



Work based learning

Introduction

Work based learning (WBL) is a bridge between education and work that allows people to "learn while earning". WBL includes provision from level 1 through to level 4, for young people and adults, and for both employed and unemployed learners. There are currently five Work based learning programmes in Wales falling under the marketing banner 'Learning Works'. These programmes cater for all eligible learners over 16 years of age and consist of the following:

- Preparatory Training (youth/adult) known as Skill Build - this is aimed at unemployed learners who are vocationally unfocused, lack confidence, have poor motivation or basic skills;
- Skills Training (youth/adult) known as Skill Build +. This has two strands Skillbuild Plus (non-employed) which comprises occupational learning to NVQ level 1 for young people who must be endorsed by Careers Wales and occupational learning to NVQ 1 or 2 or 3 for individuals in receipt of learning allowances paid through the Department of Work and Pensions. Skillbuild + (employed status) is a programme for employed learners to undertake basic skills qualifications and core key skills at level 1. For 2007/08, Skill Build and Skillbuild+ will be merged;
- Foundation Modern Apprenticeship are employment-based programmes at level 2;
- Modern Apprenticeships are similar in structure and involve learning to level 3, but unlike Foundation Modern Apprenticeships are only open to employed status learners. Both types of Apprenticeships are based on frameworks devised by the relevant industry Sector Skills Councils;
- Modern Skills Diploma is an employment-based programme at level 4. It is only open to employed status learners.

The latest statistics published (for 2004/05) show:

- 58,620 individual learners pursued WBL with providers (including further education institutions) receiving funding from ELWa in 2004/05;
- The number of individual learners on WBL programmes has increased by 27% between March 2000 and March 2005;
- 66% of WBL learners were under the age of twenty five on 31 August 2004; 2% were of a non-white ethnic origin and 5% had a disability.ⁱ

Overview of current statutory powers of the Assembly

- The *Education and Inspections Act 2006*ⁱⁱ received Royal Assent on 8 November 2006. Section 178 of the Act contained wide powers for the Assembly to make subordinate legislation, known as 'framework powers'. A draft Order in Councilⁱⁱⁱ to convert the framework powers in the Act into powers for the Assembly to make Assembly Measures in the same policy areas was debated and approved by the Assembly in Plenary on 7 March 2007. Powers included in the Order include those in connection with the curriculum in schools maintained by local education authorities.
- "Education and training" is Field 5 of Schedule 5 of the *Government of Wales Act 2006*. This means that the National Assembly for Wales can seek Measure-making powers over education matters through Legislative Competence Orders.

Key Welsh Government strategy documents and action plans from the Second Assembly:

The *Work Based Learning Improvement Plan*^{iv} was approved by the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills in January 2006. The all-age programmes will be refocused to facilitate delivery against the two key policy drivers of employability (tackling economic inactivity) and upskilling of the existing workforce (skills). It is intended that the employability programme will be improved in a number of ways in order to facilitate access for learners of all ages and abilities, and its key aim will be provide opportunities for individuals to gain the appropriate skills to enter, and to remain within, the labour market. The Plan contains 12 recommendations for the review and redesign of the existing work-based learning programmes in order for them to best meet the needs of individuals and employers. The Minister provided a progress paper to the Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee on 14 February 2007^v.

The [Learning Country: Vision into Action](#)^{vi} is the Welsh Assembly Government's strategic plan for education, lifelong learning and skills in Wales until 2010.

Legacy issues from the Second Assembly

The Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee's legacy paper highlighted the following issue for the attention of the Third Assembly:

- Monitor the progress of the Work Based Learning Improvement Plan.

Useful Links

- The Welsh Assembly Government has a website covering education and lifelong learning issues: <http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/?lang=en>

Further information

For further information on any aspect of Work based learning, please contact Anne Thomas, Members' Research Service (Anne.Thomas@wales.gsi.gov.uk), 029 2089 8966

ⁱ National Assembly for Wales, [Further Education, Work-based Learning and Community Learning in Wales Statistics 2004/05](#), March 2007

ⁱⁱ The [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#) (C40)

ⁱⁱⁱ The [National Assembly for Wales \(Legislative Competence\) \(Conversion of Framework Powers\) Order 2007](#) (No.910/2007)

^{iv} National Assembly for Wales, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee Paper (ELLS(2) 05-06(p4)), [Work-Based Learning Improvement Plan](#), 16 March 2006

^v National Assembly for Wales, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee Paper (ELLS(2) 03-07(p4)), [Work Based Learning](#), 14 March 2007

^{vi} Welsh Assembly Government [The Learning Country: Vision into Action](#) 26 October 2006