

Children and Young People Committee

Supplementary Information following evidence session on 17 November

Improving skills levels

1. Is the implementation of the Measure having an impact on improving the level of skills of young people?

UCAC stated that on the whole, they believe that the Measure is improving young people's skill levels, because more students are being given the option of following courses which are more closely suited to their abilities and interests.

However, their members are still concerned about the fact that the Measure encourages Level 2 courses at Key Stage 4 (to the detriment of Level 1), and similarly encourages Level 3 courses at Key Stage 5 / post-16 (to the detriment of Level 2). Whilst UCAC understands the need to incentivise schools and colleges to push pupils to achieve to the best of their abilities, it is often the lower level courses that keep students in education who would otherwise be at risk of being NEET. They also feel that there is a serious risk, when the financial cuts are introduced, that it is these lower level courses that get cut, and that the most vulnerable students will be affected.

NASUWT suggested that it is probably too early to say and thought that the points that were made by the ATL in the Committee meeting about the parity between vocational and academic courses, that were challenged by Keith Davies AM, may well be germane here.

2. Has the implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure had any impact, either positive or negative, on those learners who intend to aim for higher education?

UCAC said that they do not have any evidence to offer on this matter. They added that it was probably too early to judge, and in any case, rather difficult to measure.

NASUWT again felt it was too early to say and suspected that those intending to go onto higher education would concentrate on academic rather than a vocational pathway.