

Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

14 September 2022

Dear Delyth Jewell MS,

**Inquiry into the impact of increasing costs.**

ColegauCymru is pleased to respond to the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee's inquiry into the impact of increasing costs. ColegauCymru is a post-compulsory education charity; we promote the public benefit of post-compulsory education and learning. We also convene the further education (FE) Principals' Forum, which represents Further Education colleges and FE institutions (FEIs) in Wales. ColegauCymru also undertakes research, policy development and provides practical support to FE colleges in Wales, including on work-based learning (WBL) which is a key part of FE college activity.

In relation to the inquiry questions and the portfolio covered by the committee, ColegauCymru would like to highlight the following:

**International**

ColegauCymru facilitates FE colleges' participation in overseas mobility projects through pan-Wales consortium applications. We have a robust network of partners worldwide with whom we collaborate with to offer international enrichment and enhancement opportunities to learners and staff in colleges in Wales.

There are concerns that the increasing costs of flights makes staying within budget on funded projects such as Taith or Erasmus+ challenging. There are also fewer flights to choose from due to cancellations by airlines. This can mean learners are taking indirect flights which can incur extra costs, or additional money is spent travelling to and from airports located further away in order to get a flight. Currently, these increased costs haven't stopped colleges planning visits, however flights now need to be booked much further in advance to take advantage of lower fares. This in itself can be difficult when learner and staff numbers can change without warning (for example, due to Covid).

Colleges do not ask learners to contribute financially to mobilities when they are participating in funded programmes, however with costs increasing colleges may become limited with how much further support they can provide. Flexibility is available within mobility schemes, such as Taith, when it comes to increases in flight costs for disadvantaged learners. This is something ColegauCymru is keen to highlight as these exceptional costs may become more frequent as the cost of living increases.



## **Welsh**

ColegauCymru coordinates the Cymraeg Gwaith AB / Work Welsh FE project for the FE sector with funding from the National Centre for Learning Welsh. Now, in its sixth year, the project aims to develop the Welsh skills of lecturers in FEIs and enhance confidence so that at least part of their teaching can be through Welsh medium.

Concerns have risen with regards to the teaching of Welsh that as budgets are squeezed anything that's deemed "extra" is at risk of being sacrificed. Although staff are able to take part in Welsh lessons during the workday under the Welsh language standards, some colleges also give tutors remission for their time learning Welsh so this comes at an extra cost to colleges on top of running the course.

ColegauCymru are aware that the Cymraeg Gwaith grant goes towards the cost of a tutor, but does not cover the full real cost in the colleges.

## **Sport**

In terms of sports delivery within the FE sector, the costs of fuel and other energy increases will have an impact on travel costs and facility management. Colleges have significant commitments to travel for fixtures and training and associated costs for match officials, emergency aid etc are also likely to have risen. Other costs to be taken into consideration come from the hiring of facilities or pitches as many colleges use external facilities.

As costs rise it would be expected that many of the financial barriers for young people engaged in sport will increase significantly, and that this will have a greater impact in areas of lower income. FE colleges offer a wide range of recreational sport and activity free of charge for learners within the college day and rising costs could also affect this offer. Young people who commit to sports academy programmes have additional costs for kit, travel etc, and while those from families of low income can access support for course related resources, the threshold for this might not support enough young people who are currently on the margins.

It's difficult to predict the irreversible impact of rising costs on a sector wide level when it comes to sports in FE, but as most FE colleges own some form of sport facility that is used by both college and the public, any closures or temporary suspensions of services due to the rising cost of living will have a wider impact into the local community.

Maintaining current levels of financial support from Welsh Government for the FE sector is vital to ensuring that sport provision and facilities are available to all learners across Wales. For many learners with protected characteristics FE provides their best opportunity to play sport and develop as a coach /volunteer - any impact here would have a knock on effect in wider community settings and on future workforce of sport and wellbeing. The continuation of funding for mental health and wellbeing in FE will become more significant as the cost of living crisis could potentially have an impact in this space.

Looking at the FE sector in general, colleges are increasingly concerned about the impact of cost of living increases – with this coming on top of unfunded increases already announced, such as the increase in national insurance costs which will cost the sector £4.4m. However, the major concerns are in relation to energy (some colleges are reporting a fivefold increase in projected costs) as well as significant increases in transport and consumables. In addition to this, colleges are already seeing a greater volume of requests from students for funding through the Financial Contingency Funds. The sector have called for additional funding to support these students, as well as greater flexibility in the use of these student related funds certainly over the next 12 months.

ColegauCymru would be happy to discuss these matters in more detail.

Yours sincerely,

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