



Senedd Further Education and Skills Cross Party Group Report

Summer 2024

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The Senedd Cross Party Group (CPG) for Further Education (FE) and Skills was established in May 2017 by ColegauCymru, and chaired by John Griffiths MS. The group brings together MSs from across the political spectrum, stakeholders from the FE sector, and wider interested parties and businesses, to discuss and promote the public benefit of FE in Wales. This paper sets out the impact of the group’s work in 2023/24, and looks ahead to the future.

Impact Statement

In 2023/24, the CPG held its first joint meeting with the CPG for Universities. This meeting was the first of its kind and a valuable moment in our journey towards a tertiary sector ahead of the launch of Medr on 1 August 2024. The joint meeting was well attended by both Senedd Members and wider stakeholders, and there was consensus that the group should revisit the recommendations in the [Transitions to Employment report](#), published by Dr Hefin David MS, as we transition into Medr. This meeting demonstrated the commitment to collaborative working across the higher and further education sectors. It was suggested the CPGs for FE and Skills and for Universities should continue the dialogue on this report and meet again with an invite extended to the Welsh Government’s Cabinet Secretary for Education. ColegauCymru is proactively engaging with the HE sector as during the transition phase into Medr to ensure the interests of the learner are put first.

In April 2024, ColegauCymru launched the [Demonstrating the Social Value of FE Colleges in Wales](#) report during a CPG meeting with attendance and contribution from the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Lynne Neagle MS. Contributors included Guy Lacey, former Chief Executive and Principal of Coleg Gwent and Chair of ColegauCymru, and Dr Sarah Evans, Director of Business Growth and Consultancy at Cwmpas who led the research. We were pleased to welcome the newly appointed Cabinet Secretary for Education, ensuring that the social value of the FE sector was well understood by the highest office. Just some weeks later, the Cabinet Secretary [made reference to the report](#) during plenary proceedings in the Senedd, highlighting her support for the work undertaken by ColegauCymru.

Current CPG Members

- John Griffiths MS (Chair) (Welsh Labour)
- Luke Fletcher MS (Plaid Cymru)
- Mike Hedges MS (Welsh Labour)
- Vikki Howells MS (Welsh Labour)
- Samuel Kurtz MS (Welsh Conservatives)

A word from John Griffiths MS, Chair

ColegauCymru is delighted that John Griffiths MS continues to support not only the work of the FE sector in Wales, but also the work of the CPG for FE and Skills. Here are his thoughts on the work of the group so far:

“The cross-party group has been an important platform to better connect politicians with those working in Further Education across Wales. We know historically this is a sector, that compared to Higher Education, has not always had the support it needs. Having benefited from further education myself in Newport, I appreciate and recognise the opportunities it can give to an individual for a second chance in life.”

“Over the last 12 months, I’ve been very pleased to chair the Cross-Party Group for Further Education & Skills and work with the ColegauCymru team. We have and continue to explore issues such as the social value of FE, collaboration with our universities and discussed the funding and policy challenges facing the sector.”

A word from David Hagenydk, Chief Executive, ColegauCymru

“Over the last seven years, the Cross-Party Group for FE and Skills has offered the sector and our wider partners an opportunity to meet and discuss issues facing the sector, while also celebrating our successes with contributions from both Senedd Members and Government Ministers. The ColegauCymru team and I look forward to building on the success of the CPG over the next academic year, which will be a significant time of change for the tertiary sector as we transition into Medr.”

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Chair, John Griffiths MS, for his work with the Group over the last seven years. It is encouraging to know that we have such continuous support from a Senedd Member who has been through an FE education firsthand and understands the benefits it provides to learners and their lives.”

Looking ahead to 2024/25

There are various challenges for the FE sector as we look ahead to the new academic year. Sustainable funding has and will continue to be an area for concern for colleges, and so we must continue to emphasise the value that FE brings to Wales. This value is not only financial, but also to our learners and our communities as demonstrated in our social value report.

The transition into Medr will bring both challenges and opportunities for the sector. Colegau Cymru is working proactively with Medr and the Welsh Government to ensure a smooth and efficient transition for all organisations involved. We must ensure that Medr put learners at the heart of a reformed post-16 sector.

Alongside these challenges will be the importance with reforms to vocational education and training so that more young people and adults are able to access these important pathways.

The CPG is a valuable mechanism for Colegau Cymru to highlight both areas for celebration as well as development.

Potential future meeting topics

1. Medr – the transition phase and beyond

The CPG will provide an opportunity to invite senior Medr representatives to discuss how the establishment of Medr is progressing. This may also present an opportunity to hold a further joint meeting with the Universities Cross-Party Group, highlighting our readiness to collaborate with other education settings as we work our way through the transition to Medr.

2. Engineering skills - joint meeting with the Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine (STEMM) CPG

Discussions are underway with the Secretariat of the STEMM CPG to explore a future joint meeting focussing on engineering skills and colleges' contribution to innovation in this sector. This would provide an opportunity to engage with a wider group of MSs who may not have had the opportunity to engage with the FE CPG to date.

3. WorldSkills

Colleges have been engaged with the various skills competitions developed by the Inspiring Skills Excellence in Wales project funded by from the Welsh Government. WorldSkills supports young people across the world via competitions-based training, assessment and benchmarking, with members' national teams ultimately testing their ability to achieve world-class standards in the biennial 'skills olympics'. The final of WorldSkills will take place in Lyon in September 2024, with competitors taking part from three colleges in Wales -. A future CPG meeting focused on skills competitions would allow MSs to hear directly from competitors and college staff about the importance of skills competition in raising the profile of skills in Wales.

4. 14-19 Pathways

This is an area the CPG is keen to explore further. Colegau Cymru believes a new 14-19 learning and transition pathway must be a priority for the Welsh Government. A new 14-19 pathway must include greater opportunities for learners in Years 10 and 11 to be able to access vocational education in college, where they will receive education from those with industry knowledge in a setting with the correct resources and equipment available to them. This could be an opportunity for the sector to emphasise that all school age learners should have the right to hear directly from colleges about the option of studying in further education and work-based learning. This discussion would draw on the findings from the [Transitions to Employment](#), and invitations could be made to young people who have embarked on vocational pathways at a young age and have become successful in their education/employment journeys.

CPG Terms of Reference – set in 2017

- To discuss and explore potential opportunities for the future skills landscape of Wales.
- To promote understanding amongst Senedd Members and other relevant stakeholders about the issues facing further education and future skills in Wales.
- To provide advice and support to Senedd Members on key issues around FE activity.
- To evidence the importance of education as a crucial part of building the inclusive society we all want to see with FE at the heart of this.

Looking forward to the 2024/25 AGM, there may be an opportunity to revisit the terms of reference to ensure that they are still relevant and achievable.

Further Information

For more information, please contact:

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