

Medr

Y Comisiwn Addysg Drydyddol ac Ymchwil
Commission for Tertiary Education and Research

Medr Strategic Plan 2025-30- Consultation response report

March 2025

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn y Gymraeg |
This document is also available in Welsh
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Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
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Introduction

1. Following the creation of Medr – the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research – on 1 August 2024, we published a draft version of Medr’s Strategic Plan 2025-2030. We asked for views on the Strategic Plan by launching a public consultation from 23 September to 25 October 2024. During this time, we involved employers and had constructive conversations with trade union representatives. Recognising the importance of the diverse learner voice, we also developed a specific strand of engagement to ensure we heard their views.
2. We know the meaningful involvement of our stakeholders will be key to Medr’s success in ensuring our tertiary education and research system delivers for learners and for Wales. That’s why we have engaged regularly with all parts of the system – learners, providers, and organisations that operate across the sector, as well as local authorities, trade unions, the Welsh Government and other public bodies.
3. We have actively involved our workforce in the development of the Plan by sharing early drafts with everyone and holding briefing sessions with teams to inform the development of our aims and commitments.
4. We are grateful for all the feedback we received and we have fully considered all responses to the consultation and wider involvement exercises, taking them into account when making amendments to the Plan. This summary report of consultation responses provides an opportunity to reflect how this has been done.

Analysis of responses

5. We asked eighteen consultation questions, a combination of closed questions and open questions that explored your views of Medr’s vision and strategic aims and ambitions (see Appendix 1:- Medr’s Strategic Aims). We also asked a number of questions related to Medr’s responsibilities in relation to the Welsh language, equality and diversity and the Well-being of Future Generations Act.
6. We received 101 responses to the consultation exercise. The majority of responses came through the online consultation response form posted on Medr’s website. We also received a number of written responses via email.
7. Analysis of the consultation responses was undertaken internally in Medr by the Head of Social Research, a member of the Government Social Research profession. All responses received were valid and were analysed and taken into account in the redrafting of the Strategic Plan.
8. The analysis, and analysis report, reflect the range and breadth of views expressed during the consultation. Closed questions were analysed quantitatively and the responses are presented in charts. Open questions were analysed thematically and summaries of key themes are presented below the charts. Where quotes are used these have been anonymised and chosen to reflect a strong theme expressed frequently by respondents.
9. Most questions are presented separately, but some have been grouped together to avoid repetition.

10. The report is structured as follows:

- We asked - the consultation question
- You said - your responses to the consultation questions
- We did - how we have taken your responses on board in the redrafting of the Strategic Plan.

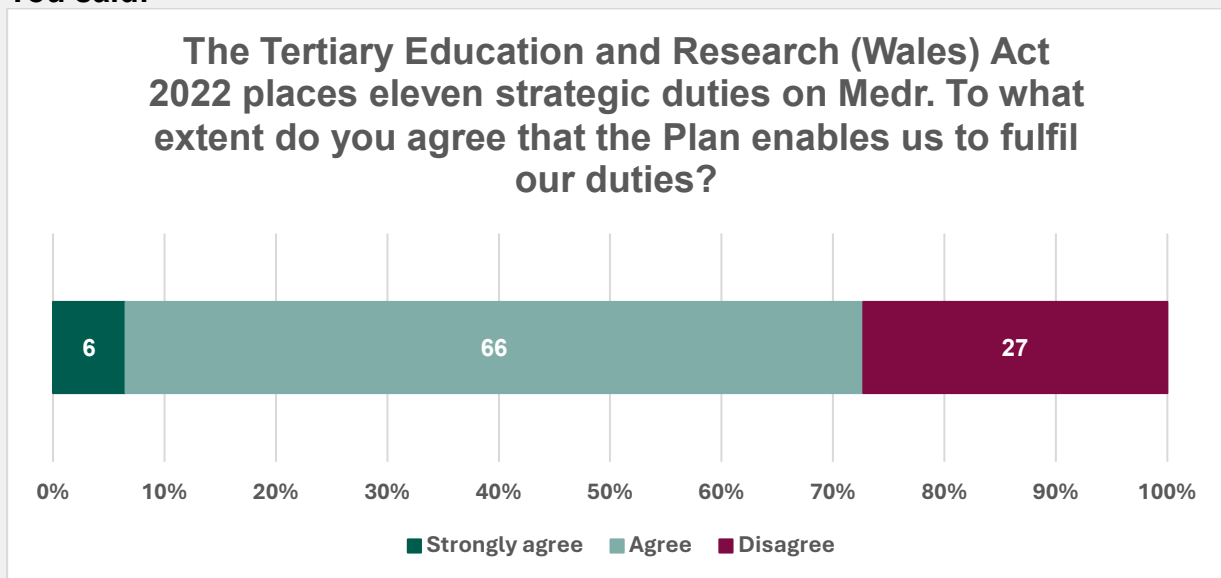
Responses to the consultation on Medr’s draft Strategic Plan

We asked:

1. The Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022 places eleven strategic duties on Medr.

1a. To what extent do you agree that the Plan enables us to fulfil our duties?

You said:



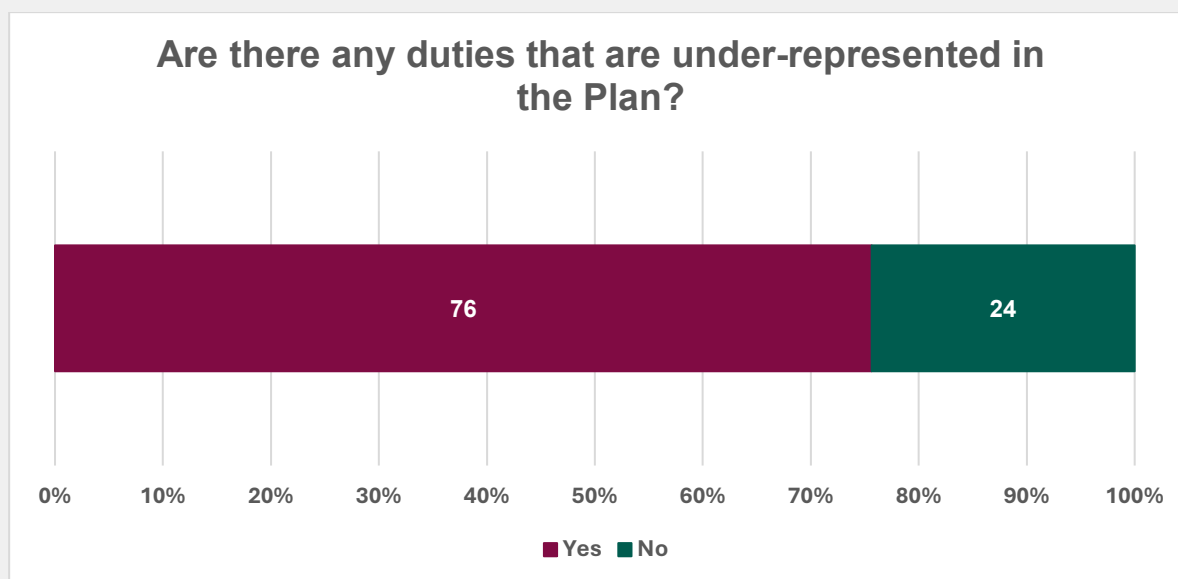
Base: 77

Over two thirds of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (72%) that the Strategic Plan will enable Medr to fulfil our duties.

We asked:

1b. Do you feel there are any duties under-represented in the Plan?

You said:



Base: 78

The majority of respondents felt that there were areas of the strategic duties which were under-represented in the Plan. The greatest proportion of responses related to:

- Global outlook: respondents felt there should be greater reference to fostering international engagement, international mobility, and knowledge exchange. Some respondents referred to the cultural and financial importance of international learners in Welsh institutions.

“There would need to be more on how the Welsh tertiary system currently sits within a broader global context and how Medr will facilitate its development.”

- Equality of Opportunity: Learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) - respondents felt that specific reference was needed to learners with ALN, including reference to pathways for learners and learning through the medium of Welsh.

“Given equality of opportunity and participation, there is not enough emphasis on the ALN pupils who very often transfer to tertiary centres. What is the provision for them in both Welsh and English?”

- Equality of opportunity: A few respondents referred to the lack of reference to violence against women, and LGBTQ+ (see question 3 for more detail).
- Welsh language: a number of respondents commented on the lack of promotion of the Welsh language, Welsh language pathways, and greater detail on how this will be achieved.

“Given the Government’s current targets through Welsh 2050 and the [Welsh Language and Education Bill] it is widely felt that the handling and vision of the Welsh language is weak. It is felt that there is a lack of ambition here in delivering courses in both languages to all our learners wherever in Wales their home is.”

- Trade Union collaboration: some respondents commented on the lack of reference to promoting collaboration between providers and trade unions

We did:

We have strengthened the narrative surrounding global outlook and international learners throughout the Plan, and included a commitment under strategic aim 1 which promotes the global opportunities available for learners, celebrates international learners and staff, and focuses on the centrality of learners being outward looking, engaged citizens. Within strategic aim 4, we have included a greater focus on global influence and international participation.

The draft Plan emphasised the importance of placing all of our learners at the heart of what we do, but we recognise that we needed to go further in respect of learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). Consequently, we have made a commitment to a person-centred approach for learners with ALN, balancing support and independence within strategic aim 1.

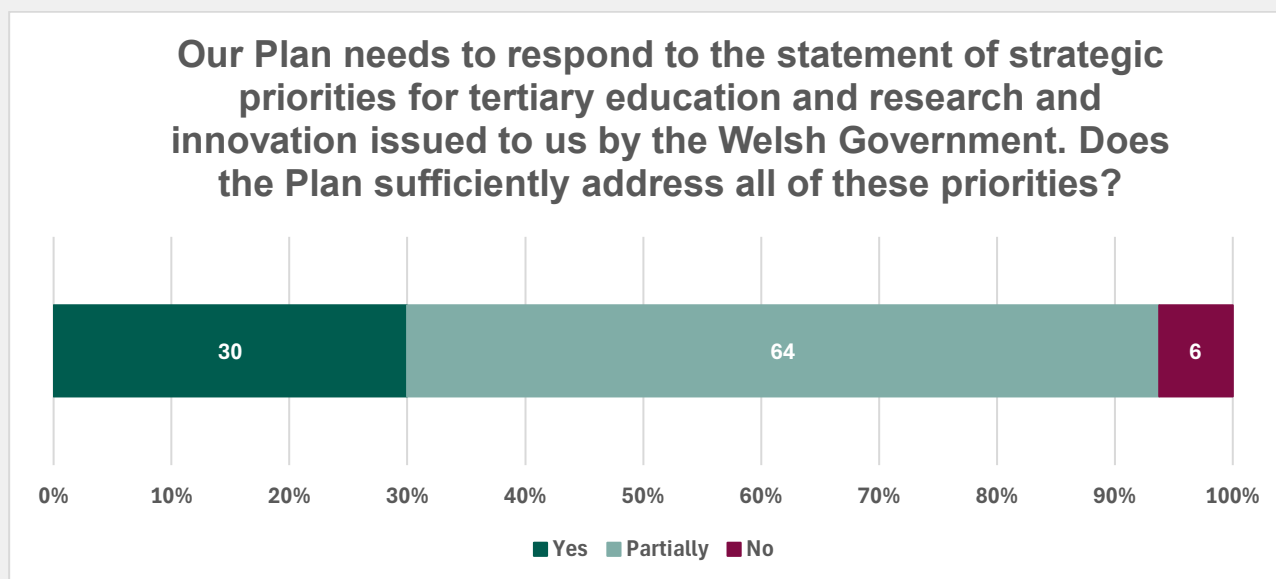
Finally, we have made explicit our duty to promote relationships between providers and trade unions, and have committed to working closely with our recognised Trade Union - PCS - as part of our foundation aim.

A large number of responses in this, and other questions made reference to our equality of opportunity and the Welsh language commitments. Our feedback on these, rather than being dispersed across all questions is included in the relevant sections within this document. Recognising that equality of opportunity and the Welsh language are both fundamental to our Plan, and underpin our work, we have taken this approach for ease of reading and to avoid duplication within this report.

We asked:

2. **Our Plan needs to respond to the statement of strategic priorities for tertiary education and research and innovation issued to us by the Welsh Government. Does the Plan sufficiently address all of these priorities?**

You said:



Sixty four percent of respondents felt that the Plan partially addresses the strategic priorities set by the Welsh Government.

In general, respondents gave similar responses to those in question 1. Additional areas of focus included:

- Medr’s role: some respondents referred to the need for Medr to provide vision and leadership for the future.
- Financial sustainability: some respondents referred to the need for financial sustainability, and questioned how Medr would make ‘difficult decisions’.

“...the plan, currently lacks a clear financial strategy, to ensure that these ambitions are affordable and sustainable given the budgetary constraints.”

- Workforce: some respondents noted the need to provide support for the tertiary education workforce.

We did:

The Plan sets out our belief in the transformational power of tertiary education and research, and articulates our collective ambition for the future. It places this ambition within the context of challenges which introduce each of our strategic aims, including fiscal challenges. We recognise though that many respondents asked for greater clarity on how finance and funding will work, and on how difficult decisions will be made. At this stage, we cannot provide the answers – because we want solutions to be crafted in collaboration with our stakeholders. **Cydwethio** – *working together* – is one of our values, and we want, over the coming months and years, to work with collaboratively to find the best solutions.

Our foundation aim now includes specific reference to investing in our own workforce, to encourage growth mindsets, and treat everyone as an individual. We have reassessed our narrative and aims under strategic aim 3, which now includes the support of the tertiary education workforce.

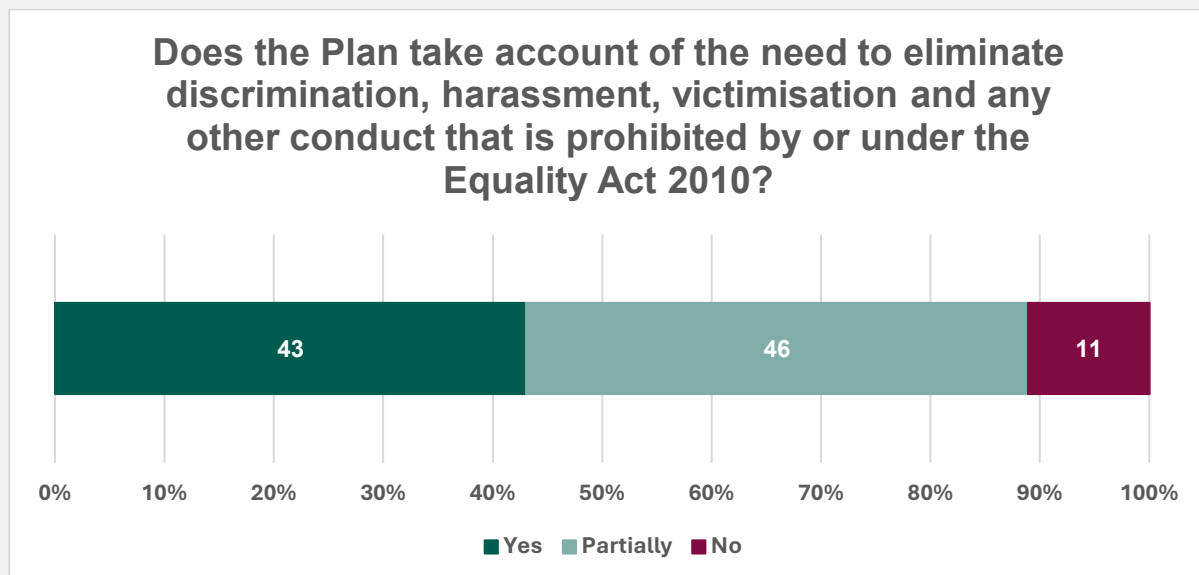
We asked:

3. Does the Plan take account of the need to:

- **eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;**
- **advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;**
- **foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;**
- **reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage?**

You said:

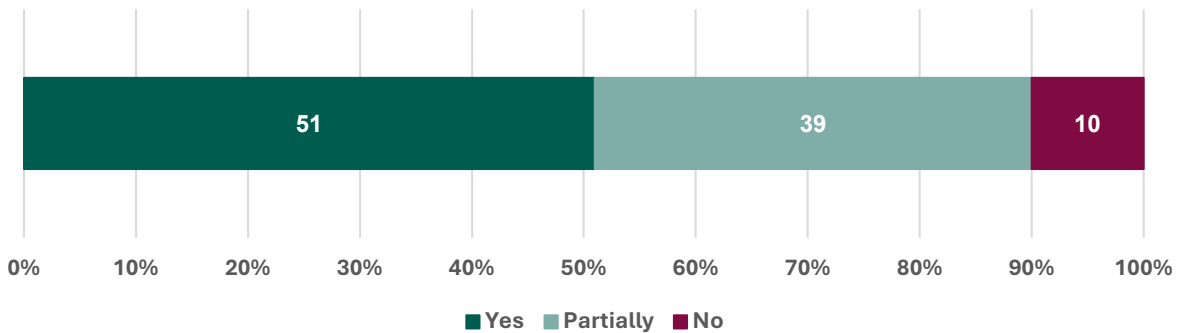
We asked a series of questions related to equalities and disadvantage. A number of common themes emerged from the analysis of the free responses to these questions and therefore these have been presented together.



Base: 72

Forty three percent of respondents agreed and 46% partially agreed that the Plan takes account of the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010.

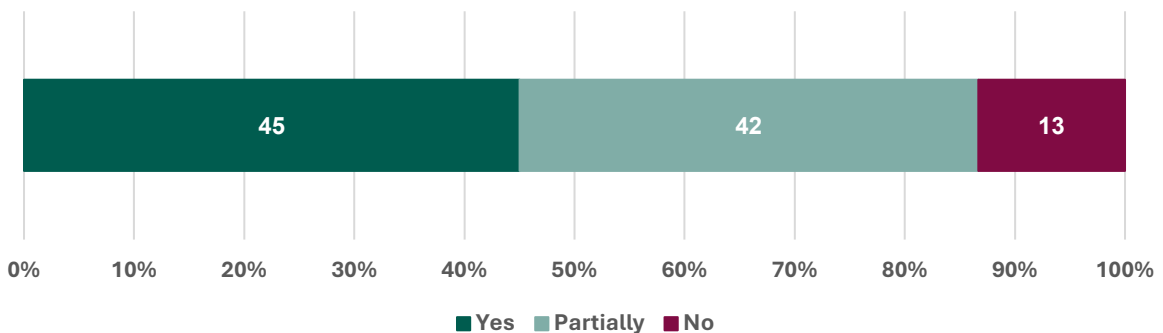
Does the Plan take account of the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it?



Base: 67

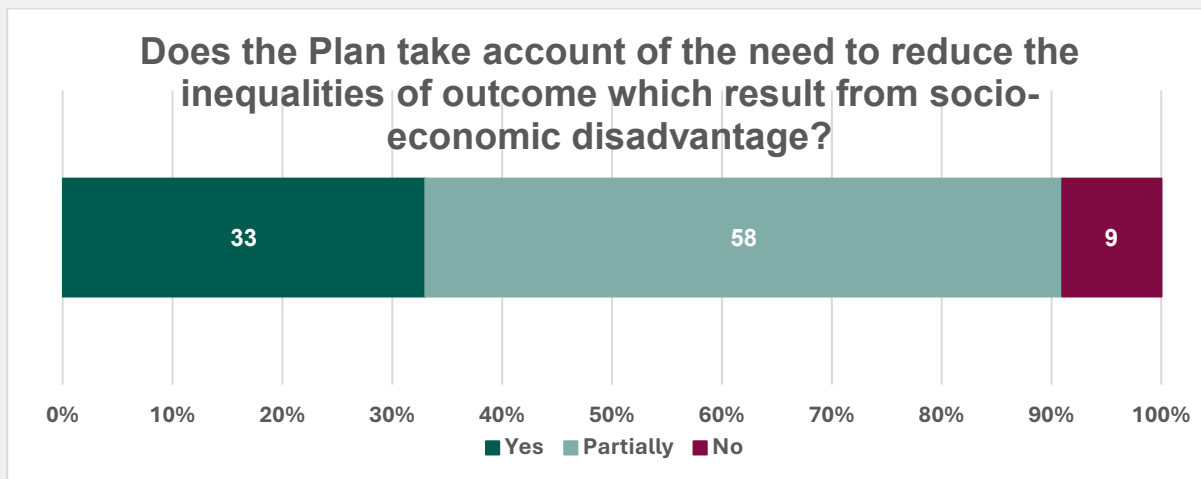
Fifty one percent of respondents agreed and 39% partially agreed that the Plan takes account of the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Does the Plan take account of the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it?



Base: 60

Forty five percent of respondents agreed and 42% partially agreed that the Plan takes account of the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.



Base: 64

Fifty eight percent of respondents partially agreed and 33% agreed that the Plan takes account of the need to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage.

Reflecting the high response to the partially agree option for these questions, the comments received highlighted a number of areas that respondents felt needed greater attention within the Plan.

- Targeted actions: greater detail on specific strategies to address the needs of those facing additional barriers to education and targeted actions to reduce the impact of inequality and socio-economic disadvantage on educational outcomes.
- Early intervention: whilst acknowledging that to a large extent this is outside the scope of Medr's remit, a number of respondents noted the need to address the impacts of inequality before learners enter tertiary education.
- Coherent pathways: a truly equitable tertiary education sector requires coherent pathways and seamless lines of progression.
- Respondents felt in particular that the following areas were not adequately addressed in the draft Plan:
 - Learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN): the Plan needs to pay greater attention to this area, with particular emphasis on Welsh medium learners.
 - An anti-racist Wales: the Plan needs to explicitly reference the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and how it will contribute to its implementation.

“Whilst the Plan cites several references to other initiatives in Wales, it does not note the Welsh Governments ambition to become an Anti-Racist nation by 2030...”

- Gender-based violence and sexual harassment: the Plan needs to better reflect the evidence of the impact of gender-based violence and harassment on learners and pay more attention to gender and gender-based violence and sexual harassment particularly with reference to putting learners at the heart of the system.

“Considering that VAWDASV [Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence] is widely recognised as a pervasive issue.....and the severity of the associated risks and harms, we strongly recommend that VAWDASV be prioritised by

Medr. As a gendered issue and one that an intersectional response is required it should be considered under the duty.”

Two further areas that were raised a number of times were:

- The need to take account of the contextual factors in Wales that influence inequality, such as geography and demographics.
- The need for better data on protected characteristics, both to fill gaps in our understanding of these needs and to enable Medr to measure its impact on these groups.

We did:

We have published our Strategic Equality Plan on our website [[Medr Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028](#)], and we have confirmed that integrated impact assessments will inform our policy and funding decisions.

We have made explicit commitments to working with partners to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, gender based violence and abuse, and working with Welsh Government towards achieving an Anti-racist Wales. As with all of our strategic aims, these commitments will be supported by our operational plan, which will provide a more detailed outline of the activities we will deliver to achieve those aims. We also know that better data on learners with protected characteristics will help to inform targeted actions within our operational plans.

The need to provide coherent pathways is defined within the context of strategic aim 1. We recognise that participation in learning varies with dependencies on a number of factors, and we have committed to increase participation generally, but particularly from those who have face barriers to education, and inequalities influenced by location. We also recognise the concerns regarding the impact of inequality and socio-economic disadvantage on educational outcomes, and will include specific actions in our operational plans.

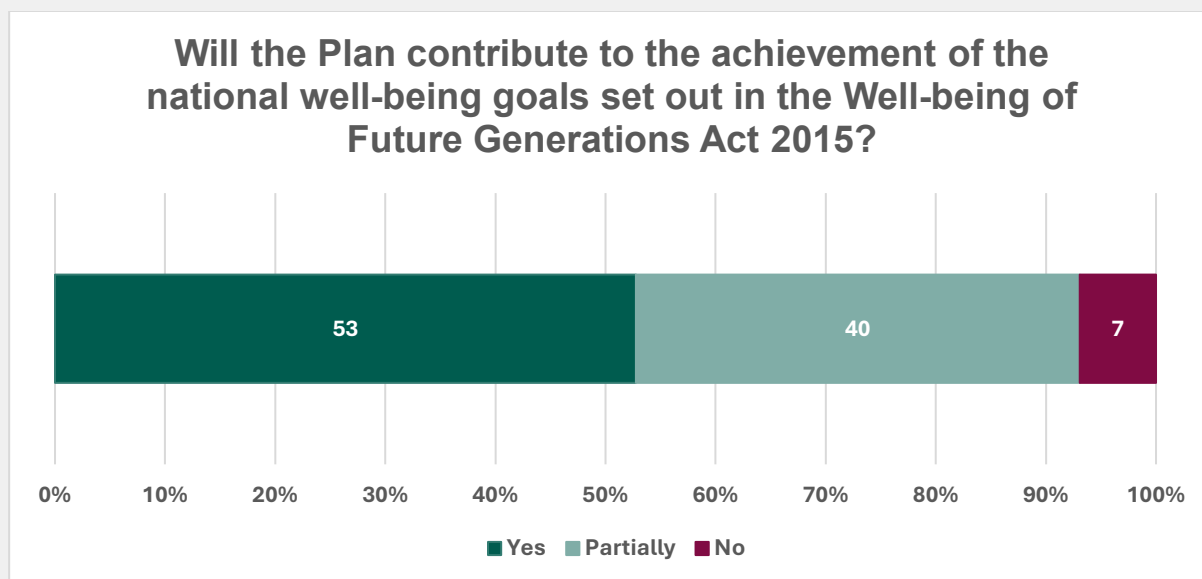
We have not included a specific commitment regarding the impacts of inequality before learners enter the tertiary education sector. However, we will support partners as appropriate with pre-transition arrangements.

Our response to question 1 addresses specific inclusion of learners with Additional Learning Needs.

We asked:

4. Will the Plan contribute to the achievement of the national well-being goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015?

You said:



Base: 72

There was strong agreement that the Plan would contribute to the achievement of the national well-being goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015, with 93% of respondents responding yes or partially to the question.

In general respondents were very supportive of the Plan’s alignment of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015. Some areas were felt to be somewhat underrepresented and may go against the achievement of other equalities aims in the Plan. These include matters related to the Welsh language, learners with Additional Learning Needs, internationalisation and a global outlook, a focus on environmental sustainability, and gender based violence, which are reflected in responses to a number of the consultation questions.

A number of respondents felt that there needed to be more detail on the specifics of how Medr’s strategy supports these aims and a recognition of how the aims interact with each other.

“It is important to note here the relationship between the different well-being goals. For example, achieving Strategic Aim 5 of the Plan can also contribute to the goal of a resilient Wales - where the Welsh language contributes to innovative and sustainable business growth, especially in the sectors of the economy that are most important to Welsh speakers and where there is the greatest need for Welsh language skills. The same is true of ‘A prosperous Wales’, ‘A more equal Wales’, and ‘A Wales of cohesive communities’.”

Respondents also highlighted the need to balance short-term priorities with long-term goals and to set specific targets and outcomes related to the aims.

“The public body requirement to take account of the long term, preventing problems, integrated and collaborative approach and involvement of people, is very well

articulated. We however believe that without supporting targets and actions, it is unclear if the Plan will contribute to the achievement of well-being goals.”

We did:

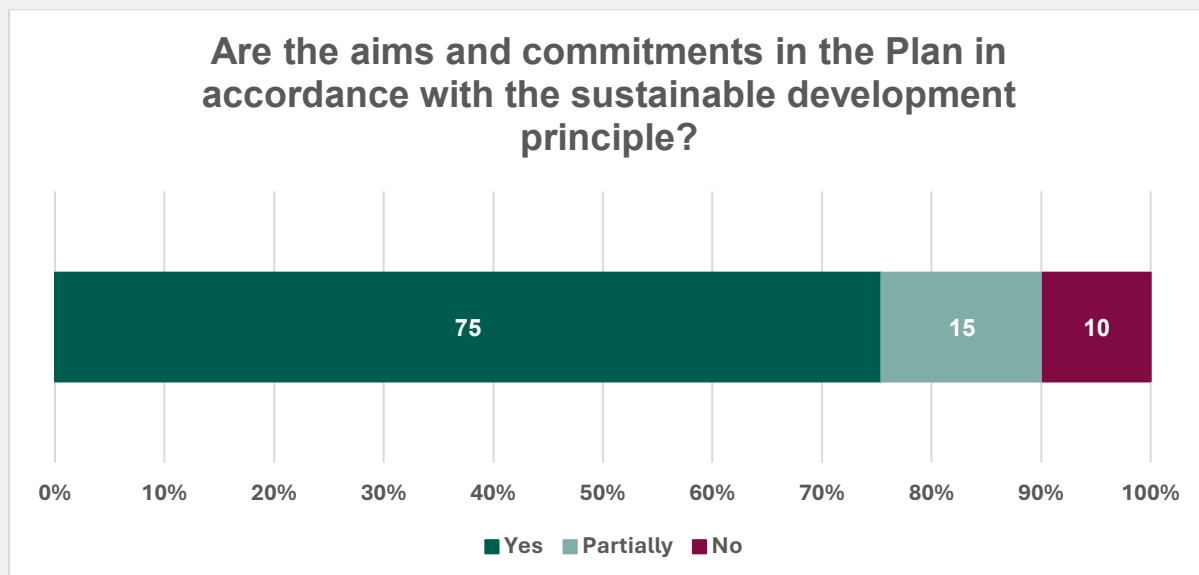
A number of themes came through your responses, which we have already addressed, including those relating to global outlook, Additional Learning Needs and gender-based violence. We have reviewed our narrative, and strengthened reference to environmental sustainability, and skills to support the journey to net zero.

We understand requests for more detail on how our strategy will support our aims, and how Medr will balance long term goals with short term actions. We are fundamentally committed to the five ways of working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Acts 2015 and contributing to the well-being goals. However, as a young organisation, we are not in a position to articulate solutions to some of our challenges as yet. We are currently collating baseline data, from which we will, working collaboratively, set performance indicators to enable us to look long-term. We will develop an operational plan, which will articulate how we will deliver on our aims and contribute to the well-being goals.

We asked:

5. Are the aims and commitments in the Plan in accordance with the sustainable development principle?

You said:



Base: 61

Ninety percent of respondents agreed or partially agreed that the aims and commitments in the Plan are in accordance with the sustainable development principle.

Respondents were very supportive with similar comments as those received for question four, in particular around the need for more actionable details. Additional points raised were:

- How will Medr ensure equality of opportunity, especially in rural areas.

- More detail on how Medr will contribute to environmental sustainability.
- The importance of measurement and data collection to track progress.

“... further alignment with the Act’s sustainable development principles could be achieved by enhancing initiatives that promote equal access to education in all regions, particularly in rural and disadvantaged communities.”

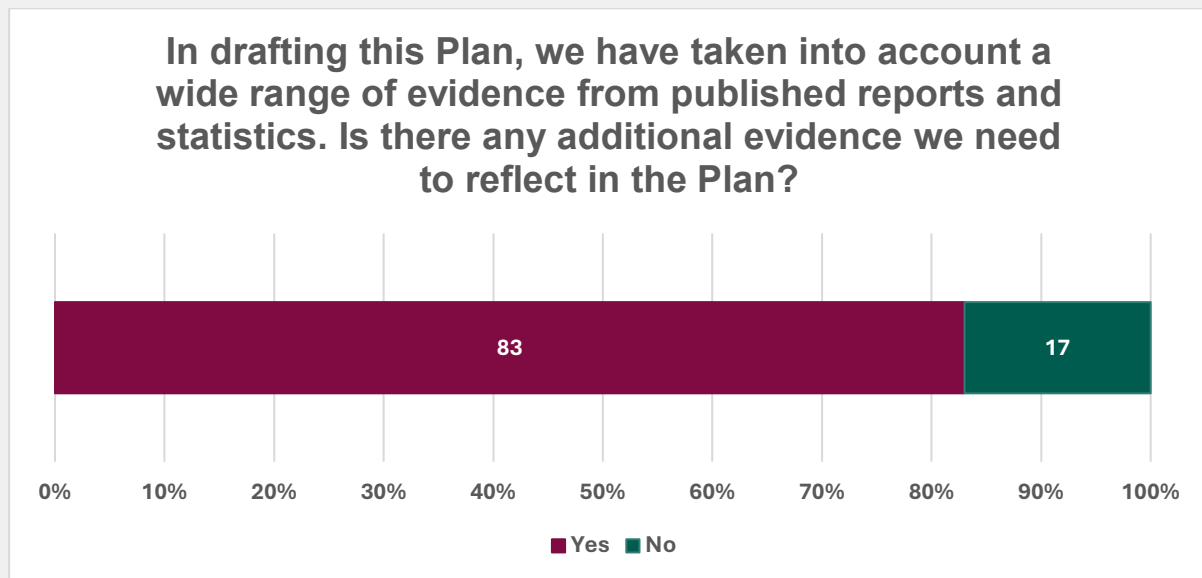
We did:

We are conscious of the differences in equality of opportunity across Wales, recognising the diversity of our learners and their needs, as well as the geographic differences in access across Wales. We will be considering as part of our pathway structure how we may improve equality of opportunity, and have examples of great innovations in some areas to overcome barriers. We have strengthened references to environmental sustainability and green skills training in the Plan, which we have included within the narrative for strategic aim 2.

We asked:

- 6. In drafting this Plan, we have taken into account a wide range of evidence from published reports and statistics. Is there any additional evidence we need to reflect in the Plan?**

You said:



Base: 70

The majority of respondents (83%) stated that there was additional evidence that needed to be reflected in the Plan.

Respondents referred us to a wide range of additional evidence sources. Key evidence that should be better reflected include:

- Evidence on gender-based violence in higher education and its impacts.
- Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill.
- The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill.
- The Anti-racist Wales Action Plan.

- The LGBTQ+ Action Plan.
- The Disability Rights Action Plan.

Respondents also noted the general need for better evidence and data on:

- Disparities in educational outcomes across different protected characteristics and socio-economic groups.
- More evidence on skills and workforce needs.
- Better evidence to understand the challenges and understand the demands e.g. what the learner landscape will look like.

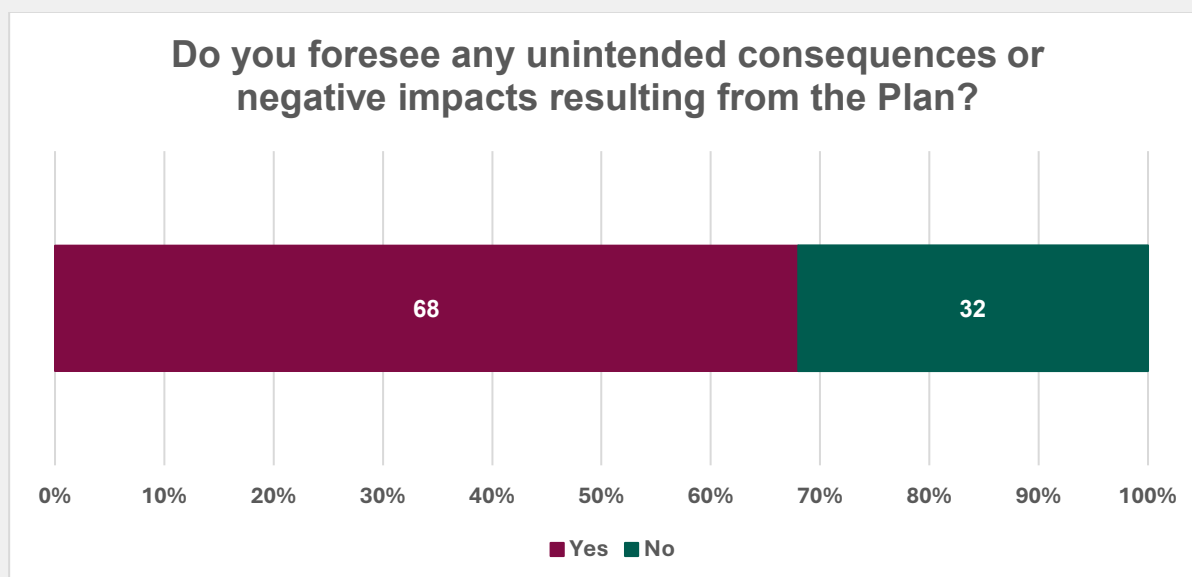
We did:

Our consultation document included examples of the documents and reports that we examined to draft the Plan. We did of course refer to a great many other reports and information, and appreciate the referrals to additional evidence. We compared our list of documentation with the range provided by respondents, and where appropriate, consulted those documents further. We will continue to consult a wide range of evidence as we develop our operational plan.

We asked

7. Do you foresee any unintended consequences or negative impacts resulting from the Plan?

You said:



Base: 69

Over two-thirds (68%) of respondents felt there could be unintended consequences or negative impacts resulting from the Plan.

These generally fell into two key areas – unintended or detrimental effects on learners in certain categories (learners through the medium of Welsh, learners with ALN, Welsh Speakers with ALN) and a loss of focus on specific parts of the tertiary sector (particularly school sixth forms and work-based learning).

Other potentially negative or unintended impacts noted include:

- The lack of emphasis on promoting a global outlook risks several negative impacts resulting from the plan e.g.

“... without sufficient support for global engagement, the quality of the Wales tertiary system could be negatively affected, and it could result in a lack of diversity and fresh thinking ...”

- There is a risk that the Plan could devalue vocational/technical skills.
- Inadvertently limiting engagement from non-traditional learners.

We did:

We fully acknowledge a general comment that it is difficult to assess the potential for unintended consequences until policy decisions are made and there is clarity about how outcomes will be achieved. We also acknowledge that financial stability is key, and resource allocations are needed to support our ambitions. We are committed to collaborating with partners wherever possible to determine viable solutions prior to reaching decisions.

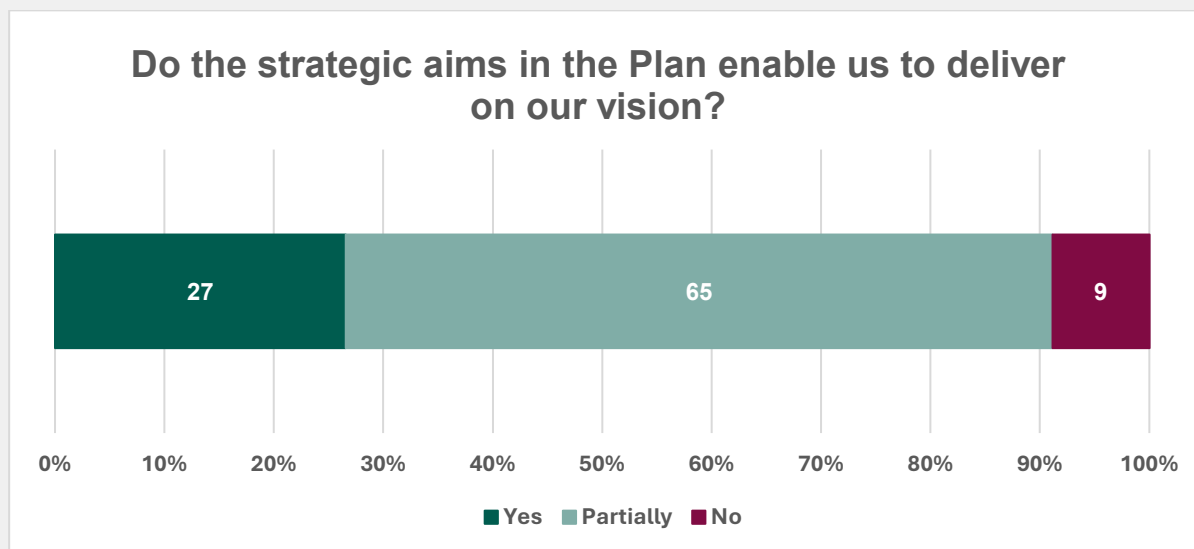
We understand the concerns regarding the generic focus of the Plan, as we become a truly tertiary education and research sector. Each component part of the tertiary education and research sector is important, and we want to ensure that each is valued. We have made it clear that arrangements we made are responsive to the differing needs of each part of the sector. We acknowledge that “attention needs to be given to bringing coherence at the same time as recognising difference between the sectors and indeed regions, and learner cohorts in Wales”.

We have struggled to understand how the Plan might inadvertently lead to a devaluing of vocational skills, or limit engagement for non-traditional learners, and will be mindful of this as we develop our operational plans. We have addressed matters concerning global outlook, and learners with ALN in our responses to previous questions.

We asked:

- 8. Medr’s vision states that we will work in close collaboration with our partners to enable a tertiary education and research system which is centred around the needs of learners, society and the economy with excellence, equality and engagement at its heart. Do the strategic aims in the Plan enable us to deliver on our vision?**

You said:



Base: 79

Almost two thirds of respondents (65%) felt that Medr’s strategic plan aims would only partially enable it to deliver on its vision as stated above.

The aims were generally accepted, but respondents noted concern over the lack of a financial strategy in the Plan to support the vision.

Many respondents felt that the Plan did not outline clearly enough how it wants to engage with partners and stakeholders, or how stakeholders are expected to connect with Medr, asking for greater clarity on who the partners are and more detail on engagement mechanisms.

“Whilst the overall tone has been positive, Medr would be well placed to move towards formalising its engagement mechanisms with partners along its strategic aims and objectives.”

Respondents highlighted the importance of collaboration with employers and industry partners, as well as community organisations and charities.

The importance of high-quality careers advice for learners and collaboration with employers around vocational options was also frequently highlighted.

A number of respondents also wanted to see more focus on lifelong learning and flexible learning pathways.

“... independent and impartial careers information, advice and guidance plays a crucial role in helping young people make informed decisions about the next steps choices into tertiary education.”

We did:

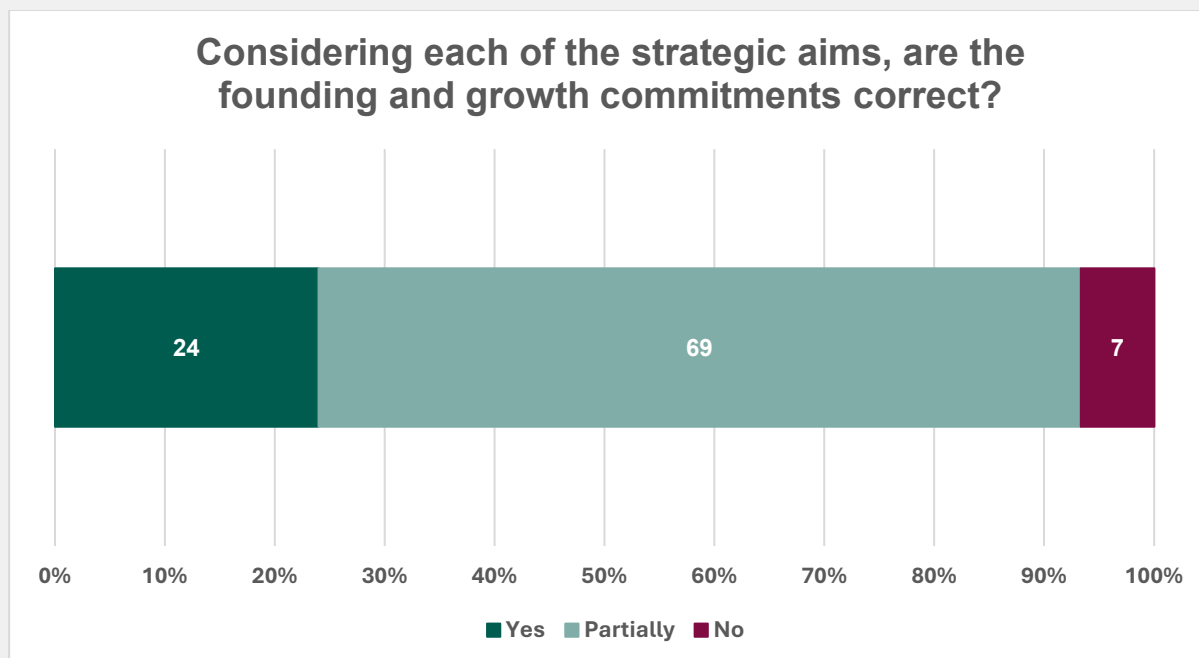
We understand the need for a financial strategy to support our vision, and will develop a strategy which will be shared. We also understand the desire to see the actions that underpin our strategy, which we will develop within our operational plan.

The intention to collaborate is recognised, but we have generally shied away from naming partners with whom we will collaborate, or programmes with which we will interact. We hope that our approach thus far has shown that we want to engage with a wide range of stakeholders, but that naming these raises the danger of unintentional omission which could be counterproductive. However, we have referred specifically to Careers Wales, recognising the importance of advice and guidance, particularly during the transition process to tertiary education.

We asked:

- 9. Within each of the strategic aims in the Plan, there are founding commitments to be achieved within the first two years, and growth commitments to be developed over five years. Considering each of the strategic aims, are the founding and growth commitments correct?**

You said:



Base: 75

Whilst broadly supportive of the founding and growth commitments, over two-thirds of respondents (69%) felt that the founding and growth commitments related to the strategic aims were only partially correct, with an overall feeling that more detail is needed in general on how foundation and growth commitments will realise sufficient progress and achievement against the strategic aims. Key themes that emerged were:

- The need for more emphasis on learners with additional needs.

- The need to be addressing gender-based violence in educational settings.
- The need for a review of skills and especially basic skills.

“Basic skills should be an immediate priority for improvement both in terms of funding and greater coherence across the tertiary system. Getting basic skills provision right is crucial to improving employment opportunities and civic participation for many adults in Wales.”

- A greater emphasis on the transition to post-16, particularly with regards to vocational learning.
- The need to strengthen the growth commitments related to Strategic aim 5 and to include a commitment to growing the Welsh speaking workforce in the sector.
- The need for a greater emphasis on and understanding of workforce challenges in all parts of the tertiary sector.
- There was strong support for a Learner Engagement Code and Learner Voice forum, but questions around how to engage with the voices of those that are not yet learners or who are disengaged with learning and/or training.

A number of respondents referred to the need for more and better data to underpin both foundation and growth commitments. In particular:

- How does Medr plan to better understand what data we currently have and what is missing, including trends in learning and skills levels across Wales?
- The need for baseline data.
- The need to ensure the reliability of data.
- The importance and challenges of creating a joined up and consistent data collection system across the tertiary sector.

We did:

We are conscious of the call for greater detail on the strategic aims. However, this is a strategic plan, and at this stage, it would not be appropriate to provide such detail. Details will emerge as part of our operational planning process, and, as we have previously noted, we want to engage with partners in developing actions, evaluating options and ultimately arriving at solutions to achieve our strategic goals.

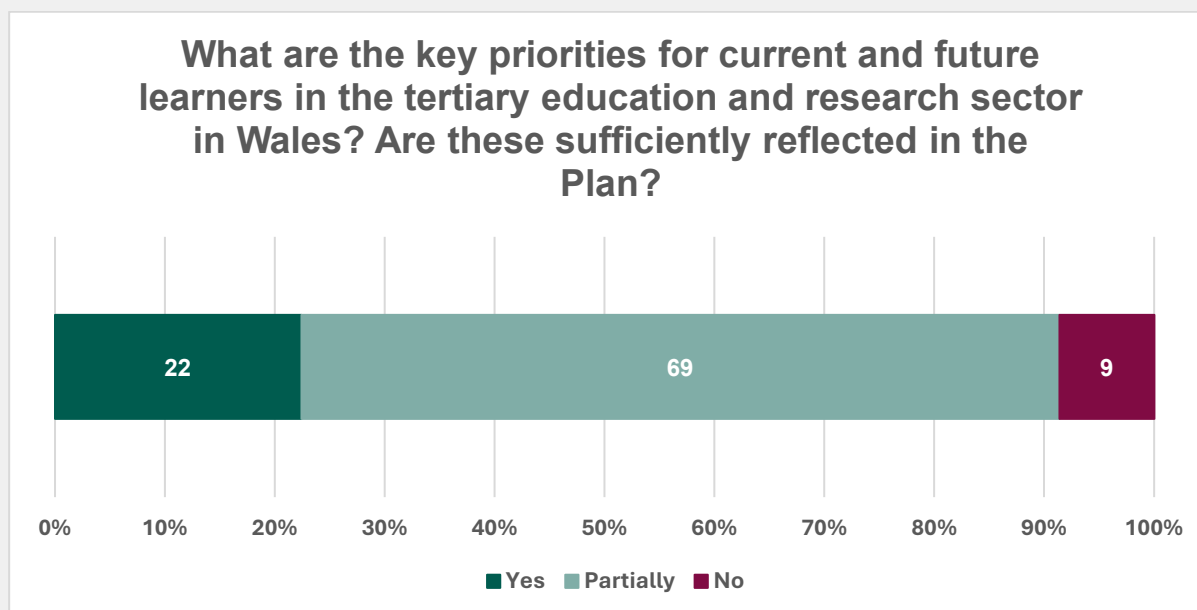
As this question asked for consideration of the strategic aims and commitments, it is inevitable that there will be some repetition between this and other question responses. Many issues have been raised already, or will be raised later in our responses, particularly relating to learners with ALN, gender-based violence, transition to post -16 education, the workforce and the Welsh Language.

The collection and analysis of data is a critical component of our foundation aim, and we are committed to providing baseline data, reducing burdens on providers of data, and using data as part of an information set to make decisions.

We asked:

10. What are the key priorities for current and future learners in the tertiary education and research sector in Wales? Are these sufficiently reflected in the Plan?

You said:



Base: 58

Over two-thirds of respondents (69%) felt that the Plan only partially reflects the priorities of current and future learners in the tertiary education and research sector in Wales.

Respondents strongly felt that a number of key areas of priorities for learners need to be better addressed in the Plan.

- Advice and guidance - the importance of high quality and independent advice and guidance for learners when determining progression pathways, including sound and unbiased careers advice and guidance (including for the transition into tertiary education).

“Accessing sound and unbiased careers advice and guidance during the pre to post 16 transition is critical. There are numerous references in the Plan to this being a critical juncture in a young person’s learning journey but the detail of how this will work across the sectors collaboratively is scarce”.

- Developing skills for the future – including basic skills in literacy, numeracy and digital competence; new skills to support new technologies; the need for Welsh language skills.
- Flexibility - the need to respond flexibly to the needs of learners.
- Better knowledge of learners in compulsory education and a stronger focus on working with the pre-tertiary system to facilitate learner progression, particularly with respect to more disadvantaged learners.
- The need for more detail on how the sector can collaborate to ensure these learner priorities are met.

Other areas of priority noted were – the mental health and well-being of learners, the cost of living, and cost of education and travel and transport to education.

“Learners face not being able to access provision of choice which meets economic demand as a result of postcode lotteries and having to choose subjects that are available locally versus their preferred career”.

We did:

We recognise the importance of effective careers advice and guidance for learners. Whilst advice and guidance pre-16 is not within our remit, we will support and promote relevant activity, and will work with Careers Wales and the Welsh Government to encourage more learners to transition to tertiary education, and reduce the proportion of people not in education, employment or training (NEET).

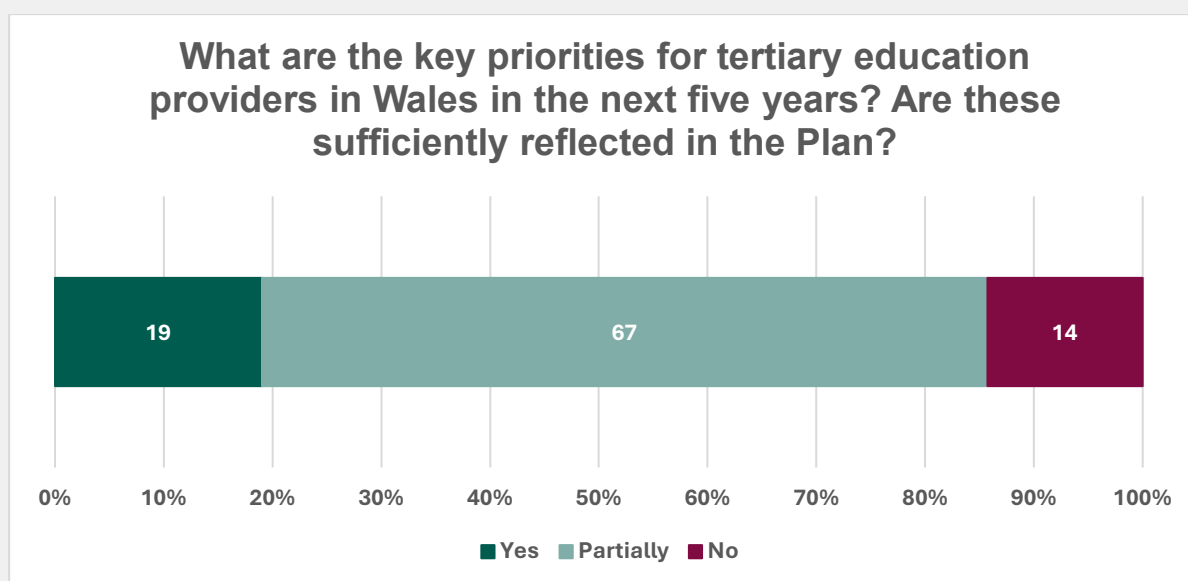
The mental health and well-being of our learners is critical and we are committed to establishing “regulatory conditions to support learner and staff welfare”.

Strategic aim 2 emphasises the importance of the acquisition of skills and knowledge for a changing economy and society. Generally, we have not referred to specific skills requirements, nor differing types of qualifications, as these are matters for our operational plans. We note that there is some confusion around terminology, such as whether essential and basic skills mean the same thing, and a glossary of terms can be found on Medr’s website.

We asked:

11. What are the key priorities for tertiary education providers in Wales in the next five years? Are these sufficiently reflected in the Plan?

You said:



Base: 63

Over two-thirds of respondents (69%) felt that the Plan only partially reflects the priorities for tertiary education and research providers in Wales in the next five years. Respondents felt that a number of key areas of priorities for providers need to be better reflected in the Plan:

- Financial stability - the top priority for providers cited by many respondents was the financial stability of the tertiary sector and a recognition that the financial pressures facing the sector will result in difficult choices and at times difficulties in meeting many of the learner and provider priorities outlined.

“Most of the priorities outlined for tertiary education providers are currently at risk due to the financial pressures facing the sector. Financial sustainability has become an overriding priority, often taking precedence even when it conflicts with environmental, social, or cultural goals. Providers need support to navigate these financial challenges and achieve stability in ways that also support Wales’s long-term goals for economic prosperity and sustainability.”

- Adapting curricula to address skills needs – this includes meeting the needs of changing economic and industry agendas.
- Participation - in education in all parts of the tertiary sector.
- Internationalisation - the need to expand opportunities for international collaboration and exchange programs to enhance global perspectives in education, to attract the best staff internationally, and international collaboration in high-quality research.
- Workforce - the challenges of ensuring a sufficient and appropriately trained tertiary education workforce to meet the needs of all learners and the needs of future industry.
- Attracting and retaining staff - the right staff for the teaching requirements and the best staff internationally

We did:

Financial sustainability and funding were the key message coming through in this section of the consultation, including the differing funding regimes for differing parts of the sector, such as the competitive process for work based learning providers. As noted previously, we understand the need for a financial strategy to support our vision, and will work to develop a financial strategy which will achieve this vision

We have previously addressed comments surrounding the global outlook and internationalisation, developing and retaining a professional workforce and participation. Strategic aim 2 commits to working with employers and employer representatives, to “ensure that a tertiary education provision responds to the economic priorities of Welsh Government”. The narrative supporting this aim underpins the changing economic and societal landscape, to which the curriculum needs to respond.

We asked:

- 12. What are the biggest opportunities of having a single body responsible for oversight of the whole tertiary sector? In your response, please consider whether the Plan enables us to make the most of these opportunities, or how we could do this better.**

You said:

Respondents noted that a single body responsible for oversight of the tertiary sector could:

- Standardise and improve responses to difficult challenges across tertiary education and research and ensure high standards across all institutions – a whole system approach focused on shared outcomes.
- Enable a unified strategy for tertiary education, creating clearer seamless pathways across the different tertiary providers.
- Create the opportunity of shared resources and infrastructure to fully leverage some of the benefits of a single body.
- Provide clear accountability and oversight of the system that reduces bureaucracy, duplication and overlap, whilst increasing learner choice and learner pathways.
- Provide consistency of experience for learners across the tertiary sector and consistency of learner expectations.
- Enable lessons and best practice to be shareable between institutions.
- Improve cohesion between institutions.
- More joined up data across the tertiary sector with greater openness and transparency.

“Having more joined up data across the tertiary sector with greater openness and transparency should allow for gaps in progression pathways to be more easily identified and addressed. Greater data connectivity should also lead to the sector being more informed of trends that may hit its constituent parts at different points along the same timeline, allowing for policy decisions to be taken at the point of initial impact.”

We did:

We were pleased to that responses to this question reflected much of our pre consultation discussions which had been incorporated into the Plan. We have as a result reframed the narrative of the Plan to focus on these opportunities, and have:

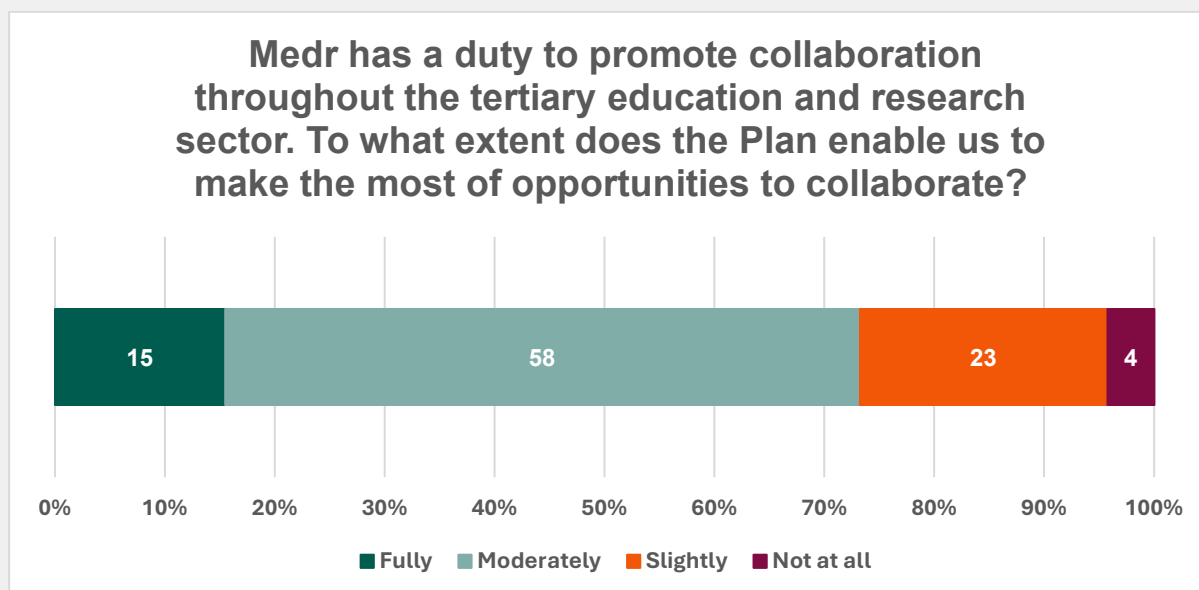
- Highlighted the need for cohesion and a “joined up” sector under strategic aim 2.
- Included a specific commitment to “support the tertiary education workforce to access effective professional learning and explore ways to share best practice, extending effective pedagogy across the whole sector”.
- Included a commitment to “minimise workload through the avoidance of duplication”.

We note the call for greater detail into how clear learning pathways will be achieved, and that some respondents called for drivers and incentives for collaboration. The detail of how we develop such pathways will mature as we work with partners to develop solutions.

We asked:

13. Medr has a duty to promote collaboration throughout the tertiary education and research sector. To what extent does the Plan enable us to make the most of opportunities to collaborate?

You said:



Base: 71

There was a mixed response to this question, with only 15% responding that the Plan will enable Medr to fully and 58% moderately able to make the most of opportunities to collaborate.

Whilst in general respondents believe the Plan provides a positive foundation for collaboration, respondents also felt that the Plan does not clearly recognise the inherent tension between collaboration and competition within the sector and the impact this could have on collaboration. Respondents also noted that the Plan does not provide enough detail on how this collaboration will be achieved and facilitated.

“The Plan sets a positive foundation for promoting collaboration across the tertiary education and research sector, emphasising engagement with various stakeholders, including educational providers, industry partners, and community organisations. However, it could go further in detailing structured, formal mechanisms for collaboration, such as dedicated working groups, partnership frameworks, or joint initiatives that bring together different sectors and regions.”

Some respondents noted that in the research context there is a critical need for collaboration outside of Wales to be valued and supported.

A number of respondents also noted the importance of collaboration with employers and employer organisations.

We did:

We recognise that many respondents noted that detail of collaboration and how this will work was needed before a true response could be made to this question. We are again clear that working with partners, we will develop solutions, but we want to develop these

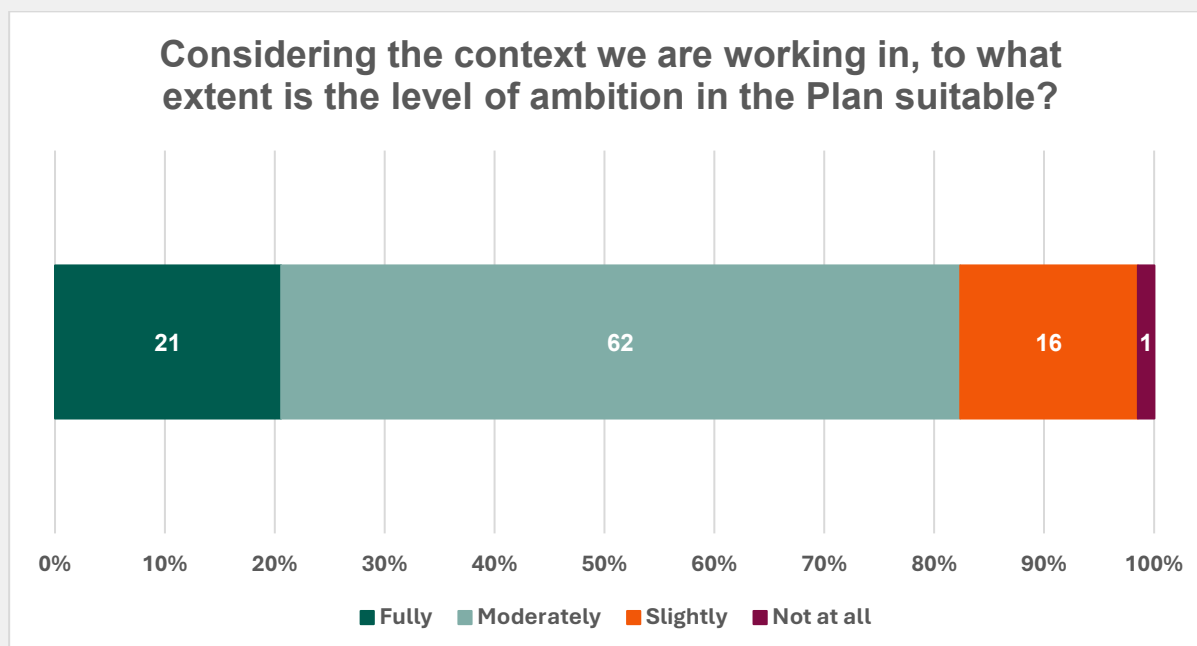
collectively and in partnership, not in isolation. We are also clear that learners and employers are partners in this process.

We do recognise the tension between collaboration and competition, and acknowledge the fact that competition will remain in some areas, such as research funding? for example. But we do need a cultural change if we are to achieve a truly tertiary education and research sector, where the learner, and learner outcomes are the locus for our decision making. We will “encourage collaboration, valuing each part of the tertiary sector for its specific strengths, embracing diversity of mission and location”.

We asked:

14. We need to be ambitious about what we can achieve. However, the financial environment we are working in is challenging. We also recognise the establishment of Medr is a significant change for the sector and we are committed to ensuring a smooth transition. Considering the context we are working in, to what extent is the level of ambition in the Plan suitable?

You said:



Base: 68

There was a mixed response to this question, with 62% responding that the level of ambition in the Plan is moderately suitable and 21% responding that level of ambition is fully suitable.

On the whole respondents felt that the Plan is rightly ambitious, however there were concerns that the current financial sustainability challenges could impact on providers' ability to deliver against these ambitions. A number of respondents also felt that not all the ambitions set out the intended outcomes clearly enough.

Three areas were commonly highlighted as lacking sufficient ambition:

- There needs to be more ambition in terms of the Welsh language.
- There needs to be more clarity on the ambitions for learners with additional needs.

- The Plan lacks ambition in the area of ‘a global outlook’.

There were some differences of opinion in relation to the ambitions for research in the Plan. While some respondents thought the plan was not ambitious enough in its aims for research and innovation, others thought that some of the aims were too ambitious and therefore not achievable.

We did:

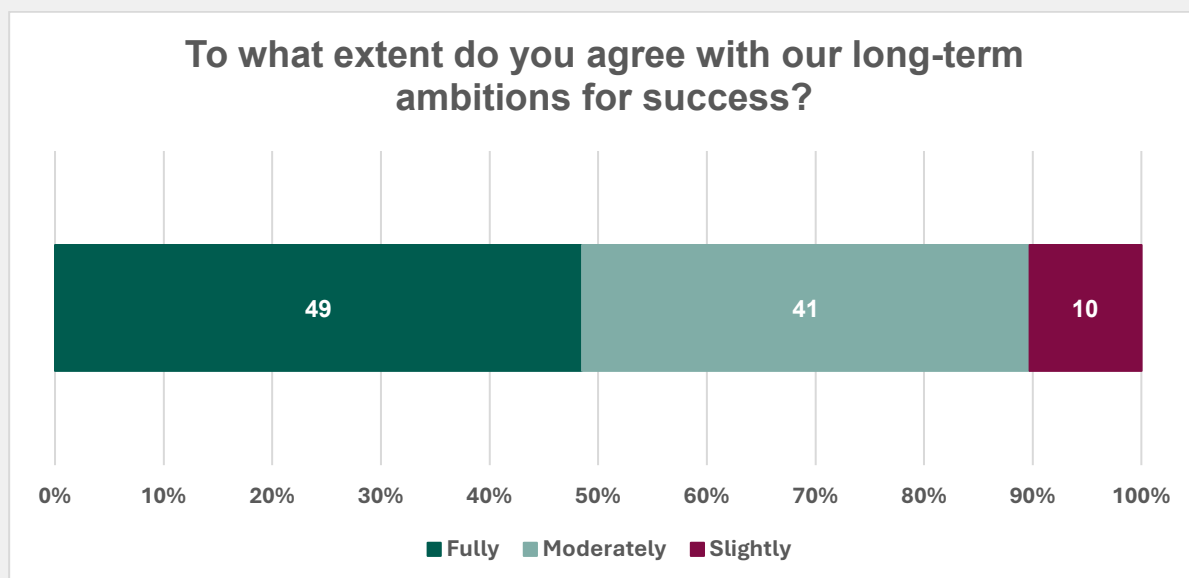
We again acknowledge that whilst we believe the Plan to be ambitious, we do understand the views of many respondents that that *“without sight of detailed financial planning which demonstrates ring fencing or creation of important funding streams, it is difficult to comment on whether the outcomes will match the aspirations”*. We also note that over the long term, investment into the tertiary education sector is required for growth.. Some respondents called for a phased approach with short term goals, to support stated ambitions. Conversely, others called for a faster pace of change, *“most notably around greater collaboration and rationalisation around 14-19 and ensuring a clear, coherent and joined up approach to vocational education and training”*.

We asked:

15. We asked a series of follow-up questions related to the ambitions in the Plan:

- **To what extent do you agree with our long-term ambitions for success?**
- **What changes are required in the sector to achieve these long-term ambitions?**
- **How will we be able to measure success against these ambitions?**

You said:



Base: 68

Almost half of respondents fully agreed with the Plan’s long-term ambitions for success, with 41% moderately agreeing.

Many of the ambitions in the Plan were welcomed, although there was also call for greater clarity around what the ambitions mean - to explain the ambitions further, quantify them, and explain the logic.

Two key areas where respondents felt the Plan could be more ambitious emerged:

- The need for Medr to be more outward looking in our ambitions and have a greater focus on internationalisation.
- The need for greater ambition in the development of clear pathways from school through to HE.

A number of respondents felt that the sector should have stronger cross-sector agreement on direction to drive the ambitions and a clearer picture of where the sector is aiming to get. This is reflected in calls for better data and evidence to inform better and more impactful policy, planning and decision making.

Respondents also noted the need for the sector to improve engagement with employers and employer organisations, and to respond to industrial skills needs such as digital literacy and green skills.

“Preparing for the future workforce requires an increased focus on digital and green skills across all levels of learning.”

In terms of measuring success against the Plan’s ambitions respondents noted that high quality baseline data is key and highlighted a number of areas where evidence will be needed to monitor progress and report on outcomes. These include:

- Learner progression and participation rates.
- Tracking improvements and participation in learner outcomes and attainment, particularly among under-represented and additional need groups.
- Evaluation of employment and skills alignment.
- Measuring research impact.
- Learner experience feedback.
- Better measures for Welsh language and development rates.

Further consultation will be needed on the development of success measures, including how best to use pre-existing data sources.

“Medr can measure success against its long-term ambitions through a combination of quantitative and qualitative metrics, with a focus on learner outcomes, institutional effectiveness, and social value”.

We did:

We have reviewed our narrative in respect of clear pathways, and reference fostering “collaboration between providers to create coherent and flexible pathways that are easy access and navigate at any point in life”. Respondents referred to multi-entry and exit points, and flexibility - we recognise that we do not yet have the detail underpinning this, and are committed to working to develop such pathways. We welcome the general view that respondents want a cross-sector agreement on ambitions, and support the use of data to inform policy and decision making.

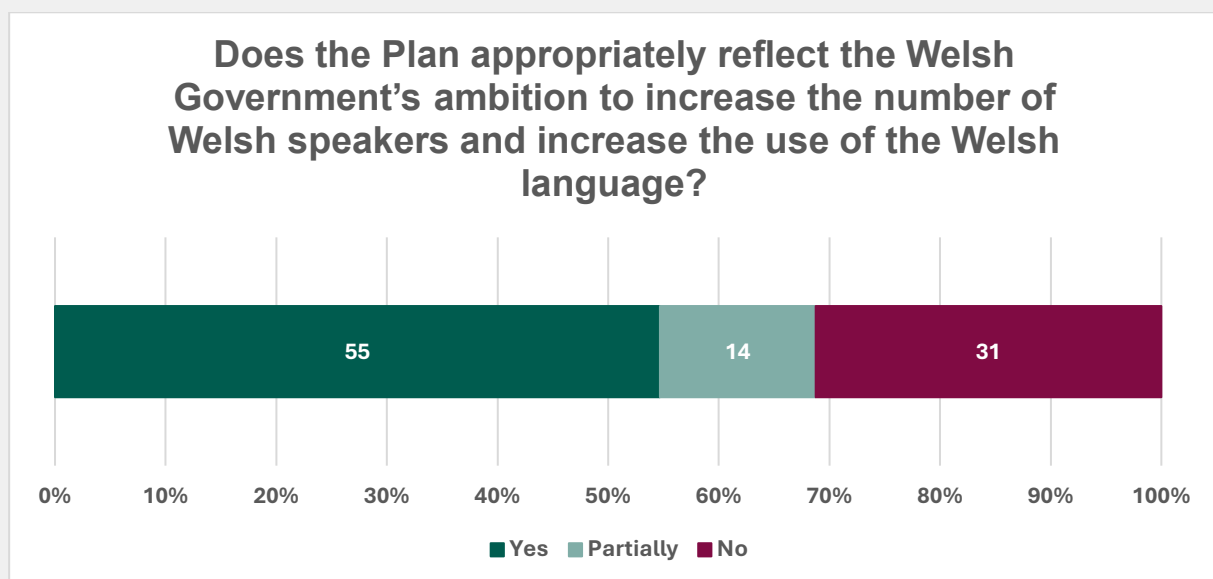
We are committed to working with providers as they set ambitions for continuous improvement, and will consult on performance indicators to support this. Developing measures for success will be articulated in our operational plan.

We asked:

16. We asked a series of questions related to Strategic Aim 5-

- **Does the Plan appropriately reflect the Welsh Government’s ambition to increase the number of Welsh speakers and increase the use of the Welsh language?**
- **Could the Plan be changed to increase positive effects, or decrease adverse effects on opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language?**
- **Could the Plan be changed to increase positive effects, or decrease adverse effects on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language?**

You said:



Base: 64

Just over half of respondents (55%) agreed that the Plan appropriately reflects the Welsh Government’s ambition to increase the number of Welsh speakers and increase the use of the Welsh language. However 31% disagreed with this question.

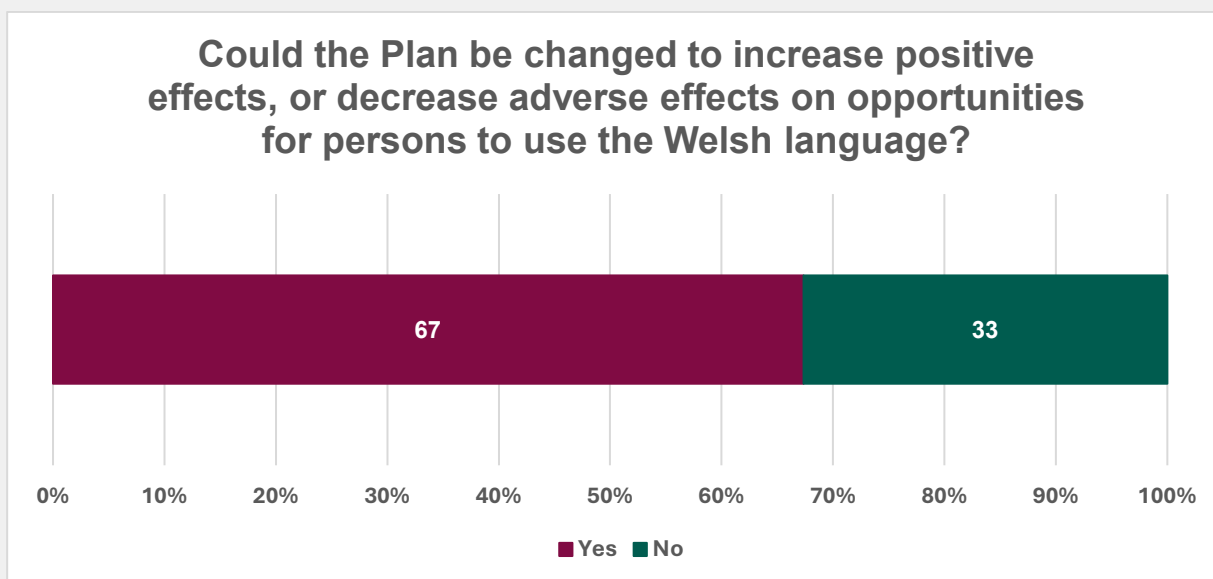
A number of respondents reflect comments made throughout the consultation document response that insufficient detail and ambition with regards to Welsh medium education is evident in the Plan. Key themes that were re-iterated in responses to these questions include:

- The Plan lacks understanding of the tertiary Welsh medium sector.

“The field of post-16 Welsh medium education is unique and distinct from tertiary education in wider provision and requires a mature understanding of the provision before moving forward.”

- Insufficient reference to the challenges of a Welsh medium workforce (or the priority of creating a Welsh medium workforce for the future).
- The fiscal challenges associated with running necessary Welsh medium minority courses.
- Lack of coverage of Welsh medium vocational routes and Welsh medium qualifications.
- Lack of coverage of learning pathways / Welsh medium provision for intensive ALN and ALN students.
- Lack of reference to the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill.
- The need to work with CYDAG (Cymdeithas Ysgolion dros Addysg Gymraeg / Association of Schools for Welsh Language), WESPs (Welsh in Education Strategic Plans) and Local Authorities as partners.

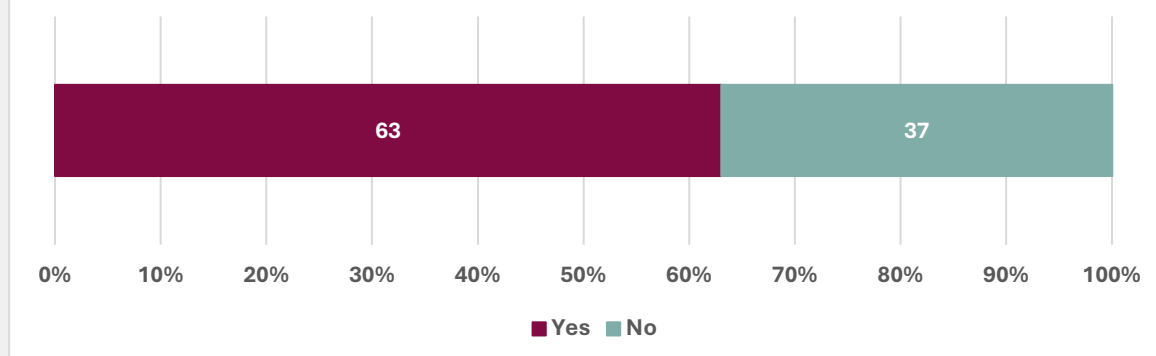
Whilst many respondents welcome the inclusion of a specific Strategic Aim related to Welsh medium education, others would prefer to see consideration of the Welsh language in education and the education workforce mainstreamed throughout all the aims in the Plan.



Base: 49

Over two thirds of respondents (67%) felt that the Plan could be changed to increase positive effects, or decrease adverse effects on opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language. Please note, less than half of respondents answered this question.

Could the Plan be changed to increase positive effects, or decrease adverse effects on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language?



Base: 46

Just under two thirds of respondents (63%) felt that the Plan could be changed to increase positive effects, or decrease adverse effects on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language. Please note, less than half of respondents answered this question.

In general respondents felt that negative consequences for the Welsh language in education would inevitably be felt if the Plan is not ambitious and detailed enough in its aims. Such consequences include:

- Potential unintended consequences of the investment made in (FE) colleges at the expense of the success of Welsh medium schools.
- Lack of understanding of the barriers that exist for learners in pursuing and continuing courses through the medium of Welsh, undermining the ability to strengthen provision.
- Concerns about the funding available to support provision, particularly for Welsh medium school sixth forms.

Respondents also felt that there were a number of areas where the Plan and the establishment of Medr could have positive impact on the opportunities for Welsh medium education in the sector. These include the positive cultural impact on Wales, enhanced Welsh language accessibility in the tertiary sector and stronger support for Welsh language learning pathways.

“It is our strong hope that the Plan will have a positive effect on the opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language. The development of a national plan for Welsh language, with each institution playing a connected and distinctive role, should lead to a more connected tertiary landscape for delivery of Welsh language provision.”

We did:

We are grateful for the wide variety of comments surrounding the Welsh language, in many question responses. For ease of reading, we have collected our responses under questions 16-18 of the consultation document.

We considered carefully whether the Welsh language should be a separate strategic aim, or whether the Welsh language should be part of every strategic aim. We consulted with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol as our designated person in advance of writing the Plan, and came to a decision that it should have an aim in its own right To ensure sufficient prominence and underline its importance.

We recognise the need to work with a range of partners in the development of a national plan for Wales across the tertiary education and research sector, and have made this clearer now in our founding commitments. We have included a specific aim surrounding the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill, recognising that Medr's role in this respect will evolve over time. We have also made explicit reference to the tertiary education and research sector's workforce, and the need to improve the recruitment and retention of staff.

As referred to earlier in our responses, we have made reference to financial challenges across the sector, and understand its pertinence in the context of Welsh language learning. More detailed actions will be included in our operational plan.

Appendix 1- Medr's Strategic Aims

Medr's Strategic Plan: Summary

Our Vision

We will work in close collaboration with our partners to enable a tertiary education and research system that is centred around the needs of learners, society and the economy with excellence, equality and engagement at its heart.

Our Values



Dysgu: to learn; to teach



Cydweithio: to collaborate



Cynnwys pawb: to include everyone



Rhagori: to excel

Strategic Aim 1: To focus the tertiary education sector around the needs of the learner.

Strategic Aim 5: To encourage greater use of the Welsh language, increasing demand for and participation in learning and assessment through the medium of Welsh.

Strategic Aim 2: To create a flexible and joined-up tertiary system where everyone can acquire the skills and knowledge they need for a changing economy and society.

Foundation Aim:
To establish Medr as a highly-effective organisation and trusted regulator.

Strategic Aim 4: To grow internationally-acclaimed research and inspire innovation throughout the tertiary education sector.

Strategic Aim 3: To ensure learners receive the highest-quality provision in a tertiary education sector that strives for continuous improvement.

To establish Medr as a highly-effective organisation and trusted regulator.

Founding commitments:

- Review and implement our Strategic Equality Plan to embed equality, diversity and inclusion across Medr.
- Work closely with our recognised trade union and co-produce a Social Partnership Agreement in 2025.
- Develop our regulatory system, underpinned by a higher education register and terms and conditions of funding.
- Establish baseline data and work with stakeholders to identify priorities for improvement.

Growth commitments:

- Collaborate with stakeholders of all kinds, engaging them meaningfully on our work.
- Take a risk-based approach to monitoring compliance with the regulatory system.
- Review and improve how we collect data to ensure it is high quality and reduces unnecessary burden.
- Consult on a system of funding to support the tertiary education sector and ensure effective use of funding.
- Invest in our workforce, supporting personal and professional development.

To focus the tertiary education sector around the needs of the learner.

Founding commitments:

- Establish regulatory conditions to advance equity and equality of opportunity and work with partners to contribute to eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation, gender-based violence and abuse.
- Contribute to achieving an anti-racist Wales and ensure inclusive learning and work environments for all.
- Promote a person-centred approach to support learners with Additional Learning Needs.
- Establish regulatory conditions to support learner and staff welfare.
- Establish a learner engagement code and ensure that complaints procedures are in place.
- Create a learner voice forum to inform Medr's policy and decision making.
- Ensure that learners and staff are aware of opportunities to learn and work globally.

Growth commitments:

- Enable learners to be outward-looking, engaged citizens, supporting the development of cohesive communities.
- Promote the benefits of learning throughout life and set targets to increase participation.
- Encourage more pre-16 learners to transition to tertiary education and reduce the proportion of NEETs.

To create a flexible and joined-up tertiary system where everyone can acquire the skills and knowledge they need for a changing economy and society.

Founding commitments:

- Support the use of changing technologies, industries and ways of working.
- Work with the Welsh Government to respond to the skills priorities it sets.
- Ensure that apprenticeship provision responds to the Welsh Government's priorities and meets learner, employer and economic need.
- Develop strong links with stakeholders and ensure tertiary provision responds to the Welsh Government's economic priorities.
- Encourage providers to develop their civic mission and share their knowledge to benefit communities.

Growth commitments:

- Facilitate learning throughout life through flexible approaches to time, place, language and support for learning.
- Create coherent and flexible learning pathways that are easy to access at any point in life.
- Review adult community learning and consider how improvements can be made to essential skills and basic language provision.

Strategic Aim 3

To ensure learners receive the highest-quality provision in a tertiary education sector that strives for continuous improvement.

Founding commitments:

- Implement a coherent quality framework that has a focus on learner experience and outcomes.
- Ensure our quality framework aligns with necessary inspection and regulatory frameworks and international standards.
- Actively promote social partnership.
- Work with providers as they set ambitions for continuous improvement and promote innovation and enhancement.
- Introduce performance indicators to promote continuous improvement.

Growth commitments:

- Support the workforce to access effective professional learning and share best practice.
- Define excellent learner outcomes and high-quality provision.
- Set ambitious targets for learner outcomes and experiences.
- Analyse learner outcomes to ensure learning has a positive effect on learners' futures.
- Review how our funding and registration models affect the achievement of performance indicators. Monitor and improve the performance of the sector.

Strategic Aim 4

To grow internationally-acclaimed research and inspire innovation throughout the tertiary education sector.

Founding commitments:

- Promote positive research environments that can attract and retain the best researchers from around the world.
- Strengthen our relationships and help our providers grow the share of research funding they receive.
- Use data to demonstrate the impact of the research and innovation we fund and review how we share knowledge.

Growth commitments:

- Encourage research and innovation activity that has a positive impact on Wales and global influence.
- Promote a culture of innovation and knowledge exchange throughout the tertiary education sector and encourage collaboration that improves productivity and aligns with the skills pipeline.
- Promote opportunities for new businesses that are established as a result of knowledge generated in Wales.
- Encourage participation in national, European and international research programmes and ensure Wales is known for being a great place to undertake research.

Strategic Aim 5

To encourage greater use of the Welsh language, increasing demand for and participation in learning and assessment through the medium of Welsh.

Founding commitments:

- Develop and implement a Welsh Language Strategy to enable Medr to become a bilingual workplace where the Welsh language is always considered in policy decisions.
- Develop and implement a national plan for the Welsh language across the entire tertiary education sector.
- Improve the recruitment and retention of Welsh-speaking staff and enable more staff to become confident in Welsh.

Growth commitments:

- Monitor progress of the achievement of the national plan and take action where necessary.
- Fulfil our role within the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill.
- Promote the benefits of and build demand for learning through the medium of Welsh.
- Establish policies that promote a Welsh-language ethos and culture; encourage the wider tertiary education workforce to develop their Welsh language skills.

Medr

Y Comisiwn Addysg Drydyddol ac Ymchwil
Commission for Tertiary Education and Research

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