



In relation to your tailored work experience programme on behalf of the Welsh Government

1. Please could you confirm the eligibility criteria for this tailored work, how learners are put forward and who assesses their eligibility? Could you also provide more information about the numbers and characteristics of learners who have been eligible for that programme by year and what data is collected and published about that? In what areas does the programme operate? What is the cost per pupil of delivering this tailored work?

The eligibility criteria for tailored work experience (TWE) are included in the table below.

Criteria	Description	Yes/No
Attendance	Learner attendance is giving the school a cause for concern (in the term preceding a referral to the project) *	
Behaviour	Learner behaviour is giving the school a cause for concern	
Attainment	Learner is operating below individual targets	
Child looked after		
Entitled to free school meals (FSM)		
Additional learning needs (ALN)		
English as an additional language		

**We are not giving specific % attendance figures for this pilot which allows us to work flexibly to meet the needs of schools and learners.*

The referral criteria were used as part of regional ESF programmes (Cynnydd, TRAC and Inspire2Achieve). Careers Wales was a delivery partner in these programmes and TWE was part of the service offer.

From 2022, TWE was funded by Welsh Government (WG), and we were specifically asked to ensure that there was coverage across Wales i.e. the service was offered to mainstream schools in every local authority (LA). WG provided us with data on school attendance and FSM, and we were asked to 'target' the top two schools in each LA:

- those with the lowest aggregate attendance in KS4



- those with the highest numbers of FSM eligible learners.

To make this approach work, it was not possible to introduce arbitrary figures for referral criteria like attendance because figures vary across LAs.

Using the criteria above, schools identify learners they feel would benefit from a TWE placement and complete a referral form which includes parental consent. Careers Wales Business Engagement Advisers (BEAs) meet the learners referred by the school to establish if they want a placement and if they are ready to commit and engage with a placement.

Regarding the 'numbers and characteristics of learners who have been eligible for the programme' -

The nature of the referral criteria means it is not possible to provide (and therefore publish) this data i.e. it is not possible to provide a total figure for Wales. As noted above, to ensure we made an offer to schools in all LAs, we did not set minimum attendance levels or this would have favoured LAs and schools in certain parts of Wales e.g. South Wales Valleys, North East Wales. Similarly, the criteria relating to behaviour and attainment is used to reflect individual schools rather than a total data set.

Between Sept 2022 and March 2025, 1,537 learners were referred for placement. Of these, 478 were categorised as 'unsuitable' for a placement (the learner did not want a TWE placement, the learner lacked confidence to attend a placement, the learner exhibited behaviour which the BEA assessed as a potential health and safety risk for the learner or others at the workplace).

Between September 2022 and March 2024, the programme operated in two schools in every LA in Wales (the two schools with lowest attendance and highest levels of FSM in each local authority – using data supplied by WG). Due to reduced funding, between April 2024 and March 2025, the programme operated in two schools in 13 LAs – see 'clusters' below. LAs and schools were selected based on WG attendance and FSM data and location of Careers Wales BEAs.

- Swansea & Carmarthenshire
- NPT, RCT & Blaenau Gwent
- Merthyr Tydfil, Torfaen & Powys
- Cardiff & Newport
- Anglesey, Conwy & Gwynedd



Between September 2022 and March 2025, Careers Wales drew down £688,102 (£470,102 in 2022-24, £218,000 in 2024-25) and placed a total of 910 learners which equates to approximately £756 per TWE placement.

2. Are there any groups of additional learners who have disengaged, or are at risk of disengaging, who you believe would benefit from the programme, but are not currently eligible for it due to capacity/funding constraints? If so, what would be the approximate cost of scaling up the programme nationwide to those learners?

We have identified three additional groups of learners who we believe would benefit from the programme:

- 1. Learners categorised as 'unsuitable' for placement** – These are learners that schools have referred for TWE but Careers Wales BEAs have established that the learner did not want a TWE placement, the learner lacked confidence to attend a placement or the learner was exhibiting behaviour which the BEA assessed as a potential health and safety risk for the learner or others at the workplace. If these learners were identified early enough and the programme had the capacity to work with learners to prepare and support them to fully engage with a placement, some of this group might be able to participate and experience the benefits of the programme.
- 2. PRU learners** – to date, WG has asked Careers Wales to make the offer of TWE to mainstream schools. However, some learners in PRUs may also benefit from a TWE placement. Typically, learners in PRUs often have more challenging behaviour and might benefit from some preparatory work before Careers Wales begins finding a placement. Behavioural challenges could make it more difficult for BEAs to source a suitable and understanding employer to offer a placement. If a placement is sourced, the learner might need a greater level of support from Careers Wales to sustain the placement.
- 3. Learners in special schools** - to date, WG has asked Careers Wales to make the offer of TWE to mainstream schools. However, some learners in special schools may also benefit from a TWE placement. As learners in special schools would typically require specific support while on placement, it may prove more difficult to identify employers able to offer suitable placements. If a suitable placement is sourced, the learner might also need a greater level of support from Careers Wales to sustain and get the most from the placement.



In terms of costings for these additional groups identified above, a mainstream cost for 1 TWE is approximately £756 as referenced against point 1, the 3 groups above would require additional support so an estimated cost would be £800 per placement.

3. What would be the approximate cost of Careers Wales providing a Wales wide work experience matching and placing service to all year 11 pupils, including the administration of assessing any required DBS, insurance and health and safety measures?

There is extensive evidence from schools, employers, learners, and their parents/carers, that more access to work experience (WEX) would be welcomed. Until 2015, Careers Wales had a remit to 'place' all KS4 learners in block WEX which involved providing schools with access to a database of health and safety vetted placements.

Since 2015, Estyn thematic reports have shown that the number of young people accessing WEX has declined significantly. Health and safety, as well as time and administrative burdens, appear to be key barriers for schools.

In recent years, Careers Wales has consistently highlighted the need for a detailed feasibility study to assess the demand from schools for a centralised work experience matching and placement service, including health and safety support. The discontinuation of this centralised service in 2015, the introduction of the Curriculum for Wales, and the current variability in WEX provision across schools all underscore the need for greater clarity and direction.

In the absence of a detailed feasibility study, we plan to gather insight through a WEX survey, which will be issued to mainstream secondary schools as part of our Partnership Agreement negotiations in summer 2025. We will be asking schools:

- If they currently offer structured WEX in KS4? If no, why not? If yes, what format does it take – block, tailored, virtual, other?
- Does anyone help them to facilitate WEX?
- Does WEX have a role to play in the new curriculum?
- What format of WEX would be best in the future?
- Would they be interested in an organisation like Careers Wales managing WEX centrally? If yes, would they want a full placing service or a database of vetted placements to self-serve?

The survey is available at the following link: <https://forms.office.com/e/nwwGBtvZqS>



By August 2025, we envisage having a much better understanding of the current situation and what support schools may want in relation to WEX going forward.

There are however some important points to consider before reinstating any potential block WEX programme:

- Careers Wales last delivered a block WEX programme in 2015. The post-Covid economic situation in terms of hybrid working could present new challenges to sourcing placements.
- Our bank of WEX placements had been built over many years. Having not delivered block WEX for 10 years, we would essentially be starting from a very low base in terms of employers that are realistically prepared to offer placements. Similarly, we had arrangements agreed with all schools as a means of staggering placement dates (although most wanted learners to go on WEX at the end of the summer term) – similar negotiations would need to take place across Wales.
- We would also need to consider the level of health and safety vetting required, both legally and to satisfy the needs of schools. Guidance from WG to schools in 2015 made it clear that employer liability insurance was the only requirement to place a learner, but schools (and local authorities) appear to favour stricter measures, and we would need to ascertain minimum requirements. Up to 2015, our database of employers included high risk employers (vetted annually), medium risk (vetted biannually) and low risk (vetted every 3 years). If we were to operate a similar system, we would need significant investment of time and resource during the first three years of operation to re-build this bank of vetted employers.

High level costs for delivering WEX is provided below, however, we would recommend a need for further discussion around this area of work and a clear strategy before we are able to provide exact and detailed costs.

A model where we would aim to place 90% of the KS4 cohort would equate 31,297 placements in a year. This would require a team of health and safety vetting officers or BEAs who would deliver 517 placements each year. The cost of this model would be in the region of £2,260,549. There would be additional costs for developing a central database. This could be an adaptation of our current Education and Business Exchange at an estimated cost of £150,000.

NB These costs are likely to reduce each year as more employers are sourced, and health and safety vetted e.g. the number of in-person visits would reduce and BEAs would be likely to increase their daily 'output' of placings.



This model assumes that Careers Wales take full responsibility for the ‘placing’ of young people in WEX. If schools were prepared to undertake the placing function themselves using a functional WEX database provided by Careers Wales, the costs of delivering the service could be reduced. Our role then would be populating the database with employers, placement dates, travel to work details etc. and supporting schools to use it. The obvious extension of this would be to encourage schools to use the database with learners in a self-serve approach with WEX as a key part of CWRE programmes.

One note of caution on WEX is that in the absence of a centralised ‘system’ in the period since 2015, it appears that WEX provision has become quite fragmented across Wales with some schools directly managing it, various providers offering a commercial service, FE colleges delivering on behalf of local authorities and some LAs themselves delivering WEX (a situation likely to be influenced by SPF funded projects in the short term).

As such, before making firm plans, we would suggest: -

- A national group with appropriate representation from schools, FE and LAs to agree the detail of any policy decisions.
- User research with schools to confirm (a) demand for and likely take-up of a WEX service, (b) their expectations in respect of health and safety, (c) whether they would support a full placing service or a database approach where they assume part responsibility.
- Considering a Careers Wales led pilot in one or more agreed locations to properly test a range of approaches and to build a more accurate picture of costs. If a pilot approach was agreed, the figures on p.3 could be used to estimate cost.

In addition to a centralised service focusing on block WEX placements, there are potentially other options for WEX:

- The continuation of funding for TWE. WG officials have access to details on the cost of this service and while it is not inexpensive due to its bespoke nature, our interim evaluation does suggest noticeable impact in terms of learner destinations.
- Further exploration into the delivery of virtual WEX. In 2021, Careers Wales entered a strategic partnership with the charity Speakers 4 Schools to offer schools access to virtual placements. The offer was not taken up by schools, and our own consultations have indicated that a virtual approach is generally not preferred. However, we are aware that some major employers in Wales remain interested in this model. It may be valuable to explore whether delivering this offer under the Careers Wales brand would increase its appeal. If we were



to proceed with virtual WEX, we would need to invest in the appropriate technology and skills.

4. To what extent do you believe that your standard offer of a careers check and a careers advice interview for every pupil in years 10/11 meets the needs of the majority of pupils across Wales and how do you assess this? What is the mechanism for evaluating the learner's view of your input?

Effective career guidance helps individuals to reach their potential, economies to become more efficient and societies to become fairer. Evidence shows that young people who have access to a range of career activities are more likely to progress into education, employment or training and there is evidence to show that those who have had access to career talks with outside speakers earned more by the age of 26. (OECD Career Readiness)

Careers advisers provide impartial and professional support to individuals and co-ordinate the range of services of the Careers Wales team for individual schools. Careers Wales focus on the short and long-term needs of pupils with an emphasis on:

- Broadening horizons
- Raising awareness of the skills required in the modern labour market
- Development of short and long-term career planning skills
- Support at key transition points for pupils who need it.

Our in-school provision offers **all** pupils a guidance interview before leaving school, with ongoing support tailored to individual needs. Support is delivered through a four-tiered model, outlined below:

- 1. Universal support** - offer of a guidance interview and additional support based on the careers adviser's professional judgement
- 2. Career Check support** - one to one support for those young people identified from Career Check needing guidance and coaching support
- 3. Targeted support** for those young people whose individual characteristics mean they may need additional support to make a positive post-16 transition



4. Additional Learning Needs Support - one to one support for those young people identified as having additional learning needs (ALN) See page below for more specific detail.

Careers Wales' ability to identify the guidance needs of learners is crucial for the development of the needs-based service. It also impacts on our ability to effectively prioritise caseloads and support learners to achieve appropriate outcomes. Career Check is a key part of the process for identifying which learners need guidance services, as well as determining the type and level of support required.

In 2023, ADR Wales examined the effectiveness of careers guidance in supporting participation in post-compulsory education and training, as well as how Career Check is used to prioritise the delivery of that guidance. Key findings included:

- Pupils with low attainment levels and those eligible for free school meals are most likely to receive guidance, regardless of their responses to the survey
- Among the higher-attaining pupils, the Career Check survey helps identify those who may need additional support with career planning.

The second publication from the research focused on identifying those who may need additional support with career planning. It explored the impact of careers guidance on the transition into post-compulsory education and training, showing that its benefits are more significant for some groups of young people than others.

The research found that pupils with low GCSE attainment are 35% less likely to become NEET if they receive a guidance interview. Similarly, pupils eligible for free school meals are 39% less likely to become NEET with access to careers guidance.

After each initial guidance interview, we send a customer satisfaction survey to the young person. Response rates are consistently above average, with nearly 5,000 responses received this academic year and excellent feedback reported year on year:

- 98% of customers stated "I was satisfied with the service I received from Careers Wales"
- 97% of customers stated "the adviser helped me understand my options"
- 96% of customers stated "my adviser helped me understand more about the opportunities available to me"



Careers Wales has also set ambitious Key Performance Indicators to measure the impact of our education offer. These include:

- **95% of young people who receive guidance and coaching services enter education, employment, or training on leaving school.** Our achievement was 95.90% for the 2024 school cohort
- **85% of young people who receive targeted support enter Education Employment or Training on leaving school.** We achieved this metric with 92.80% success for the 2024 cohort

Careers advisers help young people make sense of the information they receive from schools, colleges, training providers, employers and parents. To be most effective, talks and activities should be embedded in the curriculum, delivered through CWRE. However, we know that there is a need to increase access to the breadth of information available in many schools and to ensure greater consistency in the approach across Wales.

Whilst Careers Wales is responsible for delivering statutory duty of impartial careers guidance and employer engagement activities, schools are responsible for the implementation of CWRE as a cross-cutting theme in Curriculum for Wales. Careers Wales has a team of curriculum experts who provide support for schools in this area of work. We are uniquely placed to support schools across Wales to implement CWRE and the contribution of the team, and the services we offer, is referenced in numerous Welsh Government policy documents including Curriculum for Wales guidance and 14-16 learning guidance. Discussions have also taken place to identify the current and potential future role of the team in the evolving approach to school improvement in Wales.

If this work is not delivered by Careers Wales, it is unlikely to feature prominently in school improvement plans which appear to prioritise literacy and numeracy, attendance, and well-being. As such, the potential risks include:

- Schools across Wales being unable to successfully embed CWRE in Curriculum for Wales
- Inequality in services delivered by schools with differences in CWRE provision both between and within schools
- CWRE not being prioritised in schools, and schools left without access to support to improve their offers
- Poorer CWRE programmes.



These scenarios would likely have a secondary impact on individual learners, potentially leading to: -

- Learners less prepared for the world of work with poorer understanding of work-related skills
- Learners not getting the most out of their guidance interventions due to poor CWRE programmes, leading to poor career choices and higher dropout rates from post 16 destinations
- A less prepared future workforce
- Welsh school leavers being less competitive in the labour market than peers from other countries
- An increase in the number of NEETs post-16.

5. Are there any additions to your standard offer that you believe would offer good value for money in terms of supporting learners and their families to understand the options available to them post-16? What would be the approximate cost of providing those additional services?

Careers Wales has a substantial offer for learners and schools. With additional resource, there would be scope to deliver a wider offer in terms of our education business activities, extend TWE and work experience as noted in previous questions. We would also be able to provide extensive support to schools and teachers in embedding CWRE as part of the curriculum.

Careers Wales has recently commissioned an independent research company to undertake an exercise with our customers and stakeholder to inform our strategic planning. Key feedback has indicated:

- A demand for a continuation of our face-to-face in person work for young people and adults.
- A strong desire for broad, inclusive service provision: most survey respondents believed it was important for Careers Wales to provide services to a wide range of customer groups - a majority thought it was essential / very important to provide an all-age service.
- Learners who took part in the qualitative research suggested that careers advice should start earlier—ideally by Year 9 to help inform subject choices aligned with different career paths, or by Year 10 so they are aware of the grades needed to progress in specific subjects.



To meet this request, we could enhance our offer for KS3 learners through a range of measures. This would include facilitating Career Check for Year 9 learners to assess their Career Management Skills early and help prioritise support. Schools could also use the results to tailor their CWRE curriculum to better reflect the needs of their learners and local community. Additionally, we could offer each school an opportunity awareness and decision-making group session and aim to guarantee a guidance interview for every young person during KS3.

To facilitate this offer we would require the following based on current cohort size:

Career Check	3.95
Group sessions	3.49
Interviews	32.12
Total	39.56
Cost	£2,064,775

Parents play a vital role in shaping young people's educational and career decisions. Below are a range of options we could consider in order to expand and strengthen our offer for parents:

- Offering primary to secondary transition support through parental engagement at transition events
- Hosting digital webinars for parents to enhance their knowledge, confidence, and understanding in supporting their children's career decisions—covering topics such as labour market information (LMI), post-16 options, apprenticeships, and higher education.
- Establish regional digital parent's evenings to allow parents to engage with their child's careers adviser at a time convenient for them.

Primary to secondary transition	0.56
Parent webinars	0.05
Regional Digital Parents evenings	0.05
Total	0.65
Cost	£33,925

In the current year 11 cohort, according to our Career Check survey, the number of young people looking to enter the labour market at the end of year 11 is 3,276. We would look to provide tailored employability support to ensure they are equipped to take this step and meet the employability needs of the local economy whilst still in school. This would be delivered by our Employability Coaches, over 6-8 weeks and include coaching, job searching, mock interviews, advocacy/liaison and follow ups.

Employability Coaching	14.51
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Total	14.51
Cost	£546,676

Young people with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) remain underrepresented in the labour market. In response to the *Transition to Employment* report by Hefin David MS and the conclusion of the *Engage to Change* project, there are opportunities to strengthen and enhance our offer for ALN learners. These enhancements could include:

Offering job coaching to 20% of the post-16 cohort in special schools and resource bases (approximately 254 learners). This would involve coaches preparing both the learner and the employer, learning each task, and then systematically teaching the tasks to the learner

- Delivering small group sessions focused on raising aspirations in all special schools and resource bases, twice annually
- Sourcing 254 tailored work experience placements to meet the specific needs of these learners
- Further enhance the offer of Education Business sessions for all special schools.

Job Coaching	43.37
Raising aspirations group sessions	0.52
Tailored Work Experience placements	4.5
Enhanced Education Business offer	3.7
Total	44 ECS 8.2 BEA
Cost	£2,085,722