

[National Assembly for Wales](#)

[Enterprise and Business Committee](#)

[Inquiry into Assisting Young People into Work](#)

Evidence from Vale of Glamorgan Council – AYP 16

The Committee's Terms of Reference for the Inquiry are:

- **What support is most effective and what are the main barriers that face young people trying to enter the labour market?**

Level of support required is well documented and involves a raft of providers offering individual personal support in both the short and long term if required.

- **To what extent is the Welsh Government's strategy for young people who are not in education, employment or training effective and value for money?**

The new Engagement and Progression Framework sets out a great model for helping to address engagement for young people (this is long overdue). The agenda needs to be matched to direct funding for the Coordination of the model with a clear role of responsibility (this is partially why it has consistently failed under other models like the KIT Strategy). The concept that all existing funding can be used for the model may appear logical – but, all too often that money has already been committed to deliver projects well in advance of new agendas. All too often existing funding streams are being over committed as many different Welsh Government Departments identify additional actions, projects and ideas that existing funding streams should be covering (you can only spend money once).

- **What progress has been made to date on the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF) Implementation Plan?**

Local progress has been very good although this needs continued funding of the coordination role. In addition the traditional providers of support services like Careers Wales and the Council's Youth Service are going through unprecedented scale back which will make the delivery of provision very difficult, with a drift of services from targeted to informal support.

The Vale has set a threshold for Early Identification tool, which has been launched in all schools, to identify young people at high, medium or low risk category of becoming NEET in the future. Subsequently provision has been brokered in 6 of the 8 schools to date.

1. Mapping of courses for the youth guarantee complete and submitted to WG, talks with Head Teachers have occurred to adopt the Common Area Prospectus (CAP).
2. Lead Worker Training has been arranged in partnership with the YMCA including the CAP training
3. Development of a Youth Engagement Retention and Progression Panel (consisting of key lead workers)

4. Monitoring and tracking Early Identification in schools to see progress of young people at high risk termly.
5. Close working with Careers Wales to identify tier 1, 2 and 3 young people monthly, and internal connection within the Local Authority with Education, Social Services and Housing.
6. Information Sharing Protocol in place, approved by WASPI and signed by key partners.
7. Regional ESF work progressing for youth employment and attainment, and skills for work, includes the key elements of the YEPF to develop projects.

- **How effective is the strategic role of local authorities and other key stakeholders including the Careers Service, the Youth Service, and the education regional consortia?**

The strategic role of the Local Authority is developing well, this Council's responsibility for reducing the number of young people not in education employment or training is high on its agenda and is a corporate objective. The work of Youth Services, Education Department and Careers Wales through the Youth Engagement & Progression Framework (YEPF) has brought about a more joined up approach, better communication and improved sharing of information of young people, these have aided the development of new projects of engagement to help move young people closer to the labour market and helped address their personal barriers. This has also led to better connections and awareness of Adult Community Learning courses and young people.

The Local Authority now has more influence and access to data held by Careers Wales through the YEPF. This has allowed the Local Authority to closely examine movement of young people between the different tiers (of the Welsh Government 5 tier model) and communicate at risk young people early to providers such as Cardiff and Vale College, Youth Services and other Education, Employment and Training providers.

The Local Service Board is developing an Improving Opportunities Board to lead on helping people into work covering skills, training and job creation.

Sadly since Careers Wales were subsumed into the Welsh Government and Youth Gateway deconstructed, their ability to take a lead role has been greatly diminished. The retargeting of the Youth service to more targeted work is seeing a negative impact on universal provision; this provision would help support young people within a far more informal setting and stop young people moving into targeted provision.

- **The extent of discrimination and its impact on the recruitment of young people;**

Young people will always face discrimination when employers can pick older, more experienced employees for the same wage. A minimum wage is essential to give young people value and worth within their work. More work on bringing the training allowance in line with a minimum wage is essential.

- **How effective are the range of schemes, initiatives and projects aimed at supporting young people into work, for example: Jobs Growth Wales; apprenticeships; traineeships; other projects supported by European funding; and third-sector-run projects? Do they provide good value for money?**

Many of these projects are good value, offering a wide range of opportunities that are helping to open doors for young people. Each project needs to be analysed on an individual basis and the best of each project used to add in the support required for future developments.

In the first quarter of 2014, the Vale's Communities First Programme supported, through Jobs Growth Wales (JGW), 43 referrals and positively engaged 35 young people. Four young people progressed into employment through the JGW scheme. The Communities First 'Sticking at It' project positively engaged 24 young people progressing them into education, employment, training, work experience etc. This year the Local Authority took on 20 apprentices and will be recruiting a further 5 in November. This figure has been steadily increasing from previous years, 23 placements in 2013 and 19 placements in 2012.

The DWP's Work Programme is results driven and payment is only made on job entries and job outcomes. There is no financial support under work programme to focus upon specific groups and specific needs including young people to get them to where they need to be. Additional financial support to produce placement/experience opportunities for young people with little or no experience would help them gain ground in the wider jobs market local or otherwise.

The decision by Welsh Government not to allow Work Programme customers to access JGW is unfortunate and reduces opportunities for Welsh young people. Work Programme customers in England can access ESF funding streams, but this isn't allowed in Wales, which again reduces resources for young people. This has led to numerous individuals missing out on vital training.

Issues that the Committee is considering as part of these terms of reference include:

- **The impact of the Welsh Government's prioritisation of support for young people age 16-18; and the impact of this prioritisation on those aged 19-24;**

The new Engagement and Progression Framework sets out a great model for helping to address engagement for young people. The agenda needs to be matched to direct funding and this is partially why it has consistently failed under other models like the KIT Strategy.

A more joined up strategic approach is required to take the whole agenda forward. The use of European funds will help have a great impact but consideration needs to be given to equality of provision throughout Wales based on needs not on the measures of disadvantage and geography.

The YEPF for 11-24 year olds is heavily weighted towards pre 16 work through the Early Identification in schools, provision and brokerage, and the youth guarantee offer for 16-18 year olds. The Framework's 'Employability' element also focuses its efforts on 16-19 year olds. Although the Framework believes that this early intervention will improve outcomes at a later stage the needs of current 18-24 year olds are neglected, this is a worry.

In the Vale the Adult Community Learning fills a small gap where 18-24 year olds can access free courses to bring them closer to the labor market. There is a gap for provision for this cohort in the Vale, more can be done through partnership work to refocus on 18-24 year olds. The Vale has good links with Job Centre Plus locally and this is our primary connection, although there is a limited access to data (none devolved service). Good links with Cardiff and Vale College data is developing with access to its new Vital system of learner profiles, this should allow access data of young people at risk of becoming NEET via drop out of courses, and tracking on progression once they leave

college. Although locally some progress is being made in ways to engage, monitor and track 18-24 year olds, Welsh Government guidance in this area is essential.

- **Transport (especially in rural areas): what are the problems and what assistance can be provided?**

Transport needs will vary throughout Wales. It would have been useful to have revisited the two pilots run nationally on subsidised travel for young people travelling on Public Transport and see if this has any lessons we could learn.

Travel by public transport in the Rural Vale is limited by the resources available for transport subsidy. The Council has supplemented services with community transport provision, but there remain areas where travel remains a barrier to employment for those without private cars. Realistically, support would need to be targeted to the particular user group.

- **The need for softer skills: e.g., effective interview and job application skills; ready-for-work skills;**

Soft skills are essential and appear in all projects and training to get young people reengaged in provision. This had been part of Careers Wales Youth Gateway programme and it is a loss that this is no longer happening.

The Council offers support in these softer skills as part of its interpretation of the Work Programme and its customers' needs. However, this offer is limited as financial assistance to promote these skills is not built into the Work Programme contract per se.

- **What can be done to assist the groups of young people who are more affected by barriers to re-entering the labour market, for example those with disability?**

Research on the needs of young people to re-engage is well documented, key areas look at individual personal support, employment opportunities that offer genuine opportunity for them to gain skills (not necessarily qualifications), have a future benefit and offer a real livable wage (no different to what we all would expect). Specifically those with a disability need a benefit system that is flexible enough to allow young people to work, but that does not penalise the young person allowing them to earn less than on benefits or a system that does not allow these young people to access benefits should employment not work (for whatever reason). Young parents also need childcare to engage properly, childcare is expensive and makes work not viable to low paid/low skilled workers.

There is a need for more tier 2 services, organisations such as Innovate Trust that will engage young people with disabilities to help them build their soft and hard skills, through a vocational route, and better connections with local employers. Employers need to be more aware of young people with disabilities or care leavers, and provide opportunities of engagement through schemes, that will benefit the employer in putting something back in the community as well as advantaging the young person in gaining skills and confidence.

- **The impact and value-for-money of European funds;**

The Vale has traditionally only accessed small amounts of European funds to focus on young people support provision, funds that have been identified have often been small and advice on using these has been poor. Within areas deemed a lower priority for funding there remain significant pockets of

need. These specific areas should receive additional Welsh Government funding to compensate and ensure a level playing field to address social issues.

- **The extent to which employers require Welsh-language skills, and whether this requirement is perceived as a barrier by some young people;**

The job levels that young people are entering the market at have rarely required Welsh language skills and would perceive this not to be a barrier in our area

- **Regional variations and local challenges;**

The Vale is perceived as an affluent area and therefore our NEETs figures are supposed to be reflective of our higher level of academic achievement and engagement levels. Sadly youth unemployment is a far more complex global picture and has more to do with the availability of employment opportunities, followed by the ability of the young person to access these. The Vale has pockets of significant deprivation (eg the Communities First Cluster in Barry), but this is lost in the broader image.

- **The social problems that prevent young people from finding work, and how to change the culture and attitudes that entrench unemployment for many.**

Social problems that prevent young people finding work and those that come with being unemployed (especially in the long term) are very well documented by various studies carried out at local and national levels (please refer to 'Bridging the Gap' and 'Status A and Status O'reports, Cordis Bright and work by Professor Howard Williamson to name but a few) more focus should be made by education services to:

1. Raising aspirations of young people in schools, and through positive role models
2. Family culture, intervening early with families, changing the culture of worklessness through the family
3. Positive relationships with teachers and support
4. Improved options via a dual education system