

To: FESC
From: Wales Official
Date: June 19
Agenda Item:
For: Decision

Subject: Policy on Junior Apprenticeships in Wales

CAVC was the first college in Wales to offer a range of Junior Apprenticeships (14-16 years of age) partially funded by a direct grant from Welsh Government. This provision was rolled out across colleges in Wales in academic year 18/19. UCU has noticed an increase in issues relating to acceptable student behaviour, a matter which has been discussed within the JTUs. The JTUs agreed to do a survey to collect data to provide the evidence base to raise this matter with the Minister. This paper begins by presenting the key findings from the survey of UCU members and the combined results for the JTUs which is followed by UCU's policy position on junior apprenticeships and the actions required in order to address the issues identified.

1. Survey Findings

- 1.1 The survey revealed junior apprenticeship to be one of the courses in which staff experienced poor student behaviour.
- 1.2 The primary forms of student misbehaviour identified by staff were:(i) disrespect (70%); (ii) low level disruption (48%); verbal abuse (52%); physical aggression (16%); destroying property/buildings (10%); bullying in person (10%).
- 1.3 75% of staff responded that they had experienced challenging, disruptive or violent behaviour by a student in the previous academic year. This impacted upon staff in a number of ways with the most common being work disruption (53%); stress (48%); anxiety (41%); consideration of change of job (40%) or profession (33%); loss of confidence in the classroom (33%).
- 1.4 With regards staff CDP training on how to deal with student behaviour issues 9% of staff responded that they received good training, 11% received adequate training while 39% responded that the training was inadequate. A further 32% of staff reported that they didn't receive any training.
- 1.5 94% of staff confirmed that their institution does have a policy to deal with student behaviour issues with the most commonly reported sanctions used being: verbal warnings (45%); written warnings (35%) and meetings with parents & tutors (33%). The survey revealed the continued use of student exclusions with staff reporting fixed term exclusion being used in 17% and permanent exclusions in 13% of instances.
- 1.6 With regards staff satisfaction levels with regards the institutional response to reported student behaviour issues only 15% of staff were totally happy with the institutions response, 35% were partially satisfied while 49% were unhappy with their institutions response.
- 1.7** The findings demonstrate that student behaviour issues are a significant problem within FE institutions and manifest in an array of ways. These issues are having a detrimental effect upon staff, both on a professional and personal level, and are consequently impacting negatively on the quality of teaching.

The survey results highlight the absence of sufficient and quality staff training to be a real issue that requires addressing. Despite the existence of student behaviour policies within FE institutions, the survey results indicate that these are not being properly or consistently implemented with a high level of staff dissatisfaction with the institutions response when student behaviour issues are reported. The continued use of learner exclusions is a particular cause for concern.

2. UCU Policy Position

- 2.1 In coming to a decision about what UCU Wales policy should be we need to consider the following. We have as a nation a moral and statutory responsibility to ensure that the educational and training needs of all young people are met. This education and training may at times not always take the traditional route, and the delivery of an alternative curriculum is needed. Many young people at risk of becoming NEET through disengagement of the education system still have the potential to become skilled and successful members of the labour market and society. But any alternative curriculum must not replicate any issues experienced by the young person in the formal sector of education. Unless these issues are tackled, the young person will remain at risk of becoming NEET and be further at risk of poorer outcomes increasing costs to the individual, their community and the state.
- 2.2 Wales is offering alternative curriculum, the Junior Apprenticeship (JA) Programme, aimed at young people 14-16 years old who are either at risk of disengaging with the school system and becoming NEET, or (on occasions), have a very clear idea of the vocational pathway they wish to follow. The JA programme seeks to raise educational standards and is aligned to the Welsh Government's priority sectors.¹ Education is fundamental to achieving a workforce that is productive and sustainable. However, some young people struggle to cope with the requirements of formal mainstream education, nevertheless there is an expectation that they will somehow cope within an informal college environment.
- 2.3 Many young people disengage with the education system rather than education per se. Socio economic, family, behaviour or mental health issues can impact on a young person leading to a lack of aspiration, motivation and underachievement. These issues can lead to anger and frustration often resulting in challenging and confrontational behaviours in the classroom. However, we must not assume that these young people are a homogenous group where a one size fits all approach is effective. It should not be expected that a young person will hold the social and emotional resilience needed to slot into a college environment and culture. If the school system didn't work for them, how can we expect a college system to? Joining the JA programme without a suitable transition period and highly skilled staff may lead to a replication of the issues experienced in the school system leading to the young person feeling further failed, become challenging and disconnecting from education permanently.
- 2.4 Research into alternative curricula provision across the UK has shown that a range of specialist well trained staff who are committed, caring and knowledgeable are key to providing quality provision. There is also an acknowledgement of the importance of attracting and retaining quality staff in this area.² Most FE teachers are subject specialists who entered the profession with a particular desire to work with post compulsory age students. They impart new knowledge to young people who have chosen a specific educational route based on the subject or future career aspirations. When confronted by students, who may have disengaged with the education system at a secondary

¹ Cardiff and Vale College. (2016-2017) Protocols and Procedures: Junior Apprenticeship Programme. Pg 2.

² Department for Education, (2017). Alternative Provision: Effective Practice and Post 16 Transition: pg 47.

- level, and who do not hold the social and emotional resilience to cope with the new system, teachers can struggle pedagogically.
- 2.5 Empowering young people to develop the skills and knowledge to take control of their lives should be implemented on an individual basis. Teachers are not always equipped with the specialist skills or time to engage students that have previously experienced issues in formal education. In their research Thompson and Pennacchia (2015) found that some of the best providers of alternative curriculums paid for additional specialist training to ensure their staff were of the highest skill set and up to date with policies.³ Traditionally this informal learning was undertaken by youth workers in community centres or in Pupil Referral Units. When faced with young people who have disengaged with the education system it is important that there is an understanding of their individual needs and a support network.
 - 2.6 UCU should argue for a well thought out transition period that reinforces young people's value to help them to develop their soft and academic skills which will go a long way to enriching their experiences of college life and a programme such as Junior Apprenticeships. It will further prepare them socially and emotionally for the demands of an alternative learning environment that is predominately a mix of mature students and new social norms.
 - 2.7 In addition to a meaningful transition period for the young people, staff timetabled to teach 14-16-year olds on JA programmes, should not only have advanced training or previous experience of working with young people of this age, but a desire to work in a more informal way to develop their personal and social skills.
 - 2.8 Without such, the priorities and ethos of the programmes may be lost leading to issues that can potentially impact on staff and student well-being. The common goal for all is meeting the desired outcomes for young people and the Welsh Government priorities, we cannot just expect to fit a square peg into a round hole.

3. Action Required

- 3.1 Send a version of this briefing to the Minister requesting they consider amending the curriculum for junior apprenticeships to include an appropriate period to deal with behaviour.
- 3.2 Secure and embed a partnership approach (e.g. FE colleges, secondary schools, parents, LEA, support providers) to Junior Apprenticeships.
- 3.3 Where required, ensure that an appropriate support package is put in place for the learner prior to the commencement of the course.
- 3.4 Ensure that the correct infrastructure (e.g. toilet facilities) exist within the institution that meet the needs of the young people and comply with statutory requirements (e.g. Child Protection, Health and Safety).
- 3.5 Specialised CPD to be made available for lecturing staff who want to work with these potential NEETS learners.
- 3.6 Develop guidance for colleges advising against forcing staff to teach this group of learners, without appropriate training provided.
- 3.7 FE institutions to have robust policies and procedures to deal with student behaviour issues and ensure that these are adhered to and properly implemented in a fair and consistent manner.
- 3.8 Promote the provision of Junior Apprenticeships being available to ALL 14-16 year old, not just those who are at risk of becoming NEET.

³ The Princes Trust, (2015). What's the alternative? Effective support for young people disengaging from the mainstream. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281451351_What's_the_alternative_Effective_support_for_young_people_disengaging_from_the_mainstream_Funder_The_Princes_Trust]