

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 Gyrfa Cymru [Careers Wales](#). The company is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Welsh Government.

In January 2018, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning approved the remit letter for delivery of careers services by Careers Choices Dewis Gyrfa Ltd (which trades as Careers Wales) in Wales for the financial year 2018-19. Further information can be found [here](#).

The service helps clients to develop the skills needed to manage their careers and make decisions in a complex and changing world. The strategic vision is currently under-review (March 2019). Since 2017, CCDG's vision was "*Wales will retain an 'all-age', bilingual, professional, independent and impartial Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) service*". This will be underpinned by robust Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) and have even stronger alignment with key Welsh Government priorities. The vision will be achieved through:

- a stronger focus on young people;
- enhanced services to support other organisations to help young people develop their careers;
- even greater use of technology (Careers Wales (2017a)).

Careers Wales provides an impartial and free (at point of delivery) 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 proactively at local and national levels with the private and public sectors to help deliver Welsh Government economic, education, skills and social strategies. The challenges to Careers Wales, as identified in [2017's vision](#), are to:

- 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);
- support 16 to 18-year olds to ensure progression, including the young unemployed 16 and 17-year olds;
- support adults facing redundancy or who have been made redundant;
- assist unemployed adults aged 25 plus through the Skills Gateway;
- provide more focussed and intensive support to priority client groups as identified in the annual remit letter.

From 1st May 2019, Careers Wales will perform a new lead assessment and referral role on behalf of the Welsh Government leading on an innovative Employment Advice Gateway '[Working Wales](#)' aimed at young people and adults in need of additional careers and employment support. Careers Adviser specialist assessment and referrals, as part of enhanced employability support, will be rolled-out shortly for unemployed people of all ages. The Welsh Assembly Government commissioned Dr Deirdre Hughes to conduct an '*International Review of Categorisation Tools for Employability Support*' (Hughes, 2017). Careers Wales was given a new mandate (as described above) to lead on the Working Wales: Assessment and Referral process. This will secure enhanced advice and guidance and provide individualised support for those facing barriers to work. This has resulted in an increase in the Careers Wales allocated budget and a significant increase in the numbers of Careers Advisers recruited in 2018.

Sources

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Coordination and collaboration among stakeholders

Many working groups exist across Wales focusing on careers, employment, skills and/or wellbeing. The [Employment Advice Gateway](#) (Working Wales) will see greater co-location of [Careers Wales](#), Job Centre Plus, [Communities for Work](#) and other community-based services to enable simplified access and streamlined referrals to progress individuals onto education, training and employment. Effective co-location and community outreach have also brought about considerable dividends in the delivery of our community employability programmes. This is evident in the areas of Cardiff and Llanelli, where effective community hubs have been established to bring together a range of public services and delivery partners in one place (Welsh Government, 2018g: 28). Further information can be found [here](#).

The overriding aim of Careers Wales is to achieve high quality outcomes for individuals in terms of effective 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 effective 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. The Welsh Government provided an additional £400 000 to Careers Wales in 2017-18 to strengthen school employer links; and has also funded the [Business Class Careers Wales](#) project delivered in partnership between Careers Wales and [Business in the Community](#) (BITC). Business Class has established more than 80 school-business partnerships across Wales. The model is based on an initial matching of schools and employers; with activity agreed by the school and business. The partnerships are designed to be longer term and are a clear example of how strong education business links are being built in Wales. 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, private sector, Careers Wales and Job Centre Plus.



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 over 100 organisations or individuals involved in the delivery of learning in the workplace.

Sources

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Welsh Government (2019e). *Ministerial Written Statement: Working Wales and Employability Across Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government, November 2019. <https://gov.wales/written-statement-working-wales-and-employability-across-wales>

Welsh Government (n.d.). *Working Wales*. <https://workingwales.gov.wales/>

Access to guidance

The Welsh Government's national strategy (2017) *Prosperity for All* makes specific reference to: "provide targeted careers advice to help young people to access jobs, particularly in new and growth sectors and also entrepreneurial opportunities. Fast track the introduction of a new Education Business Exchange Service and account executives who will work with schools and colleges in the Valleys" (Welsh Government, 2017c: 16).

Employable People is defined as: "Good skills are a key factor in determining whether people get good jobs. We need to make sure that everyone has access to the training they need throughout their lives. People can follow many routes to higher skills, for example apprenticeships, work-based learning, and further and higher education. All of these options need to complement each other to enable people to pursue the careers they want. Our new approach to employability will deliver a seamless referral and support service for people who need basic skills, and people who need to raise their skill levels to get a job or progress in their career." (Welsh Government, 2017c: 27).

An *Economic Action Plan* (2018) has been developed in line with the 'Prosperity for All national strategy'. It contains actions that will work to grow the economy and reduce inequality. It has been developed to meet the needs of today and to prepare for the challenges and opportunities of the future. "We are committed to helping everyone in Wales grow and adapt their skills throughout their lives, to access work, and to progress throughout their careers" (p. 16). A key Government priority is to reduce the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training. In 2019, the proportion of 16 to 18-year olds who are NEET fell below 10% for the first time in a decade

The Ministerial taskforce for the Valleys delivery plan, *Our Valleys, Our Future: Delivery Plan* has identified three priority areas: good quality jobs and the skills to do them, better public services and my local community. This includes the development of seven strategic hubs in areas where economic potential is greatest and will benefit the largest number of people (Welsh Government, 2018g: 28). Further information can be found [here](#).

Both the *Economic Action Plan* and the *Employability Plan* recognise the vital importance of building on regional strengths. A new £10m Skills Development Fund will boost regional skills provision and target job-specific skills gaps as identified by the *Regional Skills Partnerships* (RSPs). The fund also aims to reintroduce part-time provision in particular. This aims to increase employment opportunities for the unemployed and to upskill those in low-paid employment. According to a government report, the *Employability Plan* also focuses on removing diverse barriers to employment. Mental health continues to be a significant issue for some, and the new £2m Individual Placement Support (IPS) pilot will integrate employment advisers into clinical healthcare settings. This is designed to enable access to both mental health and employability service (Welsh Government, 2018g: 28).

In 2018, Government launched a new *Employability Plan*, and implementation is now underway. The plan sets out a long-term vision to ensure workers of the future have the skills businesses will need and streamlines the support that everyone can expect to get on in work:

As we reshape our employability support, making it as simple as possible, and more responsive to the needs of individuals and employers, we are continuing to test and develop our Employment Advice Gateway, a new initiative for accessing employment support through a seamless referral and support service. The Employment Advice Gateway will see greater co-location of Careers Wales, Job Centre Plus, Communities for Work and other community-based services to enable simplified access and streamlined referrals to progress individuals onto education, training and employment. Effective co-location and community outreach have also brought about considerable dividends in the delivery of our community employability programmes. This is evident in the areas of Cardiff and Llanelli, where effective community hubs have been established to bring together a range of public services and delivery partners in one place (Welsh Government, 2018g: 28).

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 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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- 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);
- support 16 to 18-year olds to ensure progression, including the young unemployed 16 and 17-year olds;
- support adults facing redundancy or who have been made redundant;
- assist unemployed adults aged 25 plus through the Skills Gateway;
- more focussed and intensive support to priority client groups as identified in the annual remit letter.

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

Sources

Careers Wales (2018a). *Access Programme*. <https://www.careerswales.com/en/skills-gateway/access-programme/>

Quality assurance

In order to make effective career decisions and benefit from the support provided by Careers Wales it is imperative that careers education in schools is relevant, timely and 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 later in 2010 took the decision that implementation of this framework should be inspected on a thematic basis by Estyn. However, the delivery of the framework has been variable.

Estyn, the office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales, published a thematic report on ‘[Careers: the implementation of the Careers and world of work framework in secondary schools](#)’ (2017) – 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 effectively 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 own 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 effectively as in the past.

The proportion of pupils who participate in work experience placements in key stage 4 or in 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 who have reduced work experience provision feel that this has had a negative impact on pupils' progress and on their understanding of their career options. A very few schools have invested substantially in maintaining this aspect of their provision and manage the health and safety requirements.

In 2014, Estyn published a report [Learner support services for pupils aged 14-16](#), which examined the quality, consistency and impartiality of learner support services provided by schools to pupils before, during and at the end of key stage 4, including impartial careers advice and guidance. This report (Estyn, 2014) identified that:

- the provision of careers advice and guidance was the weakest feature of learner support;
- only a minority of schools offered all pupils the opportunity to discuss their careers plans in Year 9 or Year 11;
- the majority of schools did not provide pupils with up-to-date information on courses, career opportunities and progression routes;
- there was a bias towards retaining pupils in sixth forms in 11-18 schools;
- schools had not considered carefully enough how they should replace the services previously carried out by Careers Wales.

Careers Wales recommended the introduction of [Careers Leaders in Schools](#) (2017). According to the report, an effective programme of careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) requires contributions from several different members of staff (e.g. careers teachers, subject teachers, tutors, ALNCO), and contributions from a range of external partners (e.g. representatives from FE and HE, employers, apprenticeship providers, Careers Advisers), all co-ordinated into a coherent, progressive and integrated programme of careers support from key stage 3 through to the sixth form.

Careers Wales believes that two complementary professional roles are required in Wales to deliver effective provision (Estyn, 2014):

- the Careers Adviser (acting as an Account Executive), to take responsibility for providing impartial and independent careers guidance;
- the Careers Leader, supported by a range of teaching colleagues, to take responsibility for the day-to-day leadership and management of CEIAG.

According to the report, the tasks involved in the leadership and management of CEIAG in schools can be specified under the four broad headings of:

- co-ordination (linking all the contributions from within the school);
- networking (linking all contributions from external partners);
- management (ensuring the delivery of careers education and initial information and advice and the efficient administration of CEIAG);
- leadership (providing strategic leadership and assuring quality) (ibid).

Sources

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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 Wales (CCDG) has introduced new online psychometric and interest tests and quizzes. These are designed to help young people understand their strengths, values and the level of their career management skills. They also highlight potential career paths for further exploration. "The results will be captured on a client's secure online profile and be available in hard copy to discuss at home. We will use the results of such tests and quizzes to help plan our work and to monitor the progress made by clients." (Careers Discovery Model, p. 10).

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. The [Wales Essential Skills Toolkit](#) (WEST) is a basic skills screening tool used to assess learner's literacy and numeracy skills prior to commencement of learning. A new diagnostic tool is being tried and test prior to the introduction of [Working Wales](#) (May 2019).

Sources

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Career information, ICT in guidance

Within the Digital 2030 national strategy, the [Welsh Government](#) is currently undertaking a major review of digital innovation, artificial intelligence and automation. future-proofing the Welsh economy for the challenges and opportunities facing it over the coming years, 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 [careerswales.com](#) 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 'Career Discovery Model' which blends face-to-face and digital services. The Careers Wales [website](#) is being further developed into a web platform to support service delivery and the intention is that it will house 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. Current developments include commissioning 360-degree videos to bring workplaces and industries to life for young people and using voting technology in workshops and group activities. Careers Wales currently developing a new 'Minecraft' gaming tool to support young people's career learning as part of the new [Curriculum for Wales](#).

The Welsh Government has invited Careers Wales to bring forward plans setting out how [careerswales.com](#) will be further developed and strengthened, as part of its digital offer to individuals and those supporting them, including parents and teachers. To this end it is expected CCDG will consult with users about its digital offer to ensure that the website is developed to meet the needs of its users and the adviser network.

Careers Wales is developing a Digital Transformation Strategy which assess where the organisation is now and will consider how it can transform itself not only in terms of service delivery but also in terms of how the organisation works and this includes skills, the culture, ICT infrastructure and technology in all its guises.

Careers Wales has introduced a digital competency framework to support the development of digital skills for employees. This framework requires 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 have been given the opportunity to develop their skills in delivering services to individuals and groups of clients through the use of Skype and webinars. The development of these skills (coupled with the appropriate tools/technology) will enable careers advisers to be confident and flexible in responding to client needs.

The whole area of professional practice and how this plays out with the use of technology is changing the structure of career interactions particularly in the context of a national careers service.

Sources

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Welsh Government (2019c). *Digital 2030: Strategic Framework*. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government, June 2019. <https://gov.wales/digital-2030-strategic-framework>

Welsh Government (2020). *Curriculum for Wales*. <https://gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales>

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.

Sources

Funding career guidance

Careers Wales had a budget of £18.8m Core Revenue Funding from Welsh Government for 2017-18. The Welsh Government provided an additional £400,000 to Careers Wales in 2017-18 to strengthen school employer links. Details of additional funding arrangements are currently not available.

Sources

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.

Secondary schools, colleges and work-based learning providers have a statutory duty under the [Learning and Skills \(Wales\) Measure 2009](#) to widen choice and provide learner support services for young people aged 14 to 19. Learner support services include learning coaching, personal support, and careers information and guidance. The report looks at the quality, consistency and impartiality of learner support services provided by schools to pupils before, during and at the end of key stage 4 (Welsh Assembly Government, 2009).

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 provide an external careers guidance and curriculum support service, funded by 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 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](#).

Within schools and colleges, [Careers Wales](#) applies a [Youth Engagement and Progression Framework](#) (YEPF) – a framework intended to reduce the number of young people aged 11 to 25 who are not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET). The framework has 6 elements (Welsh Government, 2013b):

- identifying young people most at risk of disengagement;
- better brokerage and co-ordination of support;
- stronger tracking and transitions of young people through the system;
- ensuring provision meets the needs of young people;
- strengthening employability skills and opportunities for employment;
- greater accountability for better outcomes for young people.

Careers Wales undertakes an annual 'Careers 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 actually improves individuals' educational and employment experience by undertaking research on the effectiveness of labour market interventions in Wales. This research project will help policy makers and educational researchers understand the learning landscape in Wales and the role of careers information, advice and guidance in supporting post-compulsory education. It responds to the Welsh Government's objective by highlighting the effectiveness of careers-related interventions offered in Wales.

The research remit is wide. 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. It also examines how the use of administrative data can assist Careers Wales in:

- process and productivity improvements;
- efficient profiling and follow-up of clients;
- the optimal selection and allocation of resources to client services.

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 educational journey and the career and training decisions learners make when leaving compulsory education. The first aspect of the research explores the question of who receives the services of Careers Wales and how the services are delivered in Welsh schools.

The Careers Wales new [Education Business Exchange](#) service provides information to schools about relevant work experience opportunities and facilitate industry engagement in schools. The outcomes refer to young people who are able to develop work skills ready for employment. The pilot in two Valleys local authorities will be rolled out to all other mainstream schools.

In 2017, Careers Wales had a set target of engaging 10,000 employers on their new 'Education Business Exchange database' so that schools and young people can see the opportunities available to them from local employers and activities and interactions between schools and employers can be better facilitated and managed. This service was rolled out first in the Heads of the Valleys with progress reported to the Valleys Task Force. The Education Business Exchange is based on a comprehensive 'data set' containing details relating to employers' willingness and ability to support the curriculum with activities including:

- visits to industry which are curriculum focused;
- work or business simulations involving workshops with employers either actually or online;
- work related community participation through volunteering (30 hours required for WBQ core);
- industry days/Careers fairs with different career options or targeted careers;
- extended work placements for identified learners.

This approach reflects the Welsh Government policy to facilitate improved interactions with employers beyond the traditional 5/10-day block of work experience. The design of the service has taken into account feedback from employers across Wales.

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

- a. Youth Engagement and Progression Framework;
- b. Child Poverty Strategy for Wales;
- c. STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths);
- d. Careers and the World of Work (CWW) Curriculum;
- e. Skills and Training Initiatives e.g. AMS (Apprenticeship Matching Service);
- f. Welsh Government Employability Plan, Targets and Technical Notes;
- g. Welsh Government Employability Plan: Progress Report 2018.

The overriding aim of Careers Wales is to achieve high quality outcomes for individuals in terms of effective 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.

Importance of careers guidance in schools

Careers guidance as an effective labour market intervention entails that the 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 aspirations of learners positively (Briggs et al. 2012).

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 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. 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 to examine the incidence and nature of careers guidance received by children and how their characteristics effect the likelihood of receiving careers-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 the 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 is in receipt of 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 be in receipt of support from Careers Wales.

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Guidance for VET participants

The Welsh Government's flagship all-age apprenticeships programme will deliver 100,000 new places over this five-year Assembly term. In the first half of 2017/18 there were over 16,000 starts on apprenticeship programmes, 63% by women, giving people the right industry knowledge and job skills whilst in paid employment. In 2019, a new programme of degree apprenticeships is backed by £ 20m of investment over three years (Welsh Government, 2019). In addition, the [Apprenticeship Matching Service](#) enables individuals to upload their CV and to search for apprenticeship vacancies.

Please see the description of VET system in the United Kingdom [here](#).

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Guidance for higher education students

Universities in Wales are largely autonomous institutions that are mostly 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 own 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 Royal Charter and more modern universities that were established as higher education corporations. The [Education Reform Act 1988](#) (Part II) and the [Further and Higher Education Act 1992](#) (Part II) make provision 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 a number of 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 (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 amount 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 from: Law Wales, 2016).

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) review 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.

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:

- careers advice, including graduate placements, careers fairs and further study opportunities;
- CV workshops;
- networking / mentoring opportunities;
- coaching on interview techniques;
- 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' which employers seek (including effective 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 access. Guidance activities offered can be categorised as:

- core careers services - over 90% of FE institutions offer careers services;
- 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;
- 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, 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:

- 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;
- the [Membership Quality Standard](#) which outlines and demonstrates the levels of professionalism with which member services fulfil their purpose;
- work towards external kitemarks/quality standards, e.g. [the matrix Standard](#), [Investors in People](#);

d. recognition that each individual 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, 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, high street centres and online via careerswales.com. The new **Working Wales** initiative involves Careers Wales working closely with local community and national partners, including the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), where individuals will be assessed by qualified and trained Careers Advisers and referred to appropriate providers. A major national communications campaign is due to be launched by the Welsh Government in May 2019.

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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** aims to support vulnerable young people (and adults) at risk. Existing Employability Support programmes operate in the regions of Wales and these are currently being reviewed by the Welsh Government including:

ReAct - 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 following redundancy. The package is additional to, and is offered in collaboration with, a wide range of support from the Welsh Government and partner organisations such as Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus. The ReAct programme is supported by the European Social Fund (ESF). According to the **Guidance notes** (Welsh Government, 2015), there are three parts to the ReAct scheme:

- a vocational training grant for people who need to update their skills to return to work;
- extra support to help remove any barriers to vocational training;
- a contribution towards wages and help with training costs for recruiting employers.

Traineeships. A traineeship is for young people aged 16 to 17 in Wales. Adults aged 18 and who have left school or college can also apply. Participants will gain the skills needed to get a job or progress to further learning at a higher level such as an Apprenticeship or Further Education.

Employability Skills Programme. The aim of this programme is to support unemployed adults into sustained employment by improving their employability skills. The programme is voluntary and targeted at unemployed adults that are thought to be within six months of gaining employment.

Job Growth Wales is a six-month opportunity in a paid job. It features a contract between the beneficiary and the employer and pays at least the **National Minimum Wage**. The programme offers the chance to gain work experience that may be lacking. Those with a disability or who face other

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barriers can get additional help and mentoring while on the job. Jobs Growth Wales is funded by the Welsh Government with the support of the European Social Fund. The [Positive Pathways Group](#) has been created to implement effective approaches to supporting young people into sustained engagement, training and employment. The [KIT Group](#) is a multi-agency operational group that works with the Positive Pathways group and responds to the individual needs of young people that are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET. Interventions are provided to engage with a young person and appropriate provision is offered to support the disengaged young person back into education, employment or training.

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:

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

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 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.

[Inspire2 Achieve/ Inspire2 Work](#) is a European Social Fund Project providing support to young people that are NEET or at risk of disengaging from education and who are 16 to 24 years of age. The Inspire2 Work team offers support to young people who are currently NEET and living in Torfaen and live in Non-Communities First areas, supporting them towards and into employment. The Inspire2 Achieve team also supports young people primarily aged 11 to 16 within Secondary Schools across Torfaen, who are at risk of disengagement and/or becoming NEET. Project staff in both teams work 1:1 with young people and provide bespoke, needs led support to equip the participants with the skills and confidence to progress into education, employment and training.

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. In its first four months of operation, CfW+ has engaged with almost 2,200 participants with some 400 progressing into employment. It aims at young people aged 16-24 who are NEET and who live in Communities First areas in Torfaen, the Communities 4 Work (C4W) team provide similar needs-led support for young people towards and into education; employment or training.

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