

Apprenticeship Programme in Wales: Summary of consultation outcome

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To: Heads of tertiary education providers in Wales
Current apprenticeship providers in Wales / Apprenticeship commissioned contract holders
Employer representative bodies
Learner representative bodies
Local authority education representatives

Response by: No response required

More information: apprenticeships@medr.cymru

Summary

This document provides a summary of the responses to the consultation on the new Welsh Apprenticeship Programme from 1 August 2027, which was published in September 2025.

Summary

One of Medr's Strategic Aims is 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'. We have committed to designing future apprenticeship provision to respond to the Welsh Government's skills priorities and to meet the needs of learners, employers and the economy. This is grounded in our strategic duty to contribute to the development of a sustainable and innovative economy in Wales.

Apprenticeships are a key lever for driving productivity and helping to grow a skilled and diverse workforce. The new Welsh Apprenticeship Programme will start on 1 August 2027.

In September 2025, we held a 6-week [consultation](#) exercise that sought views from stakeholders, including training and tertiary education providers, industry representatives, employers, learners and local authorities, to help shape the new programme. We asked for views on:

- the high level principles to guide the new apprenticeship programme
- definition of an apprenticeship
- apprentice learner journey
- employer engagement
- flexible delivery
- apprenticeship sector frameworks
- economic responsiveness of the programme
- apprentice outcomes
- strengthening Welsh language opportunities
- inclusive apprenticeships

This document provides a summary of key themes from the responses to the consultation and next steps in developing the new programme.

[Annex A](#) provides a more detailed summary of consultation feedback prepared by Beaufort Research.

Introduction

1. As set out in the [consultation document](#), Medr is committed to ensuring that apprenticeship provision continues to meet Welsh Government skills priorities and the evolving needs of learners, employers, and the wider economy, as part of a flexible and joined-up tertiary education system. As we look to design a new apprenticeship programme for Wales, we sought views from key stakeholders to help shape a future-focused, inclusive, and responsive offer.
2. Medr is responsible for the development of the new apprenticeship programme across Wales, which is due to commence in August 2027, as set out in the [Tertiary, Education and Research Act](#). We intend to design the new programme to be more responsive and flexible to address skills priorities to meet our changing economy, Welsh Government skills priorities and the needs of learners.
3. We held a 6-week consultation in September – October 2025, seeking views from stakeholders, including training and tertiary education providers, industry representatives, employers, learners, and local authorities to help shape the new programme. The consultation document provided information on the current apprenticeship programme model, rationale for change, apprenticeship sector frameworks and proposals for the new apprenticeship programme.
4. There were 26 open ended questions contained within the consultation document, seeking views on:
 - the high level principles to guide the new apprenticeship programme
 - definition of an apprenticeship
 - apprentice learner journey
 - employer engagement
 - flexible delivery
 - apprenticeship sector frameworks
 - economic responsiveness of the programme
 - apprentice outcomes
 - strengthening Welsh language opportunities
 - inclusive apprenticeships
5. Five consultation events took place during the consultation period. Over 350 participants engaged with the consultation. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone that contributed, gave up their time to attend the consultation events and submitted consultation responses.
6. The feedback from the consultation has been hugely informative in shaping the development of a new apprenticeship programme that will support high-quality learning, meaningful employment, and long-term economic growth across Wales. This rich intelligence and engagement is invaluable to ensure we create a programme that is more responsive and flexible to address learner needs and skills priorities in our changing economy.
7. We commissioned Beaufort Research to analyse the input from the consultation events and the written responses received. [Annex A](#) provides a detailed analysis of the feedback, prepared by Beaufort Research. This document provides a summary

of the key themes identified which will inform the development of the new programme. The 'Next Steps' section sets out opportunities for further engagement and the timescale for publication of the programme specification.

Apprenticeship Programme principles

8. We consulted on high level principles for the new programme. These stated that it should:
- be an all-age programme.
 - deliver apprenticeships from level 2 to level 6.
 - respond to changing skills demands across the economy and regional skills needs.
 - respond to the Welsh Government's skills priorities, including responding to changing technologies and green skills.
 - meet the needs of learners and support their progression through the tertiary education system and into and throughout their chosen career path.
 - be agile and responsive to ensure the right qualifications and skills are delivered to meet employer, learner and economy needs.
 - deliver inclusive apprenticeships which are accessible for learners from a range of backgrounds and with protected characteristics.
 - increase apprenticeship opportunities available in Welsh.
 - offer high quality provision which strengthens outcomes and attainment of learners.
9. Respondents were in the main content with the overall principles. There were some specific points raised which have been integrated into the Key Themes section of this document, with more detailed information within Annex A.

Definition of an Apprenticeship

10. We consulted on the following definition of an apprenticeship:

'An apprenticeship is paid employment with training. Apprentices gain experience, learn new skills and gain a nationally recognised qualification while earning a wage. This is defined through an apprenticeship framework.'

11. Overall, stakeholder feedback on the apprenticeship definition was positive, with only minor refinements proposed. However, a small number of comments suggested a broader vision for apprenticeships, reflecting aspirational and detailed perspectives from training providers, employers, and learners. This will be developed and published alongside a general definition in the specification for the new programme. The proposed revised definition is outlined below:

'A Welsh apprenticeship is paid employment with training. Apprentices earn a wage, gain experience, learn new skills and gain industry recognised qualifications and competence (from level 2 up to degree level). The learning is defined through an apprenticeship framework.'

Apprenticeship Sector Frameworks

12. As set out in the consultation, we would like to strengthen and streamline the relevance of apprenticeship sector frameworks by implementing a new, simplified structure. There are currently [23 apprenticeship frameworks](#) across all sectors and these can be confusing for learners and employers to understand and navigate. We proposed refining the apprenticeship frameworks from 23 to 18. The proposed simplified structure set out in the consultation was:

- Care
- Health and science
- Engineering and manufacturing
- Creative, design and media
- Business services and management
- Public and protective services
- Education and early years
- Catering and hospitality
- Construction and the built environment
- Legal, finance and accounting
- Digital
- Hair and beauty
- Agriculture, environmental and animal care
- Transport, automotive and logistics
- Energy
- Food and drink
- Property services
- Sport and leisure

13. Overall the respondents were content with the proposed sectors, with some suggested changes. These included Health, Social and Child Care should be grouped together and Engineering and Manufacturing should be split. There was support for all frameworks to contain content on net zero/green, digital and AI (artificial intelligence) learning rather than having separate frameworks for these areas. Respondents also suggested including a high level description or definition for each of the frameworks, which will be implemented. The proposed revised sector frameworks (see [Annex B](#)) following the consultation are:

- Health, social and child care
- Engineering
- Manufacturing
- Creative, design and media
- Management, business and retail services
- Public and protective services
- Education and early years
- Catering and hospitality
- Construction and the built environment
- Legal, finance and accounting
- Digital
- Hair and beauty

- Agriculture, environmental and animal care
 - Transport, automotive and logistics
 - Science and energy
 - Food and drink
 - Property services
 - Sport and leisure
14. A new framework library will be introduced and launched for the start of the new programme in August 2027. We are working with apprenticeship providers and other stakeholders to learn lessons from the current framework library, and address barriers and issues to enable a new streamlined framework library to be implemented.

High Level Themes

15. The following high level themes emerged from the consultation exercise. More detailed analysis of responses to each of the questions is outlined at [Annex A](#).

All age programme

16. All respondents agreed that the programme should continue to be open to all ages, supporting lifelong career progression. This aligns with our strategic duty to promote tertiary education for the people of Wales that provides opportunities for people to participate in tertiary education throughout their lives from the age of 16.

Learner engagement and support

17. As set out in the consultation document, central to our approach is a commitment to equipping learners with the skills, knowledge, and qualifications required to progress through the tertiary education system and to enter and thrive in their chosen careers.
18. Learners may enter the apprenticeship programme at different stages of their life or career journey, including those seeking to retrain, change careers, or adapt to new technologies. The apprenticeship programme needs to be sufficiently flexible and responsive to support learners, as individuals, enabling them to gain the skills and qualifications needed to have a successful and sustainable career in a rapidly changing economy.
19. Strengthened independent careers advice and guidance was a strong theme within the consultation responses for learners to understand the wide and varied career opportunities an apprenticeship could offer and potential progression opportunities. The right information at the right time is key to enabling learners to make an informed choice on entering the world of work and/or progressing within their chosen career. Targeted year-round marketing or communications to learners, peers, influencers, teachers and parents setting out these options was highlighted as an opportunity to attract a more diverse range of learners. Promotion activities should highlight apprenticeships as viable alternative routes to rewarding careers and higher level learning. Further consideration is needed to support learners

through key transition points and decisions, for example from school, further education or higher education into an apprenticeship.

20. Strengthened communications to improve learner understanding of the apprenticeship programme is required. Respondents suggested a one stop shop to provide joined up information in clear simple language that is easy for learners and parents to access and understand.
21. Additional support for learners whilst on programme was paramount to successfully completing their apprenticeship, including mentoring, employability, entrepreneurship skills and wellbeing. There were some suggestions that further help for young people commencing their apprenticeship or entering the world of work for the first time could be introduced, including guidance on workplace conduct and more intensive support at the start of the apprenticeship to reduce the risk of dropping out. Pastoral care to encourage personal growth, building confidence and softer transferrable skills (for example communications, teamwork, problem solving, digital literacy, leadership and wellbeing) was seen as a key benefit for learners to fulfil their potential and become valued members of society regardless of their background. Finally, supporting apprentices after they have finished the apprenticeship to enter sustainable employment was highlighted as important.

Progression throughout the levels and across the tertiary system

22. Opportunities for learners to progress through the apprenticeship levels and across tertiary education is paramount. Apprentices learn at different speeds and the system needs to be flexible and agile to be able to meet and respond to differing needs of learners, including the progression options available. Clearer progression pathways are needed for learners to understand and navigate the full range of career options available to them across the tertiary education system.

Employer engagement and support

23. We need to support employers throughout their engagement with apprenticeships, from understanding what an apprenticeship is, to recruitment and throughout the apprentice journey. This will help the apprenticeship programme to meet the rapidly changing skills needs across Wales.
24. Strengthened communications are needed to improve employer understanding of the apprenticeship programme. Respondents suggested a one stop shop (via a simplified digital system) of clear consistent and centralised information, which is easy for employers to access and includes all relevant information. This should include, but not be limited to, taking on an apprentice (time, financial investment and resources), recruitment process and support throughout the learner journey. This could be through employer guides, resources, toolkits and templates for inductions, learning plans, documenting on and off the job training and an employer charter.
25. There is a need to widen the employer base to enable more employers, especially small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), to take on an apprentice. We need to continue to strengthen relationships with industry bodies and other stakeholders to try and reach more employers, including SMEs. Marketing campaigns could undertake targeted engagement and focus on trying to change employer mindsets

so apprentices are seen as valid and valuable. We could consider where incentives might support this activity.

26. Introducing more intensive mentoring support for employers and line managers and/or creating networks to share good practices, experiences and advice, would enhance employer confidence and improve apprentice retention. This could be from other employers that have gone through the process or directly from apprenticeship providers. Mentoring could include support for recruitment, preparing for an apprentice to start or helping employers gain further knowledge and understanding of providing support to the apprentice throughout their learning. Other suggestions from respondents included short, accessible training for workplace mentors and supervisors, covering topics such as setting expectations, feedback, and supporting wellbeing.
27. There is a need to strengthen employer engagement in developing apprenticeship frameworks including a mechanism for Medr to provide feedback to employers.
28. Apprenticeship providers could work closer with employers to understand the learner's progress and what learning is required at what point, including assessments. They could co-deliver learning, and strengthen the monthly reporting process on where learners are in their journey and how close they are to completion to help employers and learners plan more effectively.

Agile and responsive to meet employer, learner and economy needs

29. There was a clear message throughout all of the consultation responses that the new programme must be flexible and agile to meet the needs of the learner and the economy. This included the length and structure of the apprenticeship being more learner centric, qualifications responding to economic needs, introducing micro-credentials or short bolt-on qualifications, progression between frameworks, flexibility of the framework funding model, essential skills requirements and ability to recognise prior learning.
30. The responses suggested that we need to make better use of labour market intelligence to strengthen forward planning on skills needs across the economy and by region. More agility is needed in updating frameworks to reflect changing industry needs and requirements, whether these are defined by qualifications or occupational standards.
31. Embedding and contextualising literacy, numeracy and digital into vocational training was a key theme. There were calls for the assessment to be simplified and essential skills qualifications to be optional for those learners who require them.

Celebrating successes of learners and parity of esteem

32. A recurring theme across a range of stakeholders was the need to address the perceived lack of parity of esteem between vocational and academic qualifications. Suggestions included apprenticeships to be promoted, recognised and celebrated as equal to academic pathways in status and opportunity, and ongoing sharing of case studies and successes. Respondents also suggested strengthening career advice and guidance and promoting apprenticeships as a first-choice, high-status option alongside other tertiary pathways instead of a secondary choice.

Apprentice outcomes

33. Responses supported strengthening apprenticeship outcomes. Some examples of how this could be done included:
- Sustainable employment being a primary outcome for apprentices alongside achieving the apprenticeship framework.
 - Moving to a more outcome-based funding model.
 - More holistic approach to measurement of apprenticeship success (completion/timely completion, sustained employment, progression, learner/employer satisfaction, competency attainment, readiness for work and economic impact).
 - Quality benchmarks to be measured through robust indicators. Medr intends to consult on tertiary performance indicators in Autumn 2026.

Welsh Language

34. There was support from respondents for greater promotion of apprenticeship opportunities which could increase uptake bilingually and through the medium of Welsh, which should be contextualised to their sectors. Exploring options to expand Welsh-medium and bilingual apprenticeship provision at all levels to ensure language choice for learners was fully supported. There were a number of suggestions from respondents on how this could be undertaken, these included, but were not limited to:
- strategic planning to address shortages of Welsh-speaking tutors, assessors, and mentors, especially in vocational sectors.
 - Welsh language planning to be built into apprenticeship frameworks and programme design as a core principle.
 - building confidence through bite-sized learning.
 - bilingual materials and accessible assessment materials.
 - sector-based approaches.

Inclusive apprenticeships

35. Respondents supported the need to harness the talent of individuals from all backgrounds and proactively work to remove any barriers to people accessing apprenticeships by enabling more inclusive flexible pathways. Community and outreach support was identified as a good approach to encourage under-represented and disadvantaged learners to consider an apprenticeship as a career option. Other respondents suggested that providing flexible assessment and wraparound support could increase participation and support learners from all demographics to complete their apprenticeship successfully. Others suggested that further work is needed to align more fully with employability programmes and work experience provision to enable learners to progress onto an apprenticeship. Respondents also suggested providing training to employers to raise awareness. Further work is needed to explore options for learners that may have other barriers to accessing apprenticeships beyond Medr's direct remit, for example language, transport and childcare, so that the system as a whole can offer more accessible and equitable opportunities.

36. There was an overwhelming consensus that Supported Apprenticeships, the Employer Incentive Scheme and Additional Learning Support were successful and should continue in the new programme.

Programme implementation and management

37. Responses raised further points related to the implementation and ongoing management of the new apprenticeship programme. These included:
- Supporting learners through better use of technology.
 - Setting clear accountability structures and defining roles.
 - Making funding arrangements flexible and responsive to emerging needs, enabling innovation and adaptation as priorities evolve.
 - Evidence-based research to inform policy and practice, ensuring decisions were grounded in robust analysis.
 - Increasing availability of end-point assessors, streamlining validation, and strengthening recognition of prior learning systems.
 - Strengthening links between further education and higher education.

Next steps

38. The key next steps on the development and implementation of the new apprenticeship programme 2027 are:

Activity	Date
Publication of the timetable for the development and implementation of the new apprenticeship programme with key dates on further engagement in the design of the programme specification.	February 2026
Consultation on the proposed new apprenticeship funding model.	May 2026
Events to test the detailed design of the new Apprenticeship Programme	May 2026
Continued engagement with employers through events and research to understand the demand for apprenticeships, opportunities for innovation in programme delivery and design, how we could expand the employer base to ensure broader engagement and participation, and what further support and communications are needed to assist employers.	February – April 2026
Engagement with learners to better understand what works well and where there are opportunities for improvement, including pre-apprenticeship, during their apprenticeship and once their apprenticeship has been completed.	March – May 2026

Publication of the programme specification and grant commissioning documentation - inviting providers to bid for funding for the new programme	September 2026
The new apprenticeship framework library will be launched.	August 2027
The new apprenticeship programme will commence.	1 August 2027

Further information

39. Any queries regarding this circular should be directed to Heather Davidson, Head of Apprenticeships (apprenticeships@medr.cymru).

Medr

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