

## **Summary of employment and skills support for older workers**

The Welsh Government operates a range of employment and skills programmes which can be accessed by individuals aged 50 years and above. These programmes are underpinned by further services available either via the Welsh Government or supported by other agencies, such as JobCentre Plus. This document focuses on four areas:

- Workplace employment and skills support
- Employment and skills support services
- Additional areas of skills support
- Future employment and skills support

Looking ahead the intention is to expand on the existing portfolio of employment and skills programmes by accessing support via the current round of European funding.

## **Workplace employment and skills support**

### **ReAct (Redundancy Action Plan Scheme)**

ReAct aims to address the needs of people who have been made redundant, or are under notice of redundancy, through a series of measures designed to remove barriers to obtaining new employment. The programme is designed to complement services offered to redundant workers by Jobcentre Plus and Careers Wales.

ReAct targets four key areas where assistance may be required in order for a redundant worker to gain new employment. Two are aimed at providing prospective employers with incentives and assistance to employ a redundant worker, whilst two are aimed at updating the skills of a redundant worker and removing any barriers to training and employment.

ReAct is an all-age programme. Between 1 January 2013 and 30 November 2014 ReAct supported 1,751 older participants<sup>1</sup>.

### **Apprenticeships including Higher Level Apprenticeships**

In November 2014 the Welsh Government published the Framework for Co-investment in Skills which refocuses apprenticeship provision in support of adults aged 25 and under. Support will continue to be available to older workers during the transition phase which will take place up to April 2017. Older workers will also benefit from access to all-age support for Higher Level Apprenticeships (those at Level 4 and above).

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<sup>1</sup> Figures as presented to Committee within the Welsh Government paper.

In Wales, there are 46 Apprenticeship Frameworks available at Level 4 and above, including Accounting, Logistics, Creative Media and Advanced Manufacturing, for example. In 2013/14, 6.7% (4,880) of participants within Work Based Learning were older workers. This has increased from 6% in 2011/12<sup>2</sup>.

## **Union Learning**

The Welsh Government is supporting a range of projects as part of the Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF). For the most part these projects are not restricted by age group and are based upon the demands indicated by specific Unions.

WULF underpins the work of the 1,300 Union Learning Representatives throughout Wales whose job is to help trade union members take part in all kinds of learning opportunities including ICT, numeracy, literacy, Welsh, foreign language and vocational training.

## **Employment and skills support services**

### **Skills Gateway for Adults**

Launched in January 2015, the Skills Gateway offers an inclusive service for adults who need careers information support as well as advice on how to improve their skills and employability or get back into work.

The Skills Gateway is available via the Careers Wales portal and provides an online and telephone service for those individuals seeking to access employment and skills support. The Skills Gateway is also available for employers who can access support via the Business Wales portal and telephone service.

### **Skills Assessment Tool**

The Skills Assessment Tool has been designed to help identify the skills and training needs of companies. The service is provided online via the Skills Gateway and explores a range of skills areas from essential skills through to jobs specific skills required by employers.

Results of the Skills Assessment Tool provide the mechanism on which to discuss specific support programmes with employers.

A new standardised Essential Skills Assessment Tool has also been developed and is being rolled out to support the delivery of Essential Skills to adult learners.

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<sup>2</sup> Analysis of StatsWales data for *Learning programme numbers by provision type, mode and gender*.

## **Careers Wales**

Careers Wales offers a breadth of information, advice and guidance on how to access work opportunities and progress within work. The Careers Wales website provides tools and resources for researching jobs and training opportunities and the courses available in Wales capable of supporting an individual's training needs. The Skills Gateway for Adults aligns with the work of Careers Wales.

### **Additional areas of skills support**

#### **Workplace Welsh and Welsh for Adults Centres**

The Workplace Welsh website, developed by the Welsh Government with support from the WJEC, provides individuals with the tools for assessing their Welsh language skills. Employers are able to use this information to plan a training programme to meet any skills gaps.

The six dedicated Welsh for Adults Centres provide advice on the Welsh language, with courses being run locally.

#### **Professional and Career Development Loan (PCDL)**

Individuals of all ages are able to borrow anything between £300 and £10,000 if their course is vocational and is aimed at supporting their employment aspirations.

#### **Lift Programme**

Lift is an ambitious Welsh Government programme to provide 5,000 training and employment opportunities by the end of 2017 for those people living in households where no-one is in work.

The programme is not aimed at those who are temporarily out of work, focusing instead on those individuals who have spent more than six months out of work or training and who face the greatest barriers to becoming employable.

#### **Community Learning/ Further Education Provision**

The predominant source of funding for older individuals is via the Further Education (FE) sector and particularly Community Learning. The participation rate from older individuals accessing FE support was 29.3% in 2013/14<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Analysis of StatsWales data for *Learning programme numbers by provision type, mode and gender*.

## **Work Ready**

This programme, previously known as Steps to Employment, prepares an individual for employment or further learning by helping to source training and work experience opportunities. It is aimed at unemployed adults aged 18 and over who are on a Department for Work and Pensions benefit. This is an interim programme which will close on the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2015. A new programme entitled Skills for Employment Wales is currently in development.

## **Future employment and skills support**

### **Essential Skills in the Workplace (ESiW)**

Welsh Government is progressing an application for support under the 2014 - 2020 European Social Fund (ESF) to enhance core budgets to deliver an ESiW 2 programme. ESiW is designed to address the high proportion of adults in Wales without the necessary literacy, numeracy and ICT skills to function effectively in the workplace. The revised programme will be supported by a new standardised Essential Skills Assessment Tool.

Between 1 January 2013 and 30 November 2014 ESiW supported 152 older participants.

### **Flexible Skills Programme**

Work is underway to introduce a new Flexible Skills Programme focused on providing targeted skills interventions where recruitment and skills needs cannot be met through other existing provision or where there is a clear case for direct involvement by the Welsh Government. The Flexible Skills Programme will be driven by the demand from employers and is not expected to operate any age restrictions on participants.

### **Skills Priorities Programme**

The Skills Priorities Programme is being introduced on a phased approach and is currently being piloted with the Further Education sector. The programme will focus on ensuring that providers can respond to local employer demand for skills and can develop the vocational offer, including at higher level, that employers need. At this stage, there is no intention to operate any age restrictions to the Skills Priorities Programme given that the support available is expected to be open to all employers in Wales.

### **Skills for Employment Wales**

An all age adult employability programme is being developed for implementation from September 2015. This will target support for adults who have been short-term unemployed (less than 12 months) in helping them to enter the labour market. The focus of this work will be on core Essential Skills, including digital literacy, so that adults have a strong basis on which to access or progress into employment.