

Enterprise and Business Committee

APPO2

Inquiry into Apprenticeships

Evidence from First4Skills

- Unable to deliver training solutions to UK employers – We as many other providers have agreements to deliver Apprenticeships to employers on a national basis. One of the outcomes of the tender round was that delivery has been divided up across Wales. This means that there is no consistency for employers as they would rather work with one provider and instead of struggling to break up delivery have opted out of Apprenticeships completely in Wales
- Contracting does not allow delivery by one provider over Wales- As above even with a Wales contract the way the contract was awarded in local areas meant that again there is no consistency in delivery therefore employers have decided not to go forward with Apprenticeships.
- Reduction in number of service Apprenticeships (retail starts dropped by 30%)- the number of starts on retail Apprenticeships has dropped sharply following the tender round. Whether this was by design or just as an outcome of the procurement process this has left many learners and employers without access to Apprenticeships. Retail is still the largest destination for 16-18 year olds and the lack of starts must be affecting many retail outlets
- Quality of provision not counted in tenders- The feeling across most providers even those that were successful is that quality marks such as OFSTED, ESTYN or others were not fully taking into consideration in the tender. This has led to providers with much higher grades having to be sub contractors and quality managed by providers with lower grades
- DELL will not meet with non lead providers- DELL has a policy of not meeting with sub contractors in Wales. As we are now just 18 months from next tender DELL need to be aware of all providers in the Apprenticeship provision
- No long term policy for Apprenticeships (another tender in 18 months)- The every 3 year tender policy in Wales for Apprenticeships seems to develop an all change mentality. It takes one year to bid new delivery in then you get one year of delivery and then back to looking at tendering. This never gives delivery time to settle and also makes providers feel they are on conveyer belt. Surely a better policy of monitoring delivery or 5 year tender rounds would be much better.
- Sub Contractor fees not controlled- As a sub contractor our fees are determined by lead providers. At present we have been offered fees from 40% to 15% even though there seems very little difference in what sub contractors are doing for this money. In other countries fees are capped to allow more money to be aimed at the delivery of Apprenticeships