

Julie James MS
Counsel General and Minister for Delivery
Welsh Government
(via email)

2 April 2026

Dear Julie James MS

Thank you for your letter of 26 March, which responds to my previous letter¹, on the use of statistics to monitor progress against the Welsh Government's target of creating 100,000 apprenticeships in this Senedd term.

In this case, the relevant official statistics and management information² on apprenticeships are produced by Medr. Your letter explains that recent public statements relating to apprenticeships have drawn on management information, rather than official statistics, because management information provides the most up to date picture.

As you are aware, Medr publishes two measures of apprenticeship starts, based on management information. The first, more stringent, measure excludes apprentices who withdraw in the first 8 weeks, and those who transfer out of their programme to other learning. In Medr's published statistics this is referred to as the rigorous measure. The second measure records all apprentices who have started an apprenticeship. Further to your letter we acknowledge that both measures go through the same quality assurance measures, and both will have appropriate uses.

Your letter explains that recent public statements have drawn on the measure that records all apprentices who have started an apprenticeship, and the reasons for this. It is helpful to have this explanation, which was not given alongside recent public statements, especially where there is more than one possible measure available.

Based on public information available about monitoring the target, use of the measure that records all apprentices who have started an apprenticeship appeared to create an inconsistency with previous reporting.

In the Quality and Methodology section³ the official statistics state that:

The statistics for the target measures use a more rigorous measure of apprenticeship programme starts than other statistics in this output. This

¹ [Letter from Penny Young to Rt Hon Eluned Morgan MS](#) – Welsh apprenticeships, UK Statistics Authority, 13 March 2026

² [Sta/Medr/02/2026: Apprenticeships learning programmes started: August to October 2025 \(provisional\)](#), Medr, 19 February 2026

³ [Sta/Medr/03/2025: Apprenticeships learning programmes started: May to July 2024](#), Medr, 20 February 2025

measure takes account of early drop outs (within first 8 weeks) and transfers between apprenticeships.

The StatsWales publication Data on apprenticeships started in relation to target measure⁴ highlights the same point.

The most recent management information² at the time of my earlier letter, published on 26 February, set out the position in relation to the Welsh Government's target: The total number of apprenticeships started in the Senedd period crossed 100,000 in January 2026. The number of apprenticeship starts for the more rigorous target measure remained below 100,000.

It was on this basis that I wrote to the First Minister earlier this month.

Going forward, I would strongly encourage ministers to be transparent about which measure they are using and why, considering any previous precedents that might influence the understanding of those receiving the statement.

I hope this letter more fully explains our position, and I welcome your commitment to the appropriate and transparent use of statistics. In line with that, I would always encourage Ministers to seek the advice of their statisticians on public statements related to official statistics.

Yours sincerely,



Penny Young
Interim Chair

⁴ [Apprenticeships started in relation to target measure by quarter and year \(excluding degree apprenticeships\)](#), StatsWales, last updated 27 March 2024