

ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Gyrfa Cymru
Careers Wales

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Message from the chair and chief executive

As we reflect on the past year, we do so with a real sense of pride in what Careers Wales has achieved and optimism about what lies ahead.

This has been another year of progress, innovation and growth. While continuing to deliver high-quality, impartial careers information, advice and guidance, we have also been preparing for the future - strengthening our organisation, embracing new ways of working and ensuring we remain ready to meet the changing needs of the people of Wales.



As we come to the end of our *Brighter Futures* strategy, we can look back with pride at how far we have come. This year alone, we delivered our guarantee of careers guidance for every young person before they leave school, expanded our Work in Focus Challenges, explored how artificial intelligence can enhance our services and successfully piloted the Careers Wales Quality Award ahead of its national launch. We have also expanded the support we provide, reaching more learners outside mainstream education and strengthening our Working Wales service to help even more people take their next step.

The value of our work continues to be evident. Independent analysis demonstrates that investment in Careers Wales generates significant social and economic value, showing that careers guidance is not only life-changing for individuals but also a vital investment in Wales' future.

None of this would have been possible without the strong relationships we have built with employers, education providers, Welsh Government and our many partners across Wales. Together, we are helping people develop the skills, confidence and ambition they need to succeed, while supporting employers to build the workforce our economy needs.

Looking ahead is just as exciting. As we develop our new strategy, we will build on everything we have achieved through *Brighter Futures*, while setting a clear direction for the years ahead. Alongside our unwavering commitment to delivering world-class careers guidance, we will place greater emphasis on organisational transformation, making smarter use of data and insight, improving our systems and helping shape careers provision across Wales. We believe this will enable us to have an even greater impact in the years ahead.

Finally, we would like to thank our colleagues, Board members and partners for their dedication, professionalism and shared commitment. As we begin this next chapter, we do so with confidence, ambition and a shared determination to help every person in Wales realise their potential.

Erica Cassin, Chair of the Board, Careers Wales
Nikki Lawrence, Chief Executive, Careers Wales

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Careers Wales

Our vision, purpose and values

Our vision

To create brighter futures for the people of Wales.

Our purpose

To support young people and adults in Wales to create brighter futures. We will do this through access to high quality, impartial careers support that makes a positive impact on individuals' education, economic, and wellbeing outcomes.

Our values

We put the needs of the customer at the heart of what we do. We collaborate with others to achieve shared goals. We are innovative, technology-enabled, and insight-led.



Making a difference

For young people

an improved understanding of the world of work, the skills needed to succeed, and greater awareness of opportunities available to them, underpinned by access to impartial careers guidance and coaching.

For schools, colleges, training providers and universities

motivated, inspired learners with clear plans for their careers, supporting improved attainment and progression.

For adults

access to professional, impartial careers guidance and coaching to help them overcome barriers and progress into fair and decent work and training.

For parents, guardians and carers

to engage with these influential figures and ensure they are aware of options available and are suitably prepared to offer support.

For businesses

through our work with schools, colleges and communities, employers will have closer links to their future workforce. We assist businesses and employees when facing redundancy, supporting reskilling and upskilling.

For Welsh Government

careers guidance and coaching supports the successful functioning of the labour market, improving economic outcomes, supporting and facilitating social mobility and enhancing the wellbeing of young people and adults.

We work closely with educational institutions, employers, partners, and community organisations to help young people and adults increase their knowledge and understanding of opportunities, skills needs, and the local labour market.

Our digital services provide national access to information, advice and guidance with personalised support available through live webchat, telephone and video.

Our services

Services in education

Year 8-9
Broadening horizons and raising aspirations by exploring options for informed decisions

Year 10-13 and further education
Supporting successful transitions from education to training, further learning or employment

Educated other than at school
Helping to sustain engagement in education, employment and training

Additional learning needs
Working with partners to agree and support learning and skills plans for positive transitions

Parents and guardians
Engaging with parents, providing information and advice to support children making important decisions

Education business links
Facilitating employer links with schools to enrich 'world of work' understanding

Curriculum support
Supporting schools and colleges to develop their careers and the world of work provision

Services in the labour market

Youth and adult offenders
Supporting young people and adults during their sentance and their resettlement programmes

Employed or training
Supporting career reviews via information advice and guidance and through referrals to support via PLAs and WULF funds

Unemployed 18+
Support to identify and overcome barriers to employment. Impartial advice and guidance and referral to further support or suitable programmes. Support to find work

Unemployed 16-18
Supporting young people to make successful transitions to education, work, training or employability support. Referrals to EET including JGW+ programme

Redundancy
Assistance to access ReAct+ funding for updating skills or retraining and employability support

Key: EET: Education, employment, training,
PLAs: Personal Learning Accounts,
WULF: Wales Union Learning Funds

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Our business model

Careers Wales is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Welsh Government and was launched on 1 April 2013.

The company provides impartial careers information, coaching, and guidance services to people of all ages in Wales within a remit set by the Welsh Government.

Our board comprises of a chair and up to 12 other directors who are appointed by the Welsh Government. The board looks after the governance of the company and contributes to the strategy going forward.

The economic and social wellbeing of Wales is at the core of our services, and the organisation is fully committed to the principles of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.



Brighter Futures

Strategic outcomes and key performance indicators (KPI)

The table below summarises the strategic outcomes set out in Brighter Futures and the key performance indicators set out against them for 2025-26.

No.	Strategic outcome	KPI	Performance against KPI
1	Support young people and adults to make positive transitions into education, employment or training, including apprenticeships and understand the skills required to succeed in the labour market and contribute to the future economy of Wales.	**95%** of pupils who receive a guidance and coaching service enter education, employment or training on leaving school.	**96.9%** of young people who received a guidance and coaching service and left Year 11 in 2025 entered education, employment or training on leaving school.
2	Customers who have benefitted from enhanced levels of support make positive transitions into appropriate provision.	**85%** of young people who receive targeted support enter education, employment or training on leaving school.	**94.1%** of young people who received a targeted support service and left Year 11 in 2025 entered education, employment or training on leaving school.
3	Raise customer awareness of education, employment or training and other progression opportunities.	**90%** of young people in education report raised awareness of opportunities.	**96.4%** of young people report raised awareness of opportunities (5,945 positive responses out of 6,168).
4	Improve access to the benefits of careers guidance and coaching support through collaboration and engagement with partners and influencers.	Partnership Agreements with **100%** of partner organisations that enable improved access to the benefits of careers guidance and coaching.	**100%** of institutions signed a Partnership Agreement (243 institutions out of 243).

No.	Strategic outcome	KPI	Performance against KPI
5	Inform and motivate young people about the world of work through engagement with employers and role models.	Careers Wales facilitates at least one employer engagement event in **95%** of secondary schools in Wales.	**100%** of schools received at least one employer engagement event (209 out of 209 mainstream secondary schools).
6	Raise young people's awareness of the skills required by economic priority sectors and how they link to the curriculum.	Removed in 2024-25 following the cessation of Choose Your Future events in the Operational Plan.	Not applicable: KPI removed in 2024-25
7	Enhance the capacity of schools and Careers Leaders to deliver Careers and Work Related Experiences (CWRE) within the Curriculum for Wales.	Training or consultancy support to improve CWRE programmes is delivered to teachers in **65%** of the secondary schools in Wales.	Teachers from **71.8%** of the mainstream schools have engaged in training or consultancy support to improve CWRE programmes (150 schools out of 209).
8	Deliver personalised, customer-centred services, enhanced by technology, responsive to user needs and accessible to all.	**85%** of customers report that their needs were met by an online service.	**90.1%** of customers report that their needs were met by our Connect service (774 positive responses out of 859).

No.	Strategic outcome	KPI	Performance against KPI
9	Create a highly skilled, engaged, diverse and agile Careers Wales workforce.	**100%** of trainee careers advisers successfully complete their level 6 diploma Career Guidance and Development within the two years allocated. **75%** of employees report positive levels of engagement with the company.	**94.12%** (17 trainee careers advisers qualified this year, 16 within the two years allocated). In the most recent employee survey (2023-24) **77.1%** of employees reported positive levels of engagement with the company.
10	Optimise our use of technology to transform our ways of working and develop the digital skills and capabilities of all Careers Wales employees.	Improvement in the digital skills and capabilities of Careers Wales employees.[1]	**90%**
11	Inform our strategy, policy and service developments through customer insight, business intelligence, data and analytics.	No KPI but progress is monitored through our continuous improvement framework.	No KPI but progress is monitored through our continuous improvement framework.

1 A baseline measure of 10% of employees needing to improve their digital skills was established in 2022-23. Digital upskilling programme has started and bite sized learning is available to all employees.

Year at a glance

2025 - 2026

86% of the 2025 school leaver cohort received a careers guidance interview before they left compulsory education[1].

Over **110,000** users accessed our Job Information webpages.

More than **48,000** young people in education attended one or more interactive career planning group sessions.

We facilitated **1,800** bespoke, employer-led activities in secondary schools across Wales. These included a range of single and multi-employer activities including site visits, curriculum specific events, workshops, presentations and carousel days.

We recorded **23,409** contacts with parents and carers, and advisers attended **over 500** parent events.

The Working Wales service supported almost **30,000** adults as well as offering support to nearly **5,000** young people.

1 Interviews are defined as Guidance, Information and Advice interactions delivered by Careers Advisers via telephone, video and face-to face.

Digital and communications

Over **110,000** users accessed Job Information on careers, pay and future demand. The addition of 11 new jobs including Biofuel Engineer and Carbon Accountant brought the total number of job profiles to around **780**.

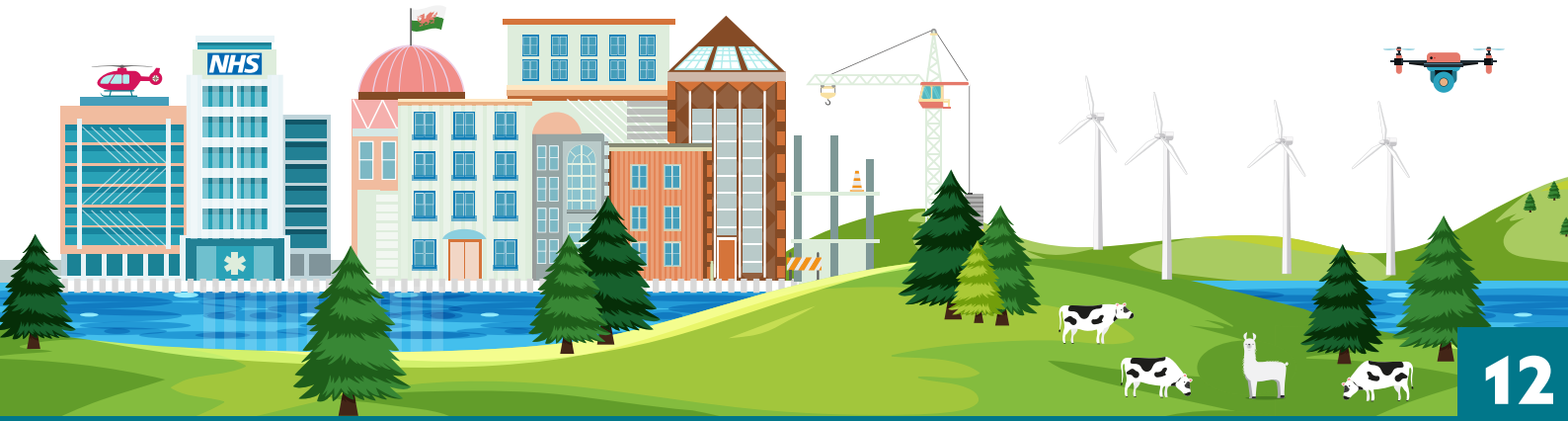
We launched a brand-new Job Search application on our website used by over **29,000** users. Based on the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Find a Job Service, users are able to find job vacancies by key word, location, industry or pay.

Our new decision-making quiz helped customers understand their decision-making style and make better education and career choices, attracting nearly **5,000** users.

We released the final four sectors of our Future Jobs Wales labour market information resource. Over **8,000** users accessed the 16 sectors helping them to find out more about the jobs they could do now and in the future.

We ran three internal AI pilots—adviser summaries, post-guidance note summarisation and CV generation—to improve efficiency. More than 30 colleagues helped test and refine the tools ahead of their 26/27 rollout. Feedback shows a **56%** adoption rate, with benefits including time savings, improved quality and enhanced wellbeing.

Our corporate social media accounts, including X, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and LinkedIn, reached a combined total of over **83,000** followers by the end of the year, achieving over **305,000** engagements.





We were mentioned over **1000** times in the media across over **230** individual outlets, representing increases of 9% and 30%, respectively. Key highlights that attracted strong media coverage included our Valued Partner Awards, inspiring real-life customer stories and our National Careers Week celebrations.



We developed a Welsh language translation library for the website to improve the efficiency and accuracy of future translations. We also launched a fully bilingual version of our Course Search, featuring over **15,000** different courses across Wales.



We completed a full accessibility review of our website and resolved over **50** issues across 16 applications, reducing barriers for users. A retest in summer 2026 will confirm compliance with accessibility standards.

- Our communications strategy received substantial assurance in an external audit covering governance, risk, budget, reporting, targets and implementation. We also reviewed our internal communications and engagement to better support employees in their roles and customer service. We will be rolling out an improved offer in 26/27.

- We added many new and refreshed pieces of content to the site including, Apprenticeships that can lead to high-paying jobs and Welsh language – a valuable skill for work – which highlights how Welsh language skills at all levels are valued in the workplace and the opportunities they can create.

- We enhanced several products and improved website search functionality to deliver better results. The upgraded search was launched on Course Search and Apprenticeship Search, with further rollout planned for 26/27.

- We built an AI assistant for our 16-18 customers to help them identify what support they need. This is in the final stages of testing and will be launched in 26/27. Over the course of the year, we have also improved our AI governance to ensure we are using it in a responsible way.

- We enhanced direct marketing and event promotion by creating more tailored customer journeys in our CRM, enabling more personalised and relevant communications based on user engagement.

- Our campaign schedule delivered timely communications to key audiences throughout the academic year. We also continued to partner with social influencers to extend our reach and engage audiences in a more authentic way.

- We also streamlined our corporate branding to make things clearer for our customers and introduced some new features for our younger audiences.

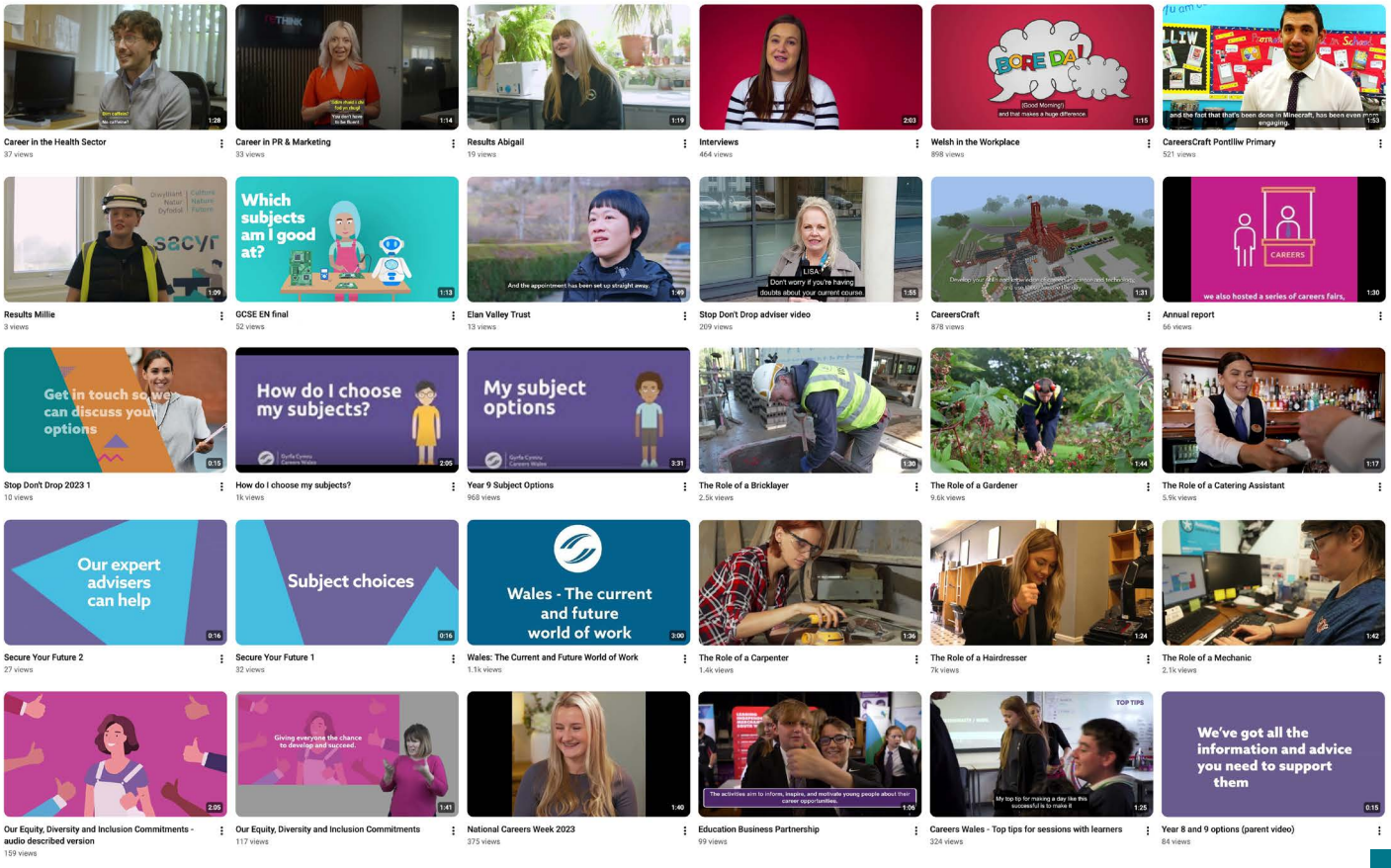
- We created new videos featuring school leaders and teachers sharing the benefits of working with us and taking part in employer engagement activities. We also produced a similar video showcasing the impact of Big Ideas Wales role models.

- We made films aiming to raise the aspirations of young people with additional learning needs (ALN), showing them the benefits of working, and have continued to produce About Jobs videos for the My Future part of the website.

- We produced new group session resources including one on Options @ 18+ and

- created virtual reality tours of 18 of our careers centres, with the rest being finished in 26-27.

- Through our user research activities, customers and employees have helped us to continuously improve, understand perceptions and shape key services. Internal projects included the review of the new sickness policy and an evaluation of the company's Copilot project. External projects included analysis of customer expectations when contacting us, an evaluation of our online booking application, and user research on the FE digital pilot.



Services to young people

- Key Stage 3 is where we begin to directly engage young people to develop their understanding of the breadth of options available to them. We delivered **272** group sessions to **13,966** young people in Key Stage 3. These sessions covered a variety of topics, all with the intention of broadening horizons and making young people aware of the world of work. In addition, we delivered **1,255** interviews to further support individual young people to make informed decisions.

- Key Stage 4 learners are introduced to the evolving world of work and encouraged to learn more about their career options and how to take their next steps. **55,958** one-to-one interviews were delivered to **37,233** young people in Key Stage 4 to discuss their career ideas and **30,298** attended interactive group sessions. These sessions helped develop the learners' career management skills and covered topics such as opportunity awareness, Labour Market Information(LMI) and decision making. In addition, we sent over **47,000** emails and over **83,000** text messages to further support customers to realise their aspirations.

- The support provided to learners in Sixth Form focuses on post-18 transition and developing an understanding of their options for the future. **3,243** young people received this support from us through one-to-one meetings that were also made available via self-service bookings online this year. **3,869** young people also attended one of our group sessions.

- We delivered **3,228** interviews to young people attending further education colleges. FE learners are provided with follow up support including guidance and coaching interviews, with priority given to those young people at risk of dropping out of their course.

- Our advisers work with young people with additional learning needs (ALN) to support a planned and successful transition from school. We provided **12,069** interviews to young people who have an Individual Development Plan (or equivalent). As part of our ALN support, we attended **1,917** transitional reviews with the school, providers, parents and young people to ensure a smooth transition.



- As well as supporting learners, it is also important for our teams to engage and involve parents and carers. We recorded **23,409** contacts with parents and carers, and advisers attended **over 500** parent events.

- We also play a crucial role in advocating on behalf of young people to secure appropriate provisions. During the year we delivered **76,924** advocacy sessions on behalf of **30,513** customers to support the successful transition of young people.

- In September 2024 a new offer was introduced in schools whereby every pupil is offered a careers guidance interview before they complete compulsory education with our aim to reach at least 80% of the cohort. For the 2025 school leavers we saw 86% take up the offer of guidance before the end of Year 11. This offer was continued

- into 2026-27. Feedback from schools shows they agree with the principle of the offer of guidance for all, and that they see Key Stage 4 as the top priority for the delivery of careers guidance.

- Within the broader offer of guidance for all in secondary education, we have continued to offer early and additional support to a targeted support group of customers who have been identified as potentially needing more help to make a successful transition from school. This includes young people in the following groups:

  - Free school meals
  - Looked After Children
  - EOTAS (PRU and alternative curriculum)
  - At risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training)
  - Young carers
  - Those with Individual Development Plans
  - Poor attenders
  - Those learning English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)
  - Labour market entrants

- It is estimated that this Targeted Support group will represent 30% of the overall cohort each year, and for the 2025 school leavers, 92% received at least one careers interview.

- Our work in schools and colleges supports young people to become more effective at planning and managing their careers in an ever changing and complex job market. With a dedicated careers adviser integrated into every mainstream and special school in Wales, learners are able to access careers information and support throughout their educational journeys. To make that happen we work in partnership with schools to agree a delivery plan based on the needs of the school and individual pupils. Careers advisers 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
  - Developing the skills for short and longer-term career planning
  - Providing support at key transition points for pupils who need it to prevent them falling out of education, employment or training





CASE STUDY

Isabelle's Story

Careers support helped Isabelle feel less anxious and more confident about her future.

In Year 10, Isabelle from Cardiff wasn't sure what to do next. She felt anxious about sixth form and her post-16 options.

Isabelle said: *"I wasn't really sure what A levels I should do, what sixth form would be best for me, or what I needed for uni."*

That's when she met Nick, her school's careers adviser. She said: *"Nick came into our year group and explained the whole thing. If you didn't know what you wanted to do, you could go and speak to him. It was really helpful."*

In Year 11, Isabelle began one-to-one sessions with Nick. Isabelle said: *"I had no idea what I should do after school. I felt so alone. But Nick made me realise I wasn't alone and that there were so many more options. He made me less anxious about leaving school."*

Step by step, Nick helped Isabelle build her confidence. She said: *"He slowly started introducing the idea of sixth form to me. He made it all seem very easy and gentle. It was a lot less daunting."*

"He went through all the different schools in our area and helped me decide which one would be the best fit. He showed me when open days were and stuff like that."

With Nick's help, Isabelle decided to study psychology, biology, history, and religious education.

Isabelle feels much more positive about her future now. She hopes to do a psychology degree. She would like to work in a role that helps people and supports communities. She said: *"Nick helped me decide what's the best place for me, what grades I needed, and what I should do with my future."*

"I feel a lot better about it now because I have support and I know where I can go. I feel a lot more secure in my future."

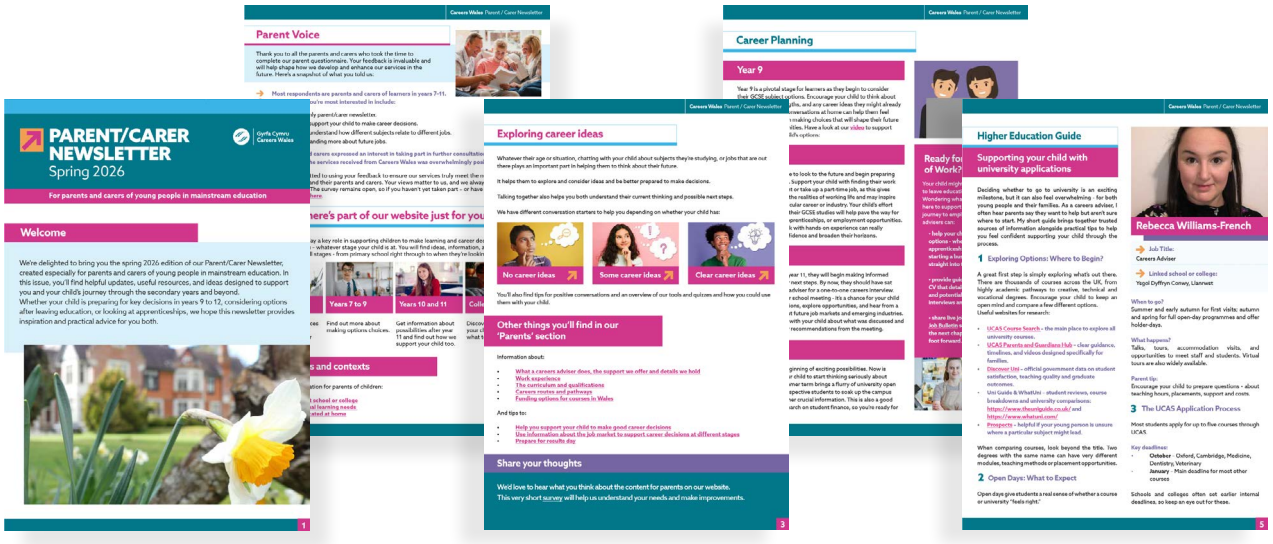
Our work in **Key Stage 3** focuses on broadening horizons and the raising aspirations of young people in Years 8 and 9 as they prepare to choose their option subjects. We use a variety of tools to do this, including group sessions, interviews, online quizzes and interactive sessions.

Our focus in **Key Stage 4** is to support young people progress onto their next stage of their education and career. Pupils support is tailored and differentiated to meet their individual needs. These learners are introduced to the evolving world of work and encouraged to learn more about their career options and how to take their next steps.

Careers advisers are available to support young people in **post-16** education both in sixth form and college. The online booking system for digital guidance appointments is the primary route for FE learners to access support. This support is primarily focused on those learners identified as at risk of not completing their post 16 course and preventing them becoming NEET (Not in Education. Employment or Training).

We have a team of advisers who also support young people who are educated in a setting outside mainstream schools (EOTAS) or at home, ensuring equity in terms of access to careers guidance and coaching. There has been a focus on partnership work with local authorities this year to help identify and offer our services to those who are Electively Home Educating (EHE). As a result, we have nearly doubled the number of customers known to us. Of the local authority EHE cohorts identified, 95% have been offered services in 2025.

We recognise that for many young people, parents and carers are key influencers on the career decisions of their children. Engaging and collaborating with parents is a key priority for us, providing them with up-to-date information and advice to support their child in their career planning. Our advisers attend parent evenings and events where they can share up to date information on options and the labour market. We have also trialled several digital parents events, promoted through schools and general marketing, where adviser appointments could be booked online.



These have seen very high demand and positive feedback so are planned to be extended next year.

Our termly newsletters have been well received by schools and parents alike. The parent newsletter is shared with all secondary schools in Wales, who in turn are asked to share directly with parents. We also have a tailored newsletter for parents of young people with ALN.

We have expanded the termly infographic reports we provide for mainstream and special schools throughout Wales this year following a very positive response from schools on the impact and benefits of the data provided, particularly during periods with Estyn inspections and governor meetings. The report illustrates the variety and volume of careers guidance and employer engagement activity we have delivered, as well as teacher support for curriculum delivery. The enhancements to the reports this year included Career Check survey results and three-year destinations trends.

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01 Sep 2025 to 24 Jul 2026

Number of interviews	481	Number of pupils attending interviews	327
Number of pupils who did not attend interviews	122	Percentage of pupils receiving an interview before leaving Year 11	85%
Advocacy and Liaison interactions	166	Parental contacts	22
Number of group sessions delivered	2	Number of pupils attending group sessions	157
Number of SMS/ emails sent	1,490	ALN reviews attended by Careers Wales staff	7
Number of employer activities schools engaged in	16	Number of pupils attending employer activities	482
CWRE consultancy sessions attended by school staff	1	CWRE training sessions attended by school staff	3

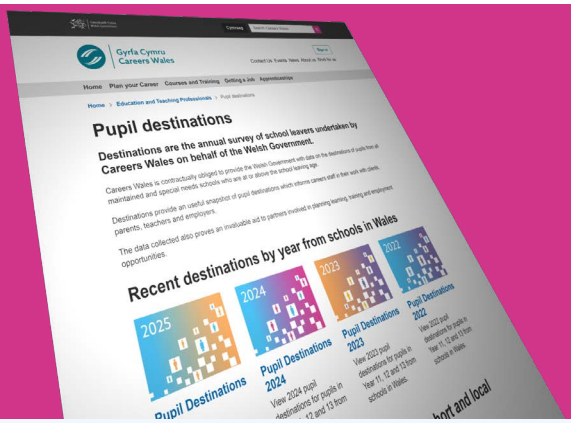
Pupil Destinations 2025

The annual survey of school leavers is undertaken by Careers Wales on behalf of the Welsh Government. This survey is compiled from data supplied by Careers Wales and looks at the education, employment and training progression routes chosen by young people. It provides a useful snapshot of pupil destinations which informs careers staff in their work with clients, parents, teachers, and employers as well proving an invaluable aid to partners and colleagues involved in planning learning, training, and employment opportunities.

When comparing the 2025 data with previous years, it is important to take account of other influencing factors, in particular in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid pandemic.

Key findings from the survey of 54,895 school leavers from Years 11, 12 and 13 in 2025 include:

- The percentage of Year 11 school-leavers returning to full-time education was 88.7% in 2025, an increase from 87.5% in 2024.
- In 2025, the percentage of year 11 school-leavers who were known Not to be in Education, Training or Employment (NEET) was 2.1%. This is a decrease when compared to 2024 where 2.4% of school-leavers were known to be NEET.
- The combined percentage entering the labour market (employment or work-based training with either employed or non-employed status) across all year groups in 2025 was 7.6%, which is lower than the 2024 figure of 8.2%.



Pupil Destinations 2025

The full report can be found here

CASE STUDY

Our service can be valuable to both parents and young people navigating next steps together.



Lucy first became aware of careers support when her son Jude was in post 16 education. Jude, who has additional learning needs, had already met careers adviser Alison through school.

Over time, Lucy began to understand just how valuable consistent careers support was for her son. As Jude got older and his annual reviews began to focus more on preparing for adulthood, Alison became more involved. This helped everyone build a clearer picture of what would and wouldn't work for Jude.

"*Alison quite quickly got the measure of him,*" says Lucy. "*She's got to know that actually he's really outdoorsy. He's not very academic, but he's very practical.*"

Jude has very clear ideas about what he enjoys and what he doesn't, something Alison respected from the start. "*He'll tell you very straight whether he'll do something or not,*" Lucy laughs. "So Alison realised quite quickly that she needed to work with what really motivated him."
One thing that stood out for Lucy and Jude was how carefully Alison listened. Lucy recalls, "*If he was telling her that he didn't want to do something, she wouldn't push him into it. She actually listened to what he wanted to do and found something that suited him.*"

Jude agrees, "*They were good, the sessions. Alison is really friendly and she listens.*"

Because Alison understood Jude's love of mountain biking and being outdoors, she focused on opportunities that matched those interests. After ruling out options that weren't right, including outdoor centres involving water sports, Alison contacted local bike related businesses to explore work experience.

In Autumn 2025, Jude started work experience at Alpkit, an outdoor bike shop. He spent one day a week working alongside a bike mechanic. What began as three weeks, soon turned into five after staff saw how well he fitted in. "*They were really pleased with him,*" Lucy explains. "*They even contacted Alison to say that if they had*

enough work, he could come back again in the spring."

For Jude, the experience made a real difference. He particularly enjoyed being hands on. *"I did learn loads,"* he says. *"I helped sell a couple of bikes and I washed bikes. I did loads of different stuff. They were also really friendly."*

Lucy added, *"He was able to actually do things, he wasn't just standing and watching, I wasn't worried about him there. He felt almost like part of the team while he was there."*

While Jude's next steps are still being explored, Alison has continued to help by making contacts with colleges and exploring realistic options that match Jude's strengths and interests. Jude has recently been accepted on to an entry level course at Llysfasi College.

Lucy feels reassured knowing they're not navigating the future alone. *"It's difficult when you fall in between – when you're not suited to independent living skills but you're not academic either,"* Lucy explains. *"But it really helps having someone who understands that and is looking out for Jude."*

For Lucy, the biggest benefit has been knowing that someone else understands Jude as an individual.

"You've got nothing to lose, really," she says. *"It's just nice to have someone else looking out for you."*

Wellbeing of Future Generations Act

We are committed to working in accordance with the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act and applying the 5 ways of working that underpin the sustainable development principle. By following these ways of working we aim to work better with our partners and stakeholders, avoid repeating past mistakes and tackle some of the long-term challenges we are facing.

Long term

We work on the principle we support our customers' ability to plan their careers in the long-term, becoming confident in their ability to plan their careers independently. We recognise, however, that customers' needs are often focussed on the short-term, particularly for those customers who are NEET, unemployed, or economically inactive, and seeking to re-enter education, training or employment urgently. We always seek to balance the short-term needs of our customers with the need to develop their ability to manage their careers in the longer-term.

Prevention

Our service is predicated on supporting customers to make well-considered and informed decisions about their next steps, making their transition from one setting to the next a smooth and effective one. Successful transitions into employment, education or training means that customers are prevented from becoming NEET or unemployed or being at greater risk of dropping out and disengaging.

Integration

We work with a wide range of partners and stakeholders from a range of settings. Our service is a key element in a wide range of policy initiatives and programmes, both in terms of direct services to customers and stakeholders and as a data provider to support the work of partners to support their objectives.

Collaboration

Allied to the integration of our work is our commitment to collaborative working. We work as part of a broad range of partnerships, all supporting each other to meet our well-being objectives.

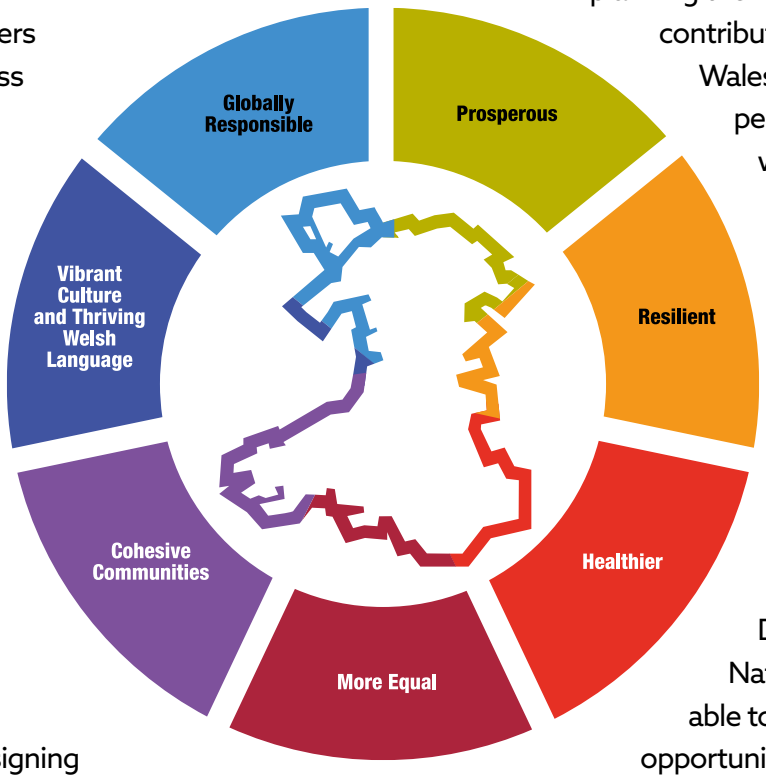
Involvement

We promote the involvement of Careers Wales employees, customers, parents/carers, and stakeholders in service design, development and evaluation. This involvement helps us ensure that the service we deliver is the one best suited for delivering on the wellbeing goals.

Links to Wellbeing of Future Generation Goals

Our support for customers from all backgrounds and of all ages enables them to fulfil their potential no matter what their circumstances. By providing an inclusive and responsive service to those in greatest need we are playing our part in creating a **More Equal Wales.**

By equipping customers with the skills to access opportunities in the labour market and developing the knowledge and understanding that will help them plan their careers effectively we are helping to build a **Prosperous Wales.**



By placing ourselves in the heart of our communities and designing services that are inclusive, accessible, and comprehensive and delivered from careers centres, Job Centres and a range of other outreach and community locations, we are helping to build a **Wales of Cohesive Communities** By supporting customers to achieve gainful employment and training, we help them contribute positively to their communities.

By promoting the value of Welsh language skills across all our services we help young people to see the value of the Welsh language in the labour market, ensuring out work plays its part in supporting a **Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language.**

The case studies illustrate how our customers feel more confident and less anxious about planning their careers and thus contribute to a Healthier Wales. This focus on people's mental wellbeing comes at what can often be a challenging and stressful time in their lives.

Through our work with employers like Bute Energy, Morlais, Hafren Dyfrdwy and National Grid we are able to highlight the career opportunities available in a Net Zero Wales and contribute to a **Globally Responsible Wales**.

Across the full range of our services, our work in developing customers' social and economic progression through greater awareness of the labour market, and ensuring future generations are aware of the opportunities available in the future Welsh economy, we are helping to build a **Resilient Wales**.

Working with employers and schools

- We facilitated **1,800** bespoke, employer-led activities in secondary schools across Wales. These included a range of single and multi-employer activities including site visits, curriculum specific events, workshops, presentations and carousel days. We achieved our goal of delivering an average of at least six employer led activities in every secondary school in Wales.
- We continued to deliver a bespoke employer engagement service to special schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) with almost **170** sessions supported in **65** different settings.
- We delivered **663** careers and work-related experiences (CWRE) training and consultancy sessions, supporting over **1,000** individual teachers in **150** secondary schools, special schools and PRUs across Wales. These sessions focused on key topics, such as embedding CWRE in the curriculum, leading CWRE programmes, labour market information and CWRE tools and resources.
- We continued to develop our support for primary schools and delivered CWRE consultancy and/or remote professional learning in **63** schools.

Our team of business engagement advisers (BEAs) bring together schools and employers, supporting collaboration with the aim of informing, inspiring and motivating young people about their career opportunities.

In line with developments linked to Curriculum for Wales, we continued to focus our education business work on embedding CWRE in the curriculum, aiming to support subject specific engagement, with less emphasis on traditional employer input. We introduced a new way of recording education business work, and we are pleased to report that over half of our employer led activities directly supported the delivery of CWRE as part of Areas of Learning & Experience (AoLE). Evaluative feedback on this work was very positive with 97% of learners saying activities improved their knowledge of the labour market, 94% of teachers said the activities met their aims and 95% of employers said the activity helped them meet their objectives.

We expanded our series of sector-based 'Work in Focus' curriculum challenges, supporting the embedding of CWRE within the Curriculum for Wales. This builds on a pilot developed in 2024-25, where the original challenges were based on Welsh Government key investment sectors. At the same time, we made the decision to pivot away from large-scale careers events, partly due to the challenges schools faced in relation to transport costs and releasing teachers.

We now have approximately 50 different employer led challenges based on Regional Skills Partnership priority sectors and

key labour market themes like green skills. For example, we have developed a national Net Zero communication challenge with Net Zero Industry Wales, supported by organisations like National Grid, along with several other 'green sector' work in focus challenges:

Bute Energy

How to recycle wind turbine blades when they need to be replaced, delivered at St Cennydd Community School and Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bryn Tawe.

morlais

Design a new tidal energy turbine, delivered at Ysgol Uwchradd Caergybi (and will be delivered to all schools in Anglesey next year).

bluestone
NATIONAL PARK RESORT

Design a sustainable packaging product for takeaway food, delivered at Milford Haven School.

HAFREN DYFRDWY

Develop and present ideas for water conservation, delivered at Ysgol Rhiwabon.

WILLMOTT DIXON

Design a green space in a new school at Ysgol Bro Taf.

ccr energy

Design a community space that produces its own energy, delivered at Cardinal Newman Catholic School.

We have now delivered these challenges in almost 60 schools across Wales, and 100% of teachers said the challenges helped learners to understand the link between what they learn in school and the world of work, and 96% of teachers said the challenges raised learner awareness of careers in the sector.

To support bespoke curriculum work, our national searchable database of employers, the Education Business Exchange, is still available to schools. Schools continue to have access to a range of digital employer resources including a library of employer videos and digital employer packages linked to Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs). We also maintained our offer to support schools to develop their alumni communities and relaunched our alumni toolkit which we developed in conjunction with Future First.

CASE STUDY

Exploring careers in communication

Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Learners at Ysgol Hendrefelin explore careers in communication at the DVLA's contact centre

Ysgol Hendrefelin

Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency

Ysgol Hendrefelin's ASD unit partnered with Careers Wales and the DVLA contact centre to run a tailored communication skills workshop for Key Stage 4 learners, helping learners build confidence and develop key skills for the world of work.

The idea for the workshop came from a School Valued Partner agreement meeting between Cerian Flannery, CWRE co-ordinator at Ysgol Hendrefelin, and Bobbie, business engagement adviser at Careers Wales. Cerian explained that communication can be a barrier for some ASD learners, particularly when it comes to social cues, expressing ideas clearly, or joining unfamiliar conversations. Together, they agreed that placing communication in a real work-based context would help make it more meaningful, and boost pupil confidence.

Over several planning meetings, Bobbie worked closely with DVLA Contact Centre trainers Lynne and Lisa, alongside Cerian, to design a bespoke and accessible session. The workshop focused on communication within the DVLA's contact centre and used real-life scenarios, broken down into manageable and relatable activities such as phone call role play, using headsets, and team listening exercises.

The session used clear and simple language, lots of visual prompts, and structured discussions. Learners were given space to take part at their own pace, with no pressure, in a setting that felt calm and supportive. Flexibility and inclusivity were key throughout the session's delivery. The workshop gave learners a better understanding of what good communication looks like in a workplace and helped build confidence in speaking, listening, and showing empathy. The involvement of real employees from DVLA helped make the world of work feel more relatable and achievable.

"This workshop was a brilliant example of how thoughtful planning, and the right employer partnership can open the world of work to our learners. Seeing our learners so engaged, confident, and proud of their communication was amazing."– Cerian Flannery, CWRE co-ordinator, Ysgol Hendrefelin

"It was fun. I wore a headset and said hello like a phone call. I listened and helped."– Pupil, Ysgol Hendrefelin

"We really enjoyed working with the school and Careers Wales. It was great to see learners getting involved and growing in confidence."– Lynne, DVLA contact centre trainer

"We're really excited about this bespoke way of working with Careers Wales and schools. It gives us a chance to share real career experiences in a way that's meaningful for all learners. Supporting workshops like this helps us show how communication, empathy, and workplace skills can be developed early; and that the DVLA is committed to helping young people prepare for the world of work."– Jess Davies, HR partner, DVLA

School Valued Partner Initiative

The School Valued Partner Initiative, which aims to build sustainable links between schools and key employers, continued during 2025-26 and includes over 100 partnerships across Wales involving high profile employers like Kier Group, Morgan Sindall, Castell Howell Foods, BBC, JCB, DVLA, Airbus UK, Aston Martin, BAE Systems, John Lewis, Zip World, British Airways, and many more.

We continue to use the initiative to source 'teacher encounters' - opportunities for teachers to learn about key local employers through visits and presentations. In total, 33 formal teacher encounters took place, involving over 140 teachers, with organisations such as Haven Holidays, Scott Construction, Celtic Collection, McArthurGlen and Eastman Chemicals.

Many of our Valued Partner employers were recognised at our annual Valued Partner Awards ceremony, hosted at the Senedd on 28 January 2026, with a keynote speech by the Minister for Skills, Jack Sergeant MS, and contributions from St Cenydd Community School and Ysgol Uwchradd Caergybi. The categories and winners were:

- **Outstanding achievement award** – **Hafren Dyfrdwy**
- **Most supportive work experience employer** – **Cambrian Village Trust**
- **Best ongoing relationship with a school** – **Voco St. Davids Cardiff**
- **Best promoter of Welsh in the workplace** – **Swansea Bay University Health Board**
- **Outstanding personal contribution** – **Conor Lyn, Berry Smith Lawyers**
- **Best newcomer** – **Atlas Copco**
- **Best supporter of the net zero agenda** – **Morlais**
- **Most supportive small business** – **The Potting Shed Cafe**







We continued to deliver regional 'What Next' careers fairs designed for ALN learners. The six events were attended in total by 851 learners from 53 schools and supported by almost 80 employers and 30 agencies. We also introduced a series of employer-led workshops that were held at these events and delivered by organisations like Screen Alliance Wales, Bute Energy and Castell Howell Foods.

We placed over 900 young people into placements between 2022-2025 as part of the Welsh Government commissioned Tailored Work Experience (TWE) project.During 2025-26 we used core funding to source placements for just over 130 learners in West and North Wales. The TWE project will be expanded during 2026-27 to deliver at least 500 placements for learners in schools drawn from each local authority in Wales, as well as a pilot with ALN learners from a cluster of special schools in South Wales and a pilot to place Key Stage 4 learners engaged in the Junior Apprenticeship programme at selected further education colleges.

Syniadau Mawr Cymru | Big Ideas Wales

We continued to deliver Welsh Government's Big Ideas Wales project in primary and secondary schools, aimed at promoting entrepreneurship and business start-up to young people. We facilitated a new national competition to find Wales's most enterprising primary schools in three categories - ECO/Sustainability, Creativity/Innovation and Social/Community impact, with the winners of each category receiving a cash prize of £2,500 and a series of £100 prizes for shortlisted runners up.

The winners of this competition were:

- ECO/Sustainability - Ysgol Halfway, Llanelli
- Creativity/Innovation - Ysgol Acrefair, Wrexham
- Social/Community impact - Cwm Glas Primary School, Swansea

During the year we also started work with a software company to develop an entrepreneurship curriculum resource within Minecraft Education Edition. The resource will include a series of 'worlds' featuring entrepreneurship related tasks, challenges and learning opportunities, set within a fun and engaging virtual environment. The resource will be supplemented with a range of teaching guides which will form part of a series of professional learning activities delivered by our CWRE coordinators. The aim of the resource is to engage more schools and learners and offer a more effective means of raising awareness of entrepreneurship and developing enterprise skills in primary learners.

In secondary schools, we facilitated a total of 1,385 role model entrepreneurship workshops with over 43,200 learners. We continued to promote the resources originally developed during 2023-24 as part of the Big Ideas Wales contract to support teachers to embed entrepreneurship in their teaching as part of Curriculum for Wales. These resources include an enterprise and entrepreneurship teacher toolkit and the Enterprise Ideas Bank (a series of practical ideas to embed entrepreneurship in engaging ways), which have been viewed collectively on Hwb almost 8,000 times.

Our team of CWRE co-ordinators aim to build the skills, knowledge, and confidence of education professionals to deliver effective careers programmes and integrate CWRE effectively into their curriculum.

We continue to offer teachers a range of professional resources such as our CWRE toolkit and toolbox, and classroom resources like Career City and CareersCraft, which now have nearly 13,000 combined views on Hwb.

Another cohort of teachers from across Wales embarked on our flagship Level Six OCR accredited Certificate in Careers Leadership qualification. We also launched an updated professional learning calendar which included a range of CWRE related learning opportunities for teachers.

2025-26 was the third year of our pilot of the Careers Wales Quality Award (CWQA). The CWQA features three stages (Leadership, Development and Impact) and is closely aligned with Curriculum for Wales guidance. 36 schools started stage one of the award in 2023-24 (five primary schools, four 'through' schools, 21 secondary schools, five special schools and one PRU), and currently we have over 60 schools working towards one of the three stages. During the past year, four schools completed all three stages of the award, with many more expected to complete the award in 2026-27.

We have evaluated stages one and two of the programme and already the award has proved successful in supporting better strategic planning and leadership of CWRE across schools, increasing engagement with governors, parents, employers, and community stakeholders, enhancing teacher confidence, promoting more purposeful employer engagement and authentic, real-world learning experiences, and improving monitoring, evaluation and evidence-based decision-making.



CASE STUDY

Creating a tailored careers fair for EOTAS learners

TEAM @Severn
Teaching, Engaging, Achieving, Motivating

Careers Wales helped the T.E.A.M@Severn centre ensure CWRE was accessible and meaningful for every learner by tailoring a careers fair format to provide a calm and supportive setting.

T.E.A.M@Severn is an Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) provision in Canton, Cardiff, offering interim education for learners who are not in full-time schooling due to health or exceptional circumstances. T.E.A.M@Severn focuses on re-engaging those learners with their education and broadening their aspirations in the world of work.

With support from Careers Wales, the centre hosted its first ever tailored careers fair designed to give learners meaningful access to employers and career opportunities in a calm, supportive setting.

As part of the Careers Wales Quality Award (CWQA) pilot, a need was identified to provide learners with opportunities to build career knowledge, gain awareness of post-16 pathways, and develop career management skills through engagement with employers and agencies. Staff therefore regularly took learners to large city careers fairs. However, many learners found these events overwhelming, crowded, and difficult to navigate.

To address this, Sean, a CWRE curriculum coordinator at Careers Wales, suggested organising a smaller, tailored careers fair hosted directly at the T.E.A.M@Severn centre. This would create an event designed specifically around learners' needs, offering a calmer environment for neurodivergent learners and anyone who might benefit from a quieter space. The idea was well received, and the team named their first fair Future Fest.

Learners were surveyed about which sectors, services, and businesses they wanted represented. Within six weeks, the centre –secured over 20 delegates, including local businesses, FE colleges, support services, and entrepreneurs. Parents were also invited, making it a whole-community event. Learners shaped the day by helping with planning and showcasing their

hospitality skills, including baking cakes and providing refreshments.

The impact was immediate. Learners who had previously disengaged at large fairs felt more comfortable and confident in the calmer setting. They were able to have meaningful one-to-one conversations with delegates, ask questions, and explore future pathways without feeling pressured. Several learners have since followed up with providers they met on the day, with some already beginning applications for post-16 courses and apprenticeships. By tailoring the format, Careers Wales helped the T.E.A.M@ Severn centre ensure CWRE was accessible and meaningful for every learner.

The success of Future Fest 2025 means it is now set to become an annual event in the centre's careers programme.

Feedback from learners:

> *I liked talking to the lady from college about Health and Beauty courses I could do.*

> *It was calm and much quieter.*

> *I didn't have to wait around to talk to the people.*

Delegate feedback:

> *A lovely opportunity to talk to students one-to-one about work experience opportunities and careers in construction.*

> *Great to interact with the students and raise awareness of NHS careers.*

> *It was great to see so many young people actively engaging in events such as this and really considering their future.*

Working Wales

Working Wales is an all-age service targeted at young people aged 16-17 from the point they leave education through to adults 18+ regardless of their status. The service emphasises a local and national presence, assisting people through to their next destination including further learning, training opportunities, securing employment and redundancy support and provides signposting to relevant and suitable employability and support agencies where appropriate.

Cymru'n Gweithio
Working Wales

Services have been designed to be inclusive, accessible and comprehensive and can be delivered from careers centres, Job Centres and a range of other outreach and community locations such as libraries.

Careers advisers and employability coaches

Support is provided by our careers advisers and employability coaches in a blended format to suit customer needs and preferences, including in-person interviews, group sessions, telephone, video and webchat. Services include support with applying for jobs, creating CVs and interview preparation including mock interviews.

Young people

4,735 young people aged 15-17, were supported during 2025-26. Support included **12,295** direct interactions with individual customers including **4,618** in-person interactions, **2,654** telephone interviews and **2,691** interactions supported by our Careers Wales Connect (CWC) telephone and digital support service. We also undertook **8,552** advocacy interactions on behalf of young people with employers, learning providers and support agencies.

Adults

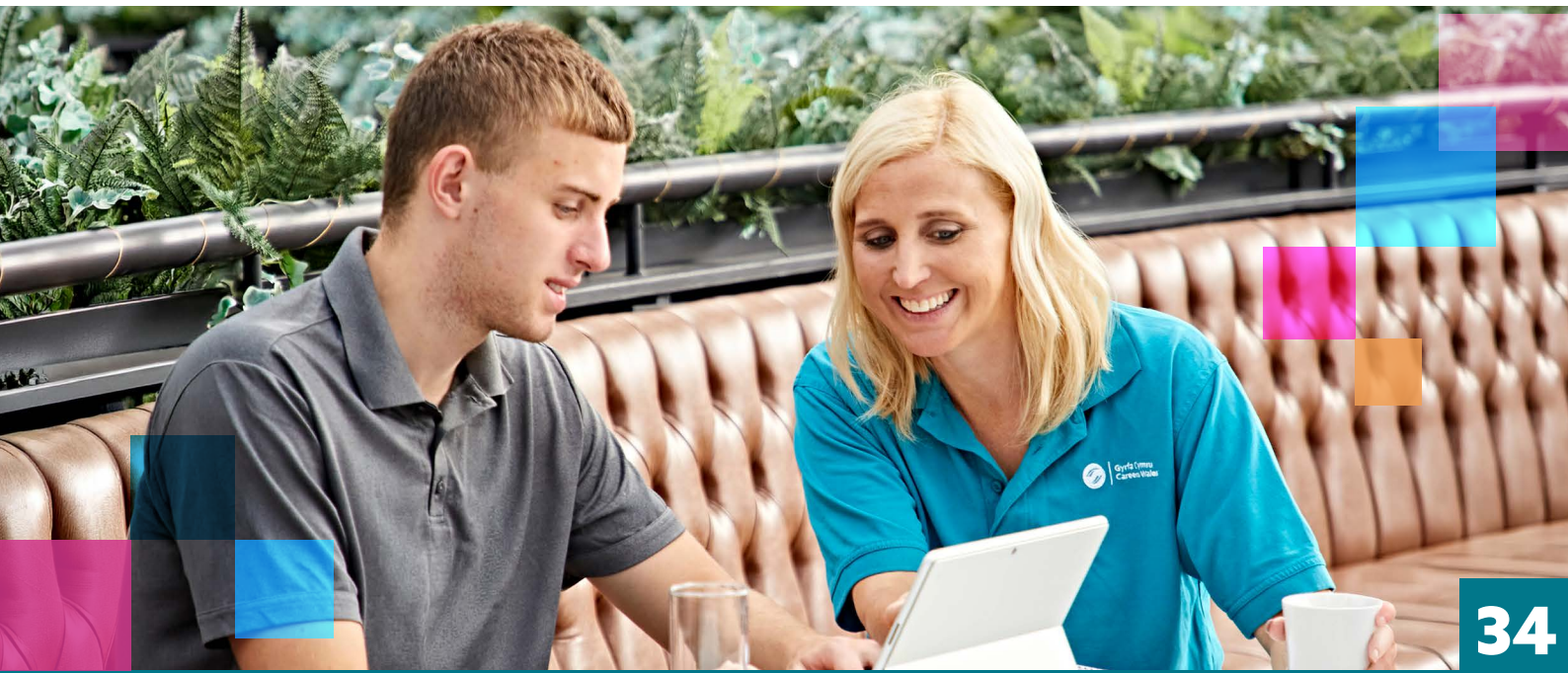
We support adults aged 18+ who are unemployed, economically inactive, facing redundancy and those with have barriers to progression. We also support employed adults who are seeking advice, guidance and support to upskill, retrain or change direction in their career planning. During 2025-26 **29,939** adults received Working Wales support. This was delivered via **84,528** direct interactions with individual customers which included **33,053** in-person interviews, **17,803** telephone interviews and **2,689** video interactions. In addition, our CWC service provided **19,025** support interactions. We also undertook **18,833** advocacy interventions on behalf of customers with employers, learning providers and support agencies.

Redundancy support

As part of Welsh Government's ReAct+ service, our teams of careers advisers, employability coaches and managers work closely with employers and individuals who are facing redundancy, both large-scale and small-scale across Wales. This work is undertaken as part of a wider team of agencies operating across Wales including DWP and Communities for Work+ (CfW+) partners as well as other agencies or organisations as appropriate, including trades unions and local authority employability teams. Frequently being the first people on site to help, our advisers offer support and guidance to people often facing traumatic and challenging experiences. They provide employers with packages which include the immediate rapid response support, one-to-one careers guidance, employability skills support and help preparing applications.

- This year our advisers worked with **2,516** individuals facing redundancy, delivering **10,484** direct one-to-one interventions as well as **3,499** advocacy and liaison interventions on behalf of these customers. We also submitted **1,520** ReAct+ Action Plans in support of customer applications for funding.

- We also provided on-site support at employer premises, delivering information sessions and one-to-one clinics. During redundancies we work in close collaboration with key partners to deliver joint group sessions (usually involving DWP and CfW+) so that customers are made aware of their options in relation to benefits, as well as the support that Working Wales and the ReAct+ programme offers. The integrated approach by this dedicated multi-agency team helped to minimise difficulties and challenges faced by customers during the build-up and aftermath of redundancies.





CASE STUDY

Charlotte's story

Charlotte rebuilt her confidence with help from her employability coach and careers adviser.

Charlotte had worked in the voluntary sector for 18 years. She enjoyed supporting people but had been looking for a more senior role for some time. After many unsuccessful applications, her confidence began to drop. She said, *"I was stuck in a cycle of apply - interview - rejection. It was becoming frustrating and was impacting on my wellbeing."*

Charlotte met employability coach Thanuja Hettiarachchi when Thanuja was asked to speak to a group of asylum seekers Charlotte was helping. As she listened to Thanuja explain how she helps people progress in their careers, something clicked.

She explained, *"As she was talking, I felt like she was talking to me. I came away and booked an appointment the next day."*

In one-to-one sessions with Thanuja, Charlotte explored her career path, her skills, and new opportunities she hadn't thought about before. She said, *"I never imagined I had anything to offer the private sector or Welsh Government, but looking through jobs together opened my eyes to my own skills and how I could use them elsewhere."*

Charlotte decided to discuss her dyslexia for the first time. She said: *"Thanuja reassured me that being open about it wouldn't disadvantage me. It actually meant the process could be made more equal for me."*

Careers adviser Carly helped Charlotte to apply for a Personal Learning Account. With Carly's support, she learned about imposter syndrome and how to prepare for interviews better. She said, *"I looked at people I admired and realised that their route to more senior jobs hadn't been linear either. Some didn't have degrees. This was a real revelation to me."*

Charlotte aimed to leave her job within a year. She expanded her search with help from friends and advisers.

With Thanuja's help, Charlotte sent in six applications. She got three interviews in nine months. She shared draft applications for feedback and felt more confident with each step. Charlotte said, *"She gave me excellent feedback. I disclosed my dyslexia on the form and felt ready to move forward."*

As a reasonable adjustment, Charlotte received interview questions in advance. Each interview helped build her confidence.

"Having the chance to practise applications and having had two interviews meant I went into the third with more confidence and determination - and that's the one where I was successful."

Charlotte got the job as Senior Diversity, Inclusion and Outreach Lead at Welsh Government. She received excellent feedback from the panel. They told her it had been a highly competitive field.

She felt proud of what she achieved. Reflecting on her journey, Charlotte said, *"I'm thankful to my previous employer where I gained the skills, experience and knowledge that helped me take this next step."*

"My success started with Thanuja listening, letting me have a little cry, and giving me support through the whole process. It has finally landed me a new, rewarding and exciting role."

Support for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees:

We supported **294** migrants, asylum seekers and refugees across Wales (77 asylum seekers, **194** refugees and **23** 'other' migrant customers). Support included:

- Funding and customer support for the UK ENIC Statement of Comparability service which demonstrates how qualifications obtained abroad compare to UK qualification frameworks. This provides valuable assurance to prospective employers about the validity and level of overseas qualifications. This had previously been a significant barrier for sanctuary seekers. This year we supported **174** applications on behalf of migrant and refugee customers. An ENIC customer leaflet has been developed to communicate the purpose, benefits and application process more clearly to relevant customers.

- We continue to enhance stakeholder awareness of the UK ENIC support via multiple channels, including direct contact with support organisations and customers, the Working Wales stakeholder newsletter, and network meetings with Wales Strategic Management Partnership, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and the Employability Forum.

- The identification of outreach locations and partners who can broker access to our services for migrant customers. For example, we have developed a productive relationship with the Grange Pavilion in Cardiff following a co-location pilot at their premises and attended two events at the venue. We also continue to deliver services from the Reach+ ESOL Assessment Support Centre based at Cardiff and Vale College.

- Continued involvement with the Welsh Strategic Migration Partnership ESOL and Employability Group and regular communication with the Welsh Refugee Council (WRC) including the continuation of a bespoke referral system for WRC customers who request Working Wales support. We also attend the Reach ESOL network in Cardiff.

- Delivery of ongoing training to advisers to enhance their knowledge and confidence in supporting customers who have been forced to migrate to Wales.This year, learning topics included 'Immigration Statuses (delivered by the WRC) and Student Finance Wales- Residency Overview.

- We have also continued to provide additional training and support to a specialist team of migrants and refugee 'champions'. This ensures that all regions have an expert with additional training, knowledge and experience in this field, who can advise and mentor colleagues as needed.

Secure estate

Support for adults is also provided to offenders in custody. Using a referral process, prisoners have access to one-to-one guidance as well as information about the local labour market and support to apply for opportunities pre-release. We continue to be available to prisoners upon release from prison to provide support during the transition period and to help prevent reoffending.

During this period, Working Wales significantly strengthened its presence across the prison estate, building momentum through participation in advisory boards, employer engagement sessions, multi-agency forums, and resettlement-focused activities. These efforts have increased the visibility of our service, improved referral pathways, and enhanced progression opportunities linked to employment, training, and release planning.

Some notable events include the Resettlement Careers Fairs hosted at both HMP Berwyn and HMP Cardiff, as well as the Construction Careers Fair at HMP Eastwood Park. In addition, we organised and attended a range of job fairs at HMP Parc and HMP Swansea. These events offered valuable opportunities for prisoners to connect with employers, explore career pathways, and engage directly with support partners.

Throughout the year, we continued embedding our delivery within the prison environment, supporting positive employability and resettlement outcomes.
At HMP Swansea and HMP Parc, we made good use of ReAct+ funding to support eligible and suitable prisoners in completing a variety of training courses. This initiative helped prepare them for release and enabled them to move closer to securing employment upon release.

Our ongoing attendance at Employment Advisory Boards, participation in Curriculum Review meetings, involvement in multi-agency progression discussions, and proactive employer engagement have all contributed to stronger collaboration and increased visibility within the prisons. We've also worked closely with education partners to ensure well-coordinated planning and support for prisoners' development and transition.

We supported **1,486** prisoners and held **3,280** interventions, including follow-up support.

In addition to our work in men's prisons across Wales, we also support female prisoners at HMP Styal and HMP Eastwood Park and have allocated named advisers to these institutions to ensure that women prisoners locating back to Wales upon release are appropriately supported.

We also continued to work closely with prison staff in the new employment bureaus to support prisoners with employability skills and to help ease their transition back in to work upon release.



CASE STUDY

Stephen's story

Stephen, 50, had worked servicing surveying equipment for many years. One day, he was told that his depot was closing. He said: "*It was a complete bombshell. I went into panic mode. I thought, what am I going to do?*"

The type of specialist equipment Stephen works with is serviced by very few companies. There were no similar service centres locally.

Stephen searched online and found Careers Wales. He then booked an appointment with a Working Wales careers adviser, Catrin. He wanted to know if his skills could transfer into another role. But he also had another idea in mind.

Stephen explained: "*I said to Catrin I'd love to have a go on my own. There's no one locally doing what I do.*"

During their sessions, Stephen showed Catrin the specialist equipment he services and explained his manufacturer training. Catrin suggested he speak to Business Wales about starting his own company. From there, things moved quickly.

Stephen applied for ReAct+ funding to complete updated manufacturer training on new equipment. ReAct+ funding supports people affected by redundancy to gain new skills and qualifications.

Catrin helped with the application and spoke directly with the training provider.

Stephen also received advice about tax, accounts and running a business. He decided to work with an accountant so he could focus on his technical work.

He said: "*It was frightening at first. I've never worked for myself before. I went in feeling like, 'Oh my God, I'm 50 and out of work,' to completely motivated and ready to run with it.*"

Stephen set up his company, Cardiff Laser and Survey Solutions Limited. He contacted previous customers to let them know he was starting out on his own. The response was immediate.

The business has grown rapidly in its first months and is already thriving. He said: "*It's been a very busy seven months.*"
Stephen encourages anyone facing redundancy to seek support: "*I'd say 100% go and have a chat. It can feel daunting, but it's worth doing.*"

He added: "*They point you in the right direction and hold your hand through it. That's what they did for me.*"

Stephen is now running his own successful business and looking ahead with confidence.

Events

Our team organised and/or attended a total of **211** events during 2025-26. These events support customers by reaching into parts of Wales that are more inaccessible; where we don't have established access points or where we are able to work with partners to offer an enhanced service. Events attended can be summarised into the following categories:

- Redundancy related events (6%)
- Recruitment/jobs fairs (49%)
- Prison and probation related (6%)
- Pop-up events (7%)
- Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) related events (5%)
- Other (27%)

Other events included business events, one-stop-shop events, over-50s events, veteran events and apprenticeship fairs. Examples include:

Cardiff & Vale sustainable, renewable and green careers event

Led by Careers Wales in collaboration with partners, this event provided support to people who were interested in pursuing a learning pathway / career within the green sector. Over **150** people attended the event at our Cardiff careers centre where they engaged with 30 exhibitors including Bute Energy & Big Issue Recruitment, Circular Resource Specialists Ltd, Gen Power Ltd, Ecotricity, 7 Steel UK, Morgan Sindall Construction and Lantra.

Feedback from customers

> *"The Careers Wales event and staff were excellent, exhibitors were engaging and clearly passionate about environmental progress."*

> *"It was great to understand about some opportunities and sectors I had not considered previously."*

Careers Wales apprenticeship event at Newport careers centre

This event highlighted apprenticeship opportunities across the region. **67** people attended the event and were able to find out about local opportunities and network with employers. One young person who attended the event subsequently had an interview for an apprenticeship at Specsavers and secured the position.

Customer feedback

> *"Everyone had excellent information to give and answered all my questions."*

Cardiff inclusive & supportive next steps - ALN transition & opportunities fair

This event for young people (16-25), provided a calm, welcoming and inclusive environments where attendees could explore opportunities and receive tailored guidance. Accessibility was a key priority, with sensory-friendly spaces, quiet zones, visual schedules and easy-read materials available. **75** people attended and thoroughly engaged with the event.

A range of inclusive, employers from various sectors with a commitment to recruiting a diverse workforce were invited to the event. Additionally, we invited specialist support organisations and learning providers e.g. We Care Wales, Cardiff Council, National Neurodivergence Team, National Museum of Wales, Office for National Statistics, Bute Energy, Screen Alliance Wales and Scope.

Safran Seats event during National Apprenticeship Week

We worked in partnership with Safran Seats, a local manufacturer of airline seats, with sites in both Cwmbran and Newport. The event saw **91** customers attend to learn more about the apprenticeship vacancies available, with a focus on Levels 3 - 6 in Engineering Pathways.

> *I'd like to extend a huge thank you to the team at Careers Wales for their invaluable support in promoting and delivering our recent event showcasing the apprenticeship opportunities available with Safran Seats for the 2026 academic cycle.*
>
> *Being new to both the company and the Early Careers space, I've relied heavily on the expertise within Careers Wales, and their passion for helping individuals enter the world of work has been evident throughout. Their guidance made a real difference, and we deem the event to be a big success for us. The coverage we received in the local media was even picked up by our Head Office in France, helping to elevate our brand both externally and internally.*

Customer feedback:

The following feedback has been received from customers via anonymous customer feedback surveys or via unsolicited emails and messages:

Services to Young People

> *The careers advice I received was very helpful and supportive. The guidance was clear, informative and made future options feel easier to understand. It helped build confidence in making decisions about next steps.*

> *The session was really helpful and I was extremely grateful for the opportunity to have support for my future.*

> *Very, very friendly and not overly focussed on getting it over and done with. They let me take my time and didn't rush me with my responses and explanations.*

> *My interview provided me with a 'plan b', if my 'plan a' doesn't work out how I would like it to.*

> *I really enjoyed the careers guidance interview and I would recommend it to people who are unsure what they want to do.*

> *The careers adviser contacted me because I wanted some advice about my son, who is in his final GCSE year and considering going to college to study electrical work and plumbing. The advice I received was great, thank you and the adviser was professional, polite, friendly and informative.*

> *As a home educator, I can't tell you how important your initial contact was. We would have missed this opportunity, so thank you again.*

> *Your adviser went above and beyond to make my son, who is home educated, feel at total ease. He felt uplifted and confident when we walked out of there which is a massive step.*

> *I just really appreciate the help and guiding me in the right direction so thank you.*

Working Wales

> *The service was excellent. I didn't need motivation as I am already motivated to find work but the help and advice made me feel much more positive.*

> *It was good to have a discussion about my future. I am worried but this service will offer great value for my future and peace of mind for me in the next few months, knowing I have expert advice available to me.*

> *This was an initial appointment for a very complex set of circumstances. Although I'm not yet clear on the path forward for me, it was still a very helpful first appointment to provide signposting and gave clear next steps for the process. I'm very grateful to Working Wales for the support I've received thus far.*

> *Thank you for your support and your kind staff. I especially appreciated the attentive listening, the quick email responses, and the prompt follow-up. I understand that the process takes time, and I also have other appointments later. But for the first appointment, my impression was very positive.*

> *What fantastic place - the very friendly environment makes you feel welcomed as soon as you walk through the door. All your questions are answered, and I couldn't ask for a better place to get a CV. Amazing that's all I can say. Thank you all for helping me out today.*

> *This is not the first time I have asked for support from Careers Wales, and I am always satisfied with the level of support.*

Building on the earlier case studies in this report, the following inspiring stories shine a light on the positive difference our services continue to make across Wales.



CASE STUDY

Daniel's story

Daniel first came across Careers Wales in Year 9. *"I wasn't quite sure what to do, as there were multiple options where I wanted to go,"* he explained. Daniel had subject choices to make, and so he attended one of the careers events at school. It was here that he first spoke to a careers adviser.

"It was just a nice chat about where I wanted to go and nothing was pushed. They helped me realise I had more options." he said.

As Daniel moved into his GCSE years, he started to meet regularly with Rhys, the careers adviser based at his school. Their sessions focused on early career ideas.

"We would mainly chat about the importance of revision and look at possible careers out there. We talked about falling on a backup plan when needed. It made my confidence a lot better because I knew there were different careers out there and different ways of going about things."

Daniel already had a rough plan in mind to do something in Information and Technology (IT). But the guidance he received helped him think more realistically about his next steps.

By the time he was studying for his A levels, Daniel began to reconsider his original plan of going to university. Through more conversations with Rhys, he explored whether university, an apprenticeship, or college would suit him best.

"Originally I thought I was going to go to university, but I realised that probably wasn't in my best interest," he said. "I prefer the more hands on sort of feel of work. I'd rather just get in there and do it."

Together, they looked at a range of apprenticeships, discussing the pros and cons of each one. During Year 12, Daniel also arranged his own work experience with the council's IT department. This gave him a real insight into the workplace.

An opportunity then came up with Carmarthenshire County Council for an apprenticeship in IT. Knowing that Daniel had enjoyed his work experience there, Rhys forwarded an email about the opportunity straight to him. He also supported him through the application process.

When Daniel was offered the apprenticeship, he said it felt like everything had come together. *"It felt amazing. It felt like the hard work had paid off."*

He is now completing an IT apprenticeship with Carmarthenshire County Council where he can earn while he learns and is enjoying every moment. *"I find it really good and it's a nice environment,"* he shared.

Looking back, Daniel says the support he received made a huge difference to his confidence and communication skills. It also encouraged him to keep going, even when things felt uncertain.

His advice to other young people thinking about speaking to a careers adviser is simple: *"I'd tell them to go and to never give up."*



CASE STUDY

Beth's story

Beth has taken her first step towards her dream career as a solicitor.

Beth, 16, from Neath, always had an interest in the legal sector. She explained, *"I had a placement with the South Wales Police, and it was a really good experience for me. From that I knew that I wanted to go into the legal field."*

Beth met with her school's careers adviser, Rebecca, to talk about her future. She said, *"I told Rebecca that my interest was in law but that I didn't really want to go to uni. I was really open to college, so initially I thought I'd be doing maybe A levels and law would be one of the options."*

"I was unaware of the apprenticeship route until I spoke to Rebecca."

Rebecca helped Beth to research options and found that JCP Solicitors offered apprenticeships through CILEX (Chartered Institute of Legal Executives). She also advised Beth to go to the open evening that JCP Solicitors was holding.

Beth continued, *"I found the open evening really helpful because I was able to see what kind of environment I would be working in if I was successful. They even showed me step by step how my career route would look."*

After the open evening at JCP Solicitors, Beth felt confident she wanted to apply for the apprenticeship. Rebecca suggested ways to enhance Beth's CV, such as practising touch typing, completing online courses, and learning the phonetic alphabet.
Beth explained, *"Rebecca really did enhance my CV, which I then applied with, and they offered me an interview. I had an in-person interview and then within a week they gave me a start date. It all started from that meeting with Rebecca."*

Beth is now an apprentice at JCP Solicitors. She works in the business support group four days a week and spends one day at Gower College studying CILEX. After that she hopes to progress to Level 5, with the long-term goal of becoming a solicitor.

Beth said, *"I never knew I'd be able to do an apprenticeship in law. It's surprising that by the time you work your way up the levels, you have a degree equivalent. You're earning while you're learning and getting practical experience."*

"I wouldn't be in this position without Rebecca. She was very warm and even if you didn't have a clue what you wanted to go into, she'd explore all the options with you. She definitely built my confidence towards applying for this role."



CASE STUDY

Ian's story

Tailored guidance opened doors for Ian to go back to work, doing something he really enjoys.

Ian had taken a break from work for 11 years to be a carer for his father and brother. When he was ready to re-enter the workforce, he first got in touch with PRIME Cymru. They recommended him to Careers Wales to help him look where to start.

He was given an appointment with Working Wales careers adviser, Lindsey, at the Swansea careers centre. Initially, they looked at Ian's experience before he stopped working and how his years of caring had given him transferable skills.

Lindsey helped Ian to look at roles he could naturally transition into. They identified that his skills aligned strongly with work in education and support roles. She then connected him with agencies that could help him get started in this area.

Lindsey also encouraged Ian to recognise the level of skills he already had, helping him regain confidence in his ability to start something new.

"I wanted to research how to get into teaching assistant work, and I joined a company called Prospero, through which I did all my DBS checks and was ready to start placements." Ian shared.

With his adviser's encouragement and continued guidance, Ian stepped into a variety of education settings.

"Since July of last year, I've worked in multiple schools all over south west Wales and Carmarthen." he said. "In that time, I've also progressed to cover supervision. As a level 2 teaching assistant, you can do cover supervision when needed, although there's still a teacher overseeing it."

Ian has since transitioned into a local council role where he supports young people who are not currently in mainstream education. He finds this work very rewarding.

What began as a daunting transition has become a positive new chapter, thanks to the guidance, reassurance and signposting he received.

"Lindsey was ace. It wasn't just careers advice, it was a chance to talk. For me it was also about getting stuff off your chest. I only had to ask 'This is what I want to do, how do I get there?' And then Lindsey was instrumental in helping me do that."

With support behind him and a growing passion for education, Ian is now looking forward with renewed confidence, purpose and enthusiasm for the future.

Corporate services

Staffing

The current headcount (31 March 2026) stood at **580**, a slight reduction from the previous year (591). Full time equivalent (FTE) stood at **521.92** FTE compared to 530.25 in 2025. **77%** of the workforce were female.

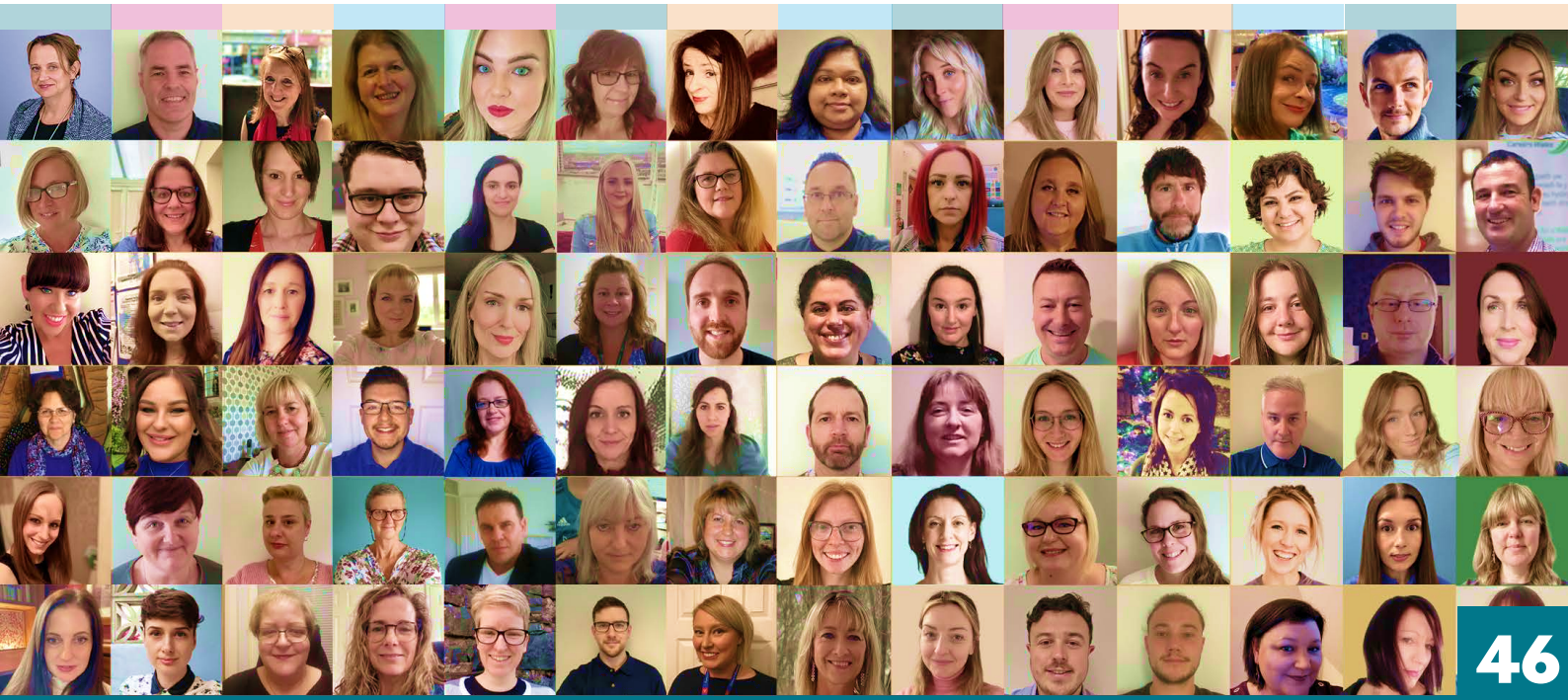
There were **30** new starters onboarded during this period. This represents an increase from the previous reporting year, which had **23** new starters.

Our retention rate remains very high with a turnover rate of **5.8%** per annum and an average stay time of 15.4 years. This compares to an average turnover rate of 34% and most common length of service being between two and five years in the UK (CIPD, 2024).

35 recruitment exercises were undertaken, attracting **950** applications. This was more than double the applications recorded in the previous year (412). Time taken to hire continues to markedly improve, reducing by 12 days since the previous year (36 days). In line with the experience of other public sector bodies, recruiting candidates with Welsh language skills continues to be challenging.

Our gender pay gap in 2025 was **2.2%**, a 0.6% increase from the figure of the previous reporting year. This is still significantly lower than the 9.7% overall Wales figure in 2025 (Gender Pay Gap in the UK ONS). We continue to pay above the living wage for all posts.

Sickness absence for this period was **4.18%** and is a marked reduction from the previous year's figure of 5.7%.



Learning and development

- We launched a new Learning Management System, Sbarc. This has already led to improvements in learner engagement and has seen an improvement in attendance at training events as well as compliance with mandatory learning.
- Our Learning at Work Week ran over a two-week period, with breakfast, lunch and twilight sessions. Most of the company took part in at least one session and feedback was extremely positive. Sessions covered a wide variety of topics including digital skills, wellbeing, career development, labour market information and supporting Welsh language learners.
- We launched a 12-month development programme for first-time line managers. The focus was on engaging and empowering teams and managing change. Feedback was very positive, with all line managers presenting their 'change challenge project' to senior managers at the end of the programme.
- There has been a strong priority put on work to support the Welsh Government's Anti-Racism Action Plan, with careers advisers and employability coaches attending training on working with black and ethnic minority girls and women, and on working with Gypsy Travellers.
- We have worked in partnership with Traumatic Stress Wales to roll out Trauma Skilled training through a train the trainer model, which has been well received.
- Refresher training has been run by external trainers for all careers advisers and employability coaches, refreshing our delivery models and focusing on how to achieve impact with customers.
- 37 employees took part in Welsh language classes at work, progressing through Entry and Foundation levels. Two employees followed self-paced Welsh courses at Entry and/or Foundation level. Eleven employees had one-to-one Welsh tuition from University of South Wales to build their confidence. Nine employees were financially supported to attend Welsh classes in their own time. Three employees attended residential courses at Nant Gwrtheyrn.
- 17 trainee careers advisers completed the level 6 Diploma in Career Guidance and Development, five employability coaches completed the Level 4 Diploma in Careers Information and Advice, and three business/stakeholder engagement advisers completed the level 6 Diploma in Business Engagement.
- Five members of the Business Insights team passed the Microsoft P300 exam, one member of the health and safety team completed the National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH) diploma and two colleagues completed their Project Management apprenticeship.
- Overall satisfaction with learning and development in Careers Wales rose from 91% to 94%.

Finance

At the time of writing this report the end of year accounts for 2025-26 were still being finalised. Our statutory accounts for the past six years are available online and 2025-26 will be added in due course.

Other commitments

Environmental performance

Our environmental strategy is underpinned by our objective to achieve the Welsh Government's target of a carbon net zero public sector by 2030. The guidance places a strong emphasis on procurement decarbonisation, estate energy reduction, low carbon transport and renewable energy generation. Our overarching environmental principles are detailed within our Environmental Policy and are implemented and monitored using an environment management system which is audited annually. We maintained the UKAS-accredited Green Dragon Environmental Standard Level 4 in this financial year.

How we manage the process

We are committed to continually improving how we reduce our environmental impact. We have established two committees which have oversight of the monitoring and reporting requirements within our governance structure. The Premises and Environment Group, chaired by our Chief Executive, has responsibility for setting the strategic direction and reviewing progress against targets. The facilities team is responsible for overseeing the auditing and production of monitoring data and for ensuring the strategic decisions for the year are implemented.

Carbon footprint

We are working to reduce our carbon footprint as much as possible by 2030, following guidance published by the Welsh Government.

A key part of our strategy is reducing the size of our office estate and exploring opportunities to share premises with partners while continuing to provide local services. We aim to create modern, low-carbon workplaces that support hybrid working and make the best use of technology. To meet the requirements of the National strategy '*Prosperity for All*' we will ensure our estates portfolio address the needs of the community that we operate in.

To help reduce our carbon emissions, we will continue to improve our environmental management systems and make better use of monitoring data to set targets and track progress each year.

The environment data in the table below has been collected from the 24 offices that are fully under our control and where we receive invoices directly from the energy supplier, or detailed invoices from the landlord where we are not on shared supply. Eleven of these

offices have gas central heating installed. It is our intention to remove gas from our estate by 2029. In addition to the reporting of environment data included in this report we also report annually on additional environment information to the Welsh Government.

This report includes an estimated kgCO2 emissions for homeworking (57,613 this reporting year compared to 103,884 in the previous year), travel to work mileage (315,239 compared to 247,994 in the previous year) and supply chain emissions (677,694 compared to 1,059,682 in the previous year's report).

The below figures represent the usage in energy across Careers Wales. In 2025-26 all our offices were fully operational and there was an increase in staff working from an office, however, we continue to operate a hybrid working model. During the year we refurbished our Barry office installing energy efficient windows and removed the gas supply from our Neath Office. We will continue to invest to improve our overall office environmental performance by removing gas boilers and undertaking energy efficiency measures across the whole estate and where feasible install solar energy.

In the financial year ahead, we are planning to further reduce our estate portfolio by discontinuing leases and we are in the process of selling offices which no longer meet our needs. We will also be placing greater emphasis on reducing our carbon footprint relating to our supply chain by working closely with our suppliers to better understand what proportion of their actual emissions can be allocated to our carbon emission calculations. All our tenders include questions on carbon reduction plans and environmental sustainability.

Energy Usage comparisons are as follows:

Measure	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Water (Litres)	1,360,000	1,194,000	1,245,000
Business miles	412,892	402,891	396,654
Electricty	355,334	357,080	339,936
Gas kWh	832,842	896,571	870,318
Greenhouse gases CO_2 tonnes	341	351	329

Financial costs	2023-24 (£)	2024-25 (£)	2025-26 (£)
Gas	41,587	28,286	25,531
Electricity	220,809	177,163	134,962
Water	9,362	8,401	10,934

Welsh language

We believe that offering services to the public in their preferred language is best practice and we are committed to treating the Welsh and English languages equally.

Careers Wales is required to comply with specific standards relating to service delivery, policy making, operational standards and record keeping. Our most recent Annual Report for Welsh Language Standards was published in September 2025.

As of 31st March 2026, 53 employees self-assessed themselves as proficient Welsh-speakers and 68 as advanced Welsh-speakers. This equates to 21.12% of the workforce.

Employee Welsh language skills - numbers

Skill level	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing
Proficient	53	53	48	39
Advanced	68	78	69	63
Intermediate	39	39	41	38
Foundation	66	60	61	57
Entry	198	189	186	184
Not set[1]	2	2	2	3
No understanding	147	152	166	189
Total	580	580	580	580

Employee Welsh language skills - percentages

Skill level	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing
Proficient	9.3	9.3	8.4	6.8
Advanced	11.9	13.6	12.0	11.0
Intermediate	6.8	6.8	7.2	6.6
Foundation	11.5	10.5	10.7	10.0
Entry	34.6	33.0	32.5	32.1
Not set	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5
No understanding	25.7	26.5	29.0	32.0

1 By the deadline of 31st March a small number of employees had not set their Welsh language skills.

Equity, diversity and inclusion

We are dedicated to encouraging a supportive and inclusive culture and to ensure that equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is embedded through all aspects of the organisation. We do this by promoting a culture that actively values individuals and recognises that people from all backgrounds and experiences add value to our communities.

By embedding the principles of EDI into our daily practices, we create inclusive environments that reflect the diverse communities we serve across Wales, and ensure our customers are supported to thrive and reach their full potential.

In 2025-26 across all our services we worked with 189,362 customers.

- **66.4%** were young people of statutory education age and **26.2%** were 18 and over.
- **52.3%** of our customers were male and **46.4%** female.
- **86.4%** of our customers were white (against a population figure for Wales of 93.8%_ 2021 Census), though this figure varied across the country. In Cardiff **62.6%** of our customers were white (population 73.6%), in Newport **71.6%** (population 80.4%) and in Swansea the figure stood at **82.7%** (population 87.5%).
- As part of our survey for Working Wales customers, **97%** said they were easily able to access the services and facilities they needed. The figure is **98%** for those customers who declare that they have a disability.

As previously mentioned, there has been a strong priority put on work to support the Welsh Government's Anti-Racism Action Plan, with careers advisers and employability coaches attending training on working with black and ethnic minority girls and women. This course has had excellent feedback with many people commenting on how the training helped them understand more deeply the experiences of this customer group, particularly the impact of micro-aggressions on confidence levels.
We also delivered a webinar style session with Gypsy Travellers Wales which gives a real insight to the challenges and barriers faced by gypsy traveller young people. It also highlights the many positive and misunderstood aspects of gypsy traveller culture.

Our Equity Diversity and Inclusion eLearning was developed in-house and is refreshed at regular intervals to remain current. It is our introduction to the topic, and all employees are required to repeat the learning every three years to keep the basics fresh and current.

Recruitment

Diversity in recruitment is improving but we have more to do. A significant amount of work has gone into making our recruitment process inclusive and we have recently started using four diversity job boards for all roles: Neurodiversity Jobs, Disability Jobs, BME Jobs and LGBT Jobs. We will monitor their effectiveness over the next year in widening our engagement with underrepresented groups. We will continue to do more to widen our engagement and become an employer of choice for people from diverse communities Further information about our work in this area, including our Strategic Equality Plan (SEP), is available via our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Reports which also includes the latest version of our Public Sector Equality Duty Report.

