



Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A regional report on the Jobs Growth Wales+ youth programme in South East Wales

Date of monitoring visit: October 2022

By

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

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Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court

Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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About the South East Wales region

Inspectors visited the lead providers and their partners (sub-contractors) to review the delivery of the Jobs Growth Wales+ programme in the first year of the Welsh Government contract. This regional report provides a summary of feedback from this visit.

During our visit, we had the opportunity to:

- observe participants in sessions
- talk to participants and review their individual learning plans and key documents
- observe tutors and meet with leaders across the organisations
- meet key staff from Working Wales to review the referrals process
- review the quality and appropriateness of the accommodation and resources for the programme

In the South East Wales region, two lead providers and 10 sub-contractor partners work together to deliver programmes across the local authority areas of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen. We visited participants on the programme at venues in Newport, Cwmbran, Caerphilly.

The lead providers and their sub-contractor partners are:

Associated Community Training Ltd – lead provider

- Aspiration Training
- Cwmbran Centre for Young People (CCYP)
- Motivational Preparation College for Training (MPCT)
- Newport Youth Academy
- People Plus
- Tydfil Training

ITEC Training Solutions Ltd – lead provider

- Coleg QS

At the time of our visit, the majority of participants were enrolled on the engagement strand of the programme, with very few participants on the advancement or employment strands. There were approximately 541 participants on the programme in the region at the time of our visit.

Main findings

Leading into the start of the contract, both lead providers undertook significant development work across a wide range of areas. This included contracting with partners to deliver the programme in key geographical locations and upskilling training and support staff to deliver the new programme. Providers have also recruited additional staff, including roles such as youth engagement officers who work in local communities to engage the community and potential participants.

As a result of this thoughtful planning, staff developed a deeper understanding of strategies to engage and progress participants, and in particular how to support learners with specific needs. The programme design and delivery has been improved from previous similar engagement and employability programmes, with a noticeable improvement in the quality of teaching and support given by tutors.. The lead providers have developed sound partnership working with key stakeholders, sharing a wide range of information relating to participant performance and delivery of the contract.

Participants are well supported from their start of their programmes in a supportive and structured environment. Providers have quickly established breakfast clubs for participants. As well as giving participants access to meals and drinks, this helps build relationships and peer support networks in a cohesive approach. These activities also help support improvement in participant self-esteem, confidence and life skills.

Many participants entering this programme have different support needs than has been seen among the previous traineeship and engagement programme cohort. The current participants have significantly more well-being and mental health support needs than previous traineeship or engagement learners. Many participants start courses with more qualifications than those seen on previous programmes. This raises the question about where more hard-to-reach young people, who may have significant barriers to learning, are accessing support.

Referral information is detailed and individual learning plans contain a range of helpful information that is closely linked to participants' needs and aspirations. A particularly interesting feature is that several delivery partners engage participants in a variety of activities outside of the normal training centre environment. These activities give participants the opportunity to experience a wide range of activities, often for the first time, for example activities in the countryside and charitable work.

Securing a wide range of suitable work placements remains a challenge for providers. This strand of the programme is under-developed currently. The work placement opportunities across the region are too variable. In one local authority area, a large hospitality employer offers work placements in a range of areas but there are fewer similar opportunities in other areas in the region. Work placements in the construction sector are particularly problematic. In this sector, it is often cited that participants need to be 18 years of age for insurance purposes. However, young people may have achieved sector specific qualifications by the age of 17 years but are not able to have practical experiences in construction.

Across the region, providers report that participant numbers are below those expected prior to the start of the contract. Self-referral has started to improve participant numbers, although this is not the main mechanism for referrals. On our visit, group sizes in sessions were generally small. As a result, it raises a concern whether the hardest to reach young people who are not in education, employment or training are being targeted effectively enough to engage on the programme. The consistent sharing of data and information relating to participant referrals is underdeveloped and varies across referral agents. Where the referral process is working well, it is often due to effective working relationships between individuals. However, this aspect needs strengthening to ensure consistency and effectiveness in the sharing of data and information. For example, it could be quickly addressed by all partners being clear on what information is available, what can be shared and the protocols and forum for sharing.

Recommendations

The lead providers, Working Wales and partners in the region should:

- R1 Develop information sharing protocols and procedures across providers and referral agents, including engagement and progression co-ordinators, to enable better targeting and monitoring of referrals onto the programme, particularly to support those young people who are not in education, employment or training or who have significant barriers to learning
- R2 Develop the number and range of work placements available for participants on the programme

Appendix: About the Jobs Growth Wales+ Youth Programme

Jobs Growth Wales+ youth programme is an individualised training, development and employability support programme for 16 to 18-year-olds living in Wales who are assessed as being not in full-time education, employment or training (NEET). It aims to give young people the skills, qualifications and experience to get a job or further training. It's a flexible programme which is designed around the young person. The key objectives of the programme are to reduce the number of young people who are NEET and to support young people to make the most of their potential.

Jobs Growth Wales+ is a Welsh Government programme included in the [Young Person's Guarantee](#) (a guaranteed offer of support for under 25 year olds in Wales to gain a place in education or training, find a job or become self-employed).

From April 2022 – March 2026, the Welsh Government has contracted a network of training providers to deliver this programme across four regional areas, north Wales, south west and mid Wales, south central and south east Wales. Each region comprises of lead contractor providers working with sub-contractor partners to provide integrated programme of learning and/or development.

Working Wales advisers refer young people onto providers of the programme and provide initial assessment of the support needed, identifying the appropriate strands of the programme:

Engagement – This strand helps young people to decide what career path they would like to follow.

Advancement – This strand provides support or programmes offering qualifications to help the young person to progress to further study, training or employment.

Employment – This strand provides subsidised work opportunities for young people.

Young people on the programme, referred to as participants, will have an individual learning plan (ILP). This plan is developed and delivered by providers who will support them to attain the skills, qualifications and experience to progress to learning at a higher level, employment (including self-employment) or an apprenticeship.

The lead providers are expected to devise and deliver flexible and creative individualised support which involves a wide range of activity - beyond training and skills development. This may include, but is not limited to, the use of employer work placements, work trials, community projects, voluntary work, centre-based learning opportunities and wage subsidised employment.

Further information about the programme specification can be found on the Welsh Government website:

[Jobs Growth Wales+ programme specification | GOV.WALES](#)