

Developing the future workforce of Wales

Strategic Plan 2023 - 2026



Foreword by Chair Mr John Nash

Meeting the economic challenges and delivering the regional skills priorities of the next three years will require close collaboration with the Welsh Government and partners.

The work-based learning sector has a key role to play in helping the Welsh Government's new Commission for Tertiary Education to meet future challenges and opportunities.

To achieve the National Training Federation for Wales's vision of developing the future workforce of Wales, it's imperative that we continue to influence future Welsh Government policy on skills and apprenticeships to ensure parity of funding and esteem for work-based learning providers and apprentices.

We will continue to champion apprenticeship providers and apprentices in discussions with stakeholders throughout Wales and the UK.

Our continued focus on professionalising the work-based learning workforce will be key to delivering the Welsh Government's ambitious target of 125,000 all-age apprentices by 2027.



Strategic Director – Lisa Mytton

It is vital now more than ever that people are provided with the chance to gain skills in a workplace setting, providing real job opportunities and for organisations to have access to a skilled workforce.

We are a leading body in workplace learning and are committed to shaping and influencing the provision of apprenticeships. This is a vital part of the Welsh Government's strategy for lifelong learning; something that runs through all that we do.

Significant progress has been made in terms of apprenticeship provision – We want to build on this, and our work has a real impact. Through our members, thousands of apprentices across Wales maximise their potential.

This strategic plan sets out our vision and priorities in how we will actively collaborate with a wide range of partners and Welsh Government in achieving their ambitious plan for 125,000 apprentices.

Who are we

The National Training Federation for Wales (NTFW) is a Wales-wide representative body for all those organisations or individuals involved in the delivery of learning in the workplace. Members range from small specialist training providers to national and international organisations, as well as local authorities and charities.

Members work across Wales in rural, urban, bilingual and Welsh medium settings and Black Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. The members have links with thousands of employers across Wales ranging from small and medium size enterprises to large multi-nationals and public sector organisations.

The NTFW represents the interests of training providers and learners to inform them about all aspects of the education and training agenda in Wales.

The NTFW maintains strong working links with the Welsh Government at ministerial level, Members of the Senedd, Welsh Members of Parliament and key stakeholders including the Regional Skills Partnerships, local authorities, Careers Wales, CollegesWales, Estyn, Education Workforce Council, Qualifications Wales, Federation of Small Businesses and CBI.

Vision

Developing the future workforce of Wales

Mission

We will be recognised for:

- Championing our members in Wales
- Advocating positive impacts on the economy
- World-class work-based learning (WBL) by government and wider stakeholders
- Promoting parity between vocational and academic learning

Strategic priorities

Work collaboratively with Welsh Government to influence future Welsh Government policy and thinking, ensuring parity for WBL providers and its learners.

Represent NTFW membership with stakeholders throughout Wales and the UK challenging, influencing and shaping policy on skills and apprenticeships.

Drive the need for fair and transparent funding rates that reflect the real cost of delivery for all apprenticeship programmes.

Influence and help to shape Welsh Government's new Commission for Tertiary Education building on the strengths of the WBL sector to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Work with partners to help develop capacity and professionalise the WBL apprenticeship workforce.

Strategic Priority 1

Work collaboratively with Welsh Government to influence future Welsh Government policy and thinking, ensuring parity for WBL providers and its learners.

Last year, an increase of 7.1% was granted to all post-16 providers except for the WBL sector. This seems at odds with the aim of parity across all post-16 sectors, which was a founding principle of the post-16 National Planning and Funding System. We will continue to strive for this as it would provide stability and certainty to employers, learners, and the sector. An approach to fair funding would recognise the cost increases being experienced, such as pay rises, pension increases, and the cost of introducing the National Living Wage etc., all of which the sector has needed to bear, given that there has only been a small increase in 10 years.

We will continue to provide support to the WBL community, working with Welsh Government, and other stakeholders, helping to shape policies affecting the WBL sector, their learners and staff.

We will continue to represent the interests and advocate for our members, demonstrating the value of WBL to Welsh Government, other stakeholders, learners and employers.

Our commitment to work collaboratively and in partnership will continue and is demonstrated through our continued work with CollegesWales, working effectively together to strengthen the voice of training providers in Wales whether independent or as part of a college consortia.

We support the vision that at least 90% of 16-24 year-olds in Wales will be in education, employment, or training by 2050, and that the gap between the employment rate in Wales and the UK will be eradicated by 2050. This will help deliver a fairer Wales that leaves no one behind and makes Wales a place where people can feel confident in planning their future here.

In line with the Welsh Government's ambitious Apprenticeship programme, we support the aims to increase opportunities for people of all ages and background to develop transferable skills in the workplace and boost their life chances. This would be achieved by supporting employers and their employees throughout Wales whilst supporting the investment to help build a fair and sustainable economy.

Our strategic priorities support the skills agenda to deliver policies for the employability of individuals, helping to provide a strong lever for tackling poverty and strengthening this through the Jobs Growth Wales+ programme - a key part of the Welsh Government's Young Person's Guarantee.

Strategic Priority 2

Represent NTFW membership with stakeholders throughout Wales and the UK challenging, influencing and shaping policy on skills and apprenticeships.

Our strategic priorities seek to build on our strengths in order to better meet the challenges and opportunities ahead.

We will lobby for an Apprenticeship system that is flexible and responsive to the needs of our learners and employers, and supports the development of a robust and innovative Welsh economy.

We will continue to work with awarding organisations, Qualifications Wales and sector bodies to ensure that apprenticeships are fit for purpose, meeting the needs of learners and employers in both the academic and vocational elements of all the programmes.

We will continue to work with colleagues and other stakeholders such as CollegesWales, Regional Skills Partnerships, Estyn, Careers Wales, Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and the Education Workforce Council to name but a few.

We will ensure effective feedback of Federation activities and outcomes to members and stakeholders.

We will be encouraging the sharing of best practices within the education, training & skills network to benefit learners, employers & members whilst encouraging staff at all levels of seniority within members organisations to fully engage and participate in the NTFW network.

We will respond quickly and accurately to consultations, research and reports to aid and influence the education, training & skills agenda.

We will continue to engage with Ministers, Members of the Senedd and Members of Parliament embedding the importance of apprenticeships, the work of the network and the positive impact on the economy, learners and employers.

Strategic Priority 3

Drive the need for fair and transparent funding rates that reflect the real cost of delivery for all apprenticeship programmes.

Our lobbying recognises that Wales has a strong commitment to vocational qualifications, the amount of vocational qualifications being delivered is the highest among all the UK nations. The proportion of employers who strongly agree that vocational qualifications are flexible and deliver value for money is also higher for Wales.

We recognise and welcome the additional 5% increase received from Welsh Government and will continue to monitor the impact of the cost of living crisis, working closely with CollegesWales to provide evidence in support of the needs of the WBL sector, working on solutions whilst continuing to deliver high quality qualifications.

Our focus will be on working with Welsh Government and other stakeholders to demonstrate the effectiveness of vocational qualifications and the achievement of an apprenticeship, and the value they bring to the learner, employer and economy, thus proving the need for fair and transparent funding rates.

We will continue to promote and encourage the achievement of world class skills through Apprenticeship Awards Cymru, Apprenticeship Week and WorldSkills events.

We will ask that the skills system develop a stronger culture of investment. We ask both the UK Government and the Welsh Government to increase their investment and to utilise all available funding sources, thereby acting as a lever to increase the overall levels of investment in skills and to drive up the demand and quality of provision in the longer term.

Strategic Priority 4

Influence and help to shape Welsh Government's new commission for Tertiary Education building on the strengths of the work-based learning (WBL) sector to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead.

We will continue to work closely with Welsh Government and its pledge to deliver a more engaged, excellent and equitable post-compulsory education and training (PCET) sector in Wales that prioritises the interests of learners and contributes to national prosperity through the new commission.

We will continue to support the protection of the interests of learners, ensuring vocational and academic learning are equally valued.

We will continue to work with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to increase the number of qualifications taken through the medium of Welsh supporting the aim of the commission to increase the availability of Welsh-medium tertiary education and to encourage individuals to learn through the medium of Welsh.

The legislation to create the body followed a 2016 government-commissioned report on the future of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, which recommended the development of an “overarching vision” for post-secondary education in Wales, based on “stronger links between education policy, providers and provision, and social and economic goals”, along with the creation of a single tertiary regulatory, oversight and coordinating authority.

The Welsh Government said that the CTER would “support learners to move seamlessly from compulsory education to post-compulsory education and training”.

We will support the efforts to help break down barriers, secure easier learner pathways and support continued investment in research and innovation as outlined in the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022.

We will take an active lead in helping to shape the Welsh Government’s view that this act is seen as the ‘parity of esteem’ act. We will support the narrative of the Act that the “different but complementary strengths of all institutions” will enable “learners of all ages to have access to the full range of opportunities and are able to contribute economically, academically, and to our communities.”

Strategic Priority 5

Work with partners to help develop capacity and professionalise the work-based learning (WBL) apprenticeship workforce.

We will continue to support our network of WBL providers and their staff to ensure we have a workforce that motivates and inspires every learner to achieve their full potential.

We will influence the work of Awarding Organisations, Sector Skills Councils and Qualifications Wales by sharing knowledge and expertise to help improve the quality of delivery of WBL also helping to tailor innovative approaches to learning delivery.

We will help to further develop the ‘silhouettes’ project with the Education Workforce Council. The project has been commissioned by Welsh Government to produce a series of ‘silhouettes’ that set out job roles/levels within the post-16 workforce (Further Education (FE) and WBL). The purpose of the silhouettes being to outline what model post-holders (working in different roles within FE and WBL) might look like, in terms of their skills, experience and qualifications, providing a valuable developmental resource for practitioners and stakeholders.

We will support Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and their priority to develop the Welsh language and bilingualism within the FE and Apprenticeships sectors ensuring the network utilises the funding and support available to develop its bilingual provision.

We will build on and support the work undertaken by the Education Workforce Council’s development of professional standards for FE and WBL leaders and support staff, and for adult learning. Together with other key stakeholders from the FE, WBL and Adult Learning sectors we have been invited to join a steering group which will oversee the development of the additional standards. We will provide advice, guidance and information to inform the development of the standards, particularly in relation to the nature and complexity of different roles within WBL.

We will ensure that all WBL practitioners working with our network of providers are registered with the Education Workforce Council (EWC) where the provider is contracted to the Welsh Government. We will continue to work with the EWC and Welsh Government in analysing data of the workforce and addressing the needs of providers and practitioners where evidence shows there is a fall in the number of registered practitioners.

To achieve this, we will:

Work collaboratively across Wales with WBL providers to shape and deliver inspiring vocational qualifications that benefit learners, employers and support economic growth.

Continue to develop our members' short and long-term strategic relationships with Welsh Government officials, Ministers, Members of the Senedd and Members of Parliament.

Lead on successfully representing the independent WBL providers with commissioners and key stakeholders with effectiveness, professionalism and integrity.

Give commitment in supporting Welsh Government's policies on delivering a Stronger, Fairer, Greener Wales, The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, The Equality Strategic Plan, The Young Persons Guarantee, The Digital Strategy for Wales and The Net Zero Action Plan.

National Training Federation for Wales

info@ntfw.org • ntfw.org

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NTFW

Ffederasiwn Hyfforddiant Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Training Federation for Wales
Swyddfa Gofrestredig: Canolfan Busnes Orbit, Parc Busnes Rhydycar, Merthyr Tudful, CF48 1DL
Registered Office: Orbit Business Centre, Rhydycar Business Park, Merthyr Tydfil, CF48 1DL

E: info@ntfw.org - www.ntfw.org

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