



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 North Wales

Date of monitoring visit: June 2023

By

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

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About the North 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 each local authority to review the referrals process
- review the quality and appropriateness of the accommodation and resources for the programme

In the North Wales region, three lead providers and three sub-contractor partners work together to deliver programmes across the local authority areas of Flintshire, Denbighshire, Wrexham, Conwy, Isle of Anglesey, and Gwynedd.

The lead providers and their sub-contractor partners are:

Grŵp Llandrillo Menai (GLLM) – lead provider

- North Wales Training
- Achieve More Training

Associated Community Training (ACT) Ltd – lead provider

- Motivational Preparation College for Training (MPCT)

Coleg Cambria – lead provider

At the time of our visit, there were approximately 218 participants enrolled on the programme. Of those, 47% were enrolled on the engagement strand; 50% on the advancement strand; and 3% on the employment strand.

Main findings

The number of participants enrolled on the programme is considerably lower than originally anticipated. This is attributed to young people having stayed in school or college as a result of centre-determined grades, and increased employment opportunities for those without experience, skills or qualifications. Providers also express concerns over a potential 'lost cohort' suggesting that there may still be young people who are unwilling to engage in any education, employment, or training as a result the effects of the pandemic and the associated isolation.

Within this region, there is a relatively even split of participants on the engagement and advancement strands with very few enrolled on the employment strand. Providers share that this is largely due to young people opting for full-time paid roles once they are employment ready.

Referrals from Working Wales are low, and of those young people that do access the programme via this route, most are school leavers and have received information about the programme as part of school transition support. Direct referrals account for a far larger proportion of the participants, and this direct recruitment option has been welcomed by providers who employ a range of strategies to reach the target audience including leaflet drops, social media apps, and refer-a-friend incentive schemes. All providers recognise that a personal door-knocking approach is the most effective means of reaching those who are disengaged, though acknowledge this requires a significant resource.

Where participants are referred via Working Wales, referral information is detailed and includes information about previous learning, barriers, and support needs. Direct referral information is less detailed, and providers generally gather further information as they get to know the young person. This can present challenges as support needs aren't always immediately evident and planned for.

There are challenges with data sharing at a partnership, local, and regional level which impacts on reaching suitable participants. For example, information relating to college leavers is not always shared with Jobs Growth Wales+ providers in a timely manner and this can lead to delays in interventions.

There is a variable picture in terms of links with local schools with some providers having strong, well-established relationships where providers are invited in to speak at assemblies and work with small groups of pupils. Conversely, there are examples of other schools not understanding or promoting the programme.

Taught sessions take place in a range of college and community-based venues with consideration given to accessibility and potential barriers. Spaces are variable with some that are comfortable and appropriate with examples of useful information and participant work posted on classroom walls. In other cases, facilities are limited and not stimulating or inviting.

Support is comprehensive and includes:

- access to specialists who can support well-being and mental health issues

- access to breakout spaces where free breakfast and hygiene products are available
- financial reimbursement for travel costs
- extra-curricular activities that enhance the participant experience.

Sessions are generally engaging, and deliverers use a range of resources and activities that keep participants interested and on task. Tutors and job coaches/support workers work very well together, ensuring that participants are supported appropriately and do not get distracted. However, there are some missed opportunities to make the sessions more participant-centred or to personalise tasks linking them to their areas of interest.

In most sessions, participants demonstrate positive behaviours, strong levels of engagement, and a willingness to contribute. They also develop sound skills and subject specific knowledge. The young people tell us that they are making progress and provide concrete examples to support this which include improved interpersonal and communication skills. However, many state that their preference would be to access more subject specific content relating to their areas of interest as opposed to generic work skills.

Most participants are respectful and appreciative of the learning experience, noting that they are treated as adults and given choices in how they learn and approach tasks. It is evident that there is a strong rapport between the young people and the staff who are clearly familiar with the cohort and the barriers that they face.

Many young people have identified areas of interest, but only a minority have a clear idea of progression routes and next steps. Interestingly, many participants suggest that their aim is to return to college even though, for some, it was because they didn't have a positive experience of college that they are enrolled on this programme. Some of those we talked to were completely unaware of wider apprenticeship routes.

When advancement learners show the motivation and enthusiasm to engage in work experience, their opportunities are often limited. In many cases, this is due to employers choosing to support committed apprenticeship learners who they know will be with them for a number of years, as opposed to short-term work experience which often disrupts the business practices. In some cases, employers have had poor experiences in the past with participants who lack discipline or motivation. As a result, participants are not always accessing the valuable work experience opportunities they need to progress.

Many participants are encouraged to develop their literacy and numeracy skills by working through Wales Essential Skills Toolkit (WEST) development activities. However, very few have achieved these qualifications to date.

A tutor at one provider converses on a one-to-one level in Welsh with the few participants who are fluent Welsh speakers. A very few participants say that they are confident Welsh speakers, and most of these participants undertake their programme bilingually. Most of the teaching is delivered through the medium of English.

Providers have a responsive approach in that provision can be put on where demand is identified. However, viability issues due to low numbers mean provision isn't necessarily sustainable, particularly in more rural areas, and in one case, provision was withdrawn. In this situation participants were offered alternative venues with some choosing to take up this opportunity, whereas others left the programme.

In some cases, accessing the programme face-to-face may involve using two to three buses and travelling for two hours in one direction. There are limited online opportunities to support access for those struggling with travel or engagement. Leaders feel that there is room to explore increased online engagement and acknowledge that this is an area for development.

Providers recognise the strengths of one another's organisations and plan provision and responsibilities accordingly. For example, some providers have more flexible community spaces, so these are better suited to the engagement strand participants.

Partnership working and support mirrors that of the wider work-based learning consortia and there is a pan-Wales approach to addressing operational matters, but there is no evidence to suggest a regional approach or sharing of good practice. For example, leaders at one sub-contracted training provider value the good practice meetings within their own work-based learning consortium and they recognise that extending this to involve representatives from other Jobs Growth Wales+ providers would potentially be valuable.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Explore regional partnership working opportunities on a strategic and operational level with a view to sharing information, experiences, and best practice.
- R2 Continue to identify opportunities to engage potential participants from more remote geographical areas, in terms of location, methods of delivery, or shared resources.

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](#)