

PAPER TO THE ENTERPRISE AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE ASSISTING YOUNG PEOPLE INTO WORK

Youth Engagement and Progression Framework

The Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF) is the Welsh Government's key delivery driver for reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment and training (NEET).

The Framework is non statutory and local authorities take the strategic lead in implementing it on the ground. Positive progress has been made since its launch in October 2013. Each local authority has shown commitment to this agenda by putting in place an Engagement and Progression Co-ordinator (EPC). The EPC plays a critical role in delivery. They work closely with Careers Wales to provide the operational leadership needed to identify the level of risk for young people and the specific support needed to help them make a positive progression.

Ensuring that personal information about individuals at risk is shared legally, safely and with confidence between partners is vital. We are pleased to report that every local authority in Wales now has a quality assured Information Sharing Protocol in place or under development.

Many of the findings from the [formative evaluation of the YEPF](#) published in August 2015 were positive. The report found that all LAs have made progress with implementing the YEPF and many interviewees praised the YEPF as the best guidance/strategy related to young people produced by the Welsh Government. Most interviewees believe that the YEPF has made a difference to collaboration, buy-in to reducing the numbers of young people who are NEET, and leadership engagement.

Embedding systems takes time and the YEPF is creating cultural change within local authorities. We will continue to support LAs to develop structures and systems at a local level to build upon the good work to date, including data collection and analysis, coordination of the Framework within other key priority areas and between a wide range of partners.

Careers Advice and Guidance

Careers Wales is a central partner in the delivery of the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework. Their client management system is used to track young people at risk of disengagement or who are disengaged, and is the backbone of the 'tracking' system which underpins the YEPF.

Increasingly Careers Wales is developing and delivering a blended service to young people, one which uses web-based services as far as is possible to address client needs especially for mainstream clients, with users being directed to other supporting services such as web chat or face-to-face services where needs cannot be met through the 'digital first' approach.

Blending services provides a way of bringing targeted and focused input to clients without the necessity for traditional forms of face-to-face interaction such as full guidance interviews. There is growing evidence to suggest that young people are confident in using web-chat or social media (more so than traditional telephone based services) when seeking direct interactions with a careers advisor. This is born out by the fact that in the second quarter of 2015 Careers Wales delivered 4349 web-chat sessions, more than double that delivered in the same period in 2014. Interactions through social media are also increasing rapidly.

Improving Education Employer Engagement

Business in the Community (BITC) has been appointed to develop a school-employer engagement model to build sustainable relationships (i.e. partnerships) between secondary schools and local employers. The approach will build on BITC's Business Class programme which is a tried and tested model and has been evaluated for its effectiveness. BITC is working closely with Careers Wales to embed the delivery of Business Class Cymru into their current delivery infrastructure.

Businesses will support schools through a planned programme of activity over a minimum three-year period. Partnerships are enhanced through the 'cluster' mechanism enabling young people to access a wider range of employers from different sectors. We want every secondary school in Wales to have the opportunity to participate by 2018. The primary objective for year one (to end March 2017) is to establish 60 Business Class Cymru partnerships. At the end of November 2015, 13 partnerships had been established.

The New Curriculum and Careers and the World of Work

A curriculum for Wales, a curriculum for life was published on 22 October 2015. It sets out how the Welsh Government plans to implement the recommendations set out in Professor Donaldson's *Successful Futures*. It outlines how we will build our new broad, balanced, inclusive and challenging curriculum. One of the key purposes of the curriculum is to develop young people into enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work.

We have announced the names of 106 Pioneer Schools who have been selected to focus on the design and development of the new curriculum. The Pioneer Schools, Welsh Government and Independent Advisory Group, chaired by Graham Donaldson, will continue to engage with employers, business leaders, further and higher education institutions throughout the development work to ensure that the new curriculum equips our learners for the world of work. The Pioneer Schools and experts will also consider how the Cross Curriculum Responsibilities and wider skills essential for employability and the world of work will be embedded throughout the curriculum.

The Pupil Offer, launched in December 2014 as part of the Schools Challenge Cymru programme sets out to enrich the educational experience of learners by providing opportunities to widen pupils' horizons.

The development and implementation of the new curriculum and a Pupil Offer for all pupils will strengthen school engagement with business and the wider community and provide more opportunities for young people to understand the skills and behaviours needed in the workplace.

Schools are required to provide Careers and the World of Work and this will be reviewed as part of the broader implementation of Professor Donaldson's recommendations. In the interim we are developing a range of practical tools and resources to help schools engage with employers and deliver the careers and the world of work framework with a focus on work experience placements.

Improving Access to Labour Market Intelligence

Provision of relevant and up-to-date labour market intelligence (LMI) is essential in enabling individuals to make informed career decisions. To this end Careers Wales have improved the LMI on CareersWales.com, allowing better presentation of careers information. In addition, national level LMI is presented via the Learning and Skills Observatory, with the focus on key major sources of LMI (such as the UK Commission's Employer Skills Survey).

Regional LMI is provided by the Observatories of the three Regional Skills Partnerships. A Labour Market Intelligence Management Group has been set up to minimise gaps and duplication in the LMI presented to stakeholders via key websites across Wales.

Increasing the Parity of Esteem between Academic and Vocational Pathways

We recognise the need to improve the range of opportunities for young people. The Common Area Prospectus (CAP) tool, developed by Careers Wales, has now been rolled out across Wales and allows young people to see the range of options available to them when making their choices for post-16 learning.

In Wales, secondary schools and Further Education (FE) colleges are required to offer vocational courses to learners through their key stage 4 and 16-18 local curriculum offers, in line with the statutory requirements of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009. The requirements of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 ensures that learners are offered a minimum of 25 courses with at least 3 vocational qualifications at key stage 4 and a minimum of 30 courses with at least 5 vocational courses at 16-18.

Since the introduction of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure in 2009 all secondary schools and FE colleges have either met or exceeded the minimum requirements, in terms of the number of vocational courses offered to learners. Evidence also indicates that there has been a steady increase in the last 5 years in the percentage of learners taking a vocational qualification. For example; in 2014/15 75.4% of 15 year olds took a vocational qualification compared to 46.9% in 2010/11. In addition, in 2014/15 30.0% of 17 year olds took a vocational qualification compared to 18.9% in 2010/11.

We have continued to extensively promote apprenticeships to individuals still at school or attending Further Education Institutions as this is crucial if apprenticeships are to gain parity of esteem with the traditional GCSE to “A” Level to Degree route in schools and FE Colleges. Over the past year we have used our ‘Apprenticeship Ambassadors’ (who are apprenticeship award winners and finalists from previous Skills and WorldSkills competitions) to visit a number of schools throughout Wales to promote the positive benefits of apprenticeships to pupils.

Supporting young people furthest from the labour market to remain engaged

We recognise that too many looked after children (LAC) leave compulsory education with few or no qualifications and all too often this can lead to them become NEET or to enter the youth justice system.

Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales – sets out the Welsh Government’s commitment to supporting looked after children and care leavers to reach their full potential. The strategy and accompanying action plan recognises that more must be done to help looked after children with the transition from compulsory education to post-16 education, employment or training.

The Welsh Government and Youth Justice Board published a joint Youth Justice Strategy ‘Children and Young People First’ in 2014. The Strategy brings together a vision, commitment and coherent framework to improve services for children and young people from Wales at risk of becoming involved in, or who are in, the youth justice system. Tackling the lack of engagement in ETE of young people who offend is often key to achieving successful outcomes and reducing reoffending. A number of actions within the joint strategy are specifically aimed at improving the educational outcomes of these young people.

We have worked with Big Lottery to develop a Dormant Account funded project proposal which will support young people, aged 16-25 with a learning disability/ difficulty, including Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The aim of the project is to create and support long term youth employment opportunities by engaging NEET young people and employers. It will offer engagement, training and pre-employment support, paid work placements, job coaching and mentoring, support for families and carers, support for employers and employees, support post placement and facilitate sharing of learning.

Young people with special educational needs are a priority group for enhanced services from Careers Wales. All young people with a statement of educational needs are entitled to individualised, independent careers information, advice and guidance from a Careers Wales adviser from Year 9 onwards and up to age 25 if required. Careers Wales have link advisers with all special schools and in mainstream schools in Wales and are aware of current local opportunities and support available for all young people with SEN.

Since the end of the YEPF two year implementation plan last October, we have taken a more targeted approach to its delivery. Regional stakeholder working groups now focus on specific issues and ways to improve both systems and partnership working. Between January and March 2016 the focus will be on LAC and young people in the Youth Justice system.

Higher Apprenticeships

Higher Apprenticeships are an all age programme and as such are not specifically marketed to young people. However, we have significantly raised awareness in schools and FE colleges by promoting Higher Apprenticeships as a valid alternative to Higher Education. Higher Apprenticeships contain a combination of both vocational and academic learning that will contribute greatly to economic prosperity by enhancing an individual's skills.

To make Higher Apprenticeships more appealing to both young people and employers, the Welsh Government has recently begun funding prescribed Higher Education qualifications (HND, HND and Foundation Degrees) when undertaken as part of a published Specification for Apprenticeship Standards in Wales (SASW) Higher Apprenticeship framework.

Traineeships

The Traineeship Programme helps a young person with their confidence and motivation and looks to address barriers to learning, all of which may prevent them from moving into employment or learning at a higher level. We are currently reviewing the programme to ensure it is more effective in supporting young people in to employment.

Jobs Growth Wales

Jobs Growth Wales (JGW) commenced delivery in 2012 as part of the Welsh Government approach to addressing youth unemployment in Wales. Under the first phase of the programme over 17,000 Jobs Growth Wales job opportunities were created across Wales. Data for the second phase of the programme, which commenced in May 2015, will be published in March 2016.

Discounted travel scheme for 16 and 17 year olds

The Welsh Government's scheme providing one-third discounts for 16, 17 and 18 year olds was implemented on 1 September 2015, following a marketing campaign that focused in particular on social media but also included on-bus and roadside advertising. To date, some 3,600 MyTravelPasses have been issued, enabling passholders to enjoy discounted travel on all local bus services and on the Welsh Government's TrawsCymru longer-distance bus network for all journeys, not just those for training and work.