

Rt Hon Eluned Morgan MS
First Minister of Wales
Welsh Government
(via email)

12 March 2026

Dear Eluned Morgan MS,

As Interim Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, which oversees the Office for Statistics Regulation, I am writing to you regarding the use of apprenticeships statistics in a press release on 9 February 2026 titled “Over 100,000 apprenticeships delivered in Wales this Senedd term” and in the Senedd during First Ministers questions on 24 February 2026.

In both cases the claim was made that Welsh Labour has achieved its target of having delivered 100,000 apprenticeships in the last four years.

There are two measures of apprenticeship starts published by Medr, Wales’s Commission for Tertiary Education and Research. The well established ‘rigorous’ measure excludes apprentices who withdraw in the first 8 weeks, and those who transfer out of their programme to other learning. The alternative measure records all apprentices who have started an apprenticeship.

According to Medr’s management information¹, as at 26 February 2026 there were 92,800 apprenticeship starts since Q4 2020/21 using the rigorous measure of progress towards Welsh Government’s target. When including the starts which are not counted as part of the more rigorous target measure, there were 101,760 apprenticeship starts overall in the time period.

The rigorous measure has been used historically to report on progress, including in annual reporting during the current Senedd term. This was also the measure used prior to the target being reduced from 125,000 to 100,000 in June 2024.

The claim that over 100,000 apprenticeships have been delivered in Wales in this Senedd term is not supported by the rigorous measure and appears to create an inconsistency with previous reporting and could be perceived as cherry-picking the data. The press release and statement during First Minister’s questions were not clear that they were based on the alternative measure that includes all apprentices.

Transparency matters because it enables debate to focus on the important issues. It is crucial to avoid using data that is overly selective or missing appropriate context.

¹<https://www.medr.cymru/en/News/sta-medr-02-2026-apprenticeships-learning-programmes-started-august-to-october-2025/>

Being clear on definitions and the evidence underpinning any such statements can help maintain public confidence in statistics and the organisations that produce them.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Penny Young". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Penny Young
Interim Chair