

Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices - UK/Wales

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Introduction

Across Wales careers information advice and guidance (CIAG) services are offered to school and further education students, young people not undertaking an educational course, as well as adults. Currently, these services are mainly being delivered through Career Choices Dewis Gyrfa (CCDG) operating under the name of Gyfra Cymru **Careers Wales**. The company is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Welsh Government. Since 2019 Careers Wales has delivered the Working Wales service aimed at young people and adults in need of additional careers and employment support.

Careers Wales is an all-age national careers information, advice and guidance service for Wales. In 2021, Careers Wales introduced their five-year strategy **Brighter Futures** (2021-2026). Their Vision is to create a brighter future for the people of Wales and their purpose is to:

- Support young people and adults in Wales to create brighter futures
- Give young people and adults access to high-quality, impartial careers support
- Make a positive impact on individuals' education, economic and well-being outcomes.

Careers Wales has developed 4 strategic goals to achieve the vision:

- To provide a bilingual, inclusive, impartial careers guidance and coaching service for the people of Wales.
- To develop our work with employers, training providers and entrepreneurs to understand their skills requirements and opportunities for young people and adults.
- To support the delivery of the Curriculum for Wales and contribute to the achievement of the four purposes.
- To develop a skilled, engaged and agile Careers Wales workforce and enable the delivery of high-performing, customer-centred services.

Each secondary school in Wales is linked to a support team which includes a Careers Advisor, whose role is to work with pupils to provide impartial and appropriate careers information, advice and guidance, a Business Engagement Advisor to forge and broker links with employers and a Careers and Work-Related Experiences (CWRE) Curriculum Co-ordinator who can support teachers and practitioners to embed Careers and Work-Related Experiences (CWRE) within the curriculum.

Pilots within Further Education (FE) Colleges are underway across Wales extending the Careers Service offer to students identified as 'at risk' (Welsh Government, 2023).

Gyfra Cymru Careers Wales has centres and outreach venues across Wales, a telephone helpline, webchat and email services.

In April 2022, the Minister for Economy, Wales, approved the [remit letter](#) for delivery of careers services by Career Choices/Dewis Gyrfa (CCDG) (which trades as Careers Wales) for the financial year 2022- 2023. The Minister underlines the importance of Careers Wales continuing to support high-level objectives such as:

- Supporting the long-term programme of education reform, including the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales.
- Reform of the post-16 education and training in Wales and the work of the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER).
- Supporting the Government's ambitions to build an economy based on the principles of fair work, sustainability and the industries and services of the future to provide good jobs, relevant skills and new training opportunities.
- Helping to deliver a Young Person's Guarantee (YPG) aiming to provide young people under 25 in Wales with support to gain a place in education or training, or support to get into work or self-employment.
- Supporting the Government's ambitions to create 125,000 all-age apprenticeships.

Sources

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Coordination and collaboration among stakeholders

Many working groups exist across Wales focusing on careers, employment, skills and/or well-being. Whilst the Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on service delivery, the introduction of **Working Wales** as a 'one-stop shop' for employability support, careers information advice, guidance and signposting also led to increased partnership working and co-location of services across Wales.

The overriding aim of **Careers Wales** is to achieve high-quality outcomes for individuals in terms of career planning, successful transition into further education, employment or training and sustained progression. These outcomes will have a demonstrable impact e.g. fewer young people disengaged from employment, education and training. Careers Wales is expected to produce a high-quality and comprehensive business plan in response to an annual remit letter from Ministers.

The Welsh Government recognises that employer engagement with schools can help young people plan their career journey, relate their classroom experience to their future career options and ideas and help prepare them for the future and to play a full part in life and work. Careers Wales is committed to provide a full education business service in secondary schools which includes activities such as employer talks, site visits, careers fairs and a host of curriculum enrichment activities. This is delivered using a blended model of face-to-face and digital approaches and is supported by a national employer database called **Education Business Exchange**. Careers Wales has also been part of regional ESF-funded projects and delivered services like tailored work experience for young people at risk of disengaging as part of these projects. The education business service is delivered in conjunction with employers, employer bodies, local authorities and a range of other partners and projects.

Indeed, it is worth noting that education business work is either delivered by or supported by a large range of partners in Wales across the public, private and third sectors. In 2021 Welsh Government commissioned a mapping and review of enterprise and employer engagement activity across schools in Wales. The report identifies the wide range of provisions and the need for coordination (Arad Research, 2021).

Some examples of other partnerships include:

Regional Learning and Skills Partnerships, are facilitation bodies which ensure that publicly funded learning providers and associated organisations work collaboratively, effectively and efficiently across the areas of education and regeneration to meet the needs of the learners and the regional economy. Partnerships consist of key representatives from local government, higher education, further education, the third sector, the private sector, Careers Wales and Job Centre Plus. There are now 4 regional partnerships covering North, West, Mid, and Southeast Wales.

School Improvement Consortia are regional consortia implemented by Welsh Government, through which local authorities work together on a regional basis to provide school improvement services.

National Training Federation for Wales (NTFW) is a Wales-wide representative body of organisations or individuals involved in the delivery of learning in the workplace.

Sources

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Access to guidance

There are several policies that relate to increasing and facilitating career guidance services in Wales. In May 2022, the Welsh Government introduced the 'Stronger, Fairer, Greener Wales: a plan for employability and skills', which sets out actions on how they will address some of the key labour market challenges and future trends. The document set out the ambitions of the government under 5 key areas:

- Young People realising their potential
- Tackling economic inequality
- Championing Fair work for all
- Supporting people with a long-term health conditions to work
- Nurturing learning for life culture.

Delivering the **Young Persons' Guarantee** to everyone under 25 to pursue work, education, training or self-employment is central to achieving the Welsh Government's objectives. These include many innovative aims, but central to the involvement of careers advice and guidance are:

- positioning **Working Wales** as the gateway to the Guarantee
- strengthening partnership approach with providers
- delivery of the JGW+
- delivering high-quality careers guidance service via **Careers Wales** and Working Wales
- supporting the potential for Careers Wales developing a data intelligence hub for Wales.

The Welsh Government published the **Renew and Reform plan** (June 2021) setting out priorities and plans to support learners' well-being and progression in response to Covid. The plan set out the framework and funding available to enable partners and stakeholders to support learners and practitioners in response to the pandemic. Careers Wales worked closely with education providers to ensure young people were not left behind as a result of the pandemic.

Careers Wales provides an impartial and free careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) service. It will continue to provide services, integrating online, phone and face-to-face platforms to drive efficiency while incorporating changes to the delivery of services using new technologies. Careers Wales works at local and national levels with the private and public sectors to help deliver Welsh Government economic, education, skills and social strategies. Careers Wales covers:

1. work with schools, colleges and a range of other agencies and organisations to support young people's progression through education into further learning or employment (11 to 14, 14 to 16);
2. support 16 to 18-year-olds to ensure progression, including the young unemployed 16 and 17-year-olds;
3. support adults facing redundancy or who have been made redundant;
4. assist unemployed adults aged 25 plus through the Skills Gateway;
5. more focussed and intensive support to priority client groups as identified in the annual remit letter.

The overriding aim of Careers Wales is to achieve high-quality outcomes for individuals in terms of career planning, successful transition into further education, employment or training and sustained progression. These outcomes will have a demonstrable impact e.g. fewer young people disengaged from employment, education and training. Careers Wales is expected to produce a high-quality and comprehensive business plan in response to an annual remit letter from Ministers.

Careers Wales will continue to provide CIAG support to young people and their families and support local authorities in implementing the **Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (ALNET)** that created a single legislative system for supporting children and young people aged between 0 – 25 years who have additional learning needs. (ALN).

Careers Wales also works closely with Local Authorities to ensure that every home-educated young person is offered careers advice and guidance.

The **Working Wales** service, led by Careers Wales (from 1st May 2019) brings new customers for initial assessment, CIAG and referral/signposting, in particular vulnerable young people and adults who are likely to have experienced multiple barriers to engaging in learning and work.

The **Working Wales** service is a free service available to anyone aged 16 and over living in Wales to provide access to expert advice and coaching to overcome obstacles and barriers preventing adults and young people from getting a job and progressing in their career. Working Wales provides:

- Impartial Careers information, advice and guidance
- Identification of barriers to progression
- Signposting to additional support or EET
- Help to find job opportunities
- CV and application support
- Job Interview preparation
- Redundancy and unemployment support
- Support to apply for funding
- Advice and coaching on career change
- Help to upskill and access training

Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015) was designed to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. Public bodies need to make sure when making their decisions that they take into account the impact they could have on people living their lives in Wales in the future.

The Welsh Government published the **Sectoral Approach: Explanatory Note** identified nine sectors as being, or having the potential to be, key to the **Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices - UK/Wales**

economy of Wales, namely: Advanced materials & manufacturing; Construction; Creative industries; Energy & Environment; Food and Farming; Finance and Professional Services; ICT; Life Sciences; and Tourism.

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- The Welsh Government (2021). The Young Person's Guarantee. <https://www.gov.wales/young-persons-guarantee>

Quality assurance

To make career decisions and benefit from the support provided by Careers Wales careers education in schools must be relevant, timely and of high quality. In 2008, to support the delivery of careers education, Welsh Government published "Careers and the world of work: a framework for 11 to 19-year-olds in Wales", and from 2010 decided that implementation of this framework should be inspected on a thematic basis by Estyn, the office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. However, the delivery of the framework has been variable.

Estyn (2017) published a thematic report on schools. This was a direct request for advice from the Welsh Government in the Minister's annual remit letter to Estyn for 2016-17. The report examines the extent and effectiveness of secondary schools' delivery of the statutory 'Careers and the world of work' (CWoW) framework. It considers the extent to which secondary schools' provision and leadership in this area have changed since Estyn's previous report on CWoW, *Informed Decisions* (October 2012). The report draws on evidence from 156 secondary school inspections since October 2012 and from a survey of 35 secondary schools. A summary of key findings listed in the thematic report is presented below (Estyn, 2017: 3-5):

Nearly all schools provide pupils with a range of useful information in Year 9 (pupils aged 13-14 years old) to help them make their key stage 4 subject choices. They use a range of strategies to support pupils and their parents in making decisions, including providing advice from careers advisers at open evenings. However, most schools have not responded well to reductions in the support offered by Careers Wales and as a result, only a few schools ensure that all key stage 4 pupils have an interview to discuss their career options. While most schools provide pupils with a range of general information about post-16 options, in general, 11 to 18 schools place too much emphasis on promoting their sixth form rather than exploring fully the range of other options available to pupils across a range of providers.

A minority of schools do not use sufficiently up-to-date information or resources to guide pupils' decisions. Methods for delivering CWoW continue to vary greatly across schools and the amount of lesson time that schools allocate to CWoW continues to vary greatly. A minority of schools do not allocate any time to CWoW and in a minority of schools; staff delivering CWoW are not provided with training or up-to-date resources to carry out this role.

A minority of schools feel that their CWoW provision is less effective than it was five years ago. These schools believe that reductions in the support available from Careers Wales, combined with the increasing demands of the key stage 4 curriculum have left them unable to deliver CWoW as in the past.

The proportion of pupils who participate in work experience placements in key stage 4 or the sixth form has declined substantially over the last five years. In most cases, schools feel unable to meet the health and safety requirements of running a work experience programme now that the Welsh Government no longer requires Careers Wales to maintain a national work experience database on behalf of schools. Nearly all schools that have reduced work experience provision feel that this has had a negative impact on pupils' progress and their understanding of their career options. Very few schools have invested substantially in maintaining this aspect of their provision and managing the health and safety requirements.

In September 2022, a new curriculum was launched in Wales for learners aged 3-16. Initially rolling out in primary schools, the new curriculum will be extended to all learners up to year 11 by 2026. Within the curriculum, Careers and Work-Related Experiences (CWRE) is a mandatory cross-cutting theme – details can be found [here](#). The guidance for Curriculum for Wales will replace the Careers and World of Work Framework and will form part of inspections by Estyn.

In addition to school-based inspections to assess the delivery of careers education, the services delivered by Careers Wales are also subject to inspection by Estyn. In May 2022 a report entitled '[Impartial careers advice and guidance to young people aged 14-16 years provided by Careers Wales advisers](#)' was published.

An [independent research study](#) (Davies and Yunas, 2017) investigated whether pupils within schools in Wales receive careers-related services and if the services are accessible to those pupils who are most in need (See [Career guidance for school pupils](#)).

All providers of information and advice in Wales are encouraged to pursue the Information and Advice Quality Framework for Wales (IAQF Wales). The IAQF has been developed in response to the Welsh Government's identification of the critical role that information, advice and guidance services should play in supporting the delivery of two of its strategic goals: tackling poverty and promoting financial inclusion and promoting equality and building cohesive communities. The Matrix (Dept for Education [England] standard for information, advice and guidance) is approved under the IAQF in Wales and several colleges, employers and agencies have achieved the [Matrix](#).

The Careers Wales Mark has operated since 2010. Careers Wales has worked with many schools and colleges to support them to achieve accreditation of the Careers Wales Mark, a careers quality improvement award. By achieving accreditation of this award, schools and colleges have demonstrated their commitment to providing their learners with high-quality, meaningful careers education. Delivery of the Careers Wales Mark ended in December 2021, however, the award is recognised for a duration of 3 years from accreditation. Schools that achieved the Careers Wales Mark in 2021 will be accredited with the award until 2024. A new quality standard is currently being developed in association with the Career Development Institute (CDI) careers sector professional body.

HEIs in Wales must also act in accordance with the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education \(the Quality Code\)](#), issued by the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\)](#). The UK Quality Code for Higher Education provides guidance and 'indicators of sound practice' in careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) for HEIs. It also stipulates that HEIs must 'have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential'. Further information can be found [here](#).

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Career management skills

In general, [Careers Wales](#) tends to focus on career coaching skills and/or career adaptability concepts, theory and practice. Careers professionals now use a coaching approach to help people set goals, create their pathways to success, make informed decisions and build confidence, motivation and resilience.

Careers Wales (CCDG) has introduced new online interest tests and quizzes. These are designed to help young people understand their strengths, values and the level of their career management skills. A wide range of tools and guidance approaches are applied in practice. For example, all Careers Advisers are trained in motivational interviewing, solution-focused approaches and peer support.

Careers Wales has mapped the integral skills set out in the Curriculum for Wales to a robust career management skills, guidance and coaching framework. It is making engaging digital resources and planning tools, suitable for primary school children available to teachers, including CareerCraft within Minecraft gaming.

Careers Advisers share a 'Career Check' survey with young people in Year 10. This is a survey used to help the adviser prioritise guidance support as they review the young person's career management skills and readiness to transition into post-16 options.

The Working Wales team has devised and is using a 'categorisation tool' to support referrals for further support/learning and to help assess the level of support that customers will need to progress and succeed in their chosen progression routes. The Categorisation Tool is a feature of the Careers Wales information, advice, and guidance process, supporting the identification of individuals' characteristics, strengths and barriers to employment. The Tool captures information on essential indicators covered during careers guidance interactions. The indicators are informed by academic research and help measure individuals' distance from the labour market and the level of support required to aid their transition into work. The assessment is completed by Careers Advisers for customers who complete the careers guidance process and want to work. The results help ensure that support can be tailored to meet what individuals need to secure and sustain employment.

In September 2022, a new curriculum was launched in Wales for learners aged 3-16. Initially rolling out in primary schools, the new curriculum will be extended to all learners up to year 11 by 2026. Within the curriculum, Careers and Work-Related Experiences (CWRE) is a mandatory cross-cutting theme – details can be found [here](#). The guidance for Curriculum for Wales will replace the Careers and World of Work Framework and will form part of inspections by Estyn ([See section Quality assurance](#)).

A significant number of university degree courses now include employability skills, and some include compulsory careers sessions. Many institutions also help students to develop the 'soft skills' that employers seek (including good communication, acting as a team player, creative/critical thinking, and problem-solving) through extra-curricular initiatives.

Sources

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Career information, ICT in guidance

In 2021, Welsh Government published their digital strategy which focuses on the use of digital, data and technology to improve the lives of people in Wales. The strategy includes six key themes – digital services, digital inclusion, digital skills, digital economy, digital connectivity and data and collaboration. The strategy seeks to address the challenges presented by digital innovation, but also exploit the opportunities and the transformative effects these emerging fields are likely to have on the Welsh economy and the structure of our future labour market.

[Careers Wales](#) has established its online portal as a key platform for the delivery of careers information, advice and LMI and related services to clients. The vision is that it incorporates personalisation which will enable content to be pushed to clients according to their preferences, is accessible on mobiles, tablets and desktops and provides functionality to support both individuals and career development professionals.

The current delivery approach is underpinned by a model which blends face-to-face and digital services. The Careers Wales [website](#) is continually being developed so that it supports service delivery and houses tools and resources (quizzes, psychometric tests etc) to support career discovery and career decision-making. Career Wales (CCDG) currently offers services through different channels including telephone, web chat, social media, webinars and its website. In recent times, developments have included the use of virtual reality software to bring workplaces and industries to life for young people and the use of voting technology in workshops and group activities. Careers Wales has also invested in a new gaming tool called Career Craft, which uses Minecraft education software, to support young people's career learning as part of the new curriculum (see [curriculum for Wales](#)).

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, Careers Wales had introduced a digital competency framework to support the development of digital skills for employees. The framework required individuals to measure their skills and level of confidence against a set of criteria relevant to the delivery of services through digital channels. Alongside this, careers advisers were allowed to develop their skills in delivering services to individuals and groups of clients using video interviews and webinars. Like most organisations, the pandemic forced Careers Wales to completely rethink the way services were delivered with digital presentations, interviews via Teams live, online training, web chat and investment in resource development becoming part of mainstream practice. As such, careers advisers and other colleagues have had to respond quickly to develop the digital skills necessary to deliver services. The structure of career interventions will change as a result of this shift towards an omnichannel approach.

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Training and qualifications

Level 6 on the Qualifications and Credit Framework, which is equivalent to a university degree, is the recognised standard required for a professional career guidance qualification in Wales and across the UK.

As the lead body for the sector, the CDI professional body manages the UK [Register of Career Development Professionals](#), also referred to as the Professional Register and Register. The CDI are custodians of the [National Occupational Standards: Career Development](#). These are used to inform qualifications in the sector and provide the framework for the [Career Development Sector Progression Pathway](#). The CDI published the [CDI Blueprint of Learning Outcomes for Professional Roles in the Career Development Sector](#) in 2016. According to CDI, the Blueprint is used to inform professional qualifications across the sector and to raise awareness amongst politicians, government officials, employers and other stakeholders of the breadth and depth of skills and knowledge required for these roles.

Careers Wales has invested in training 300+ practitioners in career development: using career guidance in mental health and wellbeing.

The [Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services](#) (AGCAS) is the UK-wide professional body for careers and employability professionals working with higher education students and graduates and prospective entrants to higher education. AGCAS provides support and training for professionals in

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the sector, with the aim of promoting and ensuring excellence in service delivery. AGCAS includes over 160 HE careers services as members, representing approx. 3,200 staff. According to AGCAS, the process includes:

1. a [Code of Ethics](#) which helps members maintain the highest professional standards. The Code of Ethics identifies the professional attitudes and behaviours expected of members and provides guidance to help members recognise and develop these;
2. the [Membership Quality Standard](#) which outlines and demonstrates the levels of professionalism with which member services fulfil their purpose;
3. work towards external kitemarks/quality standards, e.g. [the matrix Standard](#), [Investors in People](#);
4. recognition that each university has its own strategic vision, plan and priorities, with services customised and delivered accordingly.

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Funding career guidance

[Careers Wales](#) had a total budget of £22.12m from Welsh Government in 2022/23, made up of £18.8m core revenue funding, £1.4m non-cash (depreciation) and £1.92m capital. The Welsh Government provided additional funding to deliver the Working Wales service, plus small allocations of revenue funding for projects delivered as part of their Covid-19 recovery plan in education. These include tailored work experience placements for young people at risk of disengaging and support to establish alumni communities in targeted schools.

Source

Careers Wales. <https://www.careerswales.com/en/>

Career guidance for school pupils

The Welsh Government is moving forward with an [ambitious programme of education reform](#), working collaboratively with schools and teachers to deliver on the national mission. More than two hundred pioneer schools across Wales have helped accelerate progress on the new curriculum, designing areas of learning and experience. In September 2022, a new curriculum was launched in Wales for learners aged 3-16. Initially rolling out in primary schools, the new curriculum will be extended to all learners up to year 11 by 2026. Within the curriculum, Careers and Work-Related Experiences (CWRE) is a mandatory cross-cutting theme – details can be found [here](#).

At present, responsibility for the provision of careers information, advice, guidance and education in Wales is shared between schools and Careers Wales, with each having defined roles and responsibilities. Schools provide careers information, careers education and initial advice, and Careers Wales provides an external careers guidance and curriculum support service, funded by the government and delivered by professionally qualified staff. Careers Wales seeks to provide leadership across Wales in relation to careers education, information, advice and guidance. In this context, it is working on a wide range of developments to improve and enhance the support ultimately offered to young people in Wales.

Professor Graham Donaldson's (2015) independent review of curriculum and assessment arrangements, in Wales, [Successful Futures](#), offers a vision of what successful young people leaving statutory education should look like. The Welsh Government is taking forward the recommendations in [Successful Futures](#), with a new curriculum being developed by teachers and practitioners through a network of Pioneer Schools, supported by stakeholders as part of an all-Wales partnership. The new curriculum will have more emphasis on equipping young people for life and at the heart of this curriculum there will be 4 purposes, one of which is that children and young people should develop as 'enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work'. The Welsh Government has invited Careers Wales to identify what role it will play in supporting schools to integrate careers education, work-related and enterprise activities, in line with ambitions set out in [Successful Futures](#).

In Wales, [Youth Engagement and Progression Framework](#) (YEPF) set out the Welsh Government's approach to developing support for young people who are at risk of or who have become NEET. This framework plays an important part in the delivery of the Programme for Government, implementing more systematic approaches to identifying these young people who need support and making sure they get the help they need to get them back on track. It aims to drive change through the whole system in Wales and sets out how local authorities, working with the Welsh Government and partner organisations such as Careers Wales and providers of education and training can put in place better systems to achieve this change.

The framework has six key elements to help deliver the outcomes:

- Identifying young people most at risk of disengagement
- Better brokerage and coordination of support
- Ensuring provision meets the needs of young people
- Strengthening employability skills and opportunities for employment
- Greater accountability for better outcomes for young people.
- Stronger tracking and transitions of young people

Underpinning the Framework is the requirement for collaboration between partners such as local authorities, schools & colleges, [Careers Wales](#) & Working Wales, post-16 education and training providers and the voluntary youth work sector. The framework aims to reduce the number of young people aged 11 to 18 who are not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET). The Framework, updated in September 2022, has been expanded to include the prevention of youth homelessness.

Careers Wales undertakes an annual 'Career Check' of pupils' aspirations and key findings feed into individual school plans.

In collaboration with Careers Wales, the [Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods](#) (WISERD) and the [Administrative Data Research Centre Wales](#) (ADR Wales) at Cardiff University are exploring the notion that receiving useful and timely careers support improves individuals' educational and employment experience by undertaking research into the effectiveness of labour market interventions in Wales. This partnership will help policymakers and educational researchers understand the learning landscape in Wales and the role of careers information, advice and guidance in supporting post-compulsory education.

Using various Welsh administrative educational datasets along with anonymised client information held by Careers Wales, the research analyses the take-up and impact of the services provided by Careers Wales and how they support post-compulsory education in Wales.

The research looks at how a pupil's journey through education is influenced by their social characteristics and previous educational attainment while analysing whether receiving careers guidance influences these outcomes favourably. This is the first time the administrative data gathered on the delivery of careers services in Wales is used to explore important issues about the educational journey and the career and training decisions learners make when leaving compulsory education. Data insight reports have been published.

Careers Wales has developed, piloted and rolled out a new national employer database called the Education Business Exchange. The database allows teachers to search for employers, by sector or region, who are prepared to support the curriculum with activities including:

- Industry/site visits
- Employer presentations, workshops and/or carousel/insight days
- Careers fairs
- Mock interviews
- Work placements

Teachers in all secondary schools have been trained to use the database and in 2021 a revised and updated model was launched on the Careers Wales website.

Careers Wales is also involved in national, regional and local initiatives such as:

1. [Youth Engagement and Progression Framework](#);
2. [Child Poverty Strategy for Wales](#);
3. [STEM \(Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths\)](#);
4. [Careers and the World of Work \(CWW\) Curriculum](#);

Importance of careers guidance in schools

Careers guidance as a useful labour market intervention entails that careers-related services should be widely accessible, particularly to those who are in the greatest need, adequate and provided at the key transition points in an individual's educational and employment journey (Cedefop, 2008). Receiving appropriate careers support within schools sets the scene for achieving the long-term goal of reducing the number of young people who fall outside of the education, training or employment system and from becoming 'NEETS' by informing individuals from their first transition point about various educational and vocational possibilities for success in the labour market. Offering focused careers services to students who are in their final years of school or college has been deemed a useful way of influencing the aspirations of learners positively (Briggs et al. 2012).

Estyn (2017) published a thematic report on schools. This was a direct request for advice from the Welsh Government in the Minister's annual remit letter to Estyn for 2016-17. The report examines the extent and effectiveness of secondary schools' delivery of the statutory 'Careers and the world of work' (CWoW) framework. It considers the extent to which secondary schools' provision and leadership in this area have changed since Estyn's previous report on CWoW, [Informed Decisions](#) (October 2012). The report draws on evidence from 156 secondary school inspections since October 2012 and from a survey of 35 secondary schools (see section on [Quality assurance](#))

Additionally, literature about post-compulsory education highlights that many young people leaving compulsory education make educational and vocational choices which they never considered right for them due to certain constraints (Davies & Elias, 2003), and there are known disparities in access to careers services for pupils from the outset based on their social characteristics, particularly educational attainment, gender and ethnicity.

The provision of careers guidance in Welsh schools

An [independent research study](#) (Davies and Yunus, 2017) investigated whether pupils within schools in Wales receive careers-related services and if the services are accessible to those pupils who are most in need. The study used the data held in the Welsh National Pupil Database (NPD) for academic years 10 and 11 between 2012-2015 and client information held by Careers Wales (CW). The NPD contains information on the characteristics of children in schools and their educational progress. Merging the two datasets allowed us to examine the incidence and nature of careers guidance received by children and how their characteristics effect the likelihood of receiving career-related services, highlighting factors associated with the probability of receiving careers advice within schools. The study draws several interesting conclusions (2017: 21-22):

Analysis of administrative data reveals that in Wales approximately 85% of pupils received some form of contact with Careers Wales during Year 10, falling to just over half during Year 11. The final year of compulsory education may therefore not provide a 'complete' picture as to who receives careers guidance. In terms of equality of access to careers guidance, analysis demonstrates that whilst the provision of careers guidance in Welsh schools by Careers Wales is not gendered, certain minority ethnic groups are less likely to benefit from these services. Thirdly, the analysis confirms empirically that Careers Wales is fulfilling its remit of providing increased levels of support to those with Special Educational Needs. Finally, in terms of supporting those pupils with the greatest needs, the research demonstrates that pupils who are eligible for free school meals (FSM), have lower levels of academic attainment and higher levels of absenteeism are each more likely to receive support from Careers Wales.

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Guidance for VET participants

The Welsh Government's flagship apprenticeships programme will deliver 125,000 all-age apprenticeships during the current term of government supported by £366m funding between 2022-2025. In 2019, a new programme of degree apprenticeships was backed by £20m of investment over three years (Welsh Government, 2022). Apprenticeship vacancies in Wales are advertised through the Business Wales website Apprenticeship Matching Service which enables individuals to search for apprenticeship vacancies. VET participants have open access to Careers Wales and/or Working Wales if they require careers support. Careers services in further education colleges, supported by Careers Wales, also provide career guidance both in person and online.

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Guidance for higher education students

Universities in Wales are largely autonomous institutions that are most able to devise and deliver curriculums as they choose. Legislation relating to higher education, therefore, is limited largely to the establishment and governance of higher education institutions and the provision of financial resources to institutions and students. As autonomous institutions, [higher education institutions \(HEIs\)](#) are responsible for organising their provision of career guidance and counselling. There are currently nine universities in Wales (including the Open University in Wales). These are a mixture of older universities established by the Royal Charter and more modern universities that were established as higher education corporations. The [Education Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices - UK/Wales](#)

[Reform Act 1988](#) (Part II) and the [Further and Higher Education Act 1992](#) (Part II) make provisions for the establishment and constitution of higher education institutions (Law Wales, 2016).

Higher education in Wales may also be provided in further education colleges and, in limited circumstances, in schools. Although courses may be offered in several different educational institutions, degrees and other recognised awards may only be awarded by institutions specifically authorised to do so.

In Wales, higher education institutions are financed through a combination of Welsh Government funding (currently provided via the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales), student fees and income in the form of sponsors, donors and project partners etc.

Institutions that wish to receive funding from the [Higher Education Funding Council for Wales](#) (HEFCW) have to comply with the terms and conditions imposed on the funding. These conditions include a limit on the number of fees that can be charged to certain students and a requirement for the institution to create a plan for how the governing body will promote equality of opportunity and attract increased applications from groups under-represented in higher education. Failure by institutions to comply with these conditions can result in a reduction or withdrawal of funding (further information can be found in: [aw Wales, 2016](#)).

In 2022, the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act was laid before the Senedd and seeks to establish the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER). The commission will have responsibility for strategy, funding and oversight for the following sectors:-

- Further education, including colleges and school sixth forms
- Higher education, including research and innovation
- Adult education and adult community learning
- Apprenticeships and training

Further information can be found [here](#).

HEIs in Wales must also act in accordance with the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education \(the Quality Code\)](#), issued by the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\)](#). The UK Quality Code for Higher Education provides guidance and 'indicators of sound practice' in careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) for HEIs. It also stipulates that HEIs must 'have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential'. Further information can be found [here](#).

The [Quality Enhancement Review \(QER\)](#) is a method by which the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) reviews Welsh higher education providers, as part of the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales. This provides quality assurance and supports quality enhancement, assuring governing bodies, students and the wider public that providers meet the requirements of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW). QER assesses providers against agreed baseline regulatory requirements and [European Standards and Guidelines](#). It provides a distinctive approach to institutional review, developed to address the particular context of the Welsh higher education sector. Higher education careers services actively contribute to the review process with a specific thematic approach to careers and employability support.

There are no statutory requirements relating to the provision of careers advice in higher education; the provision of careers advice and guidance for students is a matter for individual higher education institutions (HEIs) to determine. However, all HEIs have their own careers service, staffed by appropriately trained professionals.

All providers of higher education have their own careers service, staffed by appropriately trained professionals. Careers services offer a wide range of support for students including:

1. careers advice, including graduate placements, careers fairs and further study opportunities;
2. CV workshops;
3. networking / mentoring opportunities;
4. coaching on interview techniques;
5. support with job applications and employability skills.

A significant number of university degree courses now include employability skills, and some include compulsory careers sessions. Many institutions also help students to develop the 'soft skills' that employers seek (including good communication, acting as a team player, creative/critical thinking, and problem-solving) through extra-curricular initiatives.

In many cases, students can still access their university careers service up to three years after graduation. Some universities allow lifelong assessment. Guidance activities offered can be categorised as:

1. core careers services - over 90% of FE institutions offer careers services;
2. value-added service - run by over half of careers services and growing areas of activity as services diversify and careers and employability agenda continue to increase;
3. bespoke activities - offered by smaller numbers of services, often responding to particular local needs and contexts, for example, employability partnerships with local businesses and/or innovation projects commissioned by a wide variety of agencies, including government departments.

There is significant diversity in delivery methods, e.g. skype appointments, and online seminars. Careers Advisers in Welsh universities are often referred to as Careers Consultants

A [Unistats](#) website (England and Wales only) allows prospective HE students to better compare not only courses and institutions, but the outcomes students achieve. It provides official data for undergraduate courses on each university and college's satisfaction scores in a National Student Survey, jobs and salaries after study and other key information for prospective students.

The [Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services](#) (AGCAS) is the UK-wide professional body for careers and employability professionals working with higher education students and graduates and prospective entrants to higher education. AGCAS provides support and training for professionals in the sector, with the aim of promoting and ensuring excellence in service delivery. AGCAS includes over 160 HE careers services as members, representing approx. 3,200 staff. According to AGCAS, the process includes:

1. a [Code of Ethics](#) which helps members maintain the highest professional standards. The Code of Ethics identifies the professional attitudes and behaviours expected of members and provides guidance to help members recognise and develop these;
2. the [Membership Quality Standard](#) which outlines and demonstrates the levels of professionalism with which member services fulfil their purpose;
3. work towards external kitemarks/quality standards, e.g. [the matrix Standard](#), [Investors in People](#);
4. recognition that each university has its own strategic vision, plan and priorities, with services customised and delivered accordingly.

The [Higher Education Career Services Unit](#) (HECSU) is an independent research charity specialising in higher education and graduate employment. This UK-wide organisation supports careers advisory services as they guide students and graduates through university and into the labour market. Its website [Prospects](#) provides careers information and services to students, graduates, university careers services, employers and others.

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Guidance for adult learners

Courses and subjects available at adult or community centres are often aimed at people who have not studied for some time, and they can benefit adults who need to return to learning after a break. There will often be courses at very basic levels and opportunities that prepare learners for joining more challenging courses. Some adult learning centres also run 'Returning to learning' courses to help with study skills and getting back into the swing of learning. Often access support and courses in reading and maths are available at adult and community centres. Courses often run in the evenings and centres are often based out in the community. Centres offer formal courses such as GCSEs (GCSE is the qualification taken by 15 and 16 year olds to mark their graduation from the Key Stage 4 phase of secondary education in England, Northern Ireland and Wales). Computer diplomas alongside courses linked to hobbies and interests. Individuals can find courses and clubs on topics such as art, archaeology, embroidery and Arabic (Welsh Government, n.d.).

Career guidance for adult learners is available in local communities at community hubs, libraries, Job Centres, high street careers centres and online via careerswales.com. The [Working Wales](https://workingwales.gov.wales/) service ensures that Careers Wales works in partnership with a wide range of local and national partners, including the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Communities for Work, Business Wales, Local Authorities and the Voluntary sector. As part of careers guidance, individuals will be supported in making successful decisions and moving forward in their career journey. (See [Access to guidance](#))

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Guidance for young people at risk

The Office for National Statistics publishes [annual figures on NEET trends](#) across Wales. [Working Wales](https://workingwales.gov.wales/) aims to support vulnerable young people (and adults) at risk. Welsh Government have launched the Stronger, fairer, greener Wales: A Plan for Employability and Skills (see Introduction).

The responsibility for young people who are at risk of or who are NEET up to the age of 24 is set out in the [Youth Engagement and Progression Framework](#) guidance from Welsh Government. The Youth Engagement and Progression Action Plan details how the Positive Pathways Group supports young people and bases its actions around the Welsh Government's [Youth Engagement and Progression Framework](#)'s six building blocks:

1. early identification of young people at risk of disengagement;
2. brokerage of co-ordination and support;
3. comprehensive tracking of young people through the system;
4. provision and progression aligned with the needs of young people;
5. progression into employment and employment opportunities;
6. accountability for continuous improvement and stronger collaboration.

Jobs Growth Wales+ is a Welsh Government programme included in the [Young Person's Guarantee](#). It is part-funded by the European Social Fund. The Youth Engagement and Progression Framework and 5-tier model is commonly used across Wales by a wider range of agencies working with young people to assess needs. The [Tier System](#) has been created to support professionals and young people alike, to easily access appropriate provision suited to their needs. This tiered approach is widely used throughout Wales and is classed as an example of good practice. A Mapping tool indicates the provision offered in Torfaen and includes information on the eligibility criteria and contact details. The directory will be updated annually to reflect changes in service provision.

In June 2022 REACT + was launched to support 18+ adults who are unemployed for up to 12 months or facing redundancy. The new programme was also extended to include young people aged 18-24 NEET, prisoners leaving the secure estate as well as forced migrants. The programme is part of the WG Young person's guarantee and provides a package of support that helps people gain new skills, overcome obstacles and improve their chances of returning to work in the shortest time possible. This support is tailored to the individual's situation and can include:

- Up to £1,500 to help get the relevant skills they need - Vocational Training Grant
- Up to £4,500 to help cover childcare/caring costs when training.
- Up to £500 of personal development support to help remove barriers to employment - Personal Development Support.
- Mentoring and work experience
- Up to £300 of extra support towards additional costs when training, including travel and accommodation.
- Employers can also access ReAct+ support to help with the cost of wages and job-related training for an eligible new recruit.

The [Support Finder](#) is managed by Surrey Independent Living Charity (SILC). Its tool allows customers to search for programmes that can help improve their skills and access support to help them address barriers and move forward.

Jobs Growth Wales + (JGW+) Is a training and development programme for 16 - 18-year-olds, run within Working Wales, that gives them the opportunity to develop their employability skills and gain some experience. There are 3 strands available:

- JGW + Engagement
- JGW+ Advancement
- JGW+ Employment

The [Communities for Work Plus](#) (CFW+) programme, provides intensive mentoring and support to both engage participants and address the complex barriers to employment experienced by those furthest from the labour market.

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Guidance for persons with disabilities

Careers Wales provides an impartial and free careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) service (See Access to guidance). Careers Wales continues to provide CIAG support to young people and their families and support local authorities in implementing the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (ALNET) that created a single legislative system for supporting children and young people aged between 0 – 25 years who have additional learning needs. (ALN).

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