



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

**WRITTEN ASSEMBLY QUESTION
FOR ANSWER BY
THE CABINET SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION
ON 22 NOVEMBER 2017**

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What benefit is given to a school's Estyn rating if they actively take part and help their pupils to engage with the Seren Network? (WAQ75179)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What percentage of students currently involved with the Seren Network are privately educated? (WAQ75178)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What provision is made for those who study at Welsh-medium schools to benefit from the Seren Network? (WAQ75177)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: Have the Flintshire and Wrexham, Gwynedd and Anglesey, and Conwy Seren Network Hubs seen any increase in applications to Oxbridge in 2017/18? (WAQ75176)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How many Seren Network Hubs saw an increase in applications to Oxbridge in 2017/18? (WAQ75175)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How many of the 1034 pupils of the 2015-16 Seren network cohort have taken places at Russell Group universities? (WAQ75172)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How many offers from the University of Cambridge and the University of Oxford were made to the 1034 pupils who were part of the 2015-16 Seren Network cohort? (WAQ75171)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How many offers from Russell Group universities were made to the 1034 pupils who were part of the 2015-16 Seren Network cohort? (WAQ75170)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the breakdown of pupils attending the Cardiff Seren Network Hub, by Estyn rating of the school they attend? (WAQ75169)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the breakdown of pupils attending the Vale of Glamorgan Seren Network hub by Estyn rating of the school they attend? (WAQ75168)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the breakdown of pupils attending the Ceredigion Seren Network hub by Estyn rating of the school they attend? (WAQ75166)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the breakdown of pupils attending the Anglesey-Gwynedd Seren Network Hub by Estyn rating of the school they attend? (WAQ75165)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the breakdown of pupils attending the Conwy-Denbighshire Seren Network Hub, by Estyn rating of the school they attend? (WAQ75163)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the breakdown of pupils attending the Neath-Port Talbot, Bridgend and Powys Seren Network hub by the Estyn rating of the school they attend? (WAQ75162)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the breakdown of pupils attending the Educational Achievement Service Seren Network Hub, by Estyn rating of the school they attend? (WAQ75161)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the breakdown of pupils attending the Pembrokeshire-Carmarthenshire Seren Network Hub, by Estyn rating of the school they attend? (WAQ75159)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the breakdown of pupils attending the Rhondda Cynon Taff-Merthyr Seren Network Hub, by Estyn rating of the school they attend? (WAQ75158)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the breakdown of pupils attending the Swansea Seren Network hub by Estyn rating of the school they attend? (WAQ75157)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the breakdown of pupils attending the Flintshire and Wrexham Seren Network Hub by Estyn rating of the school they attend? (WAQ75155)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the national breakdown of pupils who attend further education colleges compared with those who attend sixth form centres taking part in the Seren Network? (WAQ75154)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the breakdown of pupils who attend further education colleges versus sixth form centres, who take part in the Seren Network in the Vale Of Glamorgan Hub? (WAQ75153)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the breakdown of pupils who attend further education colleges compared with those who attend sixth form centres who take part in the Seren Network in the Ceredigion hub? (WAQ75152)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the breakdown of pupils who attend further Education colleges versus sixth form centres, who take part in the Seren Network in the Anglesey-Gwynedd Hub? (WAQ75151)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the breakdown of pupils who attend Further Education Colleges versus Sixthform Centres who take part in the Seren Network in the Conwy-Denbighshire Hub? (WAQ75150)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the breakdown of pupils who attend further education colleges compared with those who attend sixth-form centres who take part in the Seren Network in the Neath-Port Talbot, Bridgend and Powys hub? (WAQ75149)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the breakdown of pupils who attend further education colleges compared with those who attend sixth form centres who take part in the Seren Network in the Cardiff hub? (WAQ75148)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the breakdown of pupils who attend further education colleges versus sixth-form centres who take part in the Seren Network in the educational achievement service hub? (WAQ75147)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the breakdown of pupils who attend Further Education Colleges versus sixth-form centres who take part in the Seren Network in the Pembrokeshire-Carmarthenshire Hub? (WAQ75146)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the breakdown of pupils who attend further education colleges versus sixth-form centres who take part in the Seren Network in the Rhondda Cynon Taff-Merthyr Hub? (WAQ75144)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the breakdown of pupils who attend further education colleges compared with those who attend sixth form centres who take part in the Seren Network in the Swansea hub? (WAQ75143)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the breakdown of pupils who attend further education colleges versus sixth-form centres who take part in the Seren Network in the Flintshire–Wrexham hub? (WAQ75142)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How are pupils selected to take part in the Seren Network in the Vale of Glamorgan hub area? (WAQ75141)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How are pupils selected to take part in the Seren Network in the Ceredigion Hub Area? (WAQ75140)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How are pupils selected to take part in the Seren Network in the Anglesey-Gwynedd Hub Area? (WAQ75139)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How are pupils selected to take part in the Seren Network in the Conwy-Denbighshire Hub Area? (WAQ75138)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How are pupils selected to take part in the Seren Network in the Neath Port Talbot, Bridgend and Powys Hub Area? (WAQ75137)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How are pupils selected to take part in the Seren Network in the Cardiff Hub Area? (WAQ75136)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How are pupils selected to take part in the Seren Network in the Educational Achievement Service Hub Area? (WAQ75135)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How are pupils selected to take part in the Seren Network in the Pembrokeshire-Carmarthenshire Hub Area? (WAQ75134)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How are pupils selected to take part in the Seren Network in the Rhondda Cynon Taff-Merthyr Hub Area? (WAQ75133)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How are pupils selected to take part in the Seren Network in the Swansea Hub Area? (WAQ75132)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How are pupils selected to take part in the Seren Network in the Flintshire–Wrexham Hub Area? (WAQ75131)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: Why have the 11 Seren Network hubs had such different levels of pupil recruitment ranging from a low of 82 pupils to a high of 304 in the first year of the hubs? (WAQ75129)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: Is there any planned review of the key performance indicators used to assess the Seren Network and if so when will this review be complete? (WAQ75127)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What are the current key performance indicators used by the Welsh Government to determine the success or failure of the Seren Network? (WAQ75125)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How many pupils in the Seren network come from families that have not previously had a family member attend university? (WAQ75123)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What is the socio-economic breakdown of pupils who have been part of the Seren Network? (WAQ75122)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How many volunteers have been actively involved at the Anglesey-Gwynedd Seren Network Hub in the past academic year and what is the total number of hours worked by these volunteers? (WAQ75118)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How many volunteers have been actively involved at the Ceredigion Seren Network Hub in the past academic year and what is the total number of hours worked by these volunteers? (WAQ75119)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How many volunteers have been actively involved at the Vale of Glamorgan Seren Network Hub in the past academic year and what is the total number of hours worked by these volunteers? (WAQ75120)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What performance data was collected on 1034 pupils who joined the Seren Network in 2015/16? (WAQ75121)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How many volunteers have been actively involved at the Pembrokeshire-Carmarthenshire Seren Network Hub in the past academic year and what is the total number of hours worked by these volunteers? (WAQ75113)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How many volunteers have been actively involved at the Educational Achievement Service Seren Network Hub in the past academic year and what is the total number of hours worked by these volunteers? (WAQ75114)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How many volunteers have been actively involved at the Cardiff Seren Network Hub in the past academic year and what is the total number of hours worked by these volunteers? (WAQ75115)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How many volunteers have been actively involved at the Neath-Port Talbot, Bridgend and Powys Seren Network Hub in the past academic year and what is the total number of hours worked by these volunteers? (WAQ75116)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How many volunteers have been actively involved at the Conwy-Denbighshire Seren Network Hub in the past academic year and what is the total number of hours worked by these volunteers? (WAQ75117)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: Why does the Welsh Government assume that only 75 per cent of students who start the Seren Network in year 12 will continue to receive support in year 13? (WAQ75103)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: What support is offered via the Seren Network through Year 13 to ensure that pupils reach the university offers they were able to attain with the aid of the Seren Network? (WAQ75104)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How much is each Seren Network Hub funded on a yearly basis and where does this funding come from, excluding the initial start-up cost? (WAQ75105)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: Excluding the initial start-up cost, how is the funding for each Seren Network Hub determined? (WAQ75106)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How is funding for each Seren Network Hub broken down between Welsh-medium education and English-medium education within that Hub? (WAQ75107)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How many full-time staff are employed by each Seren Network Hub and what is the total number of hours worked by these per hub? (WAQ75108)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How many part-time staff are employed by each Seren Network Hub and what is the total number of hours worked by these per hub? (WAQ75109)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How many volunteers have been actively involved at the Flintshire–Wrexham Seren Network Hub in the past academic year and what is the total number of hours worked by these volunteers? (WAQ75110)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How many volunteers have been actively involved at the Swansea Seren Network Hub in the past academic year and what is the total number of hours worked by these volunteers? (WAQ75111)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How many volunteers have been actively involved at the Rhondda Cynon Taff - Merthyr Seren Network Hub in the past academic year and what is the total number of hours worked by these volunteers? (WAQ75112)

Mark Reckless South Wales East: How many of the 1034 pupils of the 2015-16 Seren network cohort have taken places at either the University of Oxford or the University of Cambridge? (WAQ75173)

Kirsty Williams: A number of questions have been tabled regarding the work of the Seren Network. This response draws together responses to these questions based on information currently available. In some cases it has not been possible to collate this information from across the Network within the time parameters required for my response here. Where information cannot be provided this will be made clear.

The Seren Network was set up with two things in mind. The first was to help better prepare young people in Wales for applying and progressing to leading universities. The second was to create a sensible infrastructure across Wales to provide this preparation, with regional hubs working in partnership under a national umbrella network. We continue to develop our support for young people, and are constantly learning and evolving to meet their needs, and will continue to do so.

We have made huge progress with the creation of the Network infrastructure to support this work. Eleven regional hubs have been established, all as true partnerships with schools and colleges working together to support all their students. Where appropriate, this government has complemented the regional work with a national framework providing an annual conference, an annual Seren summer school at Oxford University and the development of close and supporting relationships with the majority of the leading Universities.

One of the benefits of this structural approach is that there is a clear and consistent system for partners to work with. The engagement we have had with national and international universities, charities and other organisations has demonstrated the strength of this approach. Universities have been more willing to commit their own funding to supporting Welsh students, through for example the Oxford University summer school because they can see how their resource fits within a logical and efficient system of engagement. Where other policy issues have arisen, for example the provision of Further Maths tuition or preparation for Medicine pre-application tests, the Seren Network has been an ideal solution for getting the right information and support to target students quickly and efficiently, and on an equitable basis.

The infrastructure of the Seren Network, the partnership working and the collegiality between institutions is a real and tangible early success story of this programme.

In WAQs 75155, 75157, 75158, 75159, 75161, 75162, 75163, 75165, 75166, 75168 and 75169 you ask about the breakdown of pupils attending each Seren Hub by Estyn rating of the school they attend.

Collating the information necessary to provide a response to these questions will take some time and careful consideration needs to be given to the analysis of the data and possible conclusions drawn from it. There are many factors which may have an impact on individual student performance and simplistic correlations may not speak to strong causal relationships.

The Seren Network was developed to provide a universal provision in Wales, with an expectation that all schools and colleges across Wales are actively involved.

The issue of the link between Estyn ratings and participation in the Seren Network is, however, an interesting one and, a matter my officials are exploring with the individual hubs. I will ask my officials to build the consideration of the link between Estyn grades of individual

schools and participation in Seren Network activities into the evaluation which is currently being prepared and planned for completion in February 2018.

In WAQs 75142, 75143, 75144, 75146, 75147, 75148, 75149, 75150, 75151, 75152, 75153 and 75154 you ask about the breakdown of pupils who attend further education colleges versus sixth form centres, who take part in the Seren Network in each Hub area.

The information we have to date is captured in the table below is for the 2016-17 academic year. I would, again, urge considerable caution in drawing any conclusions from the results. The structure of education systems across different local authorities in Wales varies considerably so it is difficult to compare like with like. Some areas have tertiary structures (i.e. Merthyr Tydfil has no sixth forms), others have more schools with sixth forms.

	HUB	FE Year 12	FE Year 13	SIXTH FORM Year 12	SIXTH FORM YEAR 13
1	Flintshire-Wrexham	0	0	105	90
2	Denbigh-Conway	7	0	134	0
3	Gwynedd-Mon	28	23	92	73
4	Ceredigion	3	4	115	110
5	Powys/Bridgend/NPT	10/28	10/28	119/232	135/213
6	Swansea	155	0	143	0
7	Vale of Glam	0	0	200	200
8	Carms-Pembs	73	67	277	279
9	RCT-Merthyr	22	17	130	140
10	Cardiff	35	27	45	120
11	EAS	-	34*	-	190*

* combined data covering year 12 and year 13 students.

We would expect the results to reflect the nature of the provider network across Wales which varies from Local Authority to Local Authority.

In WAQs 75131 to 75141 you ask about how learners are selected to receive invitations to take part in the Seren Network.

You have also asked:

Why have the 11 Seren Network hubs had such different levels of pupil recruitment ranging from a low of 82 pupils to a high of 304 in the first year of the hubs? (WAQ75129)

The Seren Network was intended to be a universal provision; any student is able to access support regardless of where they live or who they know. This means some hubs will naturally be smaller than others due to population distribution. This is to be expected.

Officials provided general guidance and a model for each individual hub to adapt and develop support for the 11 partnership agreements. This allowed the hubs a level of flexibility whilst developing their partnerships and programme of support.

As the national programme has become established the network itself is becoming increasingly aware of the potential tensions and issues which may arise from differences in initial selection criteria and it is possible that the network will agree standardised approach from September 2018. However, while there may be some standard criteria used to identify young people for selection into the Seren Network, such criteria can only ever be a starting point for the selection process. GCSE results play an important role in selection criteria currently.

Additionally, each partner institution within the 11 Seren Hubs needs to take into account factors known to them which may be relevant. We believe that professionals on the ground, who know the young people and understand their aspirations and capabilities, are best placed to ultimately inform who is invited to be part of the Seren Network. When a young person is invited to be part of the Seren Network there is an expectation that they will engage positively with the programme of the local Hub. Some Hubs have begun actively managing their Seren cohort, withdrawing those young people who choose not to engage with others who did not receive an invitation in the first instance. It is also the case that young people develop over time and it is important that Seren Hubs have the discretion to invite those young people to join the Network who are showing the commitment, drive and potential to achieve at the highest level, even if this does not emerge until later.

The following table provides the current position on selection criteria for each of the 11 Hubs.

Selection criteria varies with some Hubs adopting different points scoring system.

	HUB	Selection Criteria for 2016/17 cohort – YEAR 12 ONLY
1	Flintshire-Wrexham	5A*'s plus pupils according to circumstances
2	Denbigh-Conway	5A*'s plus pupils according to circumstances, or average point score of 7.5
3	Gwynedd-Mon	GCSE results – 7A*/A with a minimum of 4A*
4	Ceredigion	<p>Pupils with 5 grades B or better will have access to the network. Pupils will have grade A or A* at GCSE in the subjects they wish to study at 'A' level or similar subjects where pupils did not study an 'A' level subject at GCSE. In addition, headteachers can nominate additional pupils where GCSE results were disappointing.</p> <p>Should a pupil appeal they can make an application to join the network to their Headteacher, and the can make a further appeal to the headteacher's forum.</p>
5	Powys/Bridgend/NPT	Regionally agreed measure of 20 points derived from A*=3, A=2 and B=1 so looking for x6A* plus to register
6	Swansea	7A's at GCSE or better
7	Vale of Glam	7 A's or 5A*
8	Carms-Pembs	Carms-Pembs
9	RCT-Merthyr	Minimum of four A* grades at GCSE, plus those deemed to have special circumstances; schools able to recommend students to the Hub as the academic year progressed
10	Cardiff	Minimum 5A*'s including Maths and English or Welsh
11	EAS	<p>6 A* at GCSE – as a starting point for a guaranteed entry. Then look at subject specific strengths and a minimum of 5A*/A</p> <p>Learners are nominated and then asked complete application form to explain reasons</p>

		<p>for wanting to be on the Seren programme. There are learners on the Seren programme from every school and college – this has been consistent since inception of the programme. Our core purpose is to have fair and inclusive access to Seren Desire by the Hub to widen access to other pupils (when there is restricted Seren funds). This is done in the following way;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to programme kept fluid throughout the year. • Any learners who drop out of the Seren programme can be replaced within selection criteria boundaries. • Any other learners who are exceptional or who have a passion for a subject (who are not funded through Seren budget) can access subject specific masterclasses.
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In WAQs 75110 to 75120 you ask about the number of volunteers actively involved in each Seren Hub and the number of hours worked by these volunteers.

No data is systematically collected which would enable me to provide a comprehensive response to these questions. It is the case that the great majority of activities provided through the Seren Network are supported or enabled by ‘voluntary’ or ‘discretionary’ activity. Most notably, university staff and other professionals provide many hours of their time, providing master-classes and advice sessions to young people as part of the 11 Seren Hub programmes. The extent to which Universities fund some or all of their engagement with Seren cannot be quantified, though the willingness and generosity of university staff in supporting the development and operation of the Seren Network is greatly appreciated. We believe our delivery partners value the emergence of the Seren Network and this is reflected in the time and energy they are willing to invest with us. One reflection of this is clear partnership and outreach support with a high percentage of the Universities attending the Seren Conference in Newtown on the 6th and 7th December, as follows:

- 77% of the Sutton 13
- 70% of the Sutton Trust 30
- 75% of Russell Group Universities

The contribution of heads of sixth form and college staff in arranging transport, supplying information and supporting their Seren students has been invaluable, and the hours involved difficult to quantify.

In WAQs 75108 to 75109 you ask how many full-time and part-time staff are employed by each Seren Hub and what is the total number of hours worked by those individuals.

We do not hold the data necessary to answer this question. Hubs make their own arrangements under the grant funding agreements. In most cases Local Authorities act as the grant recipient and in many cases employ the individuals who include the functions of the Seren Hub Co-ordinator in their wider job roles.

Many of the local authorities absorb the costs of the coordinator role as part of their support to year 12 and 13 students. Other hubs draw some of this cost from their grant.

The grants to date have been awarded at £25k per hub per annum. Additionally the grants help to fund:

- Pupils travel to extension classes both within the hub and across borders
- The administrative cost for preparing collateral and teaching materials
- Room hire for the hosting of extension classes, special events and the annual hub launches
- The travel and subsistence costs of visiting lecturers and guest speakers where requested.

The tables below give an incomplete breakdown based on feedback from Seren Hub coordinators. Welsh Government does not ask for this data to be collated or reported and information has been provided at the discretion of each Hub.

	HUB	Full time Staff breakdown
1	Flintshire-Wrexham	0
2	Denbigh-Conway	0
3	Gwynedd-Mon	Awaiting information
4	Ceredigion	0.3 of workload by full time LA Challenge Adviser
5	Powys/Bridgend/NPT	No specific staff in Bridgend – subsumed into my substantive post

		and all costs met by LA
6	Swansea	A proportion of the hub coordinator and secretary's salaries
7	Vale of Glam	0
8	Carms-Pembs	0
9	RCT-Merthyr	0
10	Cardiff	A proportion of the hub coordinator salary, based on £5k per annum
11	EAS	£24,809

	HUB	Part time Staff breakdown
1	Flintshire-Wrexham	2 totalling £10k per annum
2	Denbigh-Conway	1 administrator works 16 hours per week on Seren with the Seren grant meeting the cost of 4 hours weekly.
3	Gwynedd-Mon	Awaiting information
4	Ceredigion	--
5	Powys/Bridgend/NPT	--
6	Swansea	Remuneration to support T&S for visiting post graduate students
7	Vale of Glam	1 hour a week admin, approx. 10 hours a week – coordinator
8	Carms-Pembs	From November 2017, Co-ordinator employed on a 0.6FTE basis to January 2017, then full time (pending continuing WG grant funding for role)
9	RCT-Merthyr	Coordinator appointed on basis of 30 days @ £300 per day
10	Cardiff	--
11	EAS	0.6 FTE

In WAQs 75105, 75106 and 75107 you ask a series of questions related to the funding of Seren.

How much is each Seren Network Hub funded on a yearly basis and where does this funding come from, excluding the initial start-up cost? (WAQ75105)

Each Seren Hub received a £25k grant from Welsh Government in 2017-18 to support the development and delivery of a local Hub programme.

Excluding the initial start-up cost, how is the funding for each Seren Network Hub determined? (WAQ75106)

The funding for Seren is agreed each year and provides a basis for planning activities both nationally and across the 11 Seren Hubs. The costs in 2017-18 have been based on what we believe is reasonable and proportionate to support the facilitation of a programme of activities across Wales, informed by the initial operation of the Network since 2014-15. As the Seren Network is maturing it will be necessary to keep the funding of hubs under review, and the ongoing evaluation will provide us with further evidence upon which to reflect on the question of funding levels.

How is funding for each Seren Network Hub broken down between Welsh-medium education and English-medium education within that Hub? (WAQ75107)

Grant funding from Welsh Government to Seren Hubs is not broken down between Welsh-medium education and English-medium education within the Hub area. Each local Hub determines its own arrangements for partnership working. The funding provided to the 11 Hubs is, in most cases, spent supporting the cost of hub coordination and transport costs. Transport costs vary considerably due to the location of the hub.

In WAQs 75103 and 75104 you ask a series of questions on Seren activity for those in year 13.

Before addressing the specific questions I would note that the Seren Network was originally conceived to support students in year 12. Working with young people in year 12 provides opportunity for the participants to engage beyond the set curriculum and to invest in activities which will strengthen the applications they make to Universities in the autumn term of Year 13.

As the Network has developed, there has emerged a logic and desire on the part of Network participants to provide some support to students in year 13, particularly those planning to apply to courses with an October 15th deadline (Oxford, Cambridge and all veterinary and medicine courses). All students who are part of the Seren Network in year 12 continue to have access to communications and social media linked to Seren. Most hubs now offer a limited programme to year 13 students.

Outreach officers from the Welsh linked colleges at both Cambridge and Oxford have been generous in giving specific guidance where university tests and the very demanding interview processes are

concerned. Some activities have been organised on a joint-hub basis to ensure all Seren students across the 11 hubs have access to this specialist support and guidance. Two recent events organised by the RCT-Merthyr and Cardiff saw 48 students from across 6 hubs attending the humanities test prep delivered by Oxford; and 130 year 13 students attended the MMI medical test prep run in partnership with Cardiff Medical school.

All Seren students in year 13 will have access to guidance on preparing for the highly searching interviews conducted by Cambridge and Oxford. Collaborative efforts have ensured that all students, regardless of geography, have access to this support. This has only been made possible by the formation of the Seren Network and the building in capacity, knowledge, resource, and sharing best practice and contacts etc by the highly experienced and dedicated hub coordinators.

Why does the Welsh Government assume that only 75 per cent of students who start the Seren Network in year 12 will continue to receive support in year 13? (WAQ75103)

This is a working assumption based on expected levels of engagement from year 13 pupils. This engagement may be limited to interactions via social media or may include participation in specific workshops or interview / exam preparation sessions. We will use data from the current year to refine this estimate.

What support is offered via the Seren Network through Year 13 to ensure that pupils reach the university offers they were able to attain with the aid of the Seren Network? (WAQ75104)

The Seren Network was initially established to support the most academically able year 12 students. During the rollout of the Network a number of the more established hubs offer application, interview and admission support to year 13 students at the discretion of each Hub.

The established hubs are in the process of delivering test prep support for the year 13 Seren students. This offer has recently been extended to all Seren students across the Network and in a number of instances, students travelled from across 6-7 hubs to receive dedicated admission test support for an Oxbridge humanities test preparatory session and an MMI medical preparatory session, to name just two. This regional approach is being developed and is seen as a great step forward in terms of University outreach support, and also a great opportunity for Seren students to meet and engage with their peers across Wales.

In WAQs 75176, 75175, 75175, 75173, 75171 and 75170 you ask a series of questions about applications to and offers from various groups of Universities. These are addressed below:

Have the Flintshire and Wrexham, Gwynedd and Anglesey, and Conwy Seren Network Hubs seen any increase in applications to Oxbridge in 2017/18? (WAQ75176)

Hub	Yes / No	Increased number in 2017/18
Flintshire-Wrexham	Yes	25% increase indicated
Gwynedd-Mon	Awaiting information	
Conwy-Denbigh	Yes	Increase confirmed. Specific details pending.

A full picture of the applications made to Oxbridge in 2017 by students in each Seren Hub will be included in the evaluation planned for completion in February 2018. The data provided by UCAS on applications for the 15 October application deadline do not provide a breakdown by Seren Hub area and officials will be working with Hub Coordinators to collate this information. The capacity of the Network to respond to information requests at short notice is, understandably, limited.

In interpreting the results I would urge some degree of caution. When dealing with relatively small numbers of students, variations in each cohort and wider factors unrelated to the activities of individual Hubs or the qualities of individual students can impact on figures. For example, very able students may apply to Oxford or Cambridge but ultimately choose to take up a course at an alternative destination, even if they receive an offer from Oxbridge. I would note feedback from Hub Co-ordinators which indicates that unsuccessful Oxbridge applicants usually selected other high tariff universities and succeed in gaining places at such institutions. Different Oxbridge courses have varying levels of competition. If a hub has a number of medics one year and a number of modern linguists the next, they will probably see different success rates .

How many Seren Network Hubs saw an increase in applications to Oxbridge in 2017/18? (WAQ75175)

Preliminary figures from the Hubs suggest an increase in applications to Oxbridge by the October 15th, 2017 UCAS deadline. These are preliminary figures only. More robust statistical data will be available from UCAS early in the next calendar year.

	HUB	Increase (YES/NO)
1	Flintshire-Wrexham	Yes
2	Denbighshire-Conwy	n/a
3	Gwynedd-Mon	n/a
4	Ceredigion	n/a
5	Powys/Bridgend/NPT	Yes
6	Swansea	Yes
7	Vale of Glam	n/a
8	Carms-Pembs	Yes
9	RCT-Merthyr	Yes
10	Cardiff	N/a
11	EAS	Yes

***How many of the 1034 pupils of the 2015-16 Seren network cohort have taken places at Russell Group universities?
(WAQ75172)***

HESA data show that the number of Welsh domiciled undergraduate first years attending Russell Group institutions in 2015-16 was 6,260.

At this stage we are not in a position to match the data back to Seren participants as hub coordinators have no access to data at school or UCAS level. They rely on informal contacts with heads of sixth form who are usually willing to supply anonymised data on their school or colleges university destinations in any given year.

Similarly, the Seren policy team at Welsh Government do not hold this information, but officials are developing a system for compiling this data into its new destination management system

The Seren Network was not completed until November 2016 and during the initial phases of the roll-out data on young people engaging in the activities of the Seren Hubs was not collected on a consistent basis.

I would again emphasise that the purpose of the Seren Network is not to direct young people to make applications to specific groups of Universities. The choices and applications made by young people should be based on many factors, including the specifics of the

courses they wish to pursue. For example, there are many highly competitive, high tariff courses in well regarded departments which are not based within Russell Group universities.

How many offers from the University of Cambridge and the University of Oxford were made to the 1034 pupils who were part of the 2015-16 Seren Network cohort? (WAQ75171)

Information for offers made to students who were part of the Seren Network in 2015-16 is not available. This information was sent directly to young people by institutions. This information might more easily be sought from Oxford and Cambridge directly, in anonymised and summary form. Oxford and Cambridge publish offer data for Welsh students, but there is a time-delay in publishing accurate data.

How many offers from Russell Group universities were made to the 1034 pupils who were part of the 2015-16 Seren Network cohort? (WAQ75170)

Information for offers made to students who were part of the Seren Network in 2015-16 is not available. This information was sent directly to young people by institutions and schools/colleges were not asked to collate or analyse this information. The cost-benefit of gathering and analysing this information in the future has yet to be assessed.

Students who were in year 12 in 2015-17 made their applications to Universities in 2016-17 and took up their places in 2017-18. HESA data on applications to different groups of institutions in 2016-17 will be available in January 2018. UCAS produce a series of reports which provide commentary and analysis on University applications. These can be found at:

<https://www.ucas.com/corporate/data-and-analysis/ucas-undergraduate-releases/ucas-undergraduate-analysis-reports>

How many of the 1034 pupils of the 2015-16 Seren network cohort have taken places at either the University of Oxford or the University of Cambridge? (WAQ75173)

HESA data show that the number of Welsh domiciled undergraduate first years attending Oxford and Cambridge Universities in 2015-16 was 175.

In WAQs 75127, 75125 and 75121 you ask a series of questions related to performance indicators. These are addressed below.

Is there any planned review of the key performance indicators used to assess the Seren Network and if so when will this review be complete? (WAQ75127)

The evaluation activity currently underway is reviewing the statistics used to assess the contribution and impact of the Seren Network. To date the Seren Network has not been set explicit performance targets since there is a real risk that this could lead to young people being pressured to apply to specific institutions. We believe this would work against the best interests of young people. There are a number of measures which we will be tracking and the evaluation activity currently underway, to be completed in the spring term, will provide further advice on the measures which should be used to assess the longer-term impact and contribution of the Seren project.

What are the current key performance indicators used by the Welsh Government to determine the success or failure of the Seren Network? (WAQ75125)

Seren seeks to achieve the following five key aims:

1. To support and prepare young people from Wales who have the aspiration and ability to pursue courses of higher education at institutions or on specific courses which are judged and recognised as being leaders in their field.
2. As a result, to increase the proportion of young people from Wales who succeed in their applications to academic courses at leading Universities in the UK and internationally, and to high tariff / highly competitive courses wherever these are based.
3. To raise aspirations and address barriers which may otherwise prevent academically able young people from feeling they can consider making applications to leading universities or high tariff courses – wherever they may be based.
4. Build the capacity of institutions across Wales – by bringing them together in geographically defined Hubs – to effectively support young people who have the potential to successfully gain entry to leading universities or high tariff courses.
5. Create the critical mass necessary to cost-effectively develop and operate a vibrant programme of activities relevant to the goals of the Seren Network.

To date we have held back from establishing or publishing performance indicators for individual Seren Hubs or the project nationally. We do, however, believe that the impact of Seren should be seen in the numbers making applications to leading universities and high tariff courses.

It should be noted that Seren is there to provide support, advice and supra-curricular challenge over and above the curriculum. As can be seen from the five goals above, the work of the Seren Network is focused on preparing young people to make strong applications when they apply to Universities. As a result of the support, experiences, opportunities, challenges, and advice which a young person experiences and engages with, we believe they should be better prepared, equipped and motivated as they compete with learners from across the UK and internationally for places on highly competitive courses and at leading Universities across the UK and beyond.

Being part of the Seren Network will never 'quality assure' or otherwise 'rubber stamp' young people's applications to universities. However, the depth and strength of the programmes being developed by Seren Network Hubs across Wales is garnering the trust and respect of leading universities, and we hope that students who have been part of the Seren Network will be sought out by Universities looking for the best applicants in the future.

Oxbridge outreach officers work with potential applicants to prepare and strengthen their applications and personal statements. In doing so, both Universities expect strong applications from Seren students.

Quotations from staff at both Oxford and Cambridge University below speak to this.

Oxford University

"Seren is a fantastic network. It has been of enormous benefit to its participants, as well as being invaluable to academics like me who want to meet the brightest and best from across Wales. It is with the help of Seren that we in Oxford will be able to host our first ever all-Wales summer school in August 2017. Without the expertise and help of Seren, we would never have made as many meaningful connections with Welsh students."

Dr Matthew Williams, Access and Career Development Fellow, Jesus College, Oxford



Cambridge University

"It's fantastic to work in partnership with the Seren Network to promote academic ambition, inquisitiveness, and attainment amongst Wales' brightest students. This exciting programme is unique in the UK and is brilliantly placed to help aspiring undergraduates select the courses and universities which are right for them."

Dr Jonathan Padley, Widening Participation Officer, Churchill College, Cambridge



Currently Welsh Government does not set targets for numbers of young people from Wales entering any specific group of Universities (e.g. Sutton Trust 30 or Russell Group or Oxbridge), because to do so would not be impartial and may work against the best interests of young people. There are, however, proxies and measures which will help the Network gauge whether Welsh learners are competing effectively for top places within the UK and wider international context.

There is a slight complexity in available data as the applications/offers by domicile will include Welsh students educated elsewhere.

These measures include:

- Welsh domicile students enrolled at Russell Group Universities
- Welsh domicile students enrolled at Sutton Trust 30 Universities
- Welsh domicile students enrolled at Oxbridge
- Welsh domicile students making UCAS applications for courses with a 15th October deadline

What performance data was collected on 1034 pupils who joined the Seren Network in 2015/16? (WAQ75121)

In terms of performance data for those joining Seren in 2015/16 there is a lack of comparable participant data and information to allow for any meaningful interrogation. At a Hub level, some of this data is held by partner organisations and Hub Co-ordinators are not routinely able to access it.

In WAQs 75123 and 75122 you ask questions about the family characteristics / circumstances of Seren participants. These are addressed below:

How many pupils in the Seren network come from families that have not previously had a family member attend university? (WAQ75123)

No standardised data-set is available to respond to this question. Future data capture is being considered as part of the methodology design for the next stage of the evaluation of the Seren Network.

Preliminary data, where it is available, will be shared as part of the initial evaluation of the Seren Network which will be released in 2018.

What is the socio-economic breakdown of pupils who have been part of the Seren Network? (WAQ75122)

No data is available to respond to this question.

In WAQs 75178 and 75177 you ask a series of general questions unrelated to the groupings already covered. Responses to these questions are detailed below.

What benefit is given to a school's Estyn rating if they actively take part and help their pupils to engage with the Seren Network? (Note: no WAQ number provided with this question).

Officials suggest that Estyn would be best placed to provide this response.

What percentage of students currently involved with the Seren Network are privately educated? (WAQ75178)

Students invited to be part of the Seren Network are from state funded schools. 0% of students enrolled on Seren in 2017-18 are in privately funded education.

What provision is made for those who study at Welsh-medium schools to benefit from the Seren Network? (WAQ75177)

Participation in the Seren Network is open to high achieving young people who have studied through both the Welsh and English language. All secondary schools with sixth forms and all FE colleges in Wales who teach A-levels are part of the Network.

The programmes developed and delivered by the 11 Seren Hubs provide Welsh Language sessions or bilingual facilities as appropriate.

Welsh medium schools participate enthusiastically in all hubs and in certain areas of Wales; Welsh Universities are providing tailored support to prepare students' whose first language is Welsh. We acknowledge that Welsh speaking students, educated through the Welsh education system, may require additional support and guidance, for example, in using and understanding the appropriate academic/scientific/technical vocabulary.

Where a subject lends itself to it, extension classes may well focus on a Welsh topic eg Welsh history and literature.

Coordinators are aware of their local authority responsibilities in adhering to the Welsh Language Act, and are sensitive to the need for bilingual documentation, signage and provision, where appropriate.

	HUB	Welsh Medium Schools Provision
1	Flintshire-Wrexham	Bilingual documentation. All Welsh medium secondary schools are actively involved in network activities.
2	Denbigh-Conwy	All Welsh medium secondary schools are actively involved in network activities. Bangor University provide specialist support to prepare Welsh medium Seren students for tests and interviews.
3	Gwynedd-Mon	Awaiting information
4	Ceredigion	Welsh medium provision during some Seren events contributed by Aberystwyth University.
5	Powys/Bridgend/NPT	All Welsh medium secondary schools are actively involved in network activities. There are Welsh speakers

		and information in the Welsh language at events. Routinely workshop speakers are English speaking.
6	Swansea	All Welsh medium secondary schools are actively involved in network activities.
7	Vale of Glam	--
8	Carms-Pembs	All Welsh medium secondary schools are actively involved in network activities.
9	RCT-Merthyr	All Welsh medium secondary schools are actively involved in network activities. Signage/ documentation for launches and special events in both Welsh and English
10	Cardiff	Bilingual information is disseminated. Cardiff working to develop preparatory collateral to support Welsh medium students as they prepare for tests and interviews.
11	EAS	One of the EAS Seren host sites for Seren events is a Welsh Medium School. Seren learners in Welsh medium schools have equal access to all Seren events

CONCLUSION

I would like to take this opportunity to commend to you the work of the Seren Network across Wales. I am extremely proud of the work achieved by partners in establishing the Seren Network and the high levels of goodwill and engagement it is generating.

Work is ongoing to evaluate the formation and initiation of the project and this work will be used to inform future developments. Getting the network up and running to benefit young people in Wales, and building the partnerships necessary to bring experiences and expertise to our most academically able Welsh learners has been the priority to date. Now that the national network is established and the work of the 11 Hubs is embedding, a consensus is beginning to emerge at practitioner level around the types of activities and interventions which are most valued by learners and most suited to the Seren Network.

While it has not been possible to provide detailed information on all the matters you have raised, in the last year significant progress has

been made in terms of consistent data gathering and this will inform future assessments of the impact and value represented by the work of the Seren Network. Moreover, we are currently designing the longer-term evaluation methodology, working with partners from Universities, schools and colleges in the process.
