



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 Central Wales

**Date of monitoring visit: January-February
2023**

By

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

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About the South Central 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 and in the workplace
- 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 Central Wales region, two lead providers and six sub-contractor partners work together to deliver programmes across the local authority areas of Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil. We visited participants on the programme at venues in Cardiff, Bridgend, Maesteg, Aberdare, Pontypridd, Merthyr Tydfil and Tonypany.

The lead providers and their sub-contractor partners are:

ACT Ltd – lead provider

- Bridgend college
- Llanmau
- MPCT
- People Plus
- Tydfil Training

ITEC Training Solutions– lead provider

- Whithead Ross

At the time of our visit, 339 participants were enrolled on the engagement and 328 enrolled on the advancement strand of the programme. There were 7 participants enrolled on the employment strand. There were approximately 674 participants on the programme in the region at the time of our visit.

Main findings

Across the region both lead providers communicate effectively with each other. They share good practice and a wide range of information and support systems. They also work well in partnership with other organisations in the region. This partnership working is developing well in providing effective support for participants. They have well-resourced training in key locations with good access to public transport.

Both lead providers and sub-contractors place a high focus on meeting the support needs of participants. They offer comprehensive internal and external wrap-around support in the form of world of work advisors, recruitment and engagement advisors, business development coaches, counsellors, and progression coaches.

The lead providers support the sub-contractors well. Sub-contractors receive a wide range of detailed information relating to the programme and lead providers assist them in managing data. Lead providers include sub-contractor staff in professional learning activities and share good practice across the provision.

The investment in professional learning for tutors and assessors has been clearly beneficial and has resulted in a noticeable improvement in the quality of delivery. Also, the opportunity for reflection on the programme and focusing on the needs of the learners has resulted in new approaches and the introduction of appropriate online tools and other resources that support learning.

Tutors and assessors are knowledgeable and experienced and manage sessions well. They are enthusiastic and supportive and tailor the work to the needs of individual learners. In the sessions observed, the teaching is of a high quality. It is lively, interactive and the topics are relevant to the level and needs of the cohort of participants.

Tutors use a wide range of high quality resources and there is a good balance between teaching to support personal development and the delivery of knowledge and skills needed for each participant's chosen career path. Where a participant is undecided which path to follow, staff offer appropriate advice, taster sessions and, where possible, work tasters. Tutors and support assistants manage discussions on a wide range of topics well and are sensitive to the needs of individual participants in a group. These staff engage participants in up-to-date topics and news, developing their knowledge and understanding and challenging their views when necessary.

Nearly all of the participants have significant wellbeing needs. Although their academic and skills levels vary widely, with a few having achieved higher level qualifications, most on the engagement strand and many on the advancement strand, are still at the beginning of their employability journey.

Providers have clear systems to identify needs when a participant joins a programme as the level and quality of information shared by other agencies is often too variable in the degree of detail provided. All learners have tailored Individual learning plans (ILPs) and tutors are very aware of individual support needs, both for personal development and for the acquisition of skills. Staff provide appropriate support or refer to a range of specialists both within the provider and through working in

partnership with external agencies in the area, such as mental health services and family support. There is strong provision for literacy and numeracy development, both contextualised relevantly within sessions and through individual support from Essential Skills Wales tutors.

Providers have invested in useful resources to support the wellbeing of participants and are thus often able to monitor how they are feeling, their personal development and their progress in skills.

Many participants lack the social skills vital for employment. Providers offer a range of enjoyable enrichment activities which fosters a sense of community for participants, where they can interact informally with staff and their peers. These are beneficial activities for participants, many of whom report that they had become isolated and had no friends before joining the programme. Through the provision of meals, providers are often able to subtly identify those who may face financial challenges within their families.

Learning environments are often vibrant spaces which are welcoming and where young people feel comfortable and safe. A wide range of support services are often accessible at the centres, which avoids delay in referring participants when they need support.

Providers secure a range of work opportunities for participants. These are mainly in traditional skills areas but providers do their best to cater for individual ambitions, such as working in a solicitor's office. Providers consistently seek new placement opportunities for learners. However, there are particular difficulties for example, in construction and adult social care where there are skills shortages. In the best cases, participants access work placements that give them sound experiences in developing their vocational skills as well as significantly improving their confidence and self-esteem. In one example, a participant has made particularly strong progress and is progressing onto an apprenticeship programme.

Participants are cooperative, well-behaved and interact in a friendly and supportive way with each other, after initial settling in periods. Staff are well equipped and experienced to deal with challenging behaviour in a supportive way. Attendance is patchy across the region, particularly for morning sessions, but providers have strategies in place which include reduced timetable and phased returns to full time attendance for participants who struggle. Providers do everything they can to encourage full attendance.

Providers consult with participants on a regular basis and act on relevant suggestions. Nearly all participants are very positive about the programme, the support they receive, and the impact it is having on their lives.

Providers still struggle, in some areas of the region to gain relevant, background information on participants, including their prior attainment. In some council areas they do not have access to registers of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or panels where prospective participants are discussed. This has been attributed to the effects of or the local interpretation of the new GDPR rules. Providers work well with engagement and progression coordinators (EPCs), however the numbers referred to the provision by Working

Wales are lower than anticipated. There are more self-referrals to the system than referrals from Working Wales. Providers employ innovative ways to advertise the programme, including through social media platforms that are popular and accessible to young people.

Managers use data well to analyse issues and put measures in place to drive improvement where needed. For example, they monitor the take up of the programme by minority ethnic groups and have introduced key workers to liaise with communities. The providers encourage the use of the Welsh language and have increasing numbers of Welsh speaking tutors and assessors. The percentage of participants in the region who say that they speak Welsh is very low. The use of the Welsh as a language of education and training in the region remains a challenge.

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 and training or have significant barriers to learning
- R2 Work together with all relevant agencies to develop the 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 16-18 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 work placements 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](#)