundation Phase resources.</p> <p>This recommendation will be considered when further materials are developed.</p> <p>The Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan strengthens engagement with employers, to increase work experience and employment opportunities for 14 to 24-year-olds across Wales.</p> <p><i>The Real Conversation</i> programme and <i>The Intermediate Labour Market</i> initiative aim to encourage employers to recruit young people and provide work experience opportunities.</p>
<p><b>5</b> begin a process of longitudinal research on education and employment outcomes, disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background and disability, which recognises the need to look beyond immediate destination data.</p>	<p><b>Agreed in principle.</b></p> <p>Our focus will be to develop work already underway to make best use of current datasets through a programme of data linking across schools, higher education and post-16 records. Furthermore we hope to take forward work enabled by the Education and Skills Act 2008 to link learner records with benefit and tax outcomes.</p> <p>The Welsh Government already invests substantially in the Millennium Cohort Study, which has provided a rich source of longitudinal data about Welsh children up to the age of ten. This will continue to provide robust data which can be disaggregated by a number of equalities strands as the children progress through the education system and beyond.</p> <p>DfES has recently begun a Labour Market Intelligence project which will substantively improve the LMI available, our capacity to connect it with wider sources of information and our communication of that intelligence to key audiences.</p>