

Skills and Science Minister outlines Welsh Government's plans for Employability in Wales

This is the message from Skills and Science Minister, Julie James, today as she outlines her agenda for employability in Wales after being given a mandate by Cabinet to lead on employability across the Welsh Government.

The move comes as part of the Welsh Government's '[Taking Wales Forward](#)' commitment to re-shape employability support for job-ready individuals and those furthest from the labour market to help them acquire the skills and experience needed to gain and maintain sustainable employment.

As part of that commitment the Welsh Government is developing an Employability Delivery Plan and associated programmes, which will connect and join up with a range of other policies across the organisation to ensure a more integrated approach to employability is delivered; one that is better suited to the needs of the people and businesses of Wales.

The Minister, Julie James, is keen to point out that steps are already being taken to introduce new measures to support the development of the delivery plan and will announce today that, in addition to being given a mandate by Cabinet to lead on employability across the Welsh Government to help support more people into and to remain in work, she is also:

- establishing a new cross-Welsh Government Board to lead on the development of the Employability Delivery Plan
- drawing up an External Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Plan which will feed into the cross-Welsh Government Board and include representation from key partners to ensure a more integrated approach to employability.

Furthermore, the Minister has confirmed:

- the Employability Delivery Plan will be published before the end of this year
- the Employability programmes will be called 'Working Wales'.

Highlighting how the work of the [Valleys Task Force](#) is also helping to inform the development of the Employability Delivery Plan, the Minister said:

"We have seen significant improvements in the employment rate in Wales over recent years. There are now over 1.4 million people in employment in Wales, an increase of 19.1% since devolution but we also know that the rate of unemployment still remains high in some communities across Wales.

"Whilst Welsh Government's contribution to the positive overall

rate of employment, supported with EU funding, should not be underestimated, we know the story is not a wholly positive one and we must do more to support the economically inactive, those who would like to work longer hours and those in insecure employment.

“Indeed addressing employability has been a key element of our discussions through the Valleys Task Force but we also recognise there is a sense of urgency to bring jobs and growth to communities across Wales that need more of both and that is exactly what we hope to achieve by re-shaping our employability support.”

The Employability Delivery Plan for Wales will be published before the end of 2017 with a view to the new delivery programmes coming into effect in April 2019.

This will be positioned as a single employability offer under the name Working Wales and will be underpinned by a new programme for adults along with two new programmes that will deliver employability support to young people.

Between now and April 2019 the Welsh Government will reconfigure its existing programmes to enable a smooth transition, using the Valleys as a test bed to inform the new delivery approach.

Amendments to existing employability programmes, including the EU-funded ReAct, Jobs Growth Wales and the Employability Skills Programme, will be made to ensure that these are effectively aligned to the new offer to enhance support for unemployed people and those who churn in and out of temporary, poorly paid employment.

Julie James added:

“We are keen to promote prosperity for all so that the benefits of economic growth are shared by all those in work. This includes ensuring that we reach those furthest from the labour market and provide them with a holistic package of personalised, bespoke and intensive support and mentoring to reduce complex barriers to employment, tackle levels of economic inactivity and deliver on our ambition of developing prosperity for all. We can only truly achieve this through better aligned support brought about by working effectively across Government.

“If we are to shape a new employability agenda, we need to drive a coherent approach across Welsh Government and with our partners to address the many barriers preventing people from entering and progressing in good quality, fair employment. This approach will benefit individuals across Wales and deliver the prosperous and secure future that we need to Take Wales Forward.”