

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

RET 26

Ymateb gan: Cyngor Sir Powys

Response from: Powys County Council

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**1. Quality of information given to learners about the full range of post-16 options (vocational and academic routes post 16, i.e. further education, sixth form, apprenticeships and training, and onward to higher education)**

- Quality and nature of information provided to learners within schools and those educated other than at school (EOTAS).
- Quality and nature of information provided directly to learners by Careers Wales.
- The extent to which further education colleges are able to engage directly with learners in schools.
- The extent to which learners in schools are made aware of the options available to them in school sixth forms and local further education colleges, and how closely schools engage with local colleges. Are there any conflicts of interest between sixth forms and further education colleges and is this more prevalent in some areas of Wales more than others?
- The extent to which employers are able to engage directly with learners in schools, for example at careers events.
- Who else influences learners future career choices (e.g. parents, teachers, peers), and how well are those people supported to do this.

The quality of the information given to learners about post-16 options varies across Powys. Several schools host career fairs where local employers and stakeholders are invited to come directly into schools, whereas some schools don't run an event as they attend the college fair instead. Feedback from learners suggests that school run careers fairs are useful, however they focus more on academic pathways and less on vocational/apprenticeship routes into employment. Employers have also commented on the challenge to attend multiple careers fairs due to capacity. NPTC Group of Colleges host a north and south Powys fair (Shape Your Future event) which promotes courses available at the college. The feedback from these events is mixed.

All schools host a sixth form open/information evening where learners and families are invited into school to discuss post-16 pathways. Common features include speaking to subject leaders, meeting with University and Careers Wales representatives and listening to current sixth form learners/alumni about their experiences. Schools are in a difficult situation where they need to balance what's best for the learner with the need to recruit more learners to their sixth forms and improve financial viability.

The relationship between school sixth forms and colleges in Powys is mixed. Some schools have close working relationships with the local colleges whilst others choose not to engage due to concerns about quality or are too far away for meaningful provision to be established. Due to financial pressures, there is a conflict of interest between sixth forms and local colleges in terms of recruitment of learners.

Schools have a good working relationship with their Careers Wales advisers. They are mainly utilised for 1-1 sessions and assemblies to disseminate information (particularly around apprenticeship programmes and vocational pathways). Some schools also utilise careers newsletters and digital platforms to promote information which Careers Wales advisers contribute to. However, a minority of learner voice feedback has indicated that the quality and nature of the advice received from Careers Wales is not good enough. There is also a strong indication that some learners aren't meeting the Careers Wales adviser until year 11, or in a few instances, not at all. This is then affecting the advice that can be provided.

Powys Health, Care and Social Care Academy delivered a pilot programme in 2022-23 titled 'Academy Careers Education Enterprise Scheme' (ACEES). Its aim was to inform pupils of the breadth of roles available within health and social care whilst embedding the importance of Welsh language in the workplace. The pilot year was a success, and the scheme was subsequently expanded to all schools in Powys, including the special schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). The scheme involved a phased approach whereby all learners from year 7 to 13 were provided with age-appropriate advice and guidance, including 'day-in-the-life' videos of current practitioners, availability of work placements/experience, apprenticeships and hands-on scenario based activities for post-16 learners. There is also a bespoke health and social care careers festival for post-16 learners.

## **2. How effective careers support is at compulsory school age**

- 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).
- Whether work experience opportunities for learners of compulsory school are operational, effective and meaningful and any barriers in that regard.

According to Careers Wales destination data, the proportion of learners known not to be in education, employment or training (NEET) has increased over the last 3-years and was 1.6% for 2022-23, which is 0.6% higher than pre-pandemic levels.

Many schools support year 10 learners in finding work experience opportunities, however a few don't. Since Careers Wales stopped providing this service, schools are struggling with allocating the time needed to ensure meaningful and effective work experience is sourced. Instead, learners are often left to source their own work experience which relies on connections to parents/carers. Schools suggest that there is a lack of local employers to work with, however, local employers say they aren't receiving requests, therefore there is a clear problem with the current process. Schools staff also describe the administration of work experience (checking risk assessments/insurances/etc.) as a barrier. Schools are reporting a shift in learner attitudes, with many referencing the fact that learners sometimes don't see the benefit of work experience.

## **3. Changes in routes post-18**

- Is there evidence that learners are changing their choices post-18, including a drop in Higher Education enrolments, and if so why?

Information not available.

## **4. Welsh-medium provision**

- The availability of post-16 options (both academic and vocational) through the medium of Welsh, and how this impacts on young people's choices.

The availability of post-16 options through the medium of Welsh is having a negative impact on young people's choices in Powys. The first challenge is the relatively low level of learner numbers looking to access Welsh medium provision, as Powys does not currently have any Welsh medium secondary schools and our Welsh medium settings are small in nature and widespread, geographically. The second challenge is a lack of specialist teachers being available to deliver post-16 subjects. There is also a lack of Welsh medium provision at the local colleges. Recruitment for the Welsh medium teaching staff is known to be an issue in the region.

## **5. Equity of access**

- Are some groups of learners disadvantaged by the current system (e.g. pupils from low-income households, learners with travel needs)?
- What support is available for learners to improve access (financial or otherwise)?
- Is there any regional variation in the information and support provided about post-16 across Wales? Are there any particular challenges facing learners in rural areas?
- Are there any other equality issues?

A minority of schools in Powys state that some learners are disadvantaged due to the travel requirements of the current system. As a result, Powys County Council have funded post-16 transport from home to

school for several years and provide in-the-day transport between collaborative settings. However, the operational challenges of this have resulted in many learners missing lesson time or having to access public transport multiple times in a day. This is one of the reasons why a large proportion of Powys learners opt for out of county post-16 provision every year, which is having a negative impact on the local economy. Learners are also affected by adverse weather, which results in more lost learning time.

### **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?

Consistent performance measures: Destinations report for schools is useful but possibly contains too much information in a way which isn't user friendly. Schools have struggled to interpret the information.

### **6. Welsh Government's role**

- How effective is the Welsh Government's approach to support participation in the full range of post-16 education and training options?
- Are learners, their families and schools aware of available Wales-wide support and programmes, such as the Young Person's Guarantee?
- Outcomes from Dr Hefin David MS's 'Transitions to Employment' report.

More could be done by Welsh Government to support participation in the full range of post-16 options. Schools state that apprenticeships are still very difficult to find as there are no central resources to coordinate these. There needs to be more apprenticeships available for learners and better collaboration between employers and education to enable our students to become ready for the workplace in the future. Many people are aware of the Young Person's Guarantee; however, most don't understand its implications.

Recently there has been significant engagement with the Mid Wales Regional Skills Partnership and the Economic Development team. This engagement has evidenced that local businesses are frustrated by not being able to access regular coordinated engagement with schools and post 16 education. However, schools are restricted to offering opportunities to business to engage due to timetabling and resources.