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**Gweinidog yr Economi**  
**Minister for Economy**



**Llywodraeth Cymru**  
**Welsh Government**

Paul Davies MS  
Chair  
Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

23 November 2023

Dear Paul,

Thank you for your letter of 26 October.

I am grateful to the Committee for its work on reviewing the impact of cost-of-living pressures on young people and their future education, employment and training opportunities.

Indeed, this issue has also been identified in the Young Person's Guarantee (YPG) – National Conversation work and via sessions held with the YPG-Young Person's Advisory Board. The Welsh Government will continue to do everything within its means to minimise its impact on the young people of Wales.

I attach at Annex A detailed responses to the specific issues the Committee has identified.

Yours sincerely,

**Vaughan Gething AS/MS**  
**Gweinidog yr Economi**  
**Minister for Economy**

Jeremy Miles MS, Minister for Education and Welsh Language  
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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

## Annex A

### **Senedd Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee: Cost of living pressures and the Young Person's Guarantee**

#### **More support for upfront costs**

**Recommendation 1: Careers Wales recommended that more needs to be done to address the problem of up-front costs acting as a disincentive to young people accessing employment and training opportunities. The Committee would welcome a Ministerial response on what more Welsh Government can do to address this particular issue of meeting up-front costs.**

We are conscious that despite our programmes providing a range of financial support to cover things like travel, food and care costs, as well as increasing the training allowance for Jobs Growth Wales+ (JGW+) (up to £60 - pro rata if a young person attends for less than 30 hours per week) and increasing the Education Maintenance Allowance, the availability of disposable income remains an issue. Indeed, this issue has also been identified in the Young Person's Guarantee (YPG) – National Conversation work and via sessions held with the YPG-Young Person's Advisory Board.

We will continue to explore all the levers available to us, whilst also mindful that as stated in [Managing Welsh Public Money](#) A4.7.4 'Payments in advance should be exceptional, and should only be considered if a good value for money case can be made for them (i.e. that "need" can be demonstrated).

Indeed, the Communities for Work+ can provide funding to programme participants for essential expenditure such as travel costs when attending training, work experience or during the first few weeks of employment. Funding can also be provided for childcare, work clothing and other essential costs to support the individual into employment or training. This funding can be paid in advance but individuals need to provide receipts for expenditure incurred or repayment will be sought.

In terms of wider transport matters, the YPG-Young Person's Advisory Board held a session on 1 November that included a discussion with a representative from Transport for Wales (TfW). One of the issues emerging from the discussion was that young people and their guardians may not be fully aware of the range of concessionary travel available under both TfW and National Rail – as well as their own education institutions. TfW have agreed to explore how to increase awareness and will work with partners including the YPG team to address this. The session also highlighted, amongst other things, the importance of accessibility, safety, availability, frequency, capacity and technology support. TfW will continue to actively engage young people on their lived experiences as work continues on three major metro projects and legislation via the Bus Bill.

## **Evaluating the Young Person's Guarantee (YPG) – better data**

**Recommendation 2: Collaboration on data-sharing is vital to evaluate the success of the Young Person's Guarantee (YPG), and the Committee would welcome more information on how Welsh Government is addressing this, and ensuring that data is shared effectively across the partners to inform future delivery of the YPG.**

The YPG is currently subject to an ongoing evaluation process that is due to formally report by the end of next year. The evaluation is more complex than most as the YPG is a collection of programmes and many of those programmes are delivered by partners from a range of different settings e.g. School sixth forms, FE Colleges, Universities, Local Authorities, Careers Wales and Working Wales and private organisations, amongst others.

One of the main measurements of the progress of the YPG is the annual Statistical First Release (SFR) figures for 'Young people not in education, employment or training in Wales'. We have a National Indicator that 'at least 90% of 16-24 year olds will be in education, employment, or training by 2050'.

The [latest release](#) of provisional estimates show that 85.8% of 16-24 year olds were in education, employment or training in 2022, up from 83.7% in 2021.

As noted in the Committee meeting, there are a range of data agreements in place between Careers Wales and schools, FE colleges, LAs and training providers, culminating in monthly regional level Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF) Five Tier (tiers identifying education, employment or training status of 16-19 year olds) Model reports.

The data set for those over 18 and outside those settings is harder to piece together due to the range of destinations and settings available to them, including support from the Department for Work and Pensions who Careers Wales are establishing data sharing agreements.

The annex of the YPG Annual Report set out the [Statistical outputs and datasets relevant to Young Person's Guarantee](#).

The 2022 Plan for Employability and Skills confirms we are examining the delivery of a new single operating model that will include ReAct+, CfW+ and JGW+ and their data collection and sharing elements.

## **Partnership between Careers Wales and training providers**

**Recommendation 3: NTFW said that, with regard to the provision of accurate and impartial advice on the range of support and programmes available under the YGP umbrella, the partnership between Careers Wales and training providers needs to be “re-strengthened”. The Committee would welcome you outlining what action you will take to help achieve this.**

Careers Wales and our training providers are key members of our main stakeholder boards – both are members of the YPG Stakeholder Advisory Group and the JGW+

Operational Board and these provide a platform to reflect on partnership working and best practice. Separately providers also hold regular meetings with Careers Wales colleagues to help address any issues that may arise between Board meetings. Nominated regional senior manager from Careers Wales are linked to each of the Training Providers and they meet monthly as a minimum to discuss any emerging issues, engagement, communications etc. Training providers are also invited to attend their local careers centres regularly to meet customers and share knowledge with careers staff and to attend events and Jobs Fairs organised by the Working Wales teams.

Both are also members of the regional YEPF/Youth Services meetings.

In addition, the Support Finder is a website resource available on the Careers Wales website that allows customers and partners to search for appropriate programmes across Wales that provide employability and skills support. It is accessible from the Working Wales site (which sits on the Career Wales website).

In FE Colleges, Careers Wales are actively present at Enterprise and Employment Bureau events and in July the YPG team organised a second Knowledge Sharing Event between Bureau staff across Wales and Careers Wales, Inspiring Skills and CfW+, JGW+ and ReAct+ leads. A network has now been established to continue the knowledge sharing on a formal and informal basis.

### **The Apprenticeship target and retention and completion rates**

**Recommendation 4: The Committee would welcome more information on what assessment has been made of employers who have stopped offering apprenticeships, and the reasons for that, including the issues raised by Careers Wales around supervision and productivity, and what actions are being taken to address those barriers for employers.**

We are developing new statistical methods to add to our understanding of the reasons behind the drop-in success rates. This method would allow us to analyse apprenticeship incomes and more directly examine the link between income and success rates for apprentices. The method is highly experimental, but if it produces results in the near future, we will share the evidence with the committee.

In an addition to this we have been examining using an apprentice's history of free school meal eligibility as an indicator of deprivation, and the link between this and success rates. That work will be published in an article this month (November): Using free school meal history as an indicator of deprivation for apprenticeship and adult learning outcomes.

The apprenticeship programme is augmented by a number of initiatives which support and encourage the take up of apprenticeships, for example, in 2023-24 we have invested £1m for Health and Wellbeing support. Improving the Health and Wellbeing of both staff and learners supports quality delivery and is expected to help increase apprenticeship completion rates. This funding enables learners, staff and organisations to access the required support to deliver successful outcomes.

We are committed to removing barriers to getting an apprenticeship and whilst we have made significant progress to improving access to apprenticeships for disabled learners we need to do more. In Wales there remains too many employers with negative attitudes to employing disabled people and reports of a lack of support for companies considering the employment of persons with disabilities. For disabled apprentices. In financial year 2023/24 we provided £0.4m via the Employer Incentive Scheme to incentivise employers to take on apprentices with disabilities.

There is anecdotal evidence that the requirement for apprentices to undertake Essential Skills Qualifications (ESQs) are hindering achievement, apprentices are predominately required to take essential skills in literacy and numeracy where they don't already have alternative qualifications, such as GCSEs. We have therefore commissioned Estyn to carry out a thematic review of ESQs undertaken by apprentices to understand, amongst other aspects, the benefits of ESQs and their impact on apprentices.

The national apprentice minimum wage rate is sometimes a disincentive. Careers Wales has examples where people are giving up apprenticeships because they can get a job paying twice the apprenticeship minimum wage. A year one apprentice or those under 19 get the Apprentice National Minimum Wage of £5.28; they can earn double that in a non-apprenticeship job role. Apprenticeships therefore can be a hard sell to keep people engaged as people can often earn more in a part-time job than a full-time job.

Low salaries impact on transport costs, we know that jobs with low wages are less attractive when a sizable chunk of the cost are absorbed by travel expenses. Apprentices on the Apprentice National Minimum Wage rate are particularly vulnerable.

We recently responded to the Low Pay Commission on the future of the Apprentice Rate of the National Minimum Wage (NMW). The Welsh Government believes that the Apprentice Rate should be increased and aligned to the current National Minimum Wage 21-22 rate to help incentivise 16–19-year-olds to start an apprenticeship and influence young people when choosing education and employment options. This is particularly important given the pressures arising from the cost-of-living crisis and inflationary pressures.

A higher rate for apprentices would enhance the profile of 'earn while you learn' training opportunities and help apprentices in meeting living costs. In particular, a higher rate would build parity with young learners in full-time education and address child benefit disparity, where families lose child benefit for children who take up apprenticeships. Any perceived productivity differences between younger and older workers needs to be balanced against the longer-term value of the apprenticeship to both the employer and the apprentice.

Furthermore, we are continually working with providers to understand what additional support can be provided to ensure people complete their training. This may include adapting delivery mechanisms so that people achieve sooner or certain elements of the programme are delivered upfront or later to reduce pressure on individuals.

Regarding the social care sector, through the Social Care Fair Work Forum trade unions, employers and the Welsh Government continue to work in social partnership on what steps can be taken to improve terms and conditions for social care workers, with improved opportunities for career progression. This includes the development of a draft Pay and Progression Framework for the social care sector that aims to provide more consistent pay, progression and development opportunities by setting out broad bands of roles within social care, aligned with skills, learning and pay levels. We have shown our commitment to improving pay by investing a further £70 million this financial year to ensure all social care workers continue to get paid at least the Real Living Wage.

We will continue to raise awareness of the programme by promoting the benefits to both employers and learners via a range of marketing and communications activity throughout the year. Apprenticeship Week and the Apprenticeship Awards Cymru provide us with further opportunities to raise the profile of the apprenticeship and promote the key benefits of becoming (and recruiting) an apprentice, showing parity of esteem.

### **Changes to frameworks and essential skills requirements**

**Recommendation 5: The Committee would welcome more information on how concerns highlighted around the design and approval process for apprenticeship frameworks, the responsiveness of the process and the involvement of employers in that process, are being addressed.**

All apprentices in Wales must follow a Welsh Apprenticeship Framework, a framework sets out a programme of learning, bringing together different qualifications into a grouped offer.

Apprenticeship framework content is shaped and refined by employers and other relevant stakeholders. Apprenticeship frameworks are cyclically reviewed to ensure that the content remains relevant to employers, against often changing industry needs. This is particularly the case for technical subjects such as digital and engineering where industry standards are constantly evolving. Framework reviews are completed by commissioned experts and advisory steering groups; the latter include industry and/or sector bodies, Qualifications Wales, training providers and other relevant stakeholders. The steering group oversees the development of the apprenticeship framework including a public consultation with employers to ensure their needs are met. The steering group will also consider the need for entry requirements. Before any new and revised frameworks are published, they are verified as complying to statutory regulations under the Specification of Apprenticeships Standards in Wales. We are working with Qualifications Wales and other stakeholders to refine the process to make apprenticeship development and approval more efficient.

All qualifications in frameworks are regulated by Qualifications Wales and the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales. Qualifications Wales also undertake sector reviews aimed at ensuring qualifications continue to meet industry needs. The development of new qualifications is industry-led, in the instance of the Construction

and Build Environment review, sector representatives contributed to the development of the new qualifications.

CITB has recently surveyed employers to review the impact of these new arrangements on the sector. The outcome of this survey will be taken forward by CITB with Qualifications Wales and other stakeholders to ensure we maintain high levels of quality and competence training that benefits construction employers throughout Wales.

### **Apprenticeships for plant operatives**

**Recommendation 6: The Committee has been made aware that a leading civil engineering company in Wales is seeking a revaluation of the Level 3 Apprenticeship Framework given the practical challenges they highlight, and for flexibility in meeting the 51% working time rule in Wales. The Committee would welcome a response from the Minister on these specific points.**

The Welsh Government funds both a level 2 and level 3 apprenticeship frameworks in Construction Civil Engineering Plant Operations, consisting of a national vocational qualification and technical certificate in Plant Operations at level 2 and new occupational qualifications at level 3. Following the Qualification Wales sector review of Construction and Built Environment qualifications, which involved broad engagement and consultation with stakeholders and employers, new qualifications and delivery model was introduced. Under this new model, certain skills and competences are now only available within the level 3 qualification, namely 180- and 360-degree diggers, telescopic handlers or forward tipping dumpers. We are working with stakeholders to find a solution to the issue identified by Jones Bros that meets sector needs.

In terms of apprenticeship eligibility, the time spent working in Wales or England determines whether an English or Welsh apprenticeship is followed. Where an employee works for more than 51% of their apprenticeship in Wales, an employee would need to follow a Welsh apprenticeship, similar rules apply in England. The rules were introduced on the back of the apprenticeship levy, where the UK Government's voucher-based system for accessing apprenticeship provision in England prevented Welsh (and Scottish) based learners accessing England based provision. Prior to this change, reciprocal arrangements existed with the UK Government, whereby cross-border learners were funded by government at their nearest or most appropriate learning provider, with an acceptance from both governments that learners may move either way across the border. Officials have been unable to re-introduce similar arrangements since.

## **Parity of esteem for vocational qualifications and progression pathways**

**Recommendation 7: Careers Wales accept that more needs to be done to demonstrate, to parents in particular, that it is possible to progress between the apprenticeship levels for a full career pathway, including up to degree apprenticeship level. These concerns are not new, but the Minister's views on how to proactively address this barrier would be welcomed.**

We have made a commitment to promote parity of esteem between vocational and academic education routes. We welcome the report from the Vocational Qualifications Review which presented 33 recommendations relating to the future of vocational qualifications. These recommendations cover matters such as the principles and purpose of vocational qualifications and the range and availability of such qualifications through the medium of Welsh and bilingually.

We acknowledge that there is a need to look into how we synergise education, skills and economic policies and strategies across the Welsh Government.

We are in favour of a pragmatic approach to vocational qualifications that meets Wales's needs, respects learner choice and ensures the portability and recognition outside Wales. Starting from scratch or redesigning all existing qualifications would be a very lengthy and expensive process. However, there is added value in adopting a made-for-Wales approach, such as for new qualifications or when qualifications are reviewed to ensure that they remain relevant.

We are working closely with Qualifications Wales to understand the implications of qualification reform and their impact on the market in Wales.

There already exist strong routes between many apprenticeship levels. Following the pilot phase of the implementation of the degree apprenticeship programme, it was found that one in three degree apprentices reported they had previously undertaken an apprenticeship. This number rose to 55 per cent when evaluating the engineering and advanced manufacturing framework. Half of these students carried out their learning with the same employer. This suggests that progression through the levels is becoming established within this framework in particular.

Notwithstanding this, it is recognised that more needs to be done. With this in mind officials are looking to create clearer education and career pathways into higher / degree apprenticeships. Working with industry and stakeholders a number of challenges have been identified for those students who are looking to enter into key priority sectors, such as construction and new emerging skills in the advanced engineering and digital sectors. By working in partnership with the industries of the future, the aim is to create clear pathways that will allow apprentices to progress from level 2 to level 6.

In October 2023, Industry Wales was commissioned to create an apprenticeship pathway for Year 13 School / FE Leavers which leads to a Level 4 Applied Technologies Apprenticeship geared to the needs of the Engineering and Manufacturing sector. This route will allow students, who have good STEM A Levels or BTEC qualifications, to progress directly to a level 4 Higher Apprenticeship. This route will also include level 2 Performing Engineering Operations which is a pre-

requisite for students to work in Industry. Once the level 4 is achieved students will then have the choice to continue in employment or progress seamlessly through to a degree apprenticeship without having to duplicate areas of learning.

This model will be replicated for other key growth sectors by engaging closely and regularly with employers to assess which levels within specific frameworks will be conducive to meaningful progression for both individuals, businesses and public sector organisations. These pathways will be promoted in conjunction with Careers Wales, the Regional Consortia and Welsh Government STEM enrichment programmes such as Engineering Education Scheme Wales and Technocamps to ensure students and their parents and carers understand that these qualifications will lead to highly skilled, highly paid jobs that meet the needs of Industry 4.0.

### **Addressing barriers relating to benefit payments**

**Recommendation 8: The Committee would welcome a response from the Minister on what more can be done by both Welsh Government and the Department for Work and Pensions to address barriers to the take-up of programmes offered under the Young Persons Guarantee due to concerns about the impact on household benefit payments.**

Welsh Government officials have worked closely with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) colleagues during the JGW+ programme development and continue to do so to ensure young people who are in receipt of benefits can still access the programme. Officials have worked with DWP to develop systems in order to accurately share information about how many hours young people are engaged on the programme and their linked training allowance. This is then used by DWP to calculate how much (if any) benefits the young person will then be entitled to.

We maintain close working relationships with DWP officials. They attend the quarterly JGW+ Operational Board meetings. Officials also have regular meetings with their DWP counterparts outside of these meetings to share information and address any issues as they may arise.

In addition to working with the DWP, officials have worked with HMRC to ensure JGW+ is on the list of recognised courses that can be accessed by young people without it impacting on the family's ability to claim Child Benefit where applicable. Officials have also worked with HMRC to ensure young people do not pay tax on the training allowance they receive under the programme.

## **Regional and rural-urban disparities**

**Recommendation 9: The Committee would welcome a Ministerial response on the work being done to promote greater awareness both of the opportunities to continue learning in Welsh and the high demand from employers for bilingual employees.**

The Jobs Growth Wales+ programme recognises the importance of the Welsh Language and the programme specification impressed upon contractors the importance of parity between Welsh and English provision.

During the first few months of operation of the programme it became clear that contractors required additional funding to support Welsh Language provision so the programme was amended to support this. Annex 8 of our programme specification contains the full information on this: [jobs-growth-wales-plus-programme-specification-version-1-3.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

The number of posts which require Welsh language skills is increasing, particularly in the public sector and in the health and social care sectors. The success of our [Cymraeg 2050 strategy](#) is also dependent on an increased number of Welsh language practitioners to support the early years and statutory education period.

The role of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol has been expanded to provide targeted support for the further education and apprenticeship sectors. The Coleg's ambitious Further Education and Apprenticeship Welsh-medium [Action Plan](#) sets out the actions needed to increase capacity in these sectors and we are investing additional funding to support delivery in priority areas. Work with the Coleg is continuing to identify sectors where new frameworks or additional capacity for Welsh-medium and bilingual apprenticeships should be developed. Additionally, to encourage uptake of Welsh-medium and bilingual apprenticeships we have recently introduced an innovative funding model which applies an uplift for provision which is delivered bilingually.

We are investing additional funding to support Welsh language delivery in the apprenticeships sector. Apprenticeship providers and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol are working collaboratively to increase capacity in the sector and this work will need to continue if we are to create more opportunities for young people to learn and train through Welsh. The Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER) will also have specific duties in relation to the Welsh language and will need to work effectively with providers and the Coleg so that more young people can learn through the medium of Welsh and develop their Welsh language skills.

Moreover, Careers Wales facilitate a 'Welsh in the Workplace', national, digital careers fair for Welsh medium secondary schools involving employers who are actively seeking bilingual employees annually. In 2024 it intends to make the digital content from the event available as a digital resource for schools.

It supports bespoke education activity in Welsh medium schools to support employer engagement days to promote the value of Welsh in the workplace. It also recently ran a social media campaign to recruit Welsh speaking employers.

Every school in Wales is offered a 'Bilingual skills in the workplace' group session for all KS3 learners to promote the use of the Welsh language and the demands within the workforce.

There is also a 'Learn Welsh' section on the Careers Wales website which covers courses, benefits of learning the language, Welsh in the workplace and support available for employers.

**Recommendation 10: The Committee would welcome the Minister's response on the prioritisation of uplift funding to address the specific regional and rural/urban disparities it has highlighted in access to education, training and employment opportunities across Wales.**

Part of the rationale Jobs Growth Wales+ has always been that regardless of circumstances, including rurality, the programme should be accessible for all eligible young people. We deliberately made the process non-competitive so that contractors would not 'cherry pick' the biggest/most lucrative areas leaving some areas lacking provision. Funding is allocated on a regional 'lot' basis depending on population size.

Officials also made sure that at the start of the programme, where more than one provider covered a regional 'lot' they worked together to create collaboration agreements to make sure all areas received equal coverage of provision.

We have robust contract management procedures in place to make sure we can identify issues early and take steps to ensure they are addressed.

Moreover, Communities for Work+ is delivered across all 22 local authority areas, covering both urban and rural communities. It provides intensive employment support and training to those people most disadvantaged in the labour market. Funding allocations are determined using employment and wider deprivation data, including access to services, health and education, taken from the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation.

### **Consistent careers advice from primary level**

**Recommendation 11: The Committee recommends that Welsh Government provide clear direction to ensure that colleges and schools are working together to help learners progress into employment, including through a service level agreement (SLA) on information sharing and exchange between Further Education and schools, with Careers Wales acting as an 'honest broker' in this regard. The Committee recommends this requirement for an SLA on information sharing and exchange is included in Welsh Government remit letters for Careers Wales and the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research.**

We will work with partners, including Careers Wales, Colegau Cymru and the incoming Commission for Tertiary Education and Research to examine how some of the good practice (as mentioned in the Committee meeting) can be mainstreamed.

This will also be informed by pilots that the North Wales Regional Skills Partnership is overseeing. The Ynys Mon Careers pathways Pilot was formed in May 2023 and is a collaboration between Anglesey Secondary Schools, the local authority Education

department, Careers Wales, Grwp Llandrillo Menai and the North Wales Regional Skills Partnership. The main aim of the pilot is to ensure that young people in Anglesey are aware of the different careers paths that are available in the region and ensuring that all organisations are working in a more co-ordinated, smarter way to ensure that learners are progressed into training or employment. Activities include labour market intelligence (LMI) sessions for teachers on career pathways; ensuring that the college and schools work collaboratively on presenting information, advice and guidance to young people on all routes available to them, including apprenticeships.

The Wrexham Raising Aspiration Group has ensured an SLA between schools, Coleg Cambria and Careers Wales to share data on learners to ensure their progression on their pathway from school and into further education. The aim of this group is to increase participation in education, training and employment and raise perceptions, aspirations and confidence in the opportunities available in Wrexham and beyond.

We will also explore how Employment and Enterprise Bureaus might expand their collaboration with schools which as to date included: participation of school pupils at Careers/Job Fairs/days; Sector conferences; joint learning/curriculum projects; CV workshops; mock interview sessions and entrepreneurship awareness sessions.

In one college, each curriculum area has its own employability and entrepreneurship steering group. This steering group consists of schools, industry specialists and bridges education to the world of work. Enabling staff to create collaborative partnership opportunities for learners.

In schools, Careers and Work-Related Experiences are part of the curriculum from 3-16 and Careers Wales helps schools ensure primary and secondary learners receive appropriate information and support. The Welsh Government is currently developing guidance on 14-16 learning in secondary schools which includes a focus on how young people can develop a sense of their own employment, education or training aspirations through personal reflection and careers support and prepare confidently to move to their next steps. There are some strong examples of good practice across Wales of employer, college and school relationships and, in line with the Hefin David MS review and Vocational Qualifications review recommendations, we will look to share these and support these networks as we move forward.

Careers Wales also offer schools access and support to utilise the Education Business Exchange (EBE) online portal which schools can use to search for employers by sector and region to support Careers and Work Related Experience activity in their curriculum. However, while EBE is used internally as a resource by business engagement advisors in Careers Wales, usage by schools since the pandemic has been very limited with schools preferring to engage with careers advisors linked to the school directly for support with employer engagement activity utilising the 'brokerage' role that they offer.

Without significant additional resource it would not be viable for Careers Wales to offer access to the EBE to primary schools. They are not sufficiently resourced to

engage with primary schools to support them and employers to make effective use of the database.

For primary schools Careers Wales offer an annual digital 'Career Discovery Weeks' for primary schools and secondary schools. It also offers access to an extensive library of 1,000+ employer videos – where employers talk about their careers, that can be accessed by young people, teachers and parents HWB. More recently, these have been turned into areas of learning resource packages for teachers linked to the new curriculum.

In terms of the delivery of enterprise education, Big Ideas Wales provides support at primary schools through the Enterprise Troopers, at secondary schools through Role Model workshops and through to our colleges and universities where staff are supported to embed in their teaching through a dedicated Enterprise Champion in each of our institutions.

### **Awareness of the Employment and Enterprise Bureaus**

**Recommendation 12: The Committee would welcome a response from the Minister on what work is being done by the Welsh Government to further promote the existence and role of the bureaus, beyond the presence on the Business Wales website.**

The immediate customer for the Bureaus are the learners who are based at the Colleges that host the Bureaus. However, some of the Bureaus are exploring widening their presence in the wider community via 'pop up shops'. To that end, it is the responsibility of the Colleges to promote the existence of the Bureaus.

As mentioned in Recommendation 3, in July the YPG team organised a Knowledge Sharing Event between Bureau staff across Wales and the discussion included best practice on promoting and raising awareness of the Bureaus, including the internal branding used. A network has now been established to continue the knowledge sharing on a formal and informal basis.

It should also be noted that the Bureaus have been actively recruiting new staff to support the increase in demand for their services, as well as merging internal departments to ensure that there is seamless support for the learners.

The Bureaus are also key partners for the likes of employers, training providers, Local Authorities and Careers Wales.

As noted, each Bureau is advertised on the Business Wales website and their details form part of an Employer Brochure that is available to employers to inform them about the range of support and services available to them from the Welsh Government and partners. The role of the Enterprise Champions is also highlighted on the Big Ideas Wales website that signposts young people to support available in Further Education colleges should they wish to explore enterprise and business start-up.

Wider links to raise awareness have so far been made with Training Providers, UCAS, DWP, Careers and Working Wales, Inspiring Skills Excellence in Wales and the Regional Skills Partnerships.

### **Job-coaching as part of transition support for pupils with additional needs**

**Recommendation 13: It was noted that both Jobs Growth Wales Plus and Communities into Work+ programmes provide support to young people with additional needs, however the Committee would welcome more information from the Minister regarding future plans for job coaching initiatives and for Careers Wales's involvement in them.**

We are committed to providing equality of opportunity to all young people. Employment mentoring and training is available to young people with additional needs through our employability programmes. Officials are developing options for how this could be expanded, including how we can mainstream support and job coaching such as that previously provided by European Structural Funds (ESF) projects such as Engage to Change.

This, however, is against a backdrop of the UK Government not fully replacing Wales's previous levels of EU funding and bypassing Welsh Government in delivery of the Shared Prosperity Fund and the most challenging financial situation we have faced since devolution.

Elsewhere, supported shared apprenticeships provide support to young people with additional needs to access and complete an apprenticeship. Employment and learning support is provided through a dedicated job coach and employer placements are sourced to provide on-job experience to enable young people to complete the full apprenticeship framework.

### **Other Barriers to Education, Training and Employment**

**Recommendation 14: The Committee would welcome any further information the Ministers for Economy and Education can provide on how the Welsh Government is applying lessons learnt in implementing the Young Person's Guarantee and the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework, to further flex support to address the additional barriers identified by Careers Wales and other witnesses.**

The consultation on the refreshed Youth Engagement and Progression Framework in 2021 and the YPG-National Conversation 2022-23 have highlighted the link between poor mental health and NEET rates. Evidence has shown numbers of young people experiencing poor mental health has increased in recent years.

In addition, school attendance levels have not returned to pre-pandemic levels and it is well established that poor attendance patterns are often related to learner mental health or wellbeing issues. There is also anecdotal evidence of young people with more challenging behaviour, following the pandemic.

In 2022 we published new guidance on the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework, which brought the prevention of youth homelessness within the scope of the Framework. The updated Framework recognises the overlap and interdependence of poor emotional mental health and well-being with the risk of becoming or being NEET and the risk of youth homelessness. Under the

Framework, young people with significant barriers to engagement should be allocated a lead worker to provide them with sustained support.

The guidance stresses the implementation of the Framework requires significant stakeholder buy-in and joined-up working and provides an overview of how data-sharing works under the Framework. Earlier this year, Welsh Government officials worked with Careers Wales to develop detailed information for local authorities on data sharing, to develop wider understanding of processes.

On 21 November we issued further guidance, under the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework, on the early identification of young people at risk of becoming NEET or homeless. By identifying young people at an early stage, support can be put in place to keep them on a positive pathway. The guidance will set out a range of risk indicators such as school attendance, school exclusion, behaviour and mental health issues. The early identification guidance has been co-constructed with stakeholders and will be accompanied by a series of case studies.

Furthermore, we are also investing nearly £8m to continue three employment services that help people recovering from physical, mental ill-health and substance misuse into and to remain in work- the Out of Work Service and In-Work Support Service, which are helping people to rebuild their lives, has been extended until 2025.

Following a successful pilot, funding has also been given to extend the 'I Can Work' Individual Placement Support project in North Wales. The service delivers integrated health and employability support to people recovering from mental health into employment, with a particular focus on 16-24 year olds.

We are also investing £18.4m to enable colleges to implement the ALN Act and provide the support necessary for learners with additional learning needs to succeed in their studies and provide professional learning opportunities for staff to develop provision for learners with complex needs. We want to make FE accessible to as many young people as possible, so they can access education without the need to leave their local area. In rare cases where local mainstream provision is not able to meet a young people's complex needs, we secure placements for young people at independent specialist FE establishments.