



Welsh Government evidence paper on Apprenticeship Pathways

12/02/2025

This paper provides an overview of apprenticeship pathways in Wales. It describes the range of apprenticeship frameworks available and the key role apprenticeships play in supporting the Welsh economy.

The paper outlines the way in which the Welsh Government works with employers to shape skills and apprenticeship policy in Wales. It describes how individuals and employers can obtain information, advice and guidance on apprenticeships, and sets out actions being taken to improve equity and access to apprenticeships for learners.

Finally, the paper sets out the Welsh Government's role in setting strategic skills priorities for Wales and the role of Medr in delivering the apprenticeship programme.

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1. Introduction

- 1.** Apprenticeships are at the heart of the Welsh Government's ambition to create jobs and support green growth.
- 2.** Apprenticeships provide valuable skills and training, empowering individuals to build successful careers. They open doors to a wide variety of career pathways, allowing individuals to explore different industries and roles. Opportunities in Wales span from foundation to degree-level apprenticeships. They provide transformational opportunities for people of all ages.
- 3.** By supporting apprenticeships, employers benefit from a skilled and motivated workforce tailored to their specific needs. Investing in apprenticeships contributes to economic growth by developing a highly skilled workforce. The apprenticeship programme also supports key public sector workforce needs.
- 4.** We continue to invest heavily in apprenticeships. This year and in 2025-26 we are investing £144m in apprenticeships to ensure delivery of our 100,000 new apprenticeships target.

2. Apprenticeship pathways

- 5.** Apprenticeships form an important part of the Welsh Government's Young Person's Guarantee for 16-24 year olds. In Wales, we have:
 - apprenticeships at level 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6
 - shared apprenticeships
 - pre-apprenticeships such as Junior Apprenticeships and Jobs Growth Wales Plus
 - support for inclusive apprenticeship approaches
 - an apprenticeship matching service
 - a strong and quality-assured network of apprenticeship providers.
- 6.** Apprentices gain work experience, learn new skills and gain a nationally recognised qualification while earning a wage. This is completed through an apprenticeship framework, which sets out the programme of learning and qualifications from level 2 up to degree level.
- 7.** The Welsh Government is working with Medr to ensure clear pathways and progression between apprenticeship levels and qualifications. Our aim is to create a more joined-up and inclusive sector, with clearer and more flexible pathways for learners to learn at the level and in the place that is best for them.

3. The extent to which apprenticeship pathways support the needs of the Welsh economy

8. There are currently 23 apprenticeship frameworks across all sectors in Wales which are set out in the table below.

Business & Management	Digital Technology	Public Services
Education & Information Services	Protective Services	Health & Social Care
Childcare	Healthcare	Design
Creative & Media	Catering & Hospitality	Food & Drink
Travel Tourism & Leisure	Agriculture & Environment	Life Sciences
Automotive	Transport & Logistics	Property Services
Construction & Building Services	Energy	Engineering
Advanced Manufacturing & Materials	Retail, Hair & Beauty	Legal & Financial Services

9. Apprenticeships are a key driver to raise skill levels, improve productivity and help grow a skilled and diverse workforce that meets the needs of the Welsh economy. There are growing demands for new skills and upskilling as a result of new technologies, artificial intelligence and our transition to a net zero economy.
10. Our Economic Mission drives our approach to apprenticeships, supporting our vision for a more prosperous, greener and equal economy. Apprenticeships support a number of cross-government commitments, including meeting our net zero ambitions, growing the foundational economy and supporting priority industries. We continue to promote and prioritise quality apprenticeship investment in those sectors that will support economic growth and community cohesion, including those in

higher level, more technical sectors, supporting STEM apprenticeships and net-zero preparedness. We are committed to increasing the numbers of degree apprenticeships.

- 11.** Since August 2024, Medr is responsible for developing and issuing apprenticeship frameworks in Wales. We understand Medr has developed a programme of work to review all apprenticeship frameworks to ensure they meet the needs of the economy and learners going forward.

4. Employers

- 12.** Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) provide the local/regional expertise to help employers identify relevant partners, funding streams and labour market intelligence, amongst other things. RSP Boards are chaired by an employer and are made up of employers, education providers and others.
- 13.** There are four RSPs in Wales - North Wales Regional Skills Partnership, South West Regional Learning and Skills Partnership, Cardiff Capital Region Skills Partnership and Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership. They make recommendations to Welsh Government on key skills and employability priorities, based on labour market intelligence and employer-led insight. They act as strategic partnerships and directly support Growth and City Deals.
- 14.** Ministers and officials also routinely engage with a very wide range of employers and employer representative bodies on skills matters, including apprenticeships.
- 15.** We understand that Medr is working with employers to better understand the barriers they face, especially SMEs, in taking on apprentices and how to broaden the employer base going forward.

5. Information about apprenticeships

- 16.** Information on how to find and apply for an apprenticeship is available on the Welsh Government website: <https://www.gov.wales/find-apprenticeship>.
- 17.** Business Wales provides advice to employers about how to go about recruiting an apprentice and the support available: [Apprenticeships | Business Wales Skills Gateway](#).
- 18.** Careers Wales provides an all-age impartial, careers guidance service. Their careers advisers help young people understand their options, plan their careers and help prepare them to enter their chosen career path whether that is further education, employment or training. Careers Wales works with all secondary schools, special schools, Pupil Referral Units and colleges across Wales and facilitates a wide range of employer engagement activities, enabling employers to share knowledge and experience to give learners insight into the world of work.
- 19.** Working Wales, delivered by Careers Wales, targets those aged 16+ who are looking to get into work, training or to further their careers; it provides free, impartial, employability and careers guidance tailored to an individual's needs and circumstances. The service provides a national entry point to employability support, referring individuals onto appropriate employability programmes supported by the Welsh Government including apprenticeships.

6. Equity of support and access for learners

- 20.** The Welsh Government Apprenticeship Policy Statement (February 2024) recognises that inequality has a negative impact on economic growth and social outcomes. We are acutely aware that barriers exist excluding groups from accessing and completing apprenticeships. Whilst we have increased the diversity of apprenticeships, specific barriers remain. Learners can face difficulties in finding suitable work placements, especially where employers believe they may need to provide additional support. There can be real or perceived discrimination with fewer apprenticeship role models from the Black Asian Minority Ethnic communities or from disabled groups.
- 21.** We are working to increase diversity in apprenticeships. The Inclusive Apprenticeships Disability Action Plan has supported the growth of disabled apprenticeships. In 2022/23, 11.6% of all apprenticeship learning programmes were started by learners who identified as having a disability and/or learning difficulty, compared with 5.8% in the academic year 2016-17.
- 22.** Our network of Disabled People's Employment Champions help close the gap between disabled people and the rest of the working population.
- 23.** Supported Shared Apprenticeships provide additional support to disabled apprentices with intensive and wide-ranging employment and learning needs. Support provided may be through job coaching or other specialist resource.
- 24.** We also intend to modify the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for Wales including by changing the essential skills entry requirements for levels 2 and 3 for those people with learning difficulties and disabilities. This will provide a more inclusive offer and widen participation by enabling more disabled people to access the apprenticeship programme.
- 25.** The updated Anti Racist Wales Action Plan published in November last year sets a goal to increase the number of ethnic minority people starting and completing Apprenticeships. To achieve that goal we are committed to working closely with Medr. Programme performance data, including trends, benchmarking and completion data, will be collected and published regarding ethnic minority participants on Apprenticeships. We are committed to sharing good practice, developing case studies and ensuring that all promotional materials include ethnic minority people.

7. Role of the Welsh Government

- 26.** The Welsh Government sets national skills priorities for Wales, including for apprenticeships, and provides funding to Medr to deliver the apprenticeship programme.
- 27.** Medr manages and funds the apprenticeship contracted providers and the universities that deliver degree apprenticeships, working within the budget provided by the Welsh Government.
- 28.** The Welsh Government is responsible for the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for Wales (SASW) which sets out the minimum requirements to be included in a recognised Welsh apprenticeship framework. Compliance with the SASW is a statutory requirement of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.
- 29.** Medr is responsible for developing and issuing apprenticeship frameworks in Wales. The Welsh Government has delegated the role of Apprenticeship Issuing Authority in Wales to Medr. The role of the Issuing Authority is to quality assure the frameworks to make sure they meet industry standards and meet the requirements set out in legislation.