



Gyrfa Cymru
Careers Wales



Careers Wales LMI Bulletin Feature: April 2023

Apprenticeships in Wales

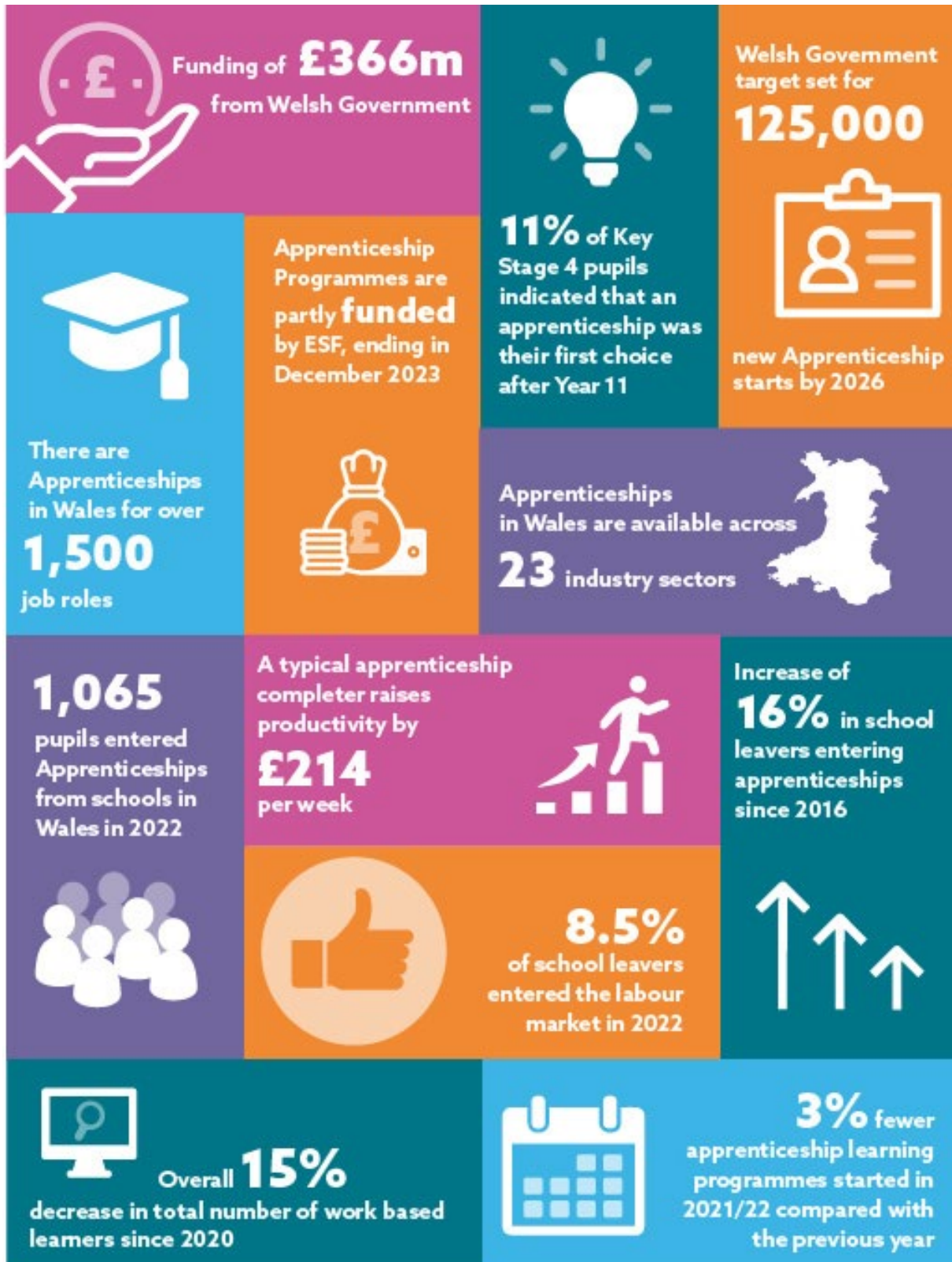


Content

1. Snapshot of apprenticeship headlines for Wales.....	3
2. Introduction	4
3. Policy Landscape	5
4. Pathways to Apprenticeships.....	6
5. Numbers of Apprenticeships in Wales	9
6. Apprenticeship Provision in Wales.....	12
7. Economic Value of Apprenticeships	13
8. Apprenticeships across the regions of Wales	14
9. Further Information	16



1. Snapshot of apprenticeship headlines for Wales



Cautionary Note: The effects of the Coronavirus pandemic may have affected the number of starts over the last few years. Considerations for the future include the end of ESF funding could reduce apprenticeship starts from 2024 onwards.

2. Introduction

The focus of this report is to explore the apprenticeship landscape in Wales from the current policy, provision, pathways and numbers participating across Wales.

Apprenticeships are part of the Work-Based Learning (WBL) provision delivered by further education institutions and other training providers. The WBL sector includes Apprenticeships and Jobs Growth Wales+ programmes.

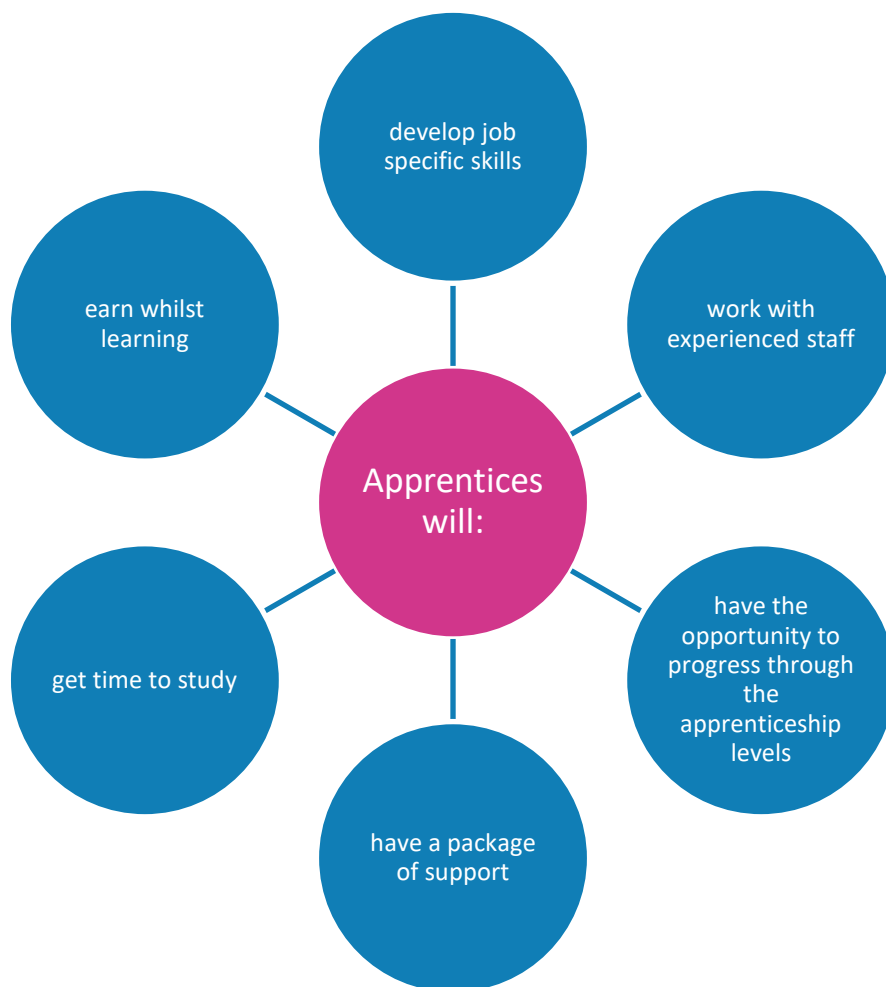
New work-based learning contract arrangements came into effect on 1st August 2021.

This feature focuses on the current definitions of Apprenticeships in Wales:

- Foundation Apprenticeships (Level 2)
- Apprenticeships (Level 3 qualification)
- Higher Apprenticeships (Level 4+ qualification)

Apprenticeships are also available as [Degree Apprenticeships](#).

The Welsh Government's [Apprenticeships-genius decision](#) highlights the benefits as the opportunity of hands-on work experience in an employed setting as well as achieving a nationally recognised qualification.





3. Policy Landscape



The [Stronger, Fairer, Greener Wales](#) Plan for Employability and Skills for Wales, published in 2020, included a headline priority to strengthen the whole system approach to making it easier for everyone under the age of 25 to access the offer of work, training or self-employment.

This priority increased the apprenticeship funding of £366m with the aim to create 125,000 new apprenticeship starts over this Welsh Government term, up to 2026.

The [Young Person's Guarantee](#) was introduced in 2021 and is the Welsh Government's key commitment to everyone under the age of 25, living in Wales, to provide support to gain a place in education or training, and help to get into work or become self-employed.

The guarantee is supported by wide ranging provision to ensure young people can take up effective support that works for them, Apprenticeships being one of those options. [Working Wales](#) (Careers Wales) is positioned as the 'gateway' to the guarantee.

Young Person's Guarantee



Feed your positivity with the Welsh Government's Young Person's Guarantee.

Priorities of the Welsh Government Apprenticeship Scheme

The Welsh Government's [Programme Specification](#) (2021-2025) details the agreement for the delivery and funding of Work Based Learning (WBL) programmes. Degree Apprenticeships are excluded from this Programme Specification.

The Welsh Government's goals are to:

- Develop higher level skills at level 3 and above.
- Improve access, equality and equity of opportunity
- Increase the number of apprentices aged 16-19 and raising the number of school leavers going on to high quality apprenticeships.
- Address skills shortages, particularly in growth sectors and emerging job categories
- Strengthening opportunities to undertake an apprenticeship through the medium of Welsh or bilingually.
- Work with employers and employer bodies to drive diversity and innovation.
- Develop skills pathways: integrating apprenticeships into the wider education system.
- Improve performance measures to focus on achievement of employment.
- Contractors delivering Foundation Apprenticeship, Apprenticeship and Higher Apprenticeship programmes must achieve a minimum framework success rate of 75%.

These goals are aligned with key messages and recommendations noted by the 4 Regional Skills Partnership's recently published [Employment and Skills Plans](#).

An important consideration is that Apprenticeship Programmes are partly funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). The ESF is expected to conclude in December 2023, therefore from the 24-25 financial year onwards, these programmes may need to **reduce** activity levels or new starts to manage within the available budget, if funding from the shared prosperity fund cannot be sought at equivalent levels.



4. Pathways to Apprenticeships

Pathways for young people into Apprenticeships Programmes start in school from knowledge and experiences gained through the [Careers and Work Related Experiences \(CWRE\)](#), from the age of 3-16. Effective CWRE consists of careers education embedded across the areas of learning which is supported by a range of work-related learning experiences. CWRE enables learners to develop knowledge, skills and understanding in preparation for the challenges and opportunities of further learning and the world of work.

‘This typically includes an understanding of education and training pathways, the labour market and the changing nature and future of careers and work.’

The new [Curriculum for Wales](#) provides an excellent framework for CWRE, so that

‘All young people need to leave school with a clear idea of the direction they are moving in. They need to know how to realise their plans, and to have the understanding and skills to be adaptable, resilient and enterprising in managing unexpected change and transitions.

It is important that all schools embed CWRE as a cross-cutting theme in the whole curriculum.’

The data on pathways to apprenticeships from school

Career Check

Career Check is an annual survey of approximately 30,000 pupils in Key Stage (KS) 4 in schools across Wales (Year 10-11). The survey gives an indication of pupils’ career ideas and next steps. The survey captures the pupils intended next steps and asks if they are interested in an apprenticeship after leaving school. The latest Career Check survey from 2022 noted that 11% of KS4 pupils indicated that an apprenticeship would be their first choice after year 11.

Pupil destinations

Destinations are the annual survey of school leavers from Years 11, 12 and 13 undertaken by [Careers Wales](#) on behalf of the Welsh Government.

Destinations data does **not** include those entering the labour market from Further Education Colleges, which represents almost 45% of Year 11 school leavers.

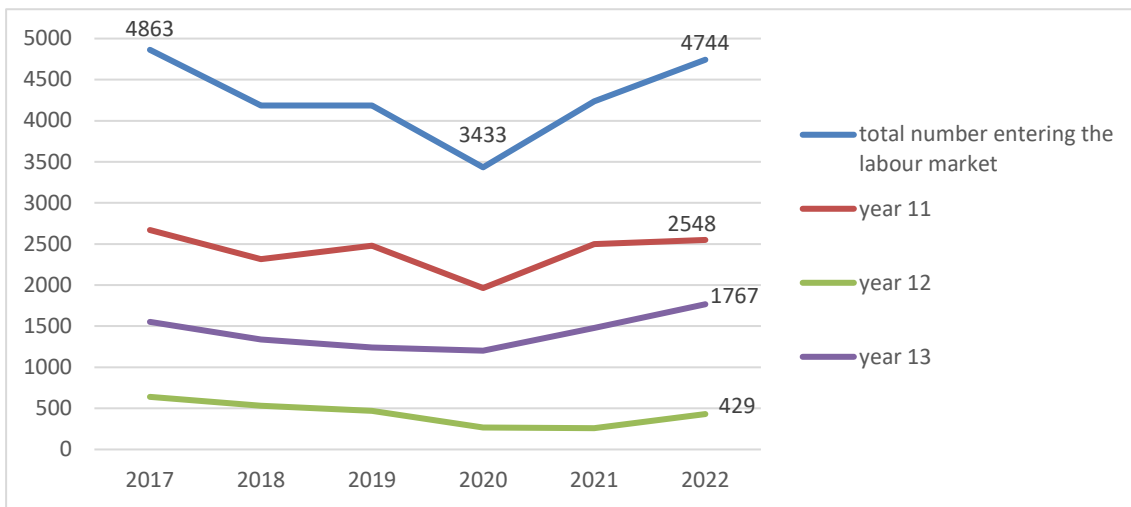
The latest pupil [destinations data](#) published for school leavers in July 2022 was published on the 4th April and provides information of school leavers first destinations, captured in the annual survey ending in October 2022.

The average total number of pupils in a typical Year 11 over the last 6 years is approximately 31,000 pupils annually. In the Destination survey, the pupils ‘entering the labour market’ fall into three categories:

- Non employed status – not on an Apprenticeship
- Employed Status – Apprenticeships (all levels)
- Other



Graph 1: Number of pupils entering the labour market as their first destination from school



Source: [Pupil destinations | Careers Wales 2023](#)

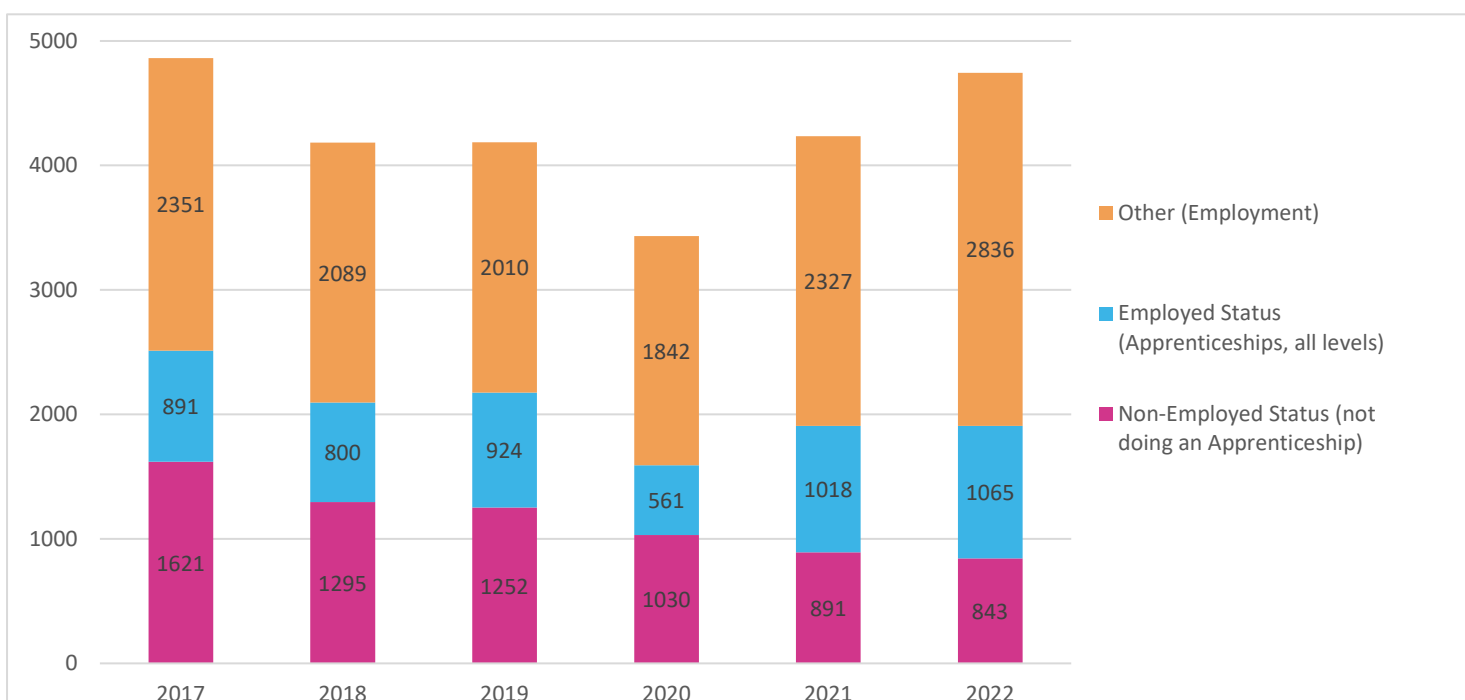
Graph 1 shows a good recovery following the decline of young people entering the labour market due to COVID-19. Recent destinations data shows that approximately 8.5% pupils enter the labour market from school (a total of 55,715 pupils from all school leaving years-11,12 and 13).

This information can be analysed further into the school leaving age of 16, 17 and 18 as shown in in Chart 1 above.

Since 2017, the last 6 years has seen a gradual decline in numbers entering the labour market from school. However, the last two years has seen an increase across all age groups and numbers, returning to previous levels last seen in 2017. It's important to note that those entering the labour market in year 13 could be taking a year out before continuing to higher education.

Bar Chart 2 below shows the number of pupil destinations into the labour market according to their status.

Bar Chart 2: Type of work based training entered by status



Source: [Pupil destinations | Careers Wales 2023](#)



- The total number of school leavers entering the labour market has seen an increase in the last two years, following the sharp decline due to COVID-19. The latest data shows the numbers entering the labour market are now higher than pre COVID numbers in 2019.
- School pupils entering the labour market to Employed Status opportunities (Apprenticeships) have increased by 16% since 2017.
- School pupils entering the labour market to non-employed status opportunities has seen a gradual decrease over the last 6 years, a 48% decline since 2017.
- Those entering the labour market in the 'other' category continue to be significant numbers in comparison and Year 13 leavers make up the largest numbers in this category. These could include Year 13 pupils gaining temporary gap year employment prior to entering higher education.
- The limitations of the destinations data exclude learners leaving further education to provide a complete picture relating to pathways to apprenticeships in Wales.
- Destinations of Further Education learners to apprenticeships is not available in the official statistics.
- Also, limitations exist in capturing the destinations beyond higher education to apprenticeships.

Pathways to apprenticeship beyond education

Information sources on Apprenticeships is vast and could be complex or daunting. Assistance and help to find apprenticeships are available from a wide network of providers offering information, advice, guidance and employability services.

Careers Wales has a useful page of contacts, information and list of employers recruiting in [How to get an Apprenticeship](#) web page, which also links to the Welsh Government's [Apprenticeship Search](#) for vacancies.



5. Numbers of Apprenticeships in Wales

The Welsh Government provides data on Apprenticeships in Wales in an [interactive dashboard](#) presented by region, programme type, age group, sector, gender and academic year. This dashboard also tracks the Government's target of reaching 125,000 new apprenticeships starts by 2026.

We have analysed official statistics relating to work based learning provision in Wales available from [Stats Wales](#). The latest data available is for the year 2021-2022.

Bar Chart 3: Apprenticeship Programmes by Region and Age



Source: [Apprenticeship learning programmes started by quarter, sector and programme type \(gov.wales\)](#) Mar 2023

Bar chart 3 shows the trend in apprenticeship learning programmes from 2017-2022. The total number of all apprenticeship programme starts in 2021-22 across Wales was 20,040

The largest group of programme starts are for Level 2 at 9,160 and 7,425 in Level 3.

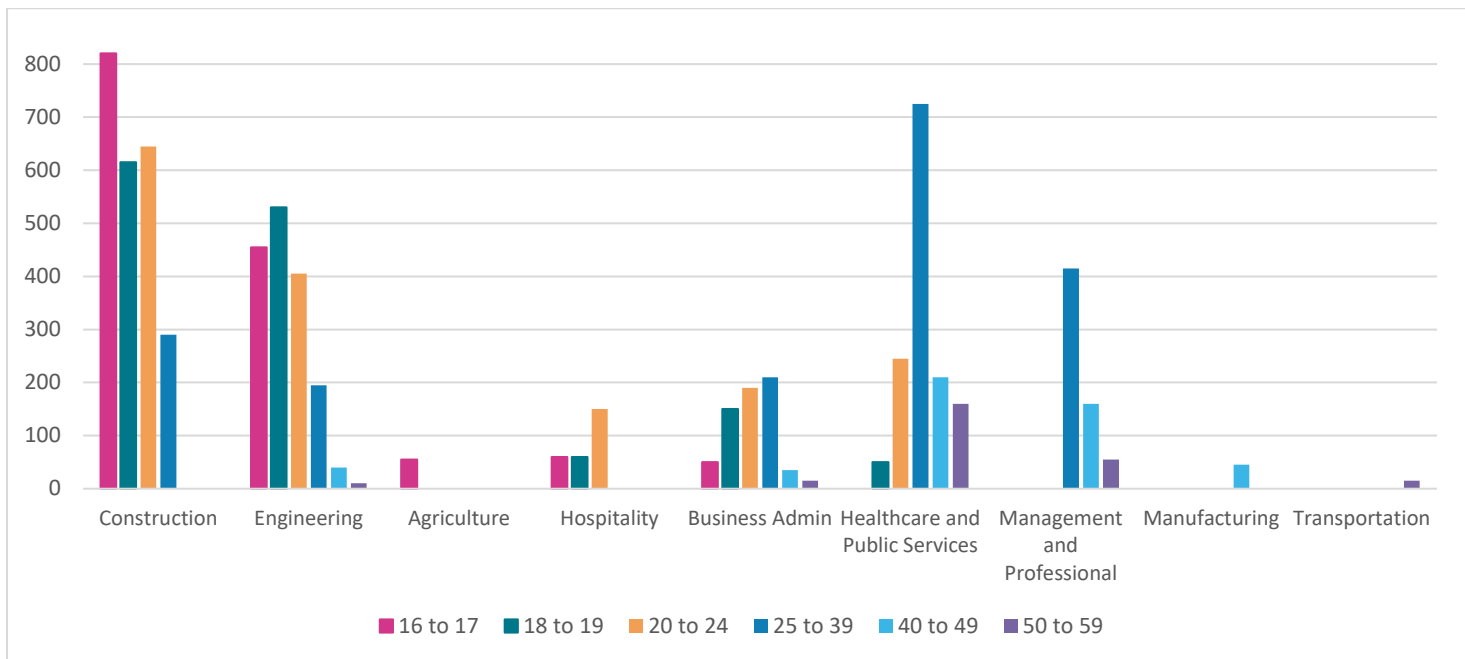
There were 5,040 programme starts in 2021-22 for the 25-39 age group (25%). Age group 25 to 39 consistently represent the largest group since 2018.

This suggests that the largest group undertaking Apprenticeships are already in employment.

The [latest data](#) shows that there were 39,370 learners enrolled in work-based learning across Wales in 2021-22 for all levels and programmes. 45% were male and 55% female.



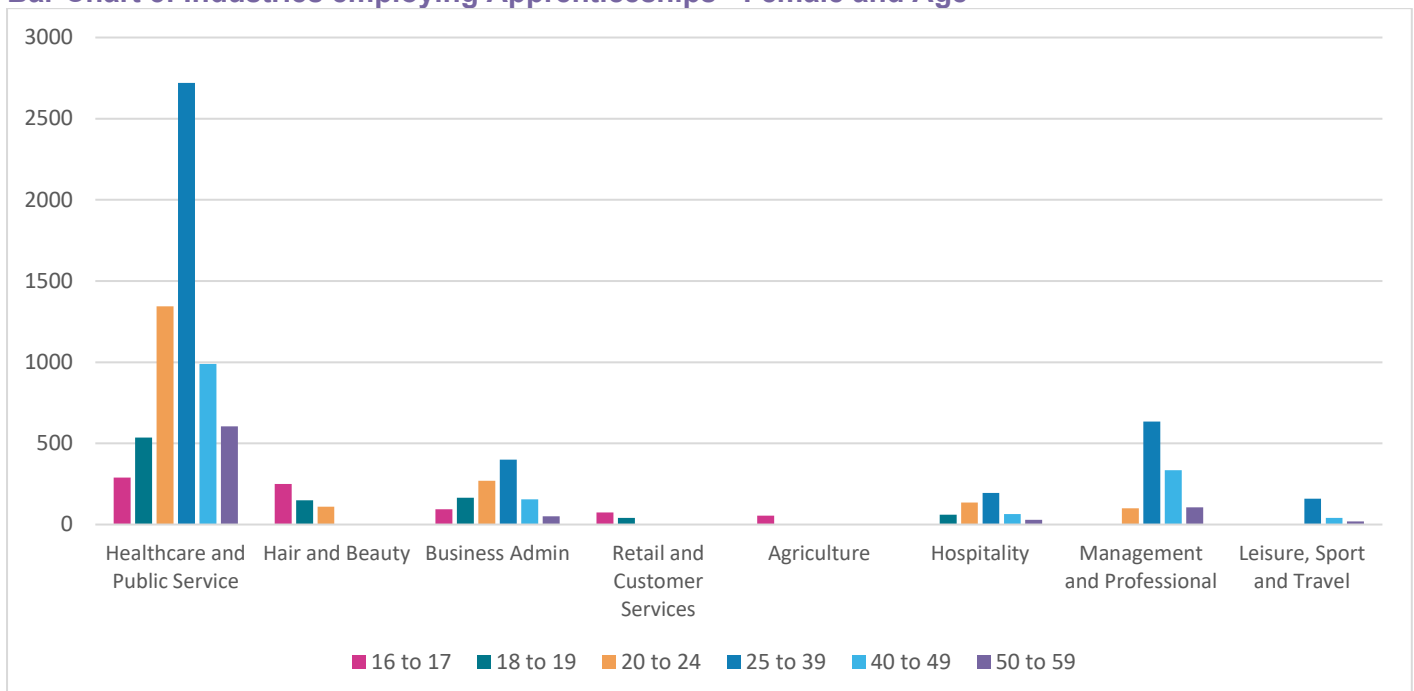
Bar Chart 4: Apprenticeship Learning Programmes by Industry



Source: [Apprenticeship learning programmes started by quarter, sector and programme type \(gov.wales\)](#) Mar 2023

Bar Chart 4 above shows a higher number of male learners aged 16-24 starting in Construction and Engineering programmes. However, between age 25-59, more males are represented in the Healthcare and Public Service and Management and Professional apprenticeship programmes. Management and Professional includes roles such as Learning and Development, Human Resource Management, Digital Support and General Management.

Bar Chart 5: Industries employing Apprenticeships - Female and Age



Source: [Apprenticeship learning programmes started by quarter, sector and programme type \(gov.wales\)](#) Mar 2023

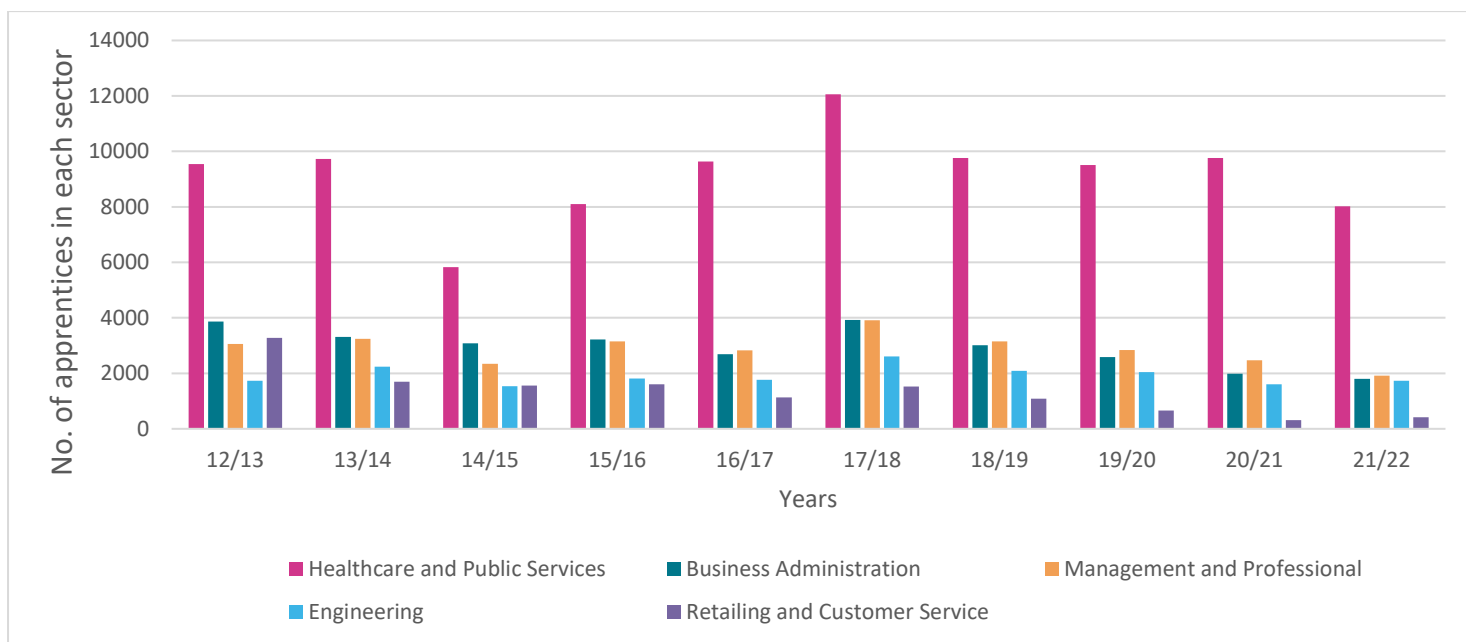


Bar Chart 5 above shows that Females aged 25-39 were the largest group represented in the Healthcare and Public Services programme starts. 6,485 females compared to 1,390 males, 79% higher. This is then a trend that continues for females through to age 59.

Apprenticeship starts in Management and Professional programmes are 46% higher for females than males.

Healthcare and Public Service includes roles such as Childcare, Health and Social Care, Advice and Guidance and Health Support roles.

Bar Chart 6: Sectors with highest number of Apprenticeship Learning Programmes 2012-2022



Source: [Apprenticeship learning programmes started by quarter, sector and programme type \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales) Mar 2023

Bar Chart 6 above shows that over the last 10 years, Healthcare and Public Service has consistently had the largest number of apprenticeship programme starts. 38% of all apprentice programme starts across the 10-year period were engaged in learning in the Healthcare and Public Service sector. Public Sector workers account for a third of the Welsh workforce. ([StatsWales](https://stats.wales.gov.uk/))

The number of apprenticeship learning programmes starts in Healthcare and Public Services across all levels for 2021-22 is 8,020. Over half (57%) of these being in Health and Social Care programmes, representing a 23% share of all apprenticeship programme starts in Wales.

This table is limited to show the 5 industry groups with the highest numbers of apprenticeship programme starts and not all industries are represented in the table.



6. Apprenticeship Provision in Wales

Apprenticeships in Wales are available across 23 industry sectors divided into different [Frameworks](#). These frameworks are developed and published by the appropriate Issuing Authority (e.g. CITB, Lantra, Skills Active, EU Skills etc).

You can view the full frameworks available in Wales on the Apprenticeship Certification Wales [Frameworks Library](#).

The framework library consists of 110 titles relevant to different job roles across 23 sectors from qualification Levels 2-6 (Degree Apprenticeships), bringing the total number of qualifications available to just over 350. There are apprenticeships in Wales for over 1,500 job roles — from engineering to boat building.

However, not all qualifications are available or delivered as apprenticeships in Wales. The availability and need for provision will differ between the providers and the varying demands of employers across the regions of Wales.

The providers of work based learning contracts, which include Apprenticeships, are issued by Welsh Government and currently awarded to [10 providers](#) across Wales. These contracts are managed and delivered by 6 Further Education Colleges and 4 Training Providers in Wales, who may also sub-contract the delivery to other training providers.

In the [official statistics](#), Work Based Learning provision has been divided into 14 industry sector groups.

Work Based Learning Sectors of Provision	
Healthcare and Public Services	Construction
Engineering	Business Administration
Leisure, Sports, Travel	Management
Agriculture	Retail and Customer Service
Hospitality	Hairdressing
Media and Design	Manufacturing
Transport	Other sectors, not defined



7. Economic Value of Apprenticeships

Funding and Costs to Employers

In Wales the [Apprenticeship Programme](#) is funded by the Welsh Government, with support from the European Social Fund (ESF). The [Apprenticeship Levy \(Business Wales Skills Gateway\)](#) is an employment tax that applies to all UK employers, and which employers with an annual 'pay bill' of over £3 million have to pay. Welsh Government is in the process of developing policy that will support the needs of employers in priority areas across Wales, regardless of their levy status.

Benefits to Apprentices and Employers

The [St Martins Group: The Real Costs and Benefits of Apprenticeships](#) report provided a comparison of apprenticeship completers' and other sub-group labour market outcomes between 2017 and 2020:

- Employment rate amongst completers averaged 86%, 10% higher than the wider labour market
- Unemployment rate amongst completers averaged 2.5%, while that of the economy averaged 4.2%
- The average unemployment rate for graduates was 2.8% and 10% for those with no qualifications

The [Welsh Government Evaluation of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme](#) found that:

- 96% would recommend the scheme to others
- 28% (of apprentices) had been promoted
- 19% apprentices reported that remuneration had increased (30% for apprentices enrolled prior to 2019)
- Average salaries were in the £30,001–£40,000 salary band

The most comprehensive and recent research on the topic of 'economic value of Apprenticeships' is [Value of Apprenticeships to Wales Report](#) presented to the National Training Federation for Wales by Arad Research in September 2015. Although somewhat dated, the headlines noted that:

- A typical apprenticeship completer raises productivity by £214 per week
- After training, the benefits to employers in terms of apprentice outputs will start to overtake the training costs

More recently the [CMI analysis](#) of the current (English) apprenticeship model found that apprentices qualified in 2019 are projected to add £7bn to the economy by the end of 2029, a 300% return on investment. CMI found that businesses using higher level management apprenticeships saw average productivity gains of £7,000 per apprentice

At a [National Training Federation of Wales \(NTFW\)](#) event on the 7th March 2023, Vaughan Gething, Minister for Economy, revealed that the Welsh Government is deferring for one year the target of creating 125,000 apprenticeships in the current Senedd term.

“European Union funds previously supported around 5,000 apprenticeships in Wales each year. Without that investment and in the face of real and unavoidable inflationary costs, I have invested an extra £36 million over the next two years to support quality, all age apprenticeships that are proven to help unlock higher earning in even better quality careers... We need to deliver apprenticeships that will raise productivity, create quality jobs and respond to the skills needs of the future, such as growing delivery in the net zero and digital sectors.”



8. Apprenticeships across the regions of Wales

The Regional Skills Partnerships (RSP) have published their 3 year Regional Skills Plans 2022-2025, outlining the skills, employment and future needs in their regions. Each RSP provides a focused section on Apprenticeships in their region. There are a number of themes, challenges and recommendations which are common across Wales.



In the North Wales region's recently published [Employment and Skills Plan](#), across all Work Based Learning programmes, there were 3,765 enrolled, showing an increase in Level 3 and Level 4+ apprenticeships.

Their research identified key areas for attention and development:

- Stark gender differences continue on apprenticeship programmes e.g., females entering Engineering and Construction are very low compared to Health and Social Care, Business Administration and Management.
- A strong need to expand the current Degree Apprenticeships offer to include other areas of need in the region such as Health and Social Care, Construction, Low Carbon/ Green Energy and Leadership and Management
- Wrexham Glyndwr University offer a Low Carbon Energy and Sustainability Degree Apprenticeship.
- Development of new apprenticeship frameworks and pathways are needed where there is evidence of demand in sectors, with a focus on L3+ apprenticeships, including degree apprenticeships
- Developing the talent pipeline within and from education, schools, apprenticeships, Further Education and Higher Education
- Recent promotion campaign and publication of [Pathways Into Apprenticeships in North Wales](#)



The West Wales RSP recently published their [Employment and Skills Plan](#). 2020-21 saw 4,860 apprenticeships started (2,665 less in 2021 than 2018 due to the impact of the pandemic). Healthcare and Public Sector being the highest intake sectors. According to evidence from their latest survey, the main reasons for not taking on apprentices are:

- Issues making the time to mentor/train an apprentice
- Apprentice framework does not fit their business model/needs
- Unsure of the process
- Difficulty in recruiting suitable candidates
- Mobility restrictions of younger workers due to transport links
- Remote working culture makes it hard to mentor
- Need skilled "ready to work" workforce
- Financial constraints of the employer
- 84% of Public Sector employers surveyed noted they have apprentices.
- In the Financial and Professional Sector, a year on year decrease has been noted in the number of apprenticeships.
- Apprenticeships are urgently needed in the following trades:
 - Painters and Decorators
 - Plasterers
 - Bricklayers
- No Training providers in South West Wales offer a Groundworkers Apprenticeship.
- Apprenticeship gaps identified in the Energy and Food and Land Sectors.
- The Food and Land Industries noted particular gaps in Apprenticeship provision



The Cardiff Capital Region Skills Partnership has developed their [Employment and Skills Plan](#) under seven cross cutting key themes, with one of their key aims over the next three years to 'broaden the Apprenticeship offer at higher levels by responding to government policy changes'.

Their report identifies the following key areas:

- Increase Apprenticeship uptake across priority sectors (including Higher and Degree Apprenticeships) and build on the successful Aspire, Y Prentis and Sgil Cymru Shared Apprenticeships models.
- Increase the uptake of Apprenticeships including Shared and Degree Level for the digital technology industries.
- Develop Apprenticeships to meet net zero requirements and deliver qualifications to meet aspirations.
- Ensure that frameworks are fit for purpose and offer parity with the apprenticeship standards in England.
- Apprenticeship frameworks are not meeting business needs was identified as the main reason why respondents to the RSP survey did not employ apprentices.
- Increase the recruitment of trainers and assessors to ensure capacity within post-16 work based learning, particularly at Level 4.
- The University of South Wales (USW) have developed a specific Degree Apprenticeship for semiconductor technologies which is successfully being piloted through Nexperia.
- Expansion of shared apprenticeship schemes needed, such as those developed in the Creative Sector.
- In the Education, Health and Care sectors, over 58% of employers surveyed confirmed that they employ apprentices. The sector would benefit from the Degree and Shared Apprenticeship delivery models.
- Need to establish more effective pathways between industry and further education to ease the transition of Further Education learners into the hospitality, retail and tourism sectors, particularly into apprenticeships.



One of the key objectives identified in Mid Wales in their recent [Employment and Skills Plan](#) is to:

'Establish a regional apprenticeship scheme (including shared apprenticeships) that bridges and aligns public and private sectors which recognises the transferability of skills.'

In the Mid Wales region, their employer survey identified that:

- 42% of respondents reported that they currently employ apprentices.
- Of the 58% of employers who don't employ apprentices, the main reason provided was that Apprenticeship frameworks do not meet business needs (19%).
- 'Other' reasons for not employing apprenticeships included
 - 'there are no apprenticeships available locally that suit our industry',
 - 'we are so busy we cannot dedicate the time to learners / training in house'
 - 'impossible to make use of people without advanced technical skills'.



9. Further Information

There is a wide variety of sources of information to guide parents, students, employers and adults on pathways to apprenticeships and provision in Wales for from:

Welsh Government [Apprenticeships - A Genius Decision](#)

Careers Wales [Apprenticeships](#)

[Employers who offer Apprenticeships](#)

[Apprenticeship Search](#)

Business Wales [Skills Gateway](#)

Degree Apprenticeships in Wales:

[Degree Apprenticeship Provision - HEFCW](#)

[Degree apprenticeships - Learn more here \(ucas.com\)](#)

[Degree Apprenticeships | Careers Wales](#)