



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 West and Mid Wales**

**Date of monitoring visit: March 2023**

**By**

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

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## About the South West and Mid 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 and the Local Authority to review the referrals process
- review the quality and appropriateness of the accommodation and resources for the programme

In the South West and Mid Wales region, three lead providers and 16 sub-contractor partners work together to deliver programmes across the local authority areas of Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Powys, and Swansea. We visited participants on the programme at venues in Newtown, Ceredigion, Aberystwyth, Haverfordwest, Neath, Cardigan, Swansea, Carmarthen, Llanelli and Pembroke Dock.

The lead providers and their sub-contractor partners are:

ITEC Training Solutions Ltd – lead provider

- Bethany Training
- Inspire Training
- Llanelli Training Centre
- Futureworks – Pembrokeshire Council

Associated Community Training (ACT) Ltd — lead provider

- Educ8
- Hyfforddiant Ceredigion Training (HCT)
- Inspire Training
- Llamau
- Llanelli Rural
- Motivational Preparation College for Training (MPCT)

B-WBL Consortium, Pembrokeshire College – lead provider

- PRP Training
- HB Training
- Coleg Sir Gar
- Achieve More Training
- ITeC Digital

- Pathways Training
- Skills & Training

At the time of our visit, there were approximately 652 participants enrolled on the programme. Of those, 65% were enrolled on the engagement strand; 34% on the advancement strand; and 1% on the employment strand.

## Main findings

The three lead providers for this region have a positive working relationship and meet regularly through formal and informal networks to share information and intelligence about issues such as learner recruitment and securing work placements. However, they acknowledge that there is a competitive element given the lower than anticipated numbers being referred into the programme. There are a few instances of duplication of provision and missed opportunities for developing a more regional approach and better sharing of information amongst sub-contractors across the region.

Lead providers have positive and supportive working relationships with sub-contractors. They provide support in the form of shared online spaces, regular meetings, quality assurance activities, and challenge where appropriate. Sub-contractor providers also have opportunities to share their expertise and good practice across the consortium to which they belong. For example, they have shared practice about ways to maximise the funds available and how to conduct effective digital reviews. Sub-contractor partners value being given autonomy to use additional support funds in ways that allow them to meet the needs of their particular cohorts. Examples of how they have used these funds include subsidising childcare and transport costs, providing enrichment activities, and supplying digital devices to participants.

Partners work collaboratively to ensure that participants access the most appropriate learning experiences. In some cases, this includes transferring learners across the consortium where a particular provider or provision better suits the needs of individuals and their progression aspirations.

Providers work with employers to support them in their mentoring roles and employers appreciate this approach. Employers also value having opportunities to influence programme development and raise issues where appropriate, such as adjusting work placement times to allow a participant to travel by public transport. Employers who have experience of working with providers and their participants have a good understanding of the cohort and the challenges that they face.

Nearly all centre managers, tutors and support staff are familiar with, and very knowledgeable about, the barriers and issues young people on this programme come up against. They work hard to develop positive relationships with individuals and groups by taking a person-centred approach to planning and delivery. Tutors work with participants to agree individualised and meaningful targets that are informed by the young people themselves, the tutor, and, where appropriate, the employer. In most cases, tutor planning also takes into account the background of participants, any additional learning needs, and their aspirations.

Almost all tutors deliver in an engaging way and their sessions include a wide range of resources and activities that participants can relate to. This leads to high levels of engagement and responsiveness from the young people. Examples include a well-being focussed session that makes reference to commonly used fast food chains and energy drinks. Similarly, a sports coaching session involves a discussion

around the pitfalls of inappropriate social media content and how this can potentially impact on future careers.

Tutors and assessors have high expectations and they challenge participants both in classrooms and workplace settings through clear target-setting and effective questioning techniques. For example, in a beauty session the assessor asks the participant questions about the ethical sourcing of materials and the subsequent disposal of these items.

Tutors readily encourage and praise participants and participants recognise that their contributions are valued and relevant. Many participants acknowledge the benefits of being in smaller groups and draw lines of comparison with previous experiences of education where they were in larger groups leading to negative behaviour and poor progress. Many participants track their achievements through the use of digital individual learning plans, and they identify examples of how their technical, academic and social skills have developed since joining the programme.

A minority of learners have very clear aspirational targets whereas others are still finding their way. Most of those in the early stages of their learning journey are unsure about what employment or career pathways may interest them. Many of the advancement and employability strand participants are in work settings that align with their aspirations. However, there are a few instances where this is not the case, particularly in areas and sectors where opportunities are sparse.

Learning spaces are accessible and appropriate, and in the best cases they are vibrant, welcoming, and comfortable. However, in some of the more rural areas, transport cuts have resulted in further barriers for the young people as travel times to centres and workplaces are significant. Many providers have adjusted start and finish times to help with transport issues. However, they make learners aware that employers may not be so flexible.

Nearly all learners value the additional support such as free breakfast, lunch allowances, and free period products. They also recognise the value of additional enrichment and well-being activities including day trips, gym membership, and access to support services such as counselling and designated youth workers.

Most providers have received far fewer referrals than anticipated and consequently welcome the opportunity to accept direct and self-referrals as this has supported the viability of the programme. In most cases, providers access and develop networks that assist them in reaching the target cohort. This entails working with Working Wales staff, local authority teams, schools, and other support agencies. In a few cases, information sharing is effective, and mechanisms have been agreed that ensure General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is not a barrier. However, in most cases, data and information sharing is still problematic.

Providers face challenges in relation to raising awareness of the programme with employers and other stakeholders as there is a lack of understanding of the difference between the Jobs Growth Wales+ programme and full apprenticeships. At the time of our visit, there were very few training sessions or delivery of the programme bilingually or through the medium of Welsh in predominantly Welsh-

speaking areas of the region. Securing work placements is also a challenge in particular sectors:

- information technology (IT), where so much is now home-based
- hospitality and care, where there are considerable recruitment challenges resulting in limited capacity to support a trainee
- hairdressing, as these businesses are struggling with energy costs so many have moved to a chair-renting approach, which also impacts on the ability to support those on work placement

## **Recommendations**

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

- R1 Continue to work together to support the improvement of the referral process to ensure learners are referred to the most appropriate strand and provision within a timely manner
- R2 Take a more regional approach to sharing of information and good practice amongst sub-contractors across the region, giving consideration to issues such as rurality, the seasonal nature of employment opportunities, sector specific issues, and the Welsh language

## Appendix: About the Jobs Growth Wales+ Youth Programme

Jobs Growth Wales+ youth programme is an individualised training, development and employability support programme for 16-18 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](#)