

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar [Llwybrau at addysg a hyfforddiant ôl-16](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) on the [Routes into post-16 education and training](#)

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Routes into post-16 education and training: effectiveness of Careers Guidance and the use of administrative data

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Introduction

Our submission provides **evidence on participation in tertiary education and training in Wales, and Key Stage 4 learners interactions with Careers Wales**. Below we summarise our relevant research and analyses of linked administrative data using longitudinal cohorts. We also reflect on our experience of using administrative data collections related to careers guidance and post-16 learner outcomes in Wales.

The terms of reference for which we provide evidence include:

- Quality and nature of information provided directly to learners by Careers Wales.
- To what extent careers support at pre-16 is resulting in positive or negative outcomes post-16 e.g. young people finding themselves not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- Equality of access
- Post-16 data collection.

Summary

The key points made below include:

Evidence suggests that Careers Wales interventions are targeted at those in most need of guidance. Additionally, interventions are likely to influence continued participation in education and training. In particular, one-to-one guidance interviews are supporting positive decision-making for young economically disadvantaged and low attaining learners, reducing the likelihood of them being Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET).

We also point to research evidence that provides figures for participation in tertiary education by a wide range of individual and household characteristics. This work highlights the differential engagement in post-16 learning by socio-economic background.

Finally, our experiences using administrative data for research purposes provides insight into some of the current limitations of data holdings on post-16 education to evaluate destinations of learners. We recommend that post-16 and employment data need to be made more readily available for analysis that can provide timely evidence for policy and practice and enable longitudinal analysis of education and employment outcomes.

Quality and nature

Prioritising Careers Guidance support to those at risk of disengagement

Using de-identified linked Careers Wales and learner data, we have considered Careers Wales engagement with school pupils and the prioritisation of careers guidance interviews. Interviews are conducted by qualified professionals on a one-to-one basis and represent the highest level of support.

The Career Check Survey (delivered in schools at Key Stage 4) provides detail on learners intended next steps, job aspirations, confidence with decision making and perceived barriers to achievement and more. Data shared by schools (and relationships with schools) enable the identification of those most at risk of disengaging from education.

We have demonstrated that **Careers Wales were providing greater levels of support to learners from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and those with lower levels of attainment.**

You can find further information in our accessible report, <https://adrwales.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Prioritisation-of-Careers-Guidance.pdf>.

Pre-16 careers guidance support and learner destinations

Using statistical matching techniques we have compared the outcomes of 'similar' pupils who did or did not receive a careers guidance interview from Careers Wales. This approach provides a more accurate or nuanced assessment of the impact of careers guidance interviews for different groups of learners. Significantly, **low attaining free-school meal (FSM) pupils were 42% less likely to become NET if they received a careers guidance interview** compared to an otherwise comparable group of pupils who do not have an interview. This supports evidence that suggests careers guidance can reduce gaps in social capital for marginalised or disadvantage groups, for example, by increasing occupational knowledge, self-esteem and raising aspirations.

We have also undertaken analysis which indicates that interactions with Careers Wales can enable 'better' choices, for example, learners with higher levels of attainment were more likely to enrol on higher level learning programmes if they have also been in receipt of careers guidance. Likewise, those with low levels of attainment at GCSE were more likely to enrol on learning programmes with lower qualification aims if they have been in receipt of careers guidance. Receiving careers guidance through interviews also increased the likelihood of registering on WBL programmes. Furthermore, learners on WBL programmes who have received careers guidance were less likely to withdraw from their courses early.

Outcomes for young people can be enhanced by careers guidance interventions and interventions appear to have most impact among the most disadvantaged groups of pupils.

You can find further details of our analysis and findings in a report and conference proceedings: <https://adrwales.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/PCET.pdf>

Careers Guidance and Transitions to Further Education in Wales
<https://ijpds.org/article/view/1211>

Careers Guidance Provision and Progression to Post-16 education
<https://ijpds.org/article/view/1210>

We are conducting further analysis of Careers Wales data and interactions with learners across tertiary education and will be happy to share any future findings and publications with the Committee.

Equity of access

- Are some groups of learners disadvantaged by the current system (e.g. pupils from low-income households, learners with travel needs)?
- Are there any other equality issues?

Recent work with the Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) on equality in tertiary education produced a comprehensive report considering pathways through education for Key Stage 4 pupils in Wales. We considered a wide variety of pupil and household characteristics by linking learner school, 6th form data, college data, and HE data to Census 2011 data. Key findings of our quantitative analysis include:

There are lower rates of participation in tertiary education for those from lower economic or socio-economic backgrounds, for those with additional learning needs and those with disabilities;

and there is variation in enrolment on different programme types (A-levels, vocational training and work-based learning) by gender and socio-economic background.

The full data report can be found here: <https://wcpp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/ADR-Wales-Data-Report-Understanding-inequity-in-tertiary-education.pdf>. Additional information is also available in the other reports from the project.

Post-16 destination data

- Is there sufficient post-16 destination data collected to understand trends and inform what education institutions deliver? If not, what data is required to fully understand the post-16 landscape?

From a quantitative research perspective, there are **three central considerations** in relation to data collections. First, **coverage** of education data for both pre and post-16 data include information on learners in publicly maintained education. This means that privately educated learners are not considered, and nor is it possible to consider the outcomes for those traveling to England for education provision, or those who are home-schooled.

Second, current data collections that enable analysis of the post-16 education sector are **disparate data collections**, often with long-lead times for publication and data access. The nature of the data collected, whilst aligned across some items are not aligned for other items. This makes it difficult to compare like with like, for example, in terms of disability. The collections are also different in terms of their scheduling, with 6th forms reporting annually and FE colleges reporting 'live' information to the Lifelong Learner Wales Record (LLWR).

These data issues limit the ability of analysts to create a complete and detailed understanding determinants of participation and pathways through tertiary education. It is currently not possible to take into account achievement or experiences in pre-16 education, a key determinant in progression, without utilising examinations data. **Through data linkage it is possible to explore patterns and trends at a finer level of detail and across education phases and provider types**, taking into account influences such as prior attainment, and household background. This provides greater rigour, however, data sharing, data provisioning and data access are complex, and extended processes. Our analyses are using data collected before the Covid-19 pandemic because of the complexities around data provisioning.

Thirdly, and most importantly, **destinations data is scant**. Understanding learner journeys and employment outcomes at a detailed level, by various characteristics and over time, cannot be adequately supported with data collections as they stand. A lack of information on employment outcomes is central to this. Some of these issues are highlighted in our WCPP report on participation in tertiary education (link above) as well as in reports considering the effective use of data within Careers Wales (see our initial report [Careers Wales Data Linking Feasibility Study](#), and a recent evaluation that considers the role of Medr and the need for legislative intervention for data sharing https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/174631/3/Careers%20Wales%20DIH_Evaluating%20Developments%20and%20Potential%20Trajectories%20in%20a%20Changing%20Environment.pdf).

Whilst destinations surveys are undertaken by Careers Wales for Welsh Government, and the Destination of Leavers Surveys are fairly comprehensive in terms of coverage, the information collected is limited to consider gender and ethnicity and does not record determinants of progression, such as socio-economic status or prior attainment. Furthermore, it is not available for research purposes and cannot be linked to other data.

Within Administrative Data Research Wales (ADR Wales) we have begun to understand patterns of participation and progression by linking various data collections. However, the examination of work-related outcomes – such as employment status – can best be explored through data linkage to the UK Census. Administrative data sources that enable understanding earnings and return to educational investments are limited. There is some information within HE data on Graduate Outcomes, but there is a lack of information on outcomes for other learners in 6th form and FE settings, including work-based training, as well as a lack of information about longer term outcomes.

The Longitudinal Employment Outcomes (LEO) dataset provides potential to consider longitudinal outcomes, but this is not yet available for Wales (English data is available via the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Secure Research Service (SRS)) and LEO for Wales will not linkable when it does become available (as with the English data). Progress is being made to support access to HMRC data and DWP data with the DWP 'RAPID' dataset due to be deposited in the SRS this year. However, again, this data will not be linkable, reducing it's effectiveness in exploring issues linked to outcomes from participation in education.

There have also been issues with the declining population coverage of the Labour Force Survey, and so national statistics and estimates robustness have recently been called into question. **There is a need to bring together data on pre-16 education, tertiary education and employment** to allow population level analysis of the destinations and outcomes from education. This is necessary to understand participation, provision and outcomes at a national level but also to analyse patterns in relation to particular groups of learners or workers or particular geographic areas.

