

[National Assembly for Wales](#)

[Enterprise and Business Committee](#)

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

Evidence from BT Wales – AYP 22



**Enterprise and Business Committee
Inquiry into Assisting Young People into Work**

1. BT Wales welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Enterprise and Business Committee's Inquiry into Assisting Young People into Work. In a rapidly changing global economy, where digital services are an increasing enabler of commerce, creativity and communication, young people must be trained in the latest skills necessary for Wales's future workforce to remain ahead of the curve. As a leading provider of telecommunications and digital services, and as a major private sector employer in Wales, BT is ideally positioned to advise on how young people can be assisted into careers in the digital sector.
2. As an anchor company, BT in Wales is looking at potential growth across several parts of the businesses, including software development, engineering, network management, retail, and associated skills. Our apprentices work towards developing skills in these areas, achieving relevant qualifications, although all BT team members need to be IT literate – an essential foundation to a career in the sector. We have two new skill requirements emerging that have been identified as a gap in current training: multi-media/multi-application skills and cyber security. Greater understanding of MTEC (Maths, Technology, Engineering and Computing) subjects forms an ideal platform to pursue careers in telecommunications and IT but also a host of other careers, whether vocational or otherwise.

Local Authorities & the education system

3. BT understands the Welsh Government focus on school banding and performance management, and the need for schools to demonstrate success through a number of criteria. The current Review of Assessment and the National Curriculum for Wales, led on behalf of the Welsh Government by Professor Graham Donaldson, is a welcome opportunity to strengthen provision of literacy and numeracy, and the consideration of ICT's place in the curriculum is an important step forward. A good grounding in ICT is essential in the modern world, and as an employer BT looks to recruit young people with these skills, as a cornerstone to further digital skills development.
4. Inspiring future engineers and computer scientists at an early age is crucial in raising awareness of how computing and digital skills can underpin a wide range of exciting careers. BT has partnered with educational charity Techniquet to do just this, by running 'Bytesize Science,' an entertaining programme of interactive, hands-on stage shows to bring computing to life. BT is working with Techniquet to create bilingual computing lessons for Key Stage 3 pupils across Wales with BT volunteers helping to deliver them over the coming months. Industry input into the curriculum is essential if the education system is to successfully meet the digital sector's constantly evolving skills needs.

Careers advice and recruitment

5. With the digital economy a key growth area, it is vital that engineering and computing are seen as solid career options. However, school and college career advice on digital skills is extremely sporadic in terms of content and availability. This can be said for other sectors but it is worse for digital as many cannot define or explain what it actually means. It is one area that business can and should advise on. It is important that employers are involved in the obvious need to educate and explain the skills and the sector in general. Activity on IT literacy does appear to be fragmented, and will remain so until the curriculum is made coherent. For example, the training of teachers is currently impeded by ICT's lack of presence in the current curriculum.
6. In Wales, BT runs the Work Inspiration programme, a week long workshop bringing GCSE pupils into to BT for a practical, hands-on experience of life as a BT apprentices. Developed and run by apprentices, the scheme is an opportunity for young people working in telecommunications, computing and engineering to pass on invaluable experience about careers in the sector. As well as learning about the work of BT's engineers and technicians, the school pupils are also taken through a 'crash course' in essential life skills including good interview techniques, how to present confidently, and how to build a winning CV – supporting young people into work whatever career direction they choose. Building these essential skills is vital as our experience shows that whilst most young people arrive at their apprenticeship start date aware and prepared, 10% struggle initially with what may appear very basic issues, such as how pay and salary works. Many do not even have bank accounts on arrival and some don't appreciate how to manage time and can be late. These issues are symptomatic of known issues with employability skills and more needs to be done within schools to prepare young people for the world of work.
7. Beyond schools and colleges, BT makes a conscious effort to demonstrate the varied career paths which engineering and computer science can offer, with our employees attending careers fairs throughout Wales. We place a particular premium on attracting women into the industry, and have worked with partners including Chwarae Teg and Welsh Government to establish an employers' network which aims to support women into traditionally under-represented roles.
8. In May 2014 Openreach, a BT Group business, announced plans to create 190 new engineering jobs in Wales with a focus on attracting a diverse set of applicants. The high response rate to this recruitment drive has been aided by the video diaries and testimonials on our recruitment portfolio, www.bt4me.co.uk which feature compelling case studies to challenge the perceptions of would-be female case studies. BT's Apprentice programmes in Wales have since seen an improvement in female apprentices from 3% in 2013/14 to 14% in 2014/15 so far.