

Great Britain

Wales

Regional Report on Lifelong
Learning Policy 2023

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Collaborative Monitoring of Regional Lifelong Learning Policies (COMORELP)
Wales (United Kingdom) – Regional Report on Lifelong Learning Policy 2023

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Introduction

Wales is a nation that has a strong culture of and commitment to LLL (lifelong learning). **The concept of LLL in Wales stems back to “adult education” that goes back to reforms and movements in the early 1900s.** Although there are many LLL offers available and citizens of Wales have entitlements to learning, the reality is that the uptake is in decline. Participation of LLL over the last decade has steadily fallen, and there are **large inequalities to LLL uptake by age**, socio economic background and prior educational attainment.

There could be many reasons for this decline in the uptake of LLL. Some reasons often given at an individual level are reasons such as lack of time, distance to learning provider, financial costs, or lack of childcare to take up LLL. Wales has made attempts to eliminate these through different support mechanisms. Other reasons are external factors that are outside of Wales's control, such as the decision of the UK to leave the European Union (Brexit) the current cost of living crisis and the global crisis with the Ukraine war. As in the rest of the world Wales has also gone through major changes in education and learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has led to a recent push over the last three years for online and distance education in times of school closures and national lockdowns. In addition to these larger external factors, Wales also has an ongoing discussion about its relationship with England and the United Kingdom. This tension is openly referred to as devolution and spans across the four countries in the UK (England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Island).

With all the many changes Wales has gone through in the last three years, Wales has and continues to show a strong commitment to LLL. In Wales the government prioritises LLL as a key aspect of its policy. The Welsh Government recognises that the ability to learn through life is essential for personal development, and it is committed to providing its citizens with access to a wide range of LLL opportunities.

This includes initiatives aimed at improving basic skills, vocational training, higher education, and personal development training. The overall goal of these policies is to ensure that the Welsh population has the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in an ever-changing job market and to support their continued growth and advancement.

On April 8th, 2022, the Minister for Education and Welsh Language, Jeremy Mills presented the **new vision for LLL in Wales** as: **I want Wales to be a nation of second chances in education – where it’s never too late to learn.**

Summary of COMORELP analysis of LLL in Wales

1. Wales has a long tradition and culture of providing LLL to its citizens.
2. Wales heavily relies on research and evaluation in designing, implementing and evaluation policy in LLL.
3. Welsh Government has commissioned important studies to review status of [post-compulsory education](#) and more [recent thematic review of LLL](#) (WCPP, 2021). The evidence-based research has led to key recommendations that are now in the process of being implemented across Wales.
4. Key changes based on research recommendations in Wales are:
 - The definition of LLL has evolved and is likely to keep expanding over time. Until recently LLL was defined for people 18 and above but the definition has now been expanded to anyone over 16. This means more people are covered by Welsh LLL policy. Advice from WCPP and other key stakeholders such as learning providers is to further remove any age restricted definition and to cover all citizens of Wales.
 - There is consensus among LLL stakeholders that LLL policy, implementation and evaluations are too sector specific and fragmented. A way to overcome this, is the proposed new [Tertiary Education and Research Act](#) (passed by the Senedd and received Royal Assent September 22). The implementation of the Act mean a Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER) will be formed during 2023. This is seen as an important opportunity for LLL stakeholders in Wales and hence much of the analysis for COMORELP has been around the role and hopes for CTER.
5. A major challenge for Wales going forward is the funding of LLL. Wales have to a large extent benefitted from cross funding from the Welsh Government and the European Union Structural Funds. Due to the decision of UK to leave the European Union (June 2016) this funding has since January 2020 no longer been available. A levelling up strategy for the UK and the subsequent UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) has been implemented but is not providing same level of funds for LLL in Wales. This is a big concern for Welsh Government as well as LLL stakeholders and has over the last year made [headlines in the Welsh and UK press](#) (2022).

The data gathered for the COMORELP project of is a combination of interviews (2021) and desktop research (2021-2022). The result of this work led to a facilitation of a Regional Roundtable (RRT) for Wales (July 2022) with the opportunity to validate and test the project benchmarking framework. 10 leading experts attended the RRT with representation from leading academics, think-tanks, adult education sector, community learning, government programmes, civil servants, and LLL learners.

To give a complete picture of LLL in Wales, the structure of this sections follows three sections; Wales evolving definition of LLL, current challenges of LLL as too sector

specific, and the expectations and hopes for the new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER). Following this background, Wales is briefly presented both as a nation and as a region, together with an overall LLL structure of Wales. COMORELP has through extensive work formulated a regional benchmarking framework for LLL policy, which has led to 14 dimensions to cover LLL policy development, implementation, and evaluation. In this report the 14 dimensions of the benchmarking tool has been applied and tested for Wales.

Wales's evolving definition of LLL

LLL has often been informally interpreted as applying primarily to 19+ adult and community learning. This is also the definition used by the current Learning and Skills Act 2000, where Welsh Ministers have a duty to secure “reasonable” facilities for further education and training to those aged 19 and over. The Tertiary Education and Research Bill (passed summer 2022 and in process of being implemented) has adopted a wider definition, where LLL now is for anyone post-16. This change means that newer sectors are now incorporated into LLL in Wales.

The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales has called for a national vision for LLL, and for this to be a priority of Wales. Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) has conducted an evidence review to support further development of policy. Their recommendation to Welsh government is to take the definition one step further, and build on UNESCO's definition of LLL as: **Wales the land of lifelong learning; available to all, at every stage, and every sphere of people's lives (WCPP, 2021)**.

Leading LLL providers such as Colleges Wales and Adult Education Wales supports WCPP's proposal of a widening definition of LLL. As concluded by a participant of the RRT and supported by other panellists LLL should be seen as: **LLL should be for any age (not defined by age groups) and that it should use a variety of methods ... Some learning should be for individual learning while other is more targeted towards professional skills and employment. Skills can be acquired naturally (by pleasure of learning) or intentionally (training for a job) (RRT, July 2022)**

Although Wales currently have adopted a definition of LLL as anyone aged 16 or above, WCPP report concludes that: **Wales is well positioned to adopt an all-age lifelong learning strategy. The Welsh Government and its resilient institutional base have many of the underpinning policies in place (WCPP, 2021; Policy Briefing – Supporting the LLL system)**.

Wales's LLL currently sector specific and fragmented

The development of LLL has happened organically and over a long period of time. According to review by Wales Centre for Public Policy in “**Taking Wales forward 2016-21**”. “There is currently an absence of an overall vision and agreement on the

definition of lifelong learning.” This is supported in interviews carried out in 2021, suggesting there are many good LLL initiatives, but it’s not joined up to a common strategy or definition. It is also supported in a statement made by Wales Minister for Education and Welsh language, Jeremy Mills: *It is only by adopting a whole system, whole sector, and whole nation approach that we will narrow educational inequalities, expand opportunities, and raise standards. (Jeremy Mills, Minister for Education and Welsh Language)*

A Solution – The new Tertiary Education and Research Act

The new Tertiary Education and Research Act was approved summer 2022 and is put forward as a solution to the identified challenges of fragmented LLL structure of Wales. The newly approved Tertiary Education and Research Bill will:

1. Show a continued commitment to LLL by giving everyone a chance to develop or re-boot their career in adult life (16+)
2. Bring all post-16 education together – all providers (colleges, universities sixth forms, apprenticeships, and adult education) will be managed as a single system in the new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER).
3. Making sure learners and students are heard.
 - The Commission will ensure providers ensure learners’ and students’ interests are represented.
 - More Welsh medium education
 - The Bill will improve opportunities to study bilingually and in Welsh.
 - A clear purpose for post-16 education
4. The Bill sets in law the Welsh government values and goals for a better lifelong tertiary education system.

The RRT participants were proud and expressed excitement of the progress Wales has made in making the new Act a reality. Naturally substantial time of the RRT was reflecting on this development and how CTER could take up their new role within LLL in Wales. WCPP (21) also published its own podcast on the topic where three experts (who also attended the RRT) reflected that the new CTER is “a once in a lifetime opportunity” to further develop the field of LLL in Wales. *CTER is “... a real opportunity for post-16 providers that sit within a national framework that learning providers can sign up to. We must really grasp the opportunity now. Shape a national programme with clear pathways...opportunities for everyone to dip in and out of LLL whatever their background and level of learning.” (WCPP, 2021, Podcast)*

Wales – a Nation and a Region

Wales is a country that is part of the United Kingdom and is in the southwestern region of Great Britain. It covers an area of 20,782 square kilometres (approximately half the size of the Netherlands and same size as Slovenia). Official estimates place the population of Wales as 3,135,000 and its own distinctive culture, language and, history. Wales has a devolved government with powers over areas such as education, health, and the environment. This allows Welsh government to make decisions that are tailored to the needs of the Welsh people and to create policies that reflect the unique characteristics of Wales. The Welsh Government has shown a strong commitment to LLL, and it is covered under multiple national policy areas.

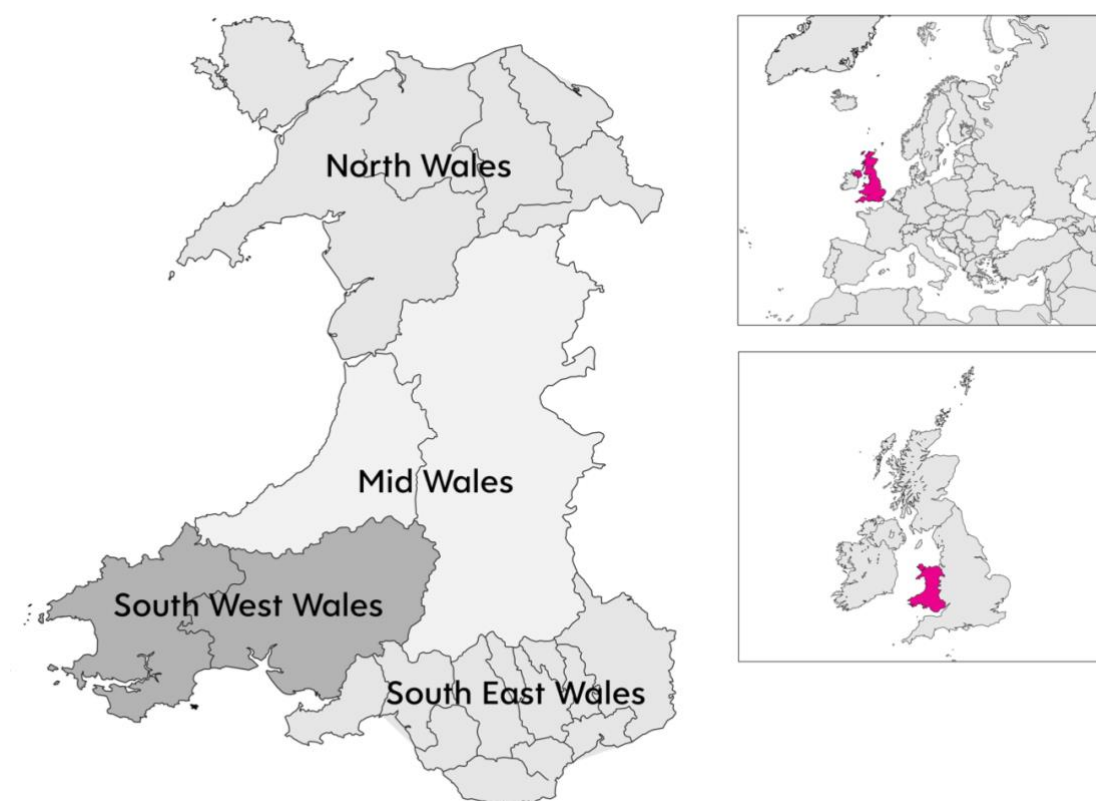


Figure 1. Map of Wales in the UK and the four regions within Wales

Wales is divided into four regions, including North Wales, South-West Wales, South-East Wales, and Mid Wales. Each region has its own distinct culture and history and is known for different attractions and industries. For example, North Wales is known for

its rugged coastline and outdoor recreational opportunities while South Wales is famous for its rich history and cultural heritage. Mid Wales is known for its rolling hills, scenic countryside, and vibrant rural communities. The four regions all play a significant role in shaping the overall identity of Wales and contribute to the rich cultural tapestry of the country. The population is heavily concentrated in the metropolitan areas around the larger cities of Swansea, Cardiff and Newport, the South Wales Valleys, and the north-eastern corner.

Since 1996, Wales is divided into 22 local government areas, each with its own elected council which makes decisions on local issues like housing, town planning and schools. The local authority areas are grouped into the four regions as mentioned above (North, Mid, South-west and South-East Wales). These regions all play a significant role in shaping the overall identity of Wales and contribute to the rich cultural tapestry of the country. The LLL offer and perceived learning needs between regions varies. As a result, it is seen as critical for each region to have autonomy and ownership in identifying learning offer and future needs.

For the purpose COMORELP study, Wales is referred to as a region in Europe. Its geographic size, population, and political structure make it well-suited for comparative analysis of the other regions in our study. However, Wales is also a nation within the UK which should be considered for the report.

Wales LLL Structure

In Wales, a commitment to improve personal or professional development through LLL was formalised in December 2018, following an agreement between the First Minister and the Minister for Education: **The need to explore how we can deliver a new Welsh right to lifelong learning, investing in the skills which people need throughout their lives, for individual, societal and economic benefit ([Adult learning website](#)).**

LLL in Wales is structured in a way that supports individuals to engage in learning opportunities. It includes both formal, non-formal and informal learning and encompasses a wide range of subjects from academic and vocational training to professional and personal development.

The Welsh Government has developed a LLL framework that provides a strategic approach to LLL in Wales. This framework includes policies and initiatives aimed at increasing access to learning opportunities, improving the quality of learning experiences and promoting the importance of LLL to individuals and society.

One key aspect of the LLL structure in Wales is the Welsh Credit and Qualifications Framework (WCQF). This framework provides a flexible and inclusive framework for learning and recognition of qualifications and skills. The WCQF enables individuals to build their skills and qualifications over time and to have their learning recognised, regardless of when or where it takes place.

The following sections cover the legal framework of LLL, key stakeholders of LLL, recent reviews of LLL structure in Wales and the recent passing of the Tertiary Education and Research Bill.

Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015

LLL in Wales is driven by the legal duty – as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 below: **An educated and skilled workforce is seen as crucial for economic prosperity, but also for promoting health and wellbeing, and supporting social cohesion. Lifelong Learning in Wales is driven by the legal duty - as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – on Welsh**

Government and listed public bodies to work to improve social, cultural, environmental, and economic well-being in Wales ([Future Generations Act](#))

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015) (WFGA) is a key piece of legislation for policymaking in Wales. Although the WFGA does not make specific reference to LLL as a delivery strategy for the goals, the Future Generations Commissioner's report in 2020 draws attention to LLL as being key to achieving the goals, suggesting that LLL be embraced across government. LLL will therefore be an implicit part of the success of the WFGA achieving its goals, evident in further statements by the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales: [A Wales where learning is at the core of all we do; where participation in learning is encouraged and rewarded; and where people have equal opportunities to gain the skills for life and work that they need to prosper](#) (Welsh Government, 2017: 3).

Recent Developments in Wales: Passing of New Tertiary Education and Research Bill

In 2016, Professor Ellen Hazelkorn was asked by the Welsh Government to conduct a review of post-compulsory education and training (PCET) in Wales. This study sets out several challenges for the tertiary education sector in the report [Towards 2030 – A framework for building a world-class post compulsory education system for Wales](#). Two key findings from the report are the need to create greater coherence across the post-compulsory education sector and the need to develop more coherent learning career pathways for all ages, gender, and talent.

Wales Centre for Public Policy' (WCPP) built on the Hazelkorn review and had been commissioned by Wales Government to undertake a thematic review of the provision of LLL in Wales. The outcome of the review is a report [Supporting the Welsh Lifelong Learning System](#) published in 2021. The report identifies key determinants and drivers to help inform Welsh Government's LLL policy. The study also provides clear recommendations to the purpose of the new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research which will be set up in 2023. The report provides two main recommendations:

- Develop an overarching vision for the PCET sector (Tertiary Education and Research Bill)
- Establish a new arm's-length body responsible for the oversight, strategic direction, and leadership of the sector (Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER))

The establishment of the [Tertiary Education and Research \(Wales\) Bill](#) was first presented to Welsh Senedd (name of Wales Parliament) November 2021. The bill was passed by Senedd June 2022 and received Royal Assent September 2022.

CTER, when implemented should aim to be an arms-length sponsored body with responsibility for the entirety of PCET and research in Wales. The new commission will replace and lead to dissolution of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW). The new Commission is intended to be established in 2023 and will have a Board and a Chief Executive. The board will include advisory members as representatives of students and learners, tertiary education practitioners, and the Commission's own staff (multi-stakeholder). This would mark the first time in Wales's history that all elements of post-16 education – including colleges, universities, adult education, apprenticeships and sixth forms – would come under the one body. The Commission should monitor, register, and regulate providers, and set out the standards expected within the sector – including Welsh medium provision. These legal duties reflect the Government's long-term vision for the sector and will guide the Commission's future work. The nine strategic duties are:

1. Promoting life-long learning
2. Promoting equality of opportunity
3. Encouraging participation in tertiary education
4. Promoting continuous improvement in tertiary education and research
5. Promoting collaboration and coherence in tertiary education and research
6. Contributing to a sustainable and innovative economy
7. Promoting tertiary education through the medium of Welsh
8. Promoting a civic mission
9. Promoting a global outlook

Projecting current funding levels forward shows that the Commission would command resourcing of over £800 million a year, meaning it would control more funding than any other Welsh public body outside of the Welsh National Health Service (NHS). The providers regulated and funded by it would be delivering provision to over 300,000 learners and students during an academic year.

Dr Helen Tilley, Senior Research Fellow at the Wales Centre for Public Policy, highlights this in their publication: [The Tertiary Education Bill brings together higher education, further education, and adult learning under a single regulatory body for the first time in Wales. This provides an opportunity to embed new ways of collaborative working across and between institutions, the Commission and Welsh Government to best meet the needs of individuals, society, and the economy. \(Tilley, 2021\)](#)

Wales Minister of Education and Welsh Language, Jeremy Mills, announced the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research in April 2022. His summary of the role of the new commission were: **The Commission will take responsibility for the funding and overall strategic direction of adult learning, in addition to further education, higher education, apprenticeships and school sixth forms. It will provide important funding to local authorities, colleges, and Adult Learning Wales. The commission will also be responsible for signing-off outcome agreements with colleges and universities. I want us to be in a position where those institutions are in the habit of disseminating their work more widely – whether that is online, taster courses, public lectures, and seminars, working with local employers and enterprises. (Jeremy Mills, Education and Welsh Language Minister, April 2022)**

The vision articulated for the new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research is illustrated with the 5 priority areas as in the figure below:

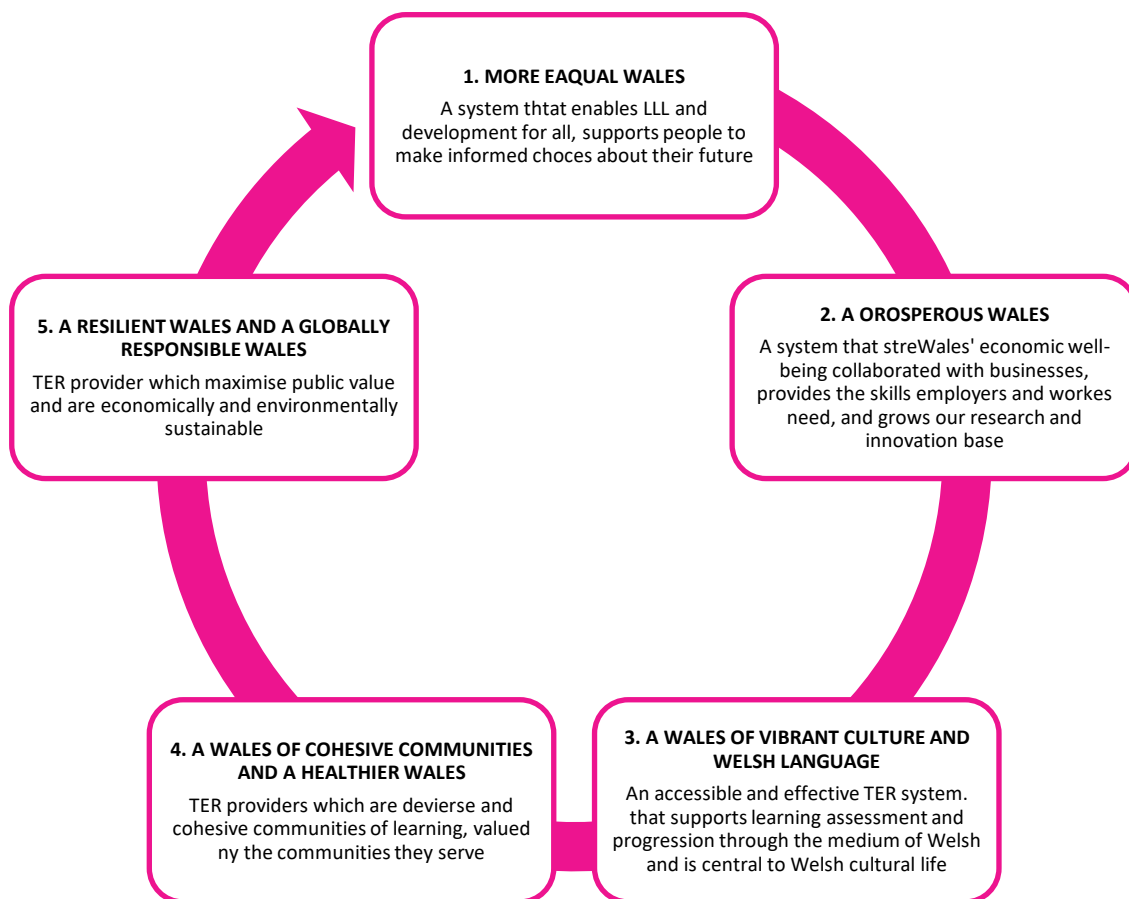


Figure 2. Vision of Commission for Tertiary Education and Research

Given the breadth of the Commission's remit, and the policy intent for the Commission to be able to deal with all post-16 education as a single sector. The regional roundtable reflected that there is a disconnect between compulsory education and post-16 LLL.

The new Bill sets out 11 strategic duties under which the Commission is required to exercise its functions. The strategic duties, as set out below (figure 3) are intended to frame the strategic direction and focus of the commission and support the delivery of its functions. The figure below is meant to provide clarity to the purpose and remit of the new Commission.



Figure 3. Strategic duties of the new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research

Advice for the coming Commission for Tertiary Education and Research

The new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER) makes a radical change for how LLL is governed in Wales. This is the first time all LLL or adult education (now post 16+) is under one organisation and it is a real opportunity to work together as one sector. This is a new and innovative structure that has created a lot of interest both within Wales but also internationally. The reflections on how to make the new Commission a success came up in COMORELP desktop research, scoping interviews, and Wales RRT. It is also the focus of WCPP own podcast (August 2022) where three

leading experts reflect on the new Commission's role as: **The new CTER** "will be a world class organisation... Doing it right it will create a society that promote learning for everyone".

When asking stakeholders what their advice is for the new CTER its was articulated by several RRT panellist as an important opportunity if done right. The key advice given by three leading experts (from podcast and RRT) were:

Collaboration – it needs to be a truly collaborative process with both learners and providers... The work needs to include other sectors such as social service and the voluntary sector.

The New Commission needs to be an enabling commission...not a monitoring commission. If you are in the central government, you want to see how money is used and what's the outcome of the money spent...This is a model from the 1980-90 and although tempting it is proven that it doesn't work.

It's a once in a lifetime chance...will could either take a collaborative approach or turn into a commission that tells people what learning in the future will look like. We must make sure it's not a dictatorial approach.

As the new commission is not in place yet (it will be implemented during 2023) it was emphasised that the different stakeholders in Wales should now prepare and articulate their hopes and needs from the CTER. One area of work that was emphasised is how CTER could help with a coordinated approach to get people into LLL. One RRT panellist emphasised that CTER should work with learning providers and partners to help tackle the lack of update in LLL offers. One way this could work is if the CTER help with marketing and national campaigns (RRT,2022). It was also emphasised by the RRT that the new Commission needs to be a truly cross sectoral commission. Some of its key roles as per the participants of the RRT are:

- "Look into skills of the future and listen to the providers."
- Work with partners to understand the lack of take up of LLL; CTER can "help increase participation through support on marketing and national campaigns."
- "Work in a way that capture everyone into learning".

Another aspect of their job is to look at LLL beyond traditional education or adult education. LLL is more than just education. By focusing on LLL in a wholistic way they can also help increasing wellbeing of people of Wales and help build confidence. As indicated by one panellist at the RRT: **It must be a truly cross over of ministerial roles and all actors from education, housing, digital connectivity, poverty, health, and disabilities needs to be involved (RRT, 2022).**

Current Challenge for Wales: Funding Uncertainty

Although Wales Government continue to show strong commitment and has made major investments into the LLL space over the last 3 years (post-Brexit and post Covid-19 pandemic) it is a concern nationwide how LLL will be funded going forward.

Especially three years since UK (and Wales) decided to leave the European Union (Brexit) it is now clear that some of the funding received from the European Structural funds will not be replaced by new UK based funding. As stated in Welsh government briefing: **The EU Structural Fund (which was funding many of the lifelong learning practices) ended in December 2020 with Wales no longer receiving an annual sum of £373m in economic aid. The UK Government aims to replace the amount lost with a Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). For 2021-22 Wales received nearly £46.6m (23% for total allocation for UK, which is £ 220m). If this allocation continues it means Wales will in the next 3 years have a shortfall of funding of £ 900m. ([from news article in Nation, 15 August 2021](#))**

In a recent interview, First Minister Carwyn Jones said in the same news article as above that Welsh voter had been promised prior to the EU Brexit vote in 2016 that: **“Wales would not be a penny worse off as a result of Brexit.” He said: “Sadly that is turning out to be absolutely not the case. Wales will be many, many millions of pounds worse off next year as a result of Brexit because the UK Government simply isn’t delivering on that promise”.**

UK ex-Prime Minister Boris Johnson delivered a ‘levelling up’ speech in July 2022 in which he admitted that the UK had a ‘glaring imbalance’ in its economy. However, critics made the point that no solutions to this was provided.

Since Brexit and 2021 it is primarily funded by Welsh Government with some co-funding from UK shared prosperity fund. This is part of the levelling up agenda for UK. However, as recent media coverage suggests, this is a lot less than what has been received in Wales from membership of the European Union. Challenges of funding for the next years is a big topic for Wales LLL strategy and policy.

LLL SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threads
<p>Wales identify challenges and tackle them with New Bill for Tertiary Education and Research Bill (CTER).</p> <p>Widening definition of LLL to cover 16+ and future all people of Wales.</p> <p>Providers focus on the training appeal, the desire and not only entitlements.</p>	<p>LLL too sector specific and fragmented. E.g., University only focusses on higher education, only NHS train health staff.</p> <p>Too much emphasis on training for labour market (human capital vs social capital).</p> <p>Too much emphasis on entitlements and rights.</p>	<p>It is recognised that international collaboration is needed, and Wales is looking for new opportunities post Brexit.</p> <p>Wales is looking internationally (Scandinavia) for best practice in LLL development and is taking a different approach to England.</p> <p>Wales is looking to UN and OECD goals for LLL.</p>	<p>Lack of international comparisons/collaborations post Brexit.</p> <p>Widening gap in political direction of the UK countries.</p> <p>Leaving the European Union has left a huge hole in funding and opportunities.</p> <p>Uncertainty of funding, and the EU replacement fund called Levelling Up funds has not been matched as promised.</p>

Table 1. SWOT Analysis of the Wales Region

Main Actors of LLL delivery and development in Wales

Wales Government have a proactive role in making sure the [needs and skills of Wales](#) are being met. Several policy documents commissioned on LLL suggest this is something Wales take seriously. Implementation of policy is delivered across sectors, from higher education institutions, further education colleges and independent providers (with funding from Government). Although mentioned in the policy documents, there are few examples of public-private partnerships in the COMORELP Project. It seems that LLL implementation is guided and funded primarily from Wales Government funding. As mentioned initially, Wales has also traditionally been reliant on European Funding (Social fund, Erasmus+ and regional funds) in their LLL policy implementation. This has however ended due to the UK leaving the EU. Some funding is secured through new UK funding bodies (part of the levelling up plan) however it is unclear how much funding will be made available for Wales in the years to come.

A selection of key institutions delivering LLL policy in Wales are:

- **Further Education Colleges:** “Virtually every FE college offers some adult and community learning” (interview, 2021). Adult Learning Wales (ALW) is the national community college and democratic movement for adult community learning in Wales. As the 'largest Adult Community Learning provider, is an independent voluntary adult education movement, committed to widening participation, promoting active citizenship and skills development, and providing high-quality learning through a collaborative approach across the whole of Wales.
- **Adult Learning Wales:** Adult learning Wales is a community learning provider that deliver training across Wales. It is an independent voluntary adult education movement, committed to widening participation, promoting active citizenship and skills development.
- **Working Wales:** Deliver the new grant programme called React+. It offers tailored solutions which may include financial support, skills training, and personal development support to help remove barriers to employment. Support could entail mental health, confidence building, language skills and more. ReAct+ builds on the success of previous programme and is part of the Welsh Government’s Young Person’s Guarantee. It is meant for people over 18 years.
- **Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF)** – A key provider for work-based learning. The purpose of the fund is to help people living and working in unionised workplaces in Wales access support, advice and funding for vocational training and personal development.
- **Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW)** is part of the Welsh Local Government Association (WGLA). They provide considered, co-ordinated and professional contributions to the development of education for children and families and lifelong learning initiatives in Wales. It ensures effective leadership and efficient management of innovative delivery arrangements, through integration of services and inclusion of all.

Key institutions influencing and informing Government LLL policies are:

- **Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP)** works to address key economic and societal challenges using research and evidence. It is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and Welsh Government. The centre is based at Cardiff University. The centre works across different sectors. In 2021 WCPP was commissioned by the Welsh Government to undertake an evidence review of LLL in Wales. This review aims to inform policy discussions and support the implementation of the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill. It has also got an active role in providing advice for the new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research about to be set up in 2023. WCPP is an influential actor and partner that help to inform Welsh Government’s LLL policy.
- **Learning and Work Institute (L&WI)** is an independent policy, research and development organisation dedicated to LLL, employment and inclusion. Based on

evidence-based research they influence policy, develop new ways of thinking, and help implement new approaches. L&WI is a UK based organisation but also has a Wales office in Wales capital Cardiff. Wales L&WI has been influential in helping Welsh government develop and progress their LLL offering and policy.

Results of Regional Assessment

The answer to this regional assessment is based on interviews, regional roundtable, and document analysis. As part of the COMORELP project 7 stakeholders were interviewed as part of the initial scoping research (2021) followed with thorough document and desktop analysis to assess the findings. Building on the initial research Arcola Research facilitated a Regional Roundtable (RRT) for Wales in July 2022. This was a 2-hour discussion facilitated virtually, where 10 stakeholders discussed the initial findings and validated the COMORELP benchmarking tool for Wales. The attendees were a mix of people working in policy, learning providers and users of LLL and represented all levels of learning and education. In addition, we also had 3 leading academics who has carried out substantial work on LLL in Wales and helped shaped the direction and guidance on how to further advance the field in Wales.

As an overall conclusion of the RRT the work of COMORELP was welcomed by all participants. Often working in LLL is experienced as working within a specific sector and participants welcomed the opportunity to get together to look at LLL in Wales across traditional sectors and usual working groups.

A summary of the key findings from our Wales RRT are:

- Tertiary Education is high on the Welsh Government priorities.
- There was broad agreement and strong support for the COMORELP vision, which is more international cooperation at a regional level. Several participants felt they had to fill a big gap post-Brexit and were keen to maintain and build new international partnerships for Wales. As stated by one of the participants in the RRT: “The lack of European network is very much felt and the need for international collaboration is there.”
- Wales has recently made major developments in LLL and is now implementing a series of innovative LLL practices that other regions could benefit from. Explicitly mentioned by the participants of the RRT were Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF), ReAct+ and Personal Learning Accounts (PLAS). All three have secured funding in the last two years and will be important initiatives to drive the LLL agenda in Wales.
- LLL is currently seen as too fragmented and sector specific. It was noted that there are big hopes for the new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER) and that this is a very good opportunity to finally look at LLL holistically and across the different traditional sectors. As illustrated by one participant at the RRT;

“Higher education and universities are good at accreditation and adult community learning are strong at engaging adult learners. NHS is seen as learning partners in educating health professionals. This is now the opportunity to change this and to learn from each other.” (RRT, 2022)

- The RRT reflected on how no one knows what jobs are required in the future and that it is important to be aware of this and plan for the unknown in LLL. This is something the new Commission for Research and Education should be clear about of and that it doesn’t fall into the temptation of pushing investments to meet exact roles that they think is needed in the future. “They need to avoid the temptation of having hard numerical targets for how many nurses are needed etc...It is clear evidence that this model doesn’t work and that we should promote learning for future jobs in an open and exploratory way.” (RRT, 2022)
- A few participants highlighted that there is “too much emphasis on higher education (universities) and on accreditation. The system needs to be rebalanced and capture other learning providers and opportunities.” (RRT, 2022)
- All participants expressed a keen interest in further networking and roundtables or conferences of this kind. This shows there is a clear need for collaboration both within Wales, but also between regions internationally.

Designing Policy

I. The Placing of LLL in a Regional Development Strategy

Question	Answer
1. Is lifelong learning an important focus of the regional development plan or of the regional strategy?	Yes

Table 2. Question 1

This section has been somewhat confusing for Wales stakeholders and informants as the COMORELP project looks at Wales as a region in Europe, and not a nation. In terms of size and population it is well suited for comparison with other regions set out in the project. Where it differs from other regions within the COMORELP project is that Wales is also a nation, as well as part of the United Kingdom. However, in Wales a region is usually referred to as one of four sub regions of Wales (see map in figure 1. Regional development strategy in Wales is about localised needs. In this report and project, we refer to Wales as a region within Europe.

Although LLL is implicitly important for regional development plans, it is not explicitly always mentioned as LLL. It is however indirectly covered in the priority areas of the

regional development plans as: “[Prosperity for all, economic growth, health, well-being, employability, and future generations of Wales](#)”.

The current Welsh Government policy response was set out in the following terms: [An educated and skilled workforce is seen as crucial for economic prosperity, but also for promoting health and wellbeing, and supporting social cohesion. Lifelong Learning in Wales is driven by a legal duty. \(Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015\)](#)

LLL is covered in Wales regional development plan, named [Future Wales; The national plan 2040](#) and published in 2020. As the national development framework, Future Wales is the highest tier of development plan and is focused on solutions to issues and challenges at a national scale. Wales National development objectives are heavily focused on National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS) as defined by the UN.

The plan builds on [The Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#). It influences the way Wales plan for new development; it demands that development and use of land contribute to improving the economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act make its contribution to the achievement of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Wales is tracking the seven development goals identified by the [UN for sustainable development](#). Those are: [A prosperous Wales, a resilient Wales, A healthier Wales, A more equal Wales, A Wales of Cohesive Communities, A Wales of Vibrant Culture and a Thriving Welsh Language, A Globally Responsible Wales](#). Under the commitment to delivering sustainable development Wales aims to maximise its contribution to each of the well-being goals.

Lifelong Learning is not explicitly mentioned in the Future Wales, The National Plan 2040. However, it is indirectly covered in the Well-being of Future Generations Act, in the Local Well-being Plans (for the 4 regions of Wales) and in the Prosperity for All Economic Action Plan. The Act explicitly delegate the Welsh Government and listed public bodies to work to improve social, cultural, environmental, and economic well-being in Wales.

Conclusions

- Lifelong learning is an important focus for Wales, both as a nation, and within the regions of Wales.
- Currently the policy priorities are included under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act from 2015, but changes are currently being made with the implementation of the new Tertiary Education and Research Bill for Wales.

- This is an innovative new approach where all LLL in Wales is going to be managed under one umbrella with the new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research.
- Although it has yet to be implemented, there are hopes and expectations that the new Commission will lead to better governance and more joined-up collaboration for LLL in Wales.
- All participants in the RRT are proud to see this development happening in Wales.
- The Regional Roundtable concluded it is an innovative and cutting-edge governance structure that other regions in Europe and beyond can learn from.

II. Promoting and Implementing Democratic Governance Within the Regional LLL System

Question	Answer
2. Are stakeholders, learners and educators involved in the governance system of LLL (or specific education sectors)	Yes (and more w/CTER)

Table 3. Question 2

Bringing LLL actors together

At the RRT it was reflected that LLL is led by democratic governance. However, some challenges with current system have been identified:

- Lifelong learning to date has been seen as fragmented and sector specific (education sector, vocational training etc).
- However, LLL is now identified as key objective to support individuals, employers, communities, and wider society. It encompasses the economic, social, and cultural dimensions of learning as well as improving skills and job prospects.
- It also has wider benefits such as improving health and well-being, supporting the arts and cultural policy, and providing understanding of the importance of climate change.
- Interventions like ‘social prescribing’, where social or creative activities are prescribed for a health/well-being benefit to individuals, show ways in which learning can be used to achieve broader policy aims. And including up/reskilling in economic policy can help to ensure that Wales has the workforce it needs in the future.

As such, lifelong learning is not only the presence of the education sector. It should involve wider government and be delivered not just by universities, colleges, and local authority adult education services, but by a network of local partnerships including the voluntary sector, private providers, and local governments.

The Hazelkorn review (2016) and subsequent proposal of the Commission for Tertiary Education of Research (CTED) states these challenges and propose an inclusive and cross-sector governance for LLL in Wales. The aim of the new commission will help ensure learners have the support of a coherent sector, focused on widening access and increasing opportunities. As mentioned by one informant during the scoping interviews: “this is a good initiative, but a lack of clarity about how they should work together.”

CTED is to be formally set up in 2023. It is still early days and hence the exact impact of this joined-up approach will have on LLL in Wales is yet to be determined. The proposed CTED will implement a democratic governance model with advisory members as representatives of students and learners, tertiary education practitioners and the CTEDs own staff. It will be a truly multi-stakeholder approach.

LLL Governance guided by evidence-based research

As mentioned in the introduction Wales has a strong culture for commissioning and utilising evidence-based research when shaping new LLL governance structures. Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) is an important actor that provide policy support research and guidance. Their work has led to a widening definition of who should be covered by LLL (from 19+ to 16+). Although Post 16 education is the new focus for LLL, the WCPP has advised that the definition should be expanded further in the future. Their recommendation from their study (2021) is that LLL should be for everyone, and not just for the job market. As stated by one panellist at the RRT: “LLL is much wider than the post-19, and wider than the post-16”. This was supported by another panellist representing the adult community learning, who mentioned that everyone need access to LLL. Especially young people and youth of today needs to learn that learning is for life and not just to achieve a qualification.

At the RRT we had representation from different LLL providers. One take away from RRT is that although they work across different sectors, they seem to be aware of its different offers and what they are doing in Wales.

Conclusions

- Wales is advanced in LLL research, planning and policy.
- Challenges has been identified that LLL governance is too sector specific and fragmented. All panellists at the RRT emphasised the need for a closer collaboration between initiatives and approaches.
- A reflection from the RRT is that the users and other non-typical LLL actors e.g., voluntary sector - could be better included in the governance model.
- As identified by the RRT all actors (not just the providers) need to come together to promote a culture of LLL.

- The idea of social prescribing of LLL was suggested in the RRT, where LLL can be suggested by anyone working with people (youth workers, General Practitioners, Immigration, Housing, Health workers to name some).
- The Tertiary Education and Research Bill for Wales was passed in June 2022 (Royal Assent in September 2022) and will hopefully improve further the democratic governance of LLL structures.

III. Inter-Institutional Coordination and Integration of LLL Policies

Question	Answer
3. Does a lifelong learning policy exist at regional level? covering all education sectors (see below)?	Yes
4. Does a lifelong learning policy cover all education sectors (see below)?	To some extent
a) formal	Yes
b) informal	Yes
c) all age groups	Not yet (16+)
5. Is there cooperation and coordination between central and regional levels?	Yes
a) financial	Yes
b) administrative	Yes
c) other	Yes

Table 4. Questions 3-5

Lifelong Learning Policy

The most recent and prominent statement of LLL policy is the [Welsh Government's Post-Compulsory Education and Training \(PCET\)](#) vision from February 2021, which suggests that adult LLL will again be at the core of the programme of reforms (Welsh Government, 2020). The principles for change supporting the PCET strategic vision set out some of the benefits of lifelong learning for the post-18 cohort: [The benefits of lifelong learning go beyond economic gain. Education and training develop resilient, ambitious, fulfilled individuals and active citizens, able to contribute to their local community and wider society.](#) (Welsh Government, 2020: 7).

Lifelong Learning Policy and education sectors

Lifelong learning has as of late been covered by adult education which has been identified as those aged 18 and over in Wales. Recently a new definition has been

approved which sees younger people from 16 and above as part of the LLL provision. The participants at the RRT welcomed this widening definition but suggested that it should be broadened even further. As per WCPP's recommendation the participants also recognised that LLL does not start at a certain age and that to promote a culture of LLL, it must cover everyone. A standard definition used by the EU has been to look at LLL post-compulsory education in a country. The RRT panellists advised against the use of this definition and highlighted that the compulsory education years are key to how people take up learning later in life.

Another reflection from the scoping interviews in 2021 was that too often it is training for employability that gets funding and support. Especially after the Covid-19 pandemic where a lot of the attention has been on getting people back into employment and other LLL initiatives may not get the same focus: **We talk a good game about it being holistic, so recognised it's supposed to be good for everyone, to create citizens who are equipped for LLL. But in practice, post coronavirus we are going to see a lot focused on employability. (Interviewee, 2021)**

WCPP has investigated eligibility and the right for LLL. This is an area that is important but as it was reflected by one of the RRT panellists: "We should applaud the offering of LLL in Wales, but it is no good if people are not aware of their rights." The RRT concluded it is important for the new Commission (CTER) to go beyond entitlements and look at why people who are eligible for learning don't make use of it. WCPP interviews with learners in Wales suggest some of the common answers stem from; not having time, not being able to travel to facilities, cost, and lack of childcare. These are all areas that could benefit from further exploratory research and investigation. [WCPP podcast on LLL](#) mentioned some of the eligibilities that could benefit from information and awareness campaigns, these are:

- Right to post-18 education: "The right to education is there but there are 15- and 16-year-olds that don't know they are entitled to education until 18."
- Right to higher education: "The right to higher education is for any age. Many people are not aware of this."
- Right to apprenticeships: "Not something that young people tend to know about".

One Roundtable participant representing the adult education providers made a point that eligibility is more than gaining qualifications. "Eligibility often leads to qualifications but should not be exclusively about that." A lot of work has gone into looking at learners' needs, and who should be eligible for LLL. Often, eligibility criteria are based on people with already existing qualifications. As a conclusion, the RRT felt that eligibility criteria should be as wide as possible as it's needed for everyone.

Cooperation And Coordination Between Central and Regional Levels

This question on collaboration between central and local can be interpreted in two ways in Wales. If Wales is seen as a nation, it can be viewed as central and the four regions of Wales as regional. With this interpretation, we don't have much data to support a statement on this. There is cooperation among learning providers that operate in different areas of Wales (e.g., Adult Learning Wales and ReAct+).

The other way of interpreting this question is to look at Wales as a region within the United Kingdom. In our analysis, we do see some collaboration between the UK as central and Wales as local.

One of our panellists in the RRT reflected that this could be improved and that some very good LLL initiatives from England and the UK could be "parachuted" to Wales with little effort. This was considered a good solution.

Conclusions

- It was recognised by RRT that a lot of progress has been made on Wales LLL offer.
- A key challenge, according to the panellists at the RRT, is uptake of LLL and to try to understand why people are not signing up to the LLL offer.
- The definition of who is eligible for support to LLL is evolving and has expanded over time. The hope for the RRT is that LLL should be for everyone and that everyone sees it as part of the culture of Wales.

IV. Identifying Learner Needs and Monitoring Participation

Question	Answer
6. Does the region monitor the participation rates in LLL; Does the region monitor emerging learning needs?	Yes, to some extent
7. How frequently does monitoring occur?	Annually (mostly)
8. Are there tools and incentives to identify and communicate learning needs?	Yes
9. Are organizations provided with tools and incentives to identify learning needs?	Yes, to some extent

Table 5. Questions 6-9

General on Learning needs in Wales

The statistics on basic skill levels among adults in Wales are poor compared to other nations within the UK. Findings show that there is a growing trend of working-age adults in Wales being under-qualified and lacking essential skills. Almost half of adults from the lowest socioeconomic groups have not received any training since they left full-time education. Only 12% of adults with no qualifications thought they would be very likely to receive job-related learning or training in the next two to three years ([Centenary Commission on Adult Education, 2021](#)). In Wales, the proportion with a level 4 qualification and above is 4% below the UK average, and the proportion with a level 3 qualification is 1% higher ([Nomis, 2021](#)). There are inequalities regarding disability where 15.2% of disabled people have no qualifications, compared to 4.9% of non-disabled people. Welsh data also suggest that there is inequity in delivery, where parts of Wales may be underserved by the current community learning offer. Current local authority community learning provision is concentrated in South Wales, with extremely limited take-up in North Wales ([data from Lifelong Learning Wales record](#)).

Wales monitoring of LLL and emerging learning needs

In Wales there are several systems and tools in place to monitor LLL practices and initiatives. The main national office is the Lifelong Learning Record. Other main Wales LLL providers have their own systems and track trends and emerging needs for the areas they operate in. Although most of the systems in place monitor needs on an annual basis, some also operate with analysis taking place less frequently.

According to one panellist at the RRT there is a need for a new national analysis of adult skills. [As the last national survey for adult skills was carried out in 2010](#), and she emphasised how more up-to-date data is needed to help the new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research to prioritise their efforts. It is a big concern for adult learning providers in Wales, as they need baseline data to focus their LLL offer based on real needs.

→ [Lifelong Learning Record \(LLWR\)](#). In Wales, there is a national Lifelong Learning Record (LLWR) that is set up to monitor learning provision and learning needs of Wales. LLWR provides statistics on learners in post-16 education and training, excluding those at schools and higher education institutions (HEIs) but including those at Further Education (FE) Institutions, other Work-based Learning providers and Adult and Community Learning provision. [Annual data is collected on several enrolments](#) (e.g., by age, gender, ethnicity, disability, level of study, type of provision, programme/subject area, learning mode and learning outcomes – completion and success rates). FE colleges and schools with sixth forms must demonstrate annual curriculum planning to the Welsh Government, and how planning is aligned to the regional and local skills needs of the economy.

Curriculum planning discussions are held ahead of allocations for the coming academic year, and once the academic year has commenced.

- **Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) and Regional Employment and Skills Plans (RESPs)** represent the four regions of Wales. They are tasked with analysing economic challenges and likely growth areas to identify the skills needed in the workforce. They produce Regional Employment and Skills Plans (RESP) to analyse and influence the provision of skills based on regional economic need, to support growth and key infrastructure projects in each region. All post-16 providers are expected to align curriculum planning with the needs of the local economy as outlined in RSP reports. The plans are refreshed every three years and provide recommendations to the Welsh Government to influence the prioritisation and deployment of skills funding including Apprenticeship and Further Education allocations.
- **Adult Learning Network (local authority level).** The Community Learning Grant provides for the delivery of adult learning in the community. The Local Authority-led Adult Learning Network, and FEI Adult Learning Wales ensure progression of those furthest away from learning and work are aligned to the skills needs of the economy.

Conclusions

- LLL providers report uptake of LLL provision to the Wales Lifelong Learning Record, which in return provide reports which is free to access for anyone.
- Regions within Wales also look at LLL needs within their region and recognise that it does vary a lot between urbanised and less urbanised areas.
- For the adult learning community, it is important to have up to date data on skills for the adult population of Wales. The latest survey took place in 2010, and hence there is a need for newer data for them to work on.
- A new study for adult skills in Wales will also benefit the new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research, which is to be set up in 2023.

V. International Comparisons, Cooperation and Learning

Question	Answer
10. Is the Region a member of an overarching association or network specifically focused on LLL or more specific education sectors (e.g., VET, adult learning, etc)	Yes (more wanted)
11. Are exchange learning opportunities in place?	Yes, to some extent

Table 6. Questions 10-11

This is a topic that was discussed in length among the panellists at the RRT. There was a sense of grief that some of them had built a lifetime of excellent European networks in their area and that due to Brexit they are now in a limbo and bit unclear as to where they should go for international comparisons. Others felt that Brexit had not changed things, and that they are still part of international and European adult education networks. One major learning provider mentioned that they are still an active contributor to European adult networks although Wales is no longer member of the EU.

It was concluded by all panellists that there is a strong need for international collaboration and that post-Brexit this need has been intensified. One of the panellists, who works closely with central government in all the UK nations expressed it like this: **In the last 12 months we have had to replace a lifetime of contacts and networks in the UK and there is a real sense of grief and a gap to fill...To keep the agenda for LLL, Governments (in the UK) had tried to attach their work on LLL to the UNESCO goals instead. (RRT 2022)**

Considering the increased focus on using UNESCO as a new international collaborator, two panellists expressed regret that the Wales ministers did not prioritise attending nor sending a delegation to their UNESCO conference on LLL in July 2022.

According to a panellist one of the rationales used to leave EU was that Wales would have the opportunity to look outwards and work with other international providers outside the EU. This has been seen to some extent with new research comparing Wales to New Zealand. However, there are few examples of this happening at time of the COMORELP project.

As expressed by one panellist at the RRT, which was followed up by others: **...I wish there would be more access to international community on what is happening in the space of LLL...A need for international collaboration is clearly there. (RRT, 2022)**. This need is also mirrored by another panellist, who emphasised that she talked on behalf of both England and Wales when the governments have been identified: **A need to focus on how to stay connected internationally and how to create opportunities for ministers and politicians.... “The lack of European network is very much felt and the need for international collaboration is there” (RRT, 2022)**

Wales new Exchange programme: Taith

The newly established Taith (launched in April 2022) is one way to look for international collaboration in a post-Brexit environment. Taith is an international exchange programme that has received funding for a programme cycle from 2022-

2026 (4 years). Taith is a programme enabling people in Wales to study, train, volunteer, and work all over the world, while allowing organisations in Wales to invite international partners and learners to do the same in Wales. Studying, volunteering, or taking a work placement abroad broadens people’s horizons, expands their skills, and brings benefits to communities and organisations in Wales. It will create opportunities to broaden horizons, experience new ways of life, and bring back lessons to share with people at home. [Taith supports Global Wales](#) in its mission to provide strategic support to the Welsh Tertiary Education sector to develop networks and partnerships in priority countries. In addition, Taith helps grow Wales’s reputation and market share as an international education destination.

At the RRT, representatives of Taith were keen to point out that the programme has been put in place to effectively replace the fantastic opportunities Wales had benefitted from through the EU Erasmus programme. It is intrinsically outward looking and very much modelled around the loss of Erasmus opportunities.

Other International Comparisons

According to one informant during scoping interviews in 2021, several international comparisons have been used to review LLL in Wales. Until 2020, these have primarily been European projects and programmes or national Welsh programmes such as:

- Welsh Government published an [International Strategy](#) in Jan 2020.
- Welsh Government participate/ed in a wide range of education-related international networks and initiatives, drawing on good practice and lessons to inform its own policies. For example, it has participated in, or actively commissioned the **OECD** to undertake education research initiatives on various aspects of education. Most recently [OECD Education Policy Perspective Report](#) on the [New Curriculum for Wales](#), including the principles of developing school children to be “ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn through their lives.”
- Welsh Government was an active member of [EARLALL - European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning](#) – for a number of years and participated in several LLL projects (e.g., PREVALET – Policies for Regional Valorisation of Education and Training, PRECOLL - Policies for Regional Co-operation in LLL, and SMOC – Soft Open Method of Co-ordination).
- Prior to the UK’s exit from the EU, the Welsh Government and Welsh education providers participated in the [EU Lifelong Learning Programme \(LLP\) 2007-2014, incl. CEDEFOP’s Study Visits Programme](#) for education policy makers and practitioners; and the successor **Erasmus+** programme (2014 – 2015), which offered opportunities in LLL.
- Welsh Government part-funds [Global Wales Discover](#), a British Council-run programme, which provides funding for Welsh institutions to deliver short-term

mobility opportunities for Welsh undergraduate students to work, study or volunteer in another country.

- Welsh Government has several **bilateral education agreements** (Memoranda of Understanding, Declarations of Intent.) with other nations which either focus on or include co-operation and collaboration in education. Examples are: student and education staff mobility and good practice exchanges and research. Some work focus on specific education sectors, e.g., university or schools' collaboration while other (e.g., Brittany and Galicia) provide a broader framework for education co-operation. The development of a Wales-specific International Learning Exchange Programme is based on this premiss. Welsh Government also engages in OECD research and intentional benchmarking programmes (e.g., PISA).

Good LLL Practices frequently reported from Wales

When asking our stakeholders in the RRT what good practices other regions may be interested in learning from Wales in the COMORELP project, three following were mentioned: Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF), React+ and Personal Learning Account (PLA). Other key practices worth mentioning from our research are Restart Programme, Taith and Higher Education Student Support Reform.

Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF) is funded by the Wales Government and administered by Wales Trade Union Congress (TUC) Learning Services. The purpose of the fund is to help people living and working in unionised workplaces in Wales to access support, advice and funding for vocational training and personal development. Since its inception in 1999, WULF has successfully delivered union led adult learning in the workplace for thousands of people. It is important to note that this offer is available to all Welsh workers of unionised organisations, not just those that hold a union membership. Each project in the WULF Programme is unique, reflecting the different types of workplaces where the union is active. Projects can include support for essential skills, including digital literacy, bespoke courses to meet specific vocational/professional learning needs, redundancy support, help during career or organisational changes and promoting equality, health, and wellbeing at work through learning. In March 2022 it was announced that more than £13million will go to further develop and deliver skills solutions and learning support to workers over the next three years (2022-25). **For more information see COMORELP News article and good practice report.** In the RRT panellists expressed that the work done by WULF has been a big achievement, and one that other regions could learn from. Opposite to the English Union Learning Fund, which has ended due to lack of further funding, WULF goes from strength to strength and has now received funding for the next programme cycle.

Personal Learning Accounts (PLAs) are designed to help people in employment and whose jobs may be at risk. The programme is aimed at who are on; furlough, zero-hour contracts, or whose jobs are at risk, providing they are 19 or over and earning under £26,000. Personal Learning Accounts allow people to study flexibly and obtain new skills. The aim is to upskill and reskill employed 19+ year olds through access to free and flexible part-time courses, delivered by colleges in economic sectors identified where there are skills shortages and are identified as key and/or growth sectors. As part of the Welsh Government programme, colleges in Wales collectively now offer more than 1,000 free courses across sectors that are ripe for job opportunities, including construction, finance, IT, health and safety, project management and engineering. The expansion of PLAs in Wales is key to realising the Welsh Government's commitment to "build a genuine system of lifelong learning for everyone who needs help finding work and re-training, especially those most disadvantaged," PLAs is part of a wider **Employability delivery plan**. According to our panellist at the RRT: **Personal Learning Account (PLA) is going to be an important vehicle on LLL in Wales and they show innovation in their approach. (RRT expert, 22).** As PLAs has now been approved and is about to be implemented in the EU countries, this is an area where there could be mutual benefits for learning.

ReAct+ is a Welsh Government programme designed to 'react quickly and positively to all redundancy situations through a series of measures designed to alleviate the negative effect of redundancy and provide all redundant individuals with the skills necessary to secure new, sustainable employment in the shortest time possible'. The programme is designed to 'complement and supplement the service offered by Jobcentre Plus and Careers Wales. The programme is for Wales citizens that have been made redundant in the past 12 months or have become unemployed for a reason other than redundancy in the past 12 months and who are currently unemployed. There are 3 elements to ReAct: Recruitment & Training Support, Vocational training Grant - Discretionary Award and Extra Support Grant - Discretionary Award. One of the participants at the RRT expressed that the political decision to continue and further develop ReAct in now named ReAct+ is a good example that could be interesting for other regions to learn from. The recently launched ReAct+ is a more flexible programme trying to engage more people into LLL.

Restart Programme. Welsh Government ran the Restart project from 2019- March 2022 (part funded through UK Responsible Authority) which supported Refugees to integrate into Wales by providing accredited ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) courses, and employability support. It gives refugees the opportunity to undertake a language assessment to see if they require ESOL classes and to allocate them to a class in line with their ability. A holistic assessment is then completed that explores different integration factors including their employment goals, previous

experience, education and needs for support. Work coaches in the hubs provided support with CV writing, interview techniques and job search.

Taith was recently launched in April 2022 and has a programme cycle from 2022-26 (4 years). Taith is a programme enabling people in Wales to study, train, volunteer, and work all over the world while allowing organisations in Wales to invite international partners and learners to do the same in Wales. Studying, volunteering, or taking a work placement abroad broadens people’s horizons, expands their skills, and brings benefits to communities and organisations in Wales. It will create opportunities to broaden horizons, experience new ways of life, and bring back lessons to share with people at home. Taith supports Global Wales in its mission to provide strategic support to the Welsh Tertiary Education sector to develop networks and partnerships in priority countries and grow Wales’s reputation and market share as an international education destination.

Higher Education Student Support Reform (HESSR) is based on principles of widening participation and equity across ages and modes. As far as our experts are aware, it is the only system in Europe that provides equivalent loans/grants to part-time and full-time undergraduates, as well as generous post-graduate funding, plus bursaries for students aged 60+.

Other Welsh Government commitments of relevance to the lifelong learning agenda over the next 5 years that were reported in the scoping interviews in 2021 are:

- Strengthening of the **Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF)** aimed at reducing the number of young people aged 11 to 25 who are not engaged in education, employment, or training (NEET).
- Delivery of the **Young Persons Guarantee**, giving everyone under 25 the offer of work, education, training, or self-employment.
- Strengthening of **Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs)** to ensure the supply of skilled adults meets the needs of Wales – to ensure that they provide regional leadership and robust labour market intelligence, using funding incentives to improve their influence on skills provision in each region.
- Create 125,000 all-age **apprenticeships**. The aim is to provide more and flexible routes into training and better jobs.

Conclusions

- RRT panellists expressed that the lack of a European network is very much felt and that there is a clear need for increased international collaboration.

- RRT concluded there is a strong need for Wales to look for international comparisons and exchange good practices of LLL internationally (within Europe and globally).
- Panellists were surprised and concerned to think that EU partners and COMORELP project might perceive the Brexit situation as an indication that Wales does not want to participate in continued EU work. This is very much NOT the case.
- All panellists in the RRT were keen on the overall idea of an International Policy exchange space and the idea of access and contributions to best practice examples in the field.
- Participants were animated and keen to contribute to the COMORELP project and would welcome more opportunities such as the RRT to recur.

VI. Managing and Sustaining Partnerships

Question	Answer
12. Has the regional authority promoted, supported, and achieved sustainable partnerships for lifelong learning?	Yes, but more can be done
13. If there are multi-stakeholder partnerships:	Yes
a) do they exist?	Yes
b) are they supported by regional authority?	Yes
c) are they promoted?	Yes
14. Are there multi-stakeholder partnerships?	Yes

Table 7. Questions 12-14

Focus on cross-sector partnerships in LLL have been a focus of recent studies and the work has been welcomed by the participants of the RRT. A more joined-up government and multi-stakeholder partnerships were also advised in Wales's recent thematic review ([WCPP, 2021](#)). This includes a perceived need for more collaboration between Government Departments such as education, work and pensions, health and others working together with holistic solutions for individuals, including older people, families, and workers and employers.

One participant at the RRT explicitly expressed the urgent need for a more cross-sector approach in LLL. One example given at the RRT was the training of health service staff. Currently it is primarily the National Health Service (NHS) educating future staff into the NHS. According to the RRT panellist, it does not need to be like that, and different sectors could work together to meet the demands of future jobs in the health sector.

Some partnerships worth mentioning from informants and desktop research are:

- [Estyn Thematic Report on post-16 partnerships](#) is the education and training inspectorate for Wales. Its name comes from the Welsh language verb Estyn meaning "to reach (out), stretch or extend". The purpose of Estyn is to inspect and report on the quality and standards of education and training provided in Wales. Their work includes how far education and training meet the needs of learners and contribute to their development and wellbeing; standards achieved; and the quality of leadership and training. Estyn is independent of, but funded by the Welsh Government. The equivalent organisation in England is Ofsted (England). Welsh Government is currently considering the recommendations in Estyn's Thematic Report on effective post-16 partnerships, together with a range of other evidence to ensure effective and sustainable partnership working across the sector and as part of the draft [Tertiary Education & Research Bill](#).
- [Principles for Change in Post-Compulsory Education and Training](#) in post-compulsory education and training is a publication from the Welsh Government. It has a strong focus on multi-stakeholder partnerships and their sustainability. This is part of the proposed Commission for Tertiary Education and Research to be set up in 2023. It states:
- "The new Commission will collaborate with the broadest range of stakeholders from public, third and private sectors, and civic society."
 - "Introducing a legislative framework for strengthening social partnership arrangements and integrating the principles of social partnership into the organisation of Wales's PCET sector and institutions"; and
 - "Building future leadership capacity of PCET providers to act as socially responsible civic leaders, delivering civic engagement at a national and community level alongside civic partners in health, education, local government, and other public services."

The new Welsh Government is considering [ColegauCymru's policy recommendation for post-16 education and lifelong learning](#) to "expand citizens' entitlement and engagement with education". [The College of the Future for Wales](#) (Jan 2021) also includes recommendations (p.18) to support colleges to play a greater role as anchor institutions.

Conclusions

- There are some examples of multi-stakeholder partnerships in LLL across Wales.
- However, in line with recent reviews, the RRT participants felt that more can be done to promote cross-sector collaboration and partnerships in Wales.
- One participant of the RRT reflected on this by giving examples of lack of joined up approach in training future health professionals. "Higher education institutions,

National Health Services (NHS) and adult learning communities tend to operate in isolation where they could clearly benefit from a joined-up approach.”

- It is perceived by the RRT that a more joined up approach is one of the main tasks for the new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER).

Implementation

VII. Information and Guidance

Question	Answer
15. Is the information easily accessible to all, i.e., if stakeholders' specific needs are taken into account?	Yes, but more could be done

Table 8. Question 15

LLL programmes and policies are advertised through main government portals and websites. There seems to be good awareness of funding opportunities from our RRT panellists as well as faith in the fairness of the tendering process of programmes. The different LLL sector or trade sites (e.g., employment, education, community colleges etc do have links to national/regional documents.) tend to provide links of other providers and funding opportunities that may be relevant for their readers. A finding from desktop research also suggests that different information sites are up to date with relevant funding opportunities. For LLL as a field, it is seen as a fair and transparent process. However, as noted in a scoping interview, the larger providers have more expertise and experience getting grants. Smaller community learning institutions don't have this expertise and rely heavily on local investors for funding.

The RRT and desktop research suggest that more work should be done in targeting specific groups in language and format that work for those groups. For example, run specific campaigns for certain age groups (e.g., young, or elderly), campaigns for people with physical or cognitive disabilities and for people who are outside employment and job market.

Some participants in the RRT focused on how larger national campaigns to promote LLL has proven to work in the past. From early 80s BBC were promoting learning and as everyone had a limited number of TV channels and before streaming services this did reach out to most people in Wales. Times has naturally changed since then but some of the centrally governed campaigns for LLL does prove to have an impact. Some good practice examples of online guidance and information channels are:

1. Gov.uk website such as Skills gateway
 - BusinessWales.gov.wales. The Skills Gateway for Business (promoter of LLL programmes)
 - CareersWales.gov.wales (information for individuals on learning opportunities)
2. Colleges Wales
3. Adult Learning Wales
4. Wales Union Learning Fund
5. Learning and Work Institute
6. Other independent learning providers such as: Digital Communities Wales, ReStart etc.

At a regional level the training is advertised and information provider through:

- City or region portals
- Local Government websites
- Independent providers locally
- Local job centres
- Organisations promoting own learning offers (from WULF or funded by employers)

Adult Learners Week is arranged annually and is the largest event in Wales advocating LLL. Adult Learners' Week is meant to be the catalyst that is meant to inspire and mobilise people to change their story to lead better and more fulfilling lives. The campaign will offer people a second chance and the confidence they need to move forward, access learning opportunities and seek advice and guidance.

This is achieved by collaborating with a whole host of private and public organisations on the promotion of online and in-person taster sessions, events, short courses, resources, promotional activity and guidance and support on careers and skills – all signposted through the Adult Learners' Week online learning platform. Adults can learn new skills, gain a qualification, explore career pathways, improve their health, well-being, and confidence, connect with other people, or discover a new passion or hobby.

Conclusions

- Desktop research suggest there is transparency and information available for all LLL stakeholders (learners and providers) on the Internet.
- The large national funding programmes are often bureaucratic and hence applications come from larger organisations with their own expertise and teams for grant applications.
- Smaller community colleges tend to focus on local funding opportunities.

- There is good system of relevant, and up to date, links to government information through several sector specific websites.
- As most information are online, the RRT expressed a concern that those stakeholders without IT access or ICT skills may lose out on LLL offers.
- More work is needed in targeting hard to reach populations. Examples of groups suggested by the RRT are; specific age groups (youth and elderly), people with physical and cognitive disabilities, people outside of education and employment.

VIII. Developing Learning Motivation and Skills or Creating a Culture of Lifelong Learning

Question	Answer
16. Are there awareness and promotion campaigns in place to support lifelong learning?	Yes
17. Does the promotion of learning to learn cover all stages of life (see below)?	To some extent
a) children?	Yes, to some extent
b) youths?	From 16+
c) adults?	Yes
d) seniors?	To some extent

Table 9. Questions 16-17

Awareness and promotion campaigns in place to support lifelong learning

According to the RRT, big national campaigns to promote LLL have worked very well. It helps providers get new learners and experience shows it also reaches out to people who may not be seeking out learning opportunities themselves. It was expressed by one panellist that the new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research could have an important role in supporting these campaigns and helping promote a culture of learning in Wales.

The RRT also focused on the difference in entitlements and their impact on LLL uptake. One panellist mentioned that too much focus has been on entitlements and the right to learning. Even with this in place learning is on the decline in Wales so more needs to be done to make people aware of their rights and to promote learning.

It was reflected by the RRT that this job to create a culture of LLL goes beyond campaigns and work of learning providers. As stated by one expert: **Everybody needs to understand the importance of upskilling people.** (RRT, 2022)

The RRT also reflected that it is tempting to think of training only post compulsory education and for adult education to be focused on training for jobs. The truth is that the needs are changing at fast pace, and no one can really predict what the needs will be in the future: **People in primary school has to be prepared for jobs we don't even know about yet (RRT, 2022).**

On that note it was also advised by the RRT that; “everyone, no matter the age needs to be prepared and trained into a culture of LLL and that it truly starts with a “cradle to grave” approach” (RRT, 2022). Campaigns for LLL should therefore be for everyone in Wales. There was also an understanding that additional campaigns should be targeting segments of the population in a way that it reaches them. Examples of segments that needs special focused campaigns were according to RRT elderly and young citizens.

Learning promotion and life stages

As mentioned in the introduction LLL has traditionally been for adults with 18+ age and most campaigns target the adult population. This definition has now been expanded to younger adults where anyone aged 16+ are included. In our desktop research we did not find many campaigns involving children under 16, and this is most likely as they will be covered under compulsory education in Wales. However, it is expected that this definition will widen even further, as LLL is for life, and it is recognised that a culture of learning must start earlier than post-compulsory education.

Although primary and compulsory education is not traditionally part of the LLL definition, the Welsh education policy literature does emphasise the importance of instilling children with a desire to learn for life. This is often referred to as “learning to learn” and is an important aspect of all primary education.

LLL is seen as a catalyst for the development of Wales and for wellbeing of its people. However, it was mentioned by the RRT we need to be aware that people have different level of motivation to pick up learning. Some people are self-motivated and will seek learning opportunities by themselves. Data suggests that those with higher education tend to be more positive to learning and that those most in need of learning new skills may be less likely to seek out learning opportunities. This may have to do with previous experience of education and/or other factors such as lack of opportunities to invest money or time to take up learning. This was illustrated well in an example by one of the RRT panellists in WCPP’ own podcast on LLL (22):

If you are 30 and school was horrible...being told by anybody e.g., jobcentre+ or others that they have to get back to training is horrible for them ... Anybody that interact with people (voluntary sector, clubs etc) need to be trained to support and nurture LLL. –

They need training in good ways of interacting and to encourage training. (WCPP Podcast, 22)

The RRT reflected that campaigns should be targeting those most in need that may not necessarily seek learning and may need help to see the value and the benefit of learning.

One of the panellists at the RRT reflected on how university and higher education needs to change to embrace a culture of LLL for all. Currently the focus is primarily for those with university degrees and those that are already active learners in society: Higher education should be redefined and capture those that are currently not part of learning or that already have university degrees...We need more offered and communicated to all levels (not just university levels). (RRT, 2022)

Another panellist at the RRT also reflected that LLL should be for any age, and that campaigns should be for anyone living in Wales. The campaigns should use a variety of methods depending on what the purpose of them are: Some learning should be for individual learning while other is more targeted towards professional skills and employment. Skills can be acquired naturally (by pleasure of learning) or with intention (training on the job). (RRT, 2022)

Conclusions

- There are good practices for recruiting learners based on national and regional campaigns. It was advised by RRT that CTER should build on this work to promote uptake of LLL.
- LLL campaigns seem to focus on the adult population of Wales, previously from 18+ and recently from the age of 16+.
- It was mutually agreed among RRT that a culture of LLL starts much earlier (than 16+) and that anyone working with people, no matter the age, should be trained and promote LLL for people of Wales.
- A reflection from the RRT is that there is too much emphasis on qualifications and accreditations of LLL. As concluded by a participant at RRT: “LLL often leads to qualifications but not always.”

IX. Professionalisation of Educators and LLL Staff

Question	Answer
18. Does the regional authority support continue professional development of:	Not applicable

Question	Answer
a) management staff at school?	Yes
b) teachers?	Yes, to some extent
c) educators in informal education?	Yes

Table 10. Question 18

Training of LLL staff was perceived by the RRT as important. Not only training to teach their subject area, but also training to promote a culture of LLL and learning for pleasure. One panellist mentioned that sometimes a training course can put an individual on a training path and massively improve the life of that individual. But often, it also takes a good professional to help people when they are struggling with learning and to motivate and encourage them to progress with their learning.

Training for everyone working with people in Wales

It was also noted in WCPP podcast that people often come into learning when dealing with life changes. Examples of life changes is at times of job uncertainty, when they have been told they need to learn a new skill at work or when their family situation change (marriage breakups, bereaved, children moving out or relocations). Any good educator needs to be aware of this and be prepared to help individuals.

The RRT also reflected that it is not only training educators or LLL staff that needs to have training on LLL. The idea of social prescribing was mentioned, and people who work with people (not just educators) will need to be trained to help people into learning. One suggestion mentioned by RRT were cases where doctors should be able to subscribe training for some patients where they see it can make a difference to their overall well-being: *It is important we bring in other partners in this discussion of LLL, and that we also include well-being when promoting LLL. It can be life changing in a positive way. "It's not about dictating (or prescribing) ...but about engaging (people into LLL). (RRT participant)*

Training for LLL educators and staff

Incentives and connections with learning is achieved with the quality of teaching... The professional that has the skills could spot when someone needs additional support. Many adult learners face challenges... This powerful statement from RRT supports how important it is the trainers in LLL have the right skills and the right training for their role. Some professional development opportunities for LLL professionals and staff in Wales are:

→ **Taith – Wales Government.** To replace the UK's withdrawal from the Erasmus+ programme, Cardiff University has developed, on behalf of Welsh Government, a

Wales-specific [International Learning Exchange Programme \(ILEP\)](#) to run from academic year 2022-3 to 2026. The Taith Programme provide funding to enable students, staff and learners across universities, Further Education and Vocational Education and Training, Adult Education, youth work settings and schools to undertake a period of structured learning or work experience overseas (Europe and farther afield), as well as enabling strategic partnerships. A fundamental principle of the programme is reciprocity. Where necessary, the programme will fund costs related to the inward mobility of learners, teachers, and young people from partner organisations abroad. For more information see COMORELP good practice report on Taith.

- **Turing Scheme – UK Government.** Welsh institutions are also able to participate in the UK [Government’s Turing Scheme](#). The scheme supports UK organisations from the higher education, further education, vocational education and training and schools’ sectors to offer their students, learners, and pupils’ life-changing experiences to study or work abroad. However, it is not a reciprocal scheme like Taith, i.e., it does not support opportunities to host incoming learning exchanges from abroad into the UK.
- **Curriculum for Wales Hwb.** Hwb is the digital platform for learning and teaching in Wales. Hwb provides its users with access to a range of centrally funded, bilingual, digital tools and resources. It is the Welsh Government’s strategic digital channel to support the delivery of the curriculum in Wales. It offers free online training and resource material for blended learning in Wales.
- **Post-16 Workforce Development Framework.** The [Post-16 Workforce Development Framework](#) project develops a suite of tools to support staff across the post-16 sector in Wales to develop their learning both on a personal and a professional level. It includes all aspects of professional development including CPD, recruitment and retention, the use of professional standards, qualifications, and regulations.
- **Future Education Workforce fit for the Future.** Welsh Government is considering Colegau Cymru’s policy recommendation on [FE Workforce Fit for the Future](#). This is not Welsh Government policy but a recommendation from Colleges Wales, one of the key providers of LLL.

Conclusions

- There are multiple training opportunities for educators and staff of LLL in Wales. Some are Welsh by origin while others are part of the wider UK offering.
- RRT emphasised the need for training of other professions not working directly with LLL to promote learning opportunities. It was suggested that anyone working with people should be trained to help people into a pathway of learning.
- To create a culture of LLL we all need to be “good neighbours” and suggest training when we see the need in our community.

→ As suggested by a panellist: “We need to enable people into LLL, not tell them to do it”.

X. Promoting Demand

Question	Answer
19. Are learners financially supported to access available learning opportunities?	YES (mostly)
20. Are there initiatives in place to support:	
a) learners with Special Needs?	Yes
b) learners with migrant background?	Yes
c) long-term unemployed?	Yes
d) unemployed youth?	Yes
e) unemployed women?	Partly Yes
f) other categories?	Yes: Wellbeing, Senior, Digital excluded, At risk of redundancy

Table 11. Question 19-20

The RRT reflected that Wales has done a very good job providing LLL opportunities for people of Wales. The Welsh Government has a statutory duty to encourage individuals to engage in post-16 education and training in Wales. Although a lot of work has been done in rights to learning, it hasn't changed the fact that less people take up these opportunities.

As mentioned by a RRT panellist: *Wales has done extremely well... we should applaud what's in place already... However, we got things in place but that's no good (in itself) if no one takes up learning (RRT, 2022)*

The RRT articulated an urgent need for people to take up LLL in Wales. Although everyone agrees there are different opinions on how to get there. One panellist expressed that Welsh government has been too fixated on rights and entitlements. As she pointed out, not all people are aware of their rights to learning, and that more work needs to be done in this area: *They (the Government) need to tell people, communicate, and take active steps to increase participation (RRT 2022).*

RRT participants agreed that one of the main tasks for the coming CTER will be to look at ways to increase participation into LLL. As mentioned by one panellist the emphasis

should be on the ones most in need for learning. It was suggested that instead of placing them in categories such as e.g., unemployed, immigrants, or woman as used in the COMORELP Benchmarking tool, the focus should be for those most in need of learning. Categorisation should therefore be agile and fluid to meet the needs at any point of time.

The people most in need of LLL are, according to one panellist; “the people of Wales that currently find themselves in unfamiliar territory” or, as suggested by another; “People who are going through life changes”. It was concluded that there are now new groups of learners in need and that the traditional groupings of (e.g., unemployed, migrant groups, women etc) may not be so relevant and that new emerging categorisations may be more relevant.

The COMORELP Benchmarking tool suggest a separate category for women is needed looking at LLL. For Wales this is not seen as relevant as learning should be for all citizen above 16+, and that both women as well as men has the same needs. This is partly due to a cultural understanding that both men and women are equal and that most households have both working parents irrespective of gender. Only in some circumstances, e.g., with immigration groups and refugees, has there been an identified need to look at women as a target group for learning.

Alternative categorisations that could be used on who is most in need of LLL in Wales were suggested by the RRT as:

- **Older citizen of Wales.** Research and press focus on what is called “the big resignation”. We know that there has been a growing group of people aged 50+ leaving employment during and post Covid-19. More research needs to be done to understand this trend and investigate how LLL can reskill or motivate this group back into LLL and maybe even back to employment: **Many people post 50 are not at work...why is that. They should have an entitlement to learn so they can stay in employment and be fit for the changes of work. (RRT participant, 2022).**
- **Younger citizen:** One RRT panellist noted that this age group has rights to learning (schooling, training on the job or apprenticeships to mention some) but that somehow many young people are not aware of it or are dropping out of learning. As stated by one expert: **People that are 16 should not be lost and all people working on young people should have training to help them learn for the rest of their lives. LLL is not for 16-18 it's for the rest of your life. Get them to understand it is learning forever (RRT participant, 2022).**
- **People in employment whose sector skillset are no longer needed:** Another group of citizens who are emerging as a group in need of LLL skills are the people with education who have been in employment over a long period of time and are now

experiencing that their expertise and roles are no longer needed. A typical group of people are people with skills that employers need is becoming transformed by technology. A panellist for the RRT expressed that they see a growing number of people who have good qualifications with 10-20 years of industry experience but now need help to change sector and their skills to fit a changing labour market. Due to the very rapid changes in jobs, it was well articulated by a panellist: **We need to do more with employers...there is an expectation that employers support LLL. "If people ask for time off for training...there needs to be an expectation they get that (RRT, 2022).**

- **Health and Well-being needs:** One of the findings from the scoping interviews is that there is often too much emphasis that training should lead to qualifications that again should lead to employment. There is also another incentive for some, which is training to tackle health and life challenges such as trauma, loneliness, and social exclusion. It was commented in the RRT that these groups are often not mentioned but should be an important part of LLL support and Government efforts in LLL.

A conclusion from the RRT is that roles and skillsets needed in society are continually changing and that this leads to new groups of people most in need of learning:

We need to prepare people for jobs that don't exist yet. (RRT, 2022)

...don't assume that people end up in the sector that they train for" Job market is unstable, and people change jobs and sectors (RRT, 2022)

Also, we don't know the future jobs and the needs for the future... but we do know people need to learn and to keep learning for jobs. People need to be trained not just for one job but for the future needs of Wales. (RRT, 2022)

The emerging needs may not have established programmes to receive financial support for learning. According to our panellist in the RRT, we need to widen the definition of who is in need and provide support for a larger group to take up LLL.

Key Welsh LLL Providers

Careers Wales/ Working Wales help young people and adults to; plan their career, prepare to get a job, and find and apply for the right apprenticeships, courses, and training. They provide free impartial careers information, guidance, and advice, including raising awareness of the wide range of opportunities available. The Careers Wales and Working Wales websites are full of a wealth of information ensuring that anyone accessing the site is aware of the full range of learning opportunities available to them. Individuals can through the sites contact a careers adviser to explore their options via a web chat service, over the telephone, via email and face to face. The Careers Wales Course Search function helps individuals find the right course for them,

course search includes courses run by private providers, community education, work-based learning, online courses, and part time college courses. Their Support finder tool allows individuals to search for [programmes that can help them improve their skills and work opportunities](#). April 2021 Careers Wales launched their new 5-year strategy, [Brighter Futures](#). Within the strategy it identifies Careers Wales offering to support those 16+ into learning and work. Careers Wales /Working Wales run regular targeted marketing campaigns including:

- [Start your Story](#) – supporting those leaving education,
- [Stop, Don't Drop](#) – supporting learners that are unsure if they're on the right course for them,
- [Change Your Story](#) – supporting those looking for a change in their career (including furlough staff) and identifying the support and courses available through the Young Persons Guarantee.

June 2021 Careers Wales delivered a [Career Discovery Week](#), which is a 5-day employer based digital 'Careers and Work-Related Experiences' event. The week was supported by over 150 employers and included live presentations, webinars, Q&A sessions, and teacher led activities. 146 secondary schools took part in the event. In terms of post-16 provision, individual learning providers across Wales promote (through Open Days and other marketing activity) – to various degrees – post-16 provision available within their own institutions. Some providers are collaborating to promote pan-provider post-16 provision across the local authority area. In 2020 Welsh Government (WG) and Careers Wales/Working Wales (CW) piloted a series of Virtual Open Days targeted mainly at year 11 pupils (age 16) and parents/guardians to help young people discover their options in and after education inform their next step choices, bringing together post-16 providers by region to promote all post-16 provision in the area.

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In 2021 Welsh Government launched [Your Future Festival](#). This is part of the wider [Start Your Story](#) campaign, funded by Welsh Government and run by Careers Wales/Working Wales. Alongside the festival Welsh Government has worked with

Careers Wales and created a post-16 education and training directory that lists schools, colleges, and training providers, and which will direct learners to providers in their local areas. This is a crucial tool and something that will be used for other promotional activities. [For a list of education and training provision see link here.](#)

[Adult Learners Week](#) is an annual event in September that focuses on adult and community Learning. The week is funded by the Welsh Government and run by the Learning and Work Institute (L&WI) More information on Adult Learners Week and their programme for this year on this link. Welsh Government also funds the L&WI to increase engagement in learning; and support the delivery of campaigns including Adult Learners' Week and Skills Work Week by promoting positive role models and case studies.

Inspire! Adult Learning Awards (organised by Learning and Work Institute Wales, in partnership with Welsh Government and other partners) are for people, projects and organisations whose learning achievements will inspire others to return to or take up learning, people who have improved their lives and /or the lives of others and gained a positive or life-changing experience from adult learning.

[Youth Engagement & Progression Framework \(YEPF\)](#) was introduced in 2013 and renewed in 2022 and focuses on reducing the number of 11–25-year-olds who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET). The Welsh Government Commissioned L&WI to undertake a review of the service, and the findings and published report summarising the feedback from a consultation on refreshing the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework. [The review was published in September 2021.](#)

Each pre- and post-16 education provider has its own commitment and policies around reducing and eliminating prejudice and discrimination.

Welsh Government's Employability Plan named [Stronger, fairer, greener Wales; A plan for Employability and Skills](#) (2022) sets out how the Welsh Government will support those furthest from the labour market, the economically inactive and those at risk of redundancy, into work. There are a range of employability programmes which are delivered to meet those aims.

[Personal Learning Accounts \(PLA\)](#) – PLA was initially part of 2016-2021 Government's Employability Plan and provides flexible learning opportunities (e.g., evenings and weekends) through short courses and higher-level qualifications. The programme was designed for 19+ year olds in Wales and in employment with earnings threshold to access free and flexible courses within Welsh Government's priority sectors and gain higher level skills & qualifications. Traineeships and Apprenticeships provide skills

development and progression within a workplace. PLA is targeted at employed people earning below average income, furloughed workers and employed individuals who have been negatively impacted by the economy (including Covid-19) to gain higher level skills. PLA is managed in collaboration with the React+ programme.

The ReAct+ programme continues to support people who are impacted by redundancy or who are short-term unemployed.

Job Growth Wales+ is for young people aged 16-18 in Wales not engaged in post-16 education or employment. This youth programme and its primary objective is to equip people with the skills, qualifications, and experience to enable them to progress learning at a higher level or to employment, including an **Apprenticeship**. The newly launched Jobs Growth Wales+ programme is running from 2022 to 2026 with the opportunity to extend beyond the programme cycle.

The Community Employability Programmes are providing intensive mentoring and support to help unemployed people progress into education, volunteering, training, or employment. Outreach Support is provided for those furthest from the labour market on a range of issues, including soft skills such as confidence, resilience, and teamwork. Work with those furthest away from the labour market and in the most deprived communities in Wales.

Big Ideas Wales, hosts entrepreneurship workshops, boot camps and role model support to young people, helps them to consider and overcome barriers when starting a business.

The Out of Work Peer Mentoring Service is unique to the UK. It provides employment support if you have mental health, alcohol, or drug problems.

Adult Learning Wales. Local Authorities and individual learning providers offer support services for their students (counselling, additional learning needs...) and some have charters setting out their commitment to learner support.

Working Wales is delivered by Careers Wales, provides a wide range of advice, guidance, and support (e.g., not just careers advice but also childcare, transport, funding support) for learners and to help individuals into employment.

Careers Wales employs specialist advisors for those with additional learning needs who provide practical transition support for learners when they transition from school to post 16 learning and employment.

Adult Community Learning (ACL) is funded via the ‘Community Learning Grant’ to local authorities, and which is delivered by Adult Learning Wales. Target group for this is 16+. However, there is a wide range of lifelong learning provision that includes full and part-time higher education, general and vocational further education. Whilst the focus is on skills for employment, wider provision is also offered.

Consideration is being given in the Tertiary Education and Research (TER) Bill to the duties of a new Commission for Education, Training and Research (CTER) – to be established in 2023 – in respect of requirements for the provision of further education and training for 16 to 19-year-olds and post-19 further education and training.

Financial Support to Learners

According to the RRT it is important to understand the underlying reasons why people may not take up learning. It was suggested that often it is financial reasons. Other reasons such as travel time to learning provider, lack of childcare for training were also mentioned. The different programmes above do aim to tackle some of the barriers but most focus is still on financial support and incentives. RRT concluded that more exploratory research on why people don’t take up learning and what works could be beneficial.

Fees and funding to cover the cost of living are major concerns for learners. It is often the lack of maintenance funding, and the need to continue working, that act as barriers to higher education. Another underlying factor is previous educational success. The higher the qualification level a person has, the more likely they are to be self-motivated and seek out further training. This has been demonstrated again through the pandemic and is documented in recent reports published by the Learning and Work Institute (2019), and Centre for Social Justice (2020).

The fee structure is constantly being reviewed and it is recommended that this will be one of the tasks for the new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research. The Hazelkorn review also suggest that there is a mixed model based on needs and ability to pay for training. There should be a mixture of different funding routes, that consider the expansion of rights and entitlements, the needs of citizens, and the capacity of government and businesses. Fully funded individuals should be those who would not only benefit from further education, but also need it to improve their basic skills or to gain employment. Co-funding should be available for individuals who wish to improve their skills at higher levels or for workplace learning. (WCPP, 2021).

Currently many LLL are free or heavily subsidised through the following programmes:

- **16–18-year-olds** usually don't pay tuition fees. This age group may also be eligible for [Education Maintenance Allowance](#) – assists eligible 16–18-year-olds to attend college (eligibility criteria include age, domiciled in Wales, minimum study hours, household income); and support from their local authority (e.g., subsidised travel to and from college or school).
- **19+ year olds** might need to pay tuition fees. However, most FE colleges offer free or discounted tuition to:
 - learners from low-income families
 - disabled learners
 - learners on benefits
- **Learners aged 19+** may be eligible for [Welsh Government Learning Grant Further Education](#) – which assists eligible learners aged 19 and over (eligibility requirements include, age, course type and level; residency and nationality, household income).

In addition, Adult Learning Policy in Wales states that learning is free to all learners up to the level of functionality:

- learners up to Level 2
- Essential Communication Skills – including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- Essential Digital Literacy Skills
- Essential Employability Skills (avoiding duplication of Employability Programmes)

[Personal Learning Account \(PLA\) Programme](#) provides support across Wales for employed people earning below average salaries, furloughed workers and employed individuals who have been negatively impacted by the economy to gain higher level skills to help them access a wider range of job opportunities and/or gain employment at a higher level. It offers:

- Careers advice and guidance and help to complete a learning plan through Working Wales and further education institutions (FEIs)
- Learning provision through flexible, short courses and higher-level qualifications to meet skills gaps in key sectors (aged 19 or over)

Links to employers and employment opportunities:

- [Student finance](#) – further education
- Other support may also be available to eligible learners whilst studying (e.g., free, or subsidised travel or support under the Welsh Government's [Childcare Offer](#))
- [The Financial Contingency Fund Scheme \(FCF\)](#) provides discretionary funding to eligible learners aged 16 and over whose access to further education at a further education institution or “Y Ganolfan Dysgu Cymraeg Genedlaethol” (formerly

Welsh for Adult Language Centres) might be inhibited by financial considerations, or who, for whatever reason, including physical or other disability face financial difficulties. The FCF can provide help with essential course costs such as: transport, meals, course equipment and childcare.

Conclusions

- Financial support goes a long way in recruiting learners but also practical help such as transport, childcare and even food helps incentive new learners.
- There are many entitlements and rights to financial help for people who want to take up learning in Wales. Some segments of society such as immigrants, young people, unemployed etc. tend to have their own programmes with funding.
- Our interviews and RRT suggest that there are new categories of people in need of learning. The consensus was that those getting funding should not be for those with lowest qualifications but those most in need.
- RRT expressed the concern that often LLL focus too heavily on employment. Although it often is about employment, LLL can also help burden on health services and social services (loneliness, mental health, wellbeing, and social engagement).

XI. Identifying Learner Needs and Monitoring Participation

Question	Answer
15. Is access to online learning opportunities part of the regional LLL policy?	Yes
16. Is there a quality system for digital learning provided, implemented by regional authorities?	Yes, to some extent (in progress)
17. Are learning outcomes of digital learning assessed and certified?	Yes, to some extent
18. Are there specific measures to help older or disadvantaged learners to access digital learning?	Yes

Table 12. Questions 21-24

Digital exclusion and digital poverty were **key concerns highlighted by learning providers** in response to a Welsh Government survey during the first national lockdown in spring 2020. The Welsh Government has made over £12 million capital funding available since July 2020 to assist post-16 learning providers in supporting digitally excluded learners to continue their learning remotely (when they have not been able to access onsite premises and facilities during the Covid-19 pandemic). This funding has supported the purchase of digital devices and other essential equipment

which can be loaned to learners who are not able to purchase these items for themselves.

At a strategic level, the Welsh Government is working closely with the sector and key stakeholders on how digital technology can be integrated and embedded into delivery to enhance the learner's experience; and how learners and staff can be equipped with digital capabilities and confidence, under the [Digital 2030](#) strategic framework for digital learning in the Post-16 sector in Wales (published in June 2019). This is a ten-year framework, articulating a shared vision and aims to achieve by 2030. An [introduction to the Digital 2030 framework](#) is available online. Alongside the initial 'national' actions identified in the framework document, learning providers were asked to create review and/or update their own organisational strategies and policies in the light of Digital 2030. This work was already underway prior to the pandemic.

The Welsh Government's [Covid-19 Resilience Plan for the Post-16 sector](#) sets out how the Welsh Government is working with our stakeholders to meet the changing needs of Welsh learners, communities and employers during and beyond the pandemic. The plan started in September 2020 and has endorsed a blended learning approach, including a mixture of face-to-face delivery and online learning.

The Children's Commissioner for Wales's [Getting Online](#) briefing (January 2021) noted that Further Education colleges responding to the Commissioner's survey "reported a range of 0-12% of learners without access to devices." This survey was undertaken before all the equipment purchased because of Welsh Government funding had been received by learning providers and distributed to learners.

Providers have raised concerns that the percentage of digitally excluded learners in future intakes could increase, given the wider economic impact of Covid-19 on employment and earning opportunities for learners and other family members, and there will be a need to develop a more sustainable approach to this issue going forward. Blended learning (including a mixture of face-to-face and online delivery) is expected to be embedded as part of the core 'offer' going forward. The proportions of face-to-face and online time as part of this blended delivery may continue to be affected by physical distancing restrictions because of the Covid-19 pandemic and are expected to vary for different types of course and/or qualification.

Many Further Education institutions (and other learning providers) are incorporating questions about learners' digital access into registration and induction processes, to identify learners in need of support at an early stage.

The Welsh Government commissioned a thematic review by Estyn ([report published March 2021](#)) on developments in remote and blended learning practice across the Post-16 sector during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Welsh Government is currently reviewing the results and reports from various studies which have been completed during recent months and liaising with the sector and key stakeholders to identify the next strategic priorities under the Digital 2030 framework and to ensure that key lessons learnt and experiences from delivery during the last year are captured, shared, and can be used to inform future delivery.

The Welsh Government has also been supporting professional development for staff in the post-16 sector, through specific grant funding to the sector (for institutional and collaborative activities) and our annual grant funding to JISC. This has included a mixture of formal (including accredited) training, and more information dissemination of tips and good practice sharing through online communities of practice.

[Digital Communities Wales \(DCW\)](#) is a good practice on how independent organisations implement the Digital 2030 in the local community. DCW is a Welsh Government funded programme which is delivered by the Wales Co-operative Centre in partnership with the Good Things Foundation and Swansea University. The programme began in 2019 and is still ongoing. They work across sectors to help population of Wales benefit from ICT and the digital opportunities. DCW work specifically with 7 health boards in Wales where the support ranges from practical training for clinical staff and other health professionals to develop their digital skills, to strategic support to help senior health executives integrate digital inclusion into their citizen-facing services.

As well as our work with health boards, we are working with individual GP surgeries, care homes, non-statutory care providers and the voluntary sector work alongside NHS colleagues, TEC Cymru and other partners to help care home staff.

DCW also try to help the population that do not have access to online services through tablet device loans and training to care homes. As a response of Covid pandemic DCW also received additional funding from Welsh Government, to provide tablet devices to be used at care homes. The tablets come equipped with mobile data, if required, and a range of useful apps.

DWC delivers training to care home staff so that they can help their residents use the tablet devices. In recent years DWC have offered training to over 1000 care homes across Wales. This support is being offered to ensure that care homes have everything they need to use the NHS Wales Video Consulting Service. This service is delivered via a communication platform called 'Attend Anywhere', and will be used by general

practices, hospital outpatients' departments and other healthcare settings, allowing residents to access medical consultations from the home without needing to travel.

Conclusions

- Digitalisation of Wales is a top priority for Welsh Government
- Social inclusion/exclusion is also seen as critical as currently 7% of Wales population are not online. This excluded group tend to also be the heaviest users of health and social services.
- Some work has been put in place to secure quality and good standards for online learning, but more work is needed.

XII. Supporting Lifelong Learning

Question	Answer
19. Is the job-related training of adults supported by regional/public financial support?	Yes (to some extent)
20. Are other forms of education and training (not job related) supported by regional/public financial support?	Yes,

Table 13. Questions 25-26

Young Person's Guarantee is an ambitious programme that will aim to provide everyone under 25 in Wales with the offer of work, education, training, or self-employment.' (Welsh Government, 2021).

The Welsh Government commissioned **JISC** (a UK-wide provider of IT resources and support to post-16 education sector) to undertake a 'rapid response' survey of post-16 learning providers in Wales, to quantify the scale of digital exclusion issues in the sector. Findings from this work (unpublished) suggested that 20% to 30% of Further Education learners in Wales were estimated to be digitally excluded. The percentage of digitally excluded learners across the whole sector (including apprenticeships, traineeships, and adult/lifelong learning provision) was estimated to be higher at c.37%. JISC has also developed pilot **Digital Standards** in consultation with the sector, which are intended to sit alongside the **existing professional standards** for Further Education and Work-Based Learning teaching practitioners (published in 2017).

Initial guidance for blended learning for post-16 providers was co-produced with a Blended Learning working group (under the **Welsh Government's Covid-19 Resilience Plan**) and published during 2020. This information is available on the Careers Wales / Working Wales websites. Both websites meet accessible requirements.

The Careers Wales 2020/21 annual report shows that the Careers Wales Website had nearly 600,000 sessions yearly. Since Working Wales launched May 2019, over 115,000 users have visited the website. Careers Wales/ Working Wales strategic outcomes are identified in a 5-year strategy named “[Brighter Futures](#)”. The main performance indicators are identified in their annual operation plan, which are approved by Ministers. The education and training inspectorate for Wales, Estyn, carried out a review in 2021-2 to consider the effectiveness of advice and guidance and Careers Wales’s offer. The Welsh Government should prioritise residents and employees (based on Estyn report):

- Aged 16 to 18 and 19 to 24
- With poor essential skills
- Without a vocational level 2 and 3; and
- Those at risk of redundancy.
- And put in place a co-funding strategy for enrichment and social prescribing, and for level 4 and above (full-time, part-time, modular, and as part of HEI civic mission activity).

One initiative in Wales to help people take up learning are:

- The [Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales \(CQFW\)](#) is an all-inclusive meta-framework which can recognise all forms of learning across levels and sectors of the education system. It offers parity of esteem for qualifications and helps learners to see progression routes, particularly where they are following non-traditional pathways. The CQFW offers flexibility to learners, especially those disengaged from learning to raise skills levels and allowing them to learn in their own time, own pace, and place. The CQFW’s lifelong learning pillar allows for the recognition/acknowledgement of formal and non-formal learning. Informal learning is outside the scope of the CQFW, as by its nature it does not comply with the high-level principles. Learning autonomy and accountability is also a component part of learning within the CQFW’s higher education pillar and unitised accredited learning area of the lifelong long learning pillar. The CQFW has three pillars of learning – higher education, regulated (general and vocational) qualifications and lifelong learning and encompasses a wide range of qualifications, credit based accredited training and non-accredited delivery. To be acknowledged within the CQFW learning provision must be developed in accordance with its 8 high-level principles: credit, learning time, recognised standards, levels/level descriptors, title, purpose, learning outcomes and assessment criteria. The focus of the lifelong learning pillar is to acknowledge learning provision from outside of the higher education and regulated qualifications pillars of the CQFW. The CQFW acknowledges that lifelong learning takes place and should be valued and recognised. The lifelong learning pillar gives flexibility for work-based learning providers to design programmes to meet individual needs. It allows employers with

specific learning needs, but who do not require a full regulated qualification, to create bespoke training – which awards credit to the learner upon achievement. The CQFW’s lifelong learning pillar splits learning into two types:

- ✎ Formal – vendor, industry, and professional learning – which tends to be stipulated by employers who require their workforce to undertake sector/industry specific training as part of ongoing professional development and includes provision such as vendor/professional courses. For example, Vendor – Microsoft courses, Industry – The Travel Association (ABTA), Professional – Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).
- ✎ Non-formal “unitised accredited learning” –bespoke/tailored bite-sized units (or modules) of learning which have a credit value. Unitised accredited learning can apply to many learning environments such as in-house company training, adult and community learning and voluntary sector training.

The Unitised Accredited Learning pillar offers a way of learning through bite-sized chunks which are flexible and accessible to learners, offering self-development opportunities and motivation for learners who cannot/do not wish to engage in regulated qualifications, professional courses or HE provision. It offers a way to raise skills and confidence levels by introducing learners who are disengaged from learning, have a low educational attainment or disadvantaged learners who have dropped out of the education system to more formal learning. Reviews of the CQFW was undertaken in 2014 and 2020. Both reviews highlighted the benefits of the CQFW as a tool for recognising learning outside more traditional areas and recognising smaller volumes of learning and its role in allowing for greater recognition of prior and informal learning through the lifelong learning pillar. Stakeholders also noted that the CQFW is very important for supporting lifelong learning, allowing for a breadth of options to be developed to suit individual needs.

- **Micro Credentials (MC)** is another offer available in Wales. Micro-Credential offers proof of learning outcomes that is more specialised, affordable, and faster to obtain than more traditional credentials, such as degrees and certifications. The Micro-Credential offer is not meant to replace traditional degrees of professional qualifications. However, they are a great source of upskilling employees already employed and those looking to gain new skills for the labour market. In Wales, many industries are experiencing skills shortage, and this offer is seen as invaluable.
- **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** – The CQFW allows for regulated qualifications to be obtained in full or in part through recognition of prior learning and there are opportunities to have formal and non-formal learning recognised. A Review of the CQFW undertaken in 2020 also highlighted that the CQFW is an integral part of the process of RPL, however, there is currently no formal policy in place for RPL in Wales. In the UK RPL is mostly used as an underpinning principle by delivery centres and is not led by Government or by Awarding Organisations. It

is up to individual institutions to determine how RPL is implemented. During 2020 the CQFW Advisory Group commissioned an exercise to establish current RPL practice within the VET sector in Wales and to determine engagement and use of RPL with forced migrants. The Advisory Group has agreed an operational objective for 2021-22 to commission the development of RPL guidance for the VET sector and a case study on practice in Wales for migrants and refugees. On behalf of the Welsh Government, Colleges Wales/Colegau Cymru will also be engaging with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Partnership to seek good practice with regards to its RPL activity. The 2020 CQFW Review recommended that the Advisory Group consider who should be responsible for funding and managing RPL in Wales in future. There may be an opportunity for the PCET/CTER to develop a Wales wide RPL policy.

Conclusions

- Feedback from interviews suggest it is job related training (and even more during Covid-19 pandemic) that get most the funding for LLL.
- RRT reflected that employers need to do more, e.g., support their staff to take time off for training and pay for it when their job is at risk of being made redundant.
- RRT also supported the idea that non-work-related training is important and should be supported even more going forward. As it was concluded by an interviewee; “LLL is training for life, not just employment.”

XIII. Valuing Learning

Question	Answer
21. Is there a validation system for all adult learning?	Yes

Table 14. Question 27

According to desktop research, interviews and RRT there are validation systems in place for adult learning. The **Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales’s** (CQFW) lifelong learning pillar is the main validation system used in Wales. CQFW maintains links with the qualifications frameworks of the other UK nations and is referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). It was initially referenced to the EQF in 2010 and was re-referenced during 2019. Alignment ensures that qualifications can be compared and recognised, supporting progression and mobility of learners and workers to and from Wales. The former Minister for Education agreed that the CQFW should remain aligned to the EQF, even as a third country, post EU-exit.

A review of the CQFW undertaken in 2020 highlighted that one of its greatest strengths is that it enables qualifications in Wales to be referenced to other UK frameworks and the EQF and its alignment with other frameworks was regarded as one of the principal benefits of the CQFW. The UK leaflet ‘Qualifications cross boundaries’ offers a guide to comparing the qualifications in the UK and Ireland and is updated annually.

CQFW policy – A stakeholder review of the CQFW undertaken in 2020 highlighted that the CQFW continues to be an integral part of the credit and qualifications landscape in Wales. Participating stakeholders (policy makers and organisations, not Welsh citizens) agreed that the CQFW underpins strategies related to qualifications and learning in Wales, and that there is ongoing support for a system that recognises levels and credit values. One of the greatest strengths of the CQFW is that it enables qualifications in Wales to be referenced to other UK frameworks and to the EQF and that it needs to remain aligned to ensure compatibility, cooperation and to enable transferability outside of Wales. 89% of respondents felt that the use of credit, which is embedded in the CQFW, provides a common currency which makes it easier to articulate and communicate achievement across sectors, levels, and geographical areas.

Conclusions

- CQFW is an integral part of the structure of LLL in Wales.
- Other validation systems are currently being considered.

Monitoring and Evaluation

XIV. Capacity to Evaluate Results, Progresses and Impact of Regional LLL Policies

Question	Answer
22. Is a formal evaluation for LLL policies in place at the regional level?	Yes
23. How frequently is an evaluation activity conducted?	Depends (usually aligned to policy/programme cycles)
24. Are evaluation reports publicly available?	Yes
25. Are all Stakeholders categories aware/involved in the evaluation?	Mostly (More user involvement needed)
26. Are evaluation results used to improve LLL Policies?	Yes
27. Is collaboration regularly evaluated?	Yes, believe so

Table 15. Questions 28-33

Evaluation of policy (impact and progress) seems to be an integrated activity in Wales. The importance of government having clear intent, targets, and programme management to ensure policy outcomes are met (Barber, 2021). This type of robust action is needed by the Welsh Government to effectively implement policy. Key organisations evaluating LLL policy in Wales are:

- [Wales Centre for Public Policy \(WCPP\)](#), supporting the Wales Lifelong Learning System (Policy Briefing)
- [Learning and Work Institute \(L&W\)](#)

But as stated by an informant it is a challenge to evaluate LLL policy as it goes far beyond qualifications and degrees: *How you evaluate positive impact on health and wellbeing is a big question. Shouldn't just be about the qualifications, needs to go further than that, to wider impacts. (Interview, 2021)*

Conclusions

- Wales heavily rely on evidence-based research and evaluations in their work.
- Wales's own research centres (linked to universities and independent organisations) are proactive and help influence and shape LLL policy.
- There are big hopes from the RRT that the new CTER will work with all stakeholders, (including learners) when leading LLL going forward.

Key References

- [Future Generation Commissioner for Wales \(2020\). Acting Today for a better tomorrow](#)
- [Hazelkorn \(2016\). Towards 2030 – A framework for building a world-class Post compulsory education system for Wales](#)
- [Miles, Minister for Education and Welsh language \(2022\) Press release; A vision for a Lifelong Learning in Wales](#)
- [PCET \(2020\). Strategic Vision. Meeting The Education, Training and Research Needs and Aspirations of The People, Businesses and Communities of Wales](#)
- [Welsh Government \(2015\). Wellbeing of Future Generations Wales Act](#)
- [Welsh Government \(2017\). Prosperity for all: The National Strategy. Taking Wales Forward](#)
- [Welsh Government \(2021\). Tertiary Education and Research \(Wales\) Bill](#)
- [Welsh Government \(2021\). Programme for Government, 2021 to 2026 Cardiff](#)
- [Wales Centre for Public Policy \(2021\): Supporting the Wales Lifelong Learning System \(Policy Briefing\)](#)

Appendix

Designing Policy

Dimension	Question	Answer
I. The Placing of LLL In a Regional Development Strategy / LLL in a Regional Development Strategy	1. Is lifelong learning an important focus of the regional development plan or of the regional strategy?	Yes,
II. Promoting And Implementing Democratic Governance Within the Regional LLL System	2. Are stakeholders, learners and educators involved in the governance system of LLL (or specific education sectors)	YES, (and more with CTER)
III. Inter-Institutional Coordination and Integration of LLL Policies	3. Does a lifelong learning policy exist at regional level? covering all education sectors (see below)?	Yes
	4. Does a lifelong learning policy cover all education sectors (see below)?	To some extent
	d) formal	Yes
	e) informal	Yes
	f) all age groups	Not yet (16+)
	5. Is there cooperation and coordination between central and regional levels?	Yes
	d) financial	Yes
	e) administrative	Yes
IV. Identifying Learner Needs and Monitoring Participation	f) other	Yes
	6. Does the region monitor the participation rates in LLL; Does the region monitor emerging learning needs?	Yes, to some extent
	7. How frequently does monitoring occur?	Annually (mostly)
	8. Are there tools and incentives to identify and communicate learning needs?	Yes
	9. Are organizations provided with tools and incentives to identify learning needs?	Yes, to some extent

Dimension	Question	Answer
V. International Comparisons, Cooperation and Learning	10. Is the Region a member of an overarching association or network specifically focused on LLL or more specific education sectors (e.g., VET, adult learning, etc)	Yes (More wanted)
	11. Are exchange learning opportunities in place?	Yes, to some extent
VI. Managing and Sustaining Partnerships	12. Has the regional authority promoted, supported, and achieved sustainable partnerships for lifelong learning?	Yes, but more can be done
	13. If there are multi-stakeholder partnerships (see below):	Yes
	d) do they exist?	Yes
	e) are they supported by regional authority?	Yes, but more could be done
	f) are they promoted?	Yes
	14. Are there multi-stakeholder partnerships?	Yes

Implementation

Dimension	Question	Answer
VII. Information and Guidance	15. Is the information easily accessible to all, i.e., if stakeholders' specific needs are taken into account?	Yes, but more could be done
VIII. Developing Learning Motivation and Skills or Creating a Yes culture of Lifelong Learning	16. Are there awareness and promotion campaigns in place to support lifelong learning?	Yes, but more could be done
	17. Does the promotion of learning to learn cover all stages of life (see below)?	To some extent
	e) children?	Yes, to some extent
	f) youths?	From 16+
	g) adults?	Yes
IX. Professionalisation of Educators and LLL Staff	18. Does the regional authority support continue professional development of:	Not applicable
	d) management staff at school?	Yes
	e) teachers?	Yes, to some extent
	f) educators in informal education?	Yes
X. Promoting Demand	19. Are learners financially supported to access available learning opportunities?	Yes (mostly)

Dimension	Question	Answer
	20. Are there initiatives in place to support:	Not applicable
	g) learners with Special Needs?	Yes
	h) learners with migrant background?	Yes
	i) long-term unemployed?	Yes
	j) unemployed youth?	Yes
	k) unemployed women?	Partly Yes (apart from migrant groups)
	l) other categories?	Yes: Wellbeing, Senior, Digital excluded, At risk of redundancy
XI. Online Learning and Digital Gap	21. Is access to online learning opportunities part of the regional LLL policy?	Yes
	22. Is there a quality system for digital learning provided, implemented by regional authorities?	Yes, to some extent (more in progress)
	23. Are learning outcomes of digital learning assessed and certified?	Yes, to some extent
	24. Are there specific measures to help older or disadvantaged learners to access digital learning?	Yes
XII. Supporting Lifelong Learning	25. Is the job-related training of adults supported by regional/public financial support?	Yes, to some extent
	26. Are other forms of education and training (not job related) supported by regional/public financial support?	Yes
XIII. Valuing Learning	27. Is there a validation system for all adult learning?	Yes

Monitoring and Evaluation

Dimension	Question	Answer
XIV. Capacity To Evaluate Results, Progresses and Impact of Regional LLL Policies	28. Is a formal evaluation for LLL policies in place at the regional level?	Yes
	29. How frequently is an evaluation activity conducted?	Depends (usually aligned to policy/ programme cycles)
	30. Are evaluation reports publicly available?	Yes

Dimension	Question	Answer
	31. Are all Stakeholders categories aware/involved in the evaluation?	Mostly (more user involvement needed)
	32. Are evaluation results actually used to improve LLL Policies?	Yes
	33. Is collaboration regularly evaluated?	Yes, believe so

