

WALES
CYMRU

RESPONSE TO:

DELIVERING SKILLS THAT WORK FOR WALES: REDUCING THE PROPORTION OF YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING IN WALES CONSULTATION

Contact Details:

Margaret Phelan
Regional Official
UCU
Unit 33, The Enterprise Centre
Tondu
BRIDGEND
CF32 9BS

Tel: 01656 721951

Email: mphelan@ucu.org.uk

Response date: 11/08/2008

Delivering Skills that work for Wales: Reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training in Wales

The University and College Union (UCU) represents more than 120,000 academics, lecturers, trainers, instructors, researchers, managers, administrators, computer staff, librarians and postgraduates in universities, colleges, prisons, adult education specialist colleges and training organisations across the UK.

It was formed on 1 June 2006 by the amalgamation of two strong partners - the Association of University Teachers (AUT) and NATFHE-the University & College Lecturers' Union - who shared a long history of defending and advancing educators' employment and professional interests.

UCU is the largest post-school union in the world: a force working for educators and education that employers and the government cannot ignore.

General Questions: Chapter One

As a trade union and professional organisation looking after lecturers in further education we are concerned to ensure that all young people have the chance to develop and achieve some success, whatever the field. We suspect that it is their perceived failure and lack of confidence, reinforced by lack of choice through schooling, which contributes to the pattern of NEET behaviour.

The proposals set out in the document must be part of a twin track approach, which recognises the potential for NEET and steers those young people to learning which supports their interests and not those dictated by a system which, as we know from the figures you present, fail between 10-12% of young people.

We would like to see much more effort focused on getting it right first time and preventing young people from walking away from education and training. Clearly the economic arguments are well articulated in the document, what isn't so clear is how the Assembly intends to make sure that those with SEN are supported in their learning before they give up and walk away from education. We would like to have seen some linkage within the document to the preventative measure used in schools and an assessment of their effectiveness. The document deals with the problem rather than addressing the prevention strategies.

Specific Questions: Chapter Two

One organisation with a lead responsibility seems a sensible approach to tackling the many different layers of support needed, we however do not feel competent to argue strongly, we will leave that question for the practitioners in this field; for that same reason we do not feel able to comment on KIT.

Providing schools with enhanced information about their school leavers is, we believe, a starting point to getting it right first time. If schools have no accurate data on their effectiveness in relation to this group of students, how can they be expected develop appropriate and effective intervention strategies? We believe that schools must be encouraged by local authorities to play a central role in the development of policy in this area.

Chapter Three

Our views on the 14-19 agenda in Wales are well known. We fully support the policy changes proposed thus far, but from our perspective, these have not gone far enough. We would strongly contend that what is needed in Wales is a statutory requirement placed on schools and colleges and where appropriate private providers to co-operate, not just to consider co-operation. Without such a requirement it will be difficult to ensure that you are able to deliver on the flexible provider network.

The learning coach must have a role that is independent of the provider if they are to seek out, support and advise on learning schemes which suit the needs of NEETS or potential NEETS. We would support the establishment of specific training for learning coaches to address the specific needs of NEETS.

We do not feel, able to comment on Cymorth Theme E.

UCU is encouraged by the commitment espoused in the document to get the in-work training right, we will be interested to see what evidence results for the pilots. Perhaps the Assembly would wish to consider advertising the fact that all low skilled 16-17 year olds have a statutory right to time off. We would like to suggest that WAG consider using its links with the WTUC to discuss the role that trade unions could have in such a strategy.

Chapter Four

The role of the learning coach is essential in tackling the 'long-standing assumption' [Rees G. et al (1996)] and we would reiterate the need for the learning coach to be independent; not reliant on the learning provider for their employment. We support the idea of developing a model for a learning coach to support specifically NEET and potential NEET young people.

The idea of financial parity across different types of learning would seem to be a sensible option, but we have no evidence to support our views. Given that you suggest running pilots from 2008 it would seem sensible to us to standardise the financial support across the range of options open to 16-18 age group.

Annex C

UCU does not use the data and therefore feel unable to comment further.