

National Assembly for Wales
Enterprise and Business Committee

Assisting Young People into Work

March 2015

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



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Enterprise and Business Committee

The Committee was established on 22 June 2011 with a remit to examine legislation and hold the Welsh Government to account by scrutinising its expenditure, administration and policy, encompassing economic development; transport and infrastructure; employment; higher education and skills; and research and development, including technology and science.

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Welsh Conservatives
South Wales East



Mick Antoniw
Welsh Labour
Pontypridd



Jeff Cuthbert
Welsh Labour
Caerphilly



Byron Davies
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Welsh Labour
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The Committee's Recommendations

The Committee's recommendations are listed below in the order that they appear in this report. All our recommendations are directed at the Welsh Government. Please refer to the relevant pages of the report to see the supporting evidence and conclusions.

Recommendation 1. The Welsh Government should strengthen the teaching of work-ready skills and understanding of the labour market throughout the whole curriculum as well as through the "Careers and the World of Work" framework. (Page 17)

Recommendation 2. The Welsh Government should make fundamental changes to work experience for young people. They should review best practice on work experience; consider making it longer; do more to ensure that more employers are involved; and ensure that sufficient resources (either in Careers Wales or in schools) are in place for work experience to be properly organised. (Page 20)

Recommendation 3. We recommend that the Deputy Minister reinstates the responsibility on Careers Wales to undertake Health and Safety vetting of work experience placements and to provide a National Work Experience Database. (Page 21)

Recommendation 4. The Welsh Government should review and evaluate the roll-out of the common application process and prospectuses to ensure that school pupils have information and access to vocational, as well as academic, courses (either through other schools or further education colleges). (Page 23)

Recommendation 5. The Welsh Government should review the outcomes of the *Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009* and evaluate the opportunities that young people have in school to choose vocational courses at age 14 and age 16, either in other schools or in further education colleges. (Page 24)

Recommendation 6. The Welsh Government should produce an analysis of the balance between academic and work-based learning post-16 and assess whether this balance is appropriate for the modern Welsh economy. (Page 24)

Recommendation 7. Further to the new Youth Concessionary Fare scheme for 16 and 17 year olds (from September 2015), the Welsh Government should undertake a study to examine the costs and feasibility of extending this scheme to young people aged 18-24. (Page 25)

Recommendation 8. We recommend strongly that the Welsh Government should ensure that Careers Wales provides face-to-face advice and guidance for every young person who needs it. (Page 29)

Recommendation 9. We recommend that the Deputy Minister's review of employer engagement is progressed as a priority and published by end July 2015. We ask the Deputy Minister to write to us with more details of the review and her timescale. (Page 32)

Recommendation 10. The Welsh Government should work with the Department for Work and Pensions to address anomalies in the benefits system, for example the difficulty young people face in sustaining a tenancy if their housing benefit is cut as a result of taking up low-paid employment. (Page 38)

Recommendation 11. The Welsh Government should fund more flexible courses that can accommodate young people who need more time to achieve the required outcomes. (Page 39)

Recommendation 12. The Welsh Government should increase their co-ordination and planning of existing financial support for the third sector to minimise duplication and to prioritise support for the hardest to reach young people in accessing the jobs market. (Page 41)

Recommendation 13. The Welsh Government should increase the investment in its provision of lead workers for vulnerable young people to ensure that they have the one-to-one support that they need to help them find work. (Page 47)

Recommendation 14. The Welsh Government should improve the availability and provision of pre-entry level training to better equip young people to undertake a Traineeship. (Page 50)

Recommendation 15. The Welsh Government should do even more to promote information on apprenticeships more widely. (Page 51)

Recommendation 16. We recommend that the Deputy Minister progresses the following reviews as a matter of urgency and ask her to provide us with greater detail about the implementation plans and timescales for these reviews and projects including:

- the review of work experience;
- the review of the structure of Careers Wales; and
- their plans for an enhanced employer engagement approach to provide accurate labour market information to young people. (Page 55)

Foreword

1. According to the latest published statistics, 17.6% of 16-24 year olds in Wales were unemployed between October 2013 and September 2014. This compares with 7.4% of 25-34 year olds and 4.4% of 35-49 year olds.¹

2. The Committee decided to look at Assisting Young People into Work during the autumn term of 2014. We set out to investigate the barriers that young people face and the success of various schemes across the public, private and third sectors in helping them into employment. This included the schemes outlined by the Welsh Government in its *Programme for Government, 2011-16*: namely, Jobs Growth Wales, Apprenticeships, Traineeships, the Youth Progression and Implementation Framework, and Steps to Employment. We also wanted to take evidence from the various bodies that are involved in preparing young students for the world of work.

3. One of our key findings was that there remains a fundamental imbalance towards academic study that is out of step with the employment opportunities available to young people and does little to prepare them for working life. Although the Welsh Government has sought to promote work-based learning and parity of esteem for vocational training, we heard that just 0.3% of school leavers in Cardiff last year started an apprenticeship. This compares with 87% going on to further education.² As the National Training Federation of Wales pointed out, it could be considerably cheaper to put students through apprenticeships rather than further academic study, particularly given the costs for those who will go on to university.

4. Some of the barriers facing young people are fundamental in nature. Employers told us that too many young people are leaving school without essential skills in literacy and numeracy. There is also a lack of “work-ready” skills, such as punctuality and knowing how to behave around colleagues.

5. Similarly, young people are often ill-equipped in terms of practical knowledge of job seeking. Monmouthshire’s Youth Service told us of otherwise very able students who were leaving school and/or college with no idea of how to construct a CV or approach a prospective employer. This chimed with evidence from recruiters that they often see application forms completed in “text speak”. Too many of our young people are confused about how to identify and apply for opportunities in the job market, and for

¹ Office for National Statistics, [NOMIS Official Labour Market Statistics](#).

² RoP para 142, 12 November 2014.

those with the greatest difficulties, the move away from face-to-face careers advice towards an online presence is another barrier.

6. Worryingly, we heard that young people's inability to manage money led to many of them overestimating the costs involved in taking a job, preferring the safety net of the benefits system instead. Young people themselves highlighted the need for some of these skills in a survey undertaken by the Assembly's Outreach team, which asked them which subjects they wanted to do more of in school. By a huge margin, students wanted more on "financial literacy, management and life skills".

7. The Committee welcomes the progress made by the Welsh Government and Bethan Jenkins AM on taking forward the objectives and aspirations of her Financial Education and Inclusion (Wales) Bill through other means.

8. All of these barriers lead to a lack of confidence in school and college leavers. Time and again we heard of the catch-22 whereby employers demand experience, but people cannot acquire it without being given a chance. Too few of the young people we spoke to were aware of the opportunities in volunteering that can help to break this cycle. One of Wales's most successful employers of young people, Urdd Gobaith Cymru, told us that its tradition of volunteering played an important part in recruitment.

9. One other practical difficulty is transport, which is especially a problem in rural Wales. Aside from the difficulty of getting to the workplace on a daily basis, young people in such areas often also have problems attending interviews, or even accessing libraries to look for job opportunities. We would like to highlight the success of the Scooter Scheme in Pembrokeshire, which tackles these problems by allowing young people to rent scooters to help with starting a new job. We would like to see the Government support similarly innovative schemes throughout Wales, where appropriate, to make up for any deficiency in public transport.

10. Several employers and training organisations expressed frustration with their inability to speak to young people while still at school. It was felt that schools would have to open their doors if students were to experience an accurate picture of the world of work, their options in the jobs market, and how they could use their education to prepare for their career. We were encouraged that the Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology is committed to strengthening the links between schools and employers, but would

emphasise that the evidence we heard called for a fundamental change of approach.

11. There is no question that the Welsh Government has prioritised jobs for young people, and its schemes and programmes have generally led to improvements. During the course of our inquiry the Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology announced that Jobs Growth Wales had met its target of providing 16,000 new job opportunities 18 months ahead of schedule. This is great progress, but we also heard that the quality of the experience was mixed, with variation from one company to another. Some witnesses questioned whether the lack of financial input from the companies involved affected their buy-in to the scheme. Similarly, there are 8,200 young people on traineeships, and some outstanding examples of successful apprenticeship schemes, but we were also told by providers that these could be co-ordinated better, with a single point of contact for Government support. For young people with the most entrenched problems, the introduction of a 'lead worker' under the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework was seen as a very positive development, and witnesses hoped that this would continue to be funded in the years to come.

12. Nevertheless, the scale of the task Wales faces in helping its young people into work is apparent from the disparity in levels of unemployment by age group. We hope that the Welsh Government will accept our recommendations and use the evidence in this report as a basis for further improvements in assisting young people into work.

Introduction to the Inquiry

13. The inquiry aimed to look at what was effective and what further support could be provided to assist young people (16-24 years) in finding work.

14. We began by issuing a call for written evidence in September 2014. The terms of reference for the inquiry are attached at Annex A. We received 24 written submissions, which are listed at Annex B.

15. We held eight oral evidence sessions with a range of witnesses, including local authorities, charities, employers, training providers and the Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology. A full list of witnesses is attached at Annex C.

16. We also visited Info-Nation in Swansea to talk to young people about the issues affecting them, and held a focus group session at the Swansea Campus of University of Wales Trinity St David to hear the views of stakeholders. The summary of our discussions is included as Annex D.

17. We are very grateful to all the contributors to our inquiry and trust that our report and recommendations have taken on board the evidence we received.

Barriers for young people

18. As part of the inquiry, we asked witnesses to tell us about the main barriers that made it difficult for young people to find work.

Lack of confidence

19. Based on its experience, Careers Wales felt the biggest barrier preventing young people accessing employment and training could be categorised as personal issues - lack of confidence, lack of qualifications and lack of experience:

“Certainly, we found that when we undertook, with the local authority, a workshop with young people who are outside education, training and employment in some of the deprived communities of Cardiff, the reasons they kept coming back to were those personal ones: lack of confidence, lack of qualifications and lack of experience.”

20. City and County of Swansea Council told us that if a young person had underachieved in school, then they could have confidence and self-esteem issues and lack positive experiences. It suggested that, although there had been a great deal of research into the reasons why young people were not in education, employment or training, there did not seem to be much research into young people’s expectations and what they believed it would be like to be in the workplace or what caused them anxiety in thinking about employment, education and training.

Essential skills

21. A number of respondents to our inquiry talked about a lack of essential skills. Wrexham County Borough Council highlighted the “lack of essential qualifications (literacy and numeracy skills)”³ as being one of the main barriers facing young people.

22. Working Links agreed, saying that over 50% of the customers it engaged with on Work Programme had essential skills issues.

23. Admiral described the impact of this on employers, saying:

“There is a commitment to try and develop these people within Admiral, but we still think that if some of these young people are

³ Written evidence AYP 07, Wrexham County Borough Council

unable to write something that is coherent in the first place, that is then a lot of work for employers to develop people.”

Work-ready skills

24. The lack of “soft” or “work ready” skills, such as punctuality, reliability and knowing how to behave around colleagues, were also identified as being a problem.

25. Stakeholders at our Swansea event told us that as well as needing to improve essential skills, employability skills needed to be taught, as preparing young people for the workplace was so important in terms of attitude, time keeping and social skills. They felt that this needed to happen much earlier than age 14-16 as by then poor habits had already been learnt. They suggested that increased use of social media meant that the current generation was not developing these skills in the same way as previous generations.

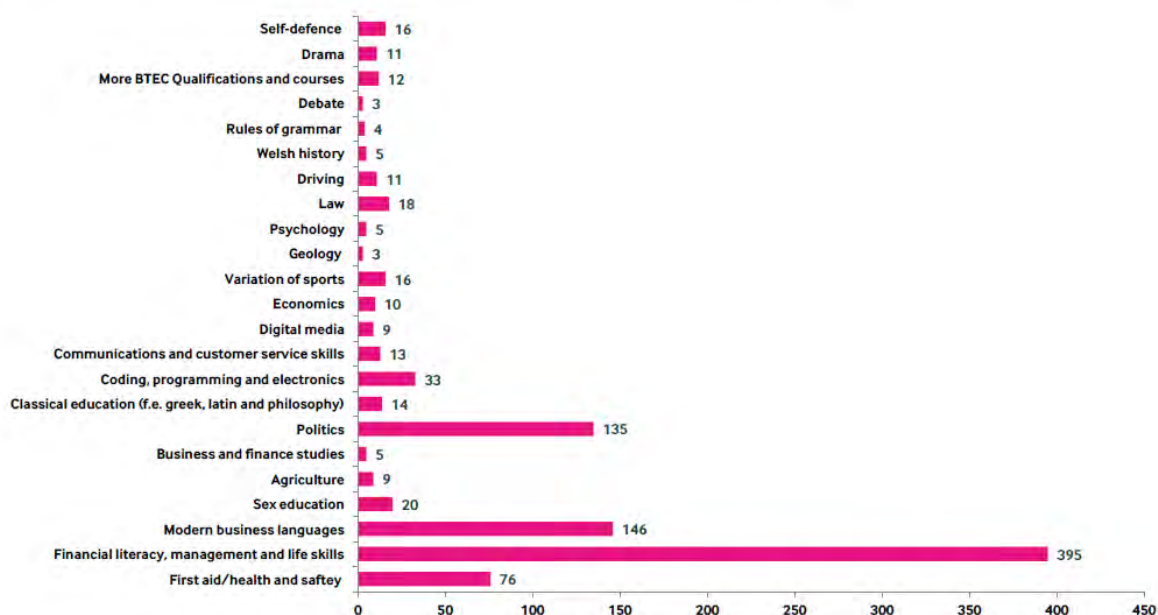
26. The employers we spoke to felt very strongly about this. The British Red Cross evidence stated that:

“Many of the young people we have encountered through these schemes have lacked the skills to answer the phone in a work environment, undertake an effective interview, or complete a job application. We have also encountered young people who are unable to understand or manage their budget, paralysing them into thinking they cannot afford to undertake placements or employment believing it financially better to remain on welfare benefits. Our experience is that young people who lack these skills subsequently feel ill-equipped to look for employment and lack the confidence to apply for employment.”⁴

27. Interestingly, young people themselves have also identified the need for these sort of skills to be taught in school. Responses to a survey of students conducted by the Assembly’s Outreach team showed huge demand for a course on ‘life skills’ in schools.

⁴ Written evidence AYP 17, British Red Cross

Question 3 – Is there anything you think should be taught in schools that isn't at the moment?



28. BBC Cymru Wales suggested that schemes such as apprenticeships and work experience could be very valuable in preparing young people for the work environment. It told us:

“In terms of work experience, again, it provides a taster for young people of what being in a work situation is – even if it is not for a particular role, it provides a particular taste of what it means, even to the extent that they need to turn up on time and that being in work means that they have to contribute positively to what is going on and so forth.”⁵

29. The Welsh Government is very aware of these issues. In her evidence to us, Julie James Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology stated:

“One of the things we are looking at, as you know, is a complete qualifications and curriculum review. One of the things the curriculum review is going to be looking at is ensuring that, rather than teaching people to be bored for a very large percentage of the time, school actually engages them and teaches them real life skills. That is going to be very much part of that review. Schools are where you prepare for life, are they not? It is not just at home. We need to

⁵ RoP para 154, 6 November 2014

get academic qualifications into people, but we need to get proper skills into them as well.”⁶

30. To follow up these issues, the Committee held an additional meeting with representatives from three schools. The schools told us that the introduction of new, more robust, GCSEs in English, Welsh, Maths and numeracy meant that there was *only very limited time* within the curriculum to cover other subjects, for example employability skills.

Navigating the jobs market

31. Several witnesses said that some young people lacked an understanding of the labour markets including how to find and apply for jobs. The Children’s Commissioner for Wales explained in detail:

“Connected to the need to improve young people’s understanding of the labour market is a need to improve young people’s knowledge and awareness of employers’ recruitment behaviour. Although most use the internet to wholly constitute or supplement their recruitment and selection practices, methods for recruitment vary both by job type and locality.

“Many young people are unaware of these differing recruitment practices and with a general lack of work experience find it difficult to best to ‘sell’ themselves to secure a job that would provide them with such experience. In responding to increased pressures of having to carry out as many job searches and applications as possible, many young people are adopting a ‘scattergun’ approach to applications and often employers are receiving a vast amount of applications that may not be relevant to their vacancies.”⁷

32. Research conducted by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that this situation was exacerbated in areas with weak labour markets, where young people had to submit nearly twice as many applications to receive the same number of positive responses as those from areas of economic prosperity, and that this approach was damaging young people’s confidence by just being unsuccessful or not receiving feedback about their applications.

⁶ RoP para 112, 26 November 2014

⁷ Written evidence AYP 9, Children’s Commissioner for Wales

33. Monmouthshire County Council told us:

“As a practitioner, a barrier that I have identified is the understanding of how to navigate the job market in particular. There have been times when I have worked with a young person and I think, ‘I genuinely can’t believe that you’re not employed’ and then you take a look at the way that they navigate the job market, the way that they do their application forms and CVs and you think, ‘That’s their barrier’. I believe that, if no-one has ever shown you how to do something, how are you expected to know how to do that?”⁸

34. The British Red Cross evidence stated that its experience had identified that many young people lacked the very basic understanding of how to present themselves or behave in interview or during employment. It believed this was mainly because nobody in their immediate family was in employment and they therefore had had no indirect exposure to the work environment.

35. Admiral said that many young people failed at the application form stage:

“We do not ask for any formal qualifications, but we expect the spelling and grammar on the application form to be of a certain standard. A lot of it is like text-speak, there is no punctuation or upper case. So, that is the first impression that you get.”⁹

36. The young people we met at Info-Nation told us they didn’t think there was sufficient help available in schools in relation to writing CVs, filling out application forms or how to behave at an interview.

37. We heard a number of examples of schemes and programmes aimed at helping young people become job ready. Monmouthshire County Council, for example:

“Invite representatives from HR to come to speak to the young people and tell them exactly the kinds of things that they would expect to see on an application form and literally go through ‘this is how you would fill out the application form and this is the kind of thing that I am looking for in an interview setting’. As that is delivered within a

⁸ RoP para 64, 12 November 2014

⁹ RoP para 145, 6 November 2014

provision, it is safe, so the young people have the opportunity to ask questions to the right people.”¹⁰

38. Barry Communities First told us about a package, put together by themselves, Asda and the local jobcentre, where local young people can attend focus groups, be given recruitment advice; attend mock interviews and get an insight into the retail environment before applying to a new Asda store which is due to open in Barry next year.

39. We recognise that the Welsh Government will shortly be considering the recommendations of Sir Graham Donaldson’s review of the curriculum and assessment in Wales (due to be published in spring 2015).

The Welsh Government should strengthen the teaching of work-ready skills and understanding of the labour market throughout the whole curriculum as well as through the “Careers and the World of Work” framework.

A lack of experience

40. Employers often ask for previous relevant work experience as part of their recruitment criteria but young people cannot acquire experience without being given a chance. Young Enterprise Wales referred to it as “the employability skill catch- 22”:

“All of the young people that we spoke to had a good idea of what career path they might like to take, but few had first (or second) hand experience of what day-to-day life in that role would entail. The majority of young people believe that employers are looking for experience and there tends to be a sense of helplessness that they can’t get experience if they don’t already have experience ‘the employability skill catch 22’.”¹¹

41. Working Links told us:

“Many young people do not have the required qualifications or work experience to enter employment. Whilst this is an obvious disadvantage for any employer, it also means that the young person has not experienced the requirements of a work environment, such as being at work at certain times and other expectations. Where we identify a lack of work experience as a main barrier to employment

¹⁰ RoP para 66, 12 November 2014

¹¹ Written evidence AYP 10, Young Enterprise Wales

we will work with key employers to access work trails and volunteering opportunities.”¹²

42. We heard many comments about both the value of work experience for young people and also criticisms of some young people’s experience of work placements. According to the UK Commission for Employment and Skills:

“Lack of experience is one of the main barriers for young people looking to enter work yet less than a quarter of Welsh employers offer work experience to school aged young people.”¹³

43. Comments from the young people who contributed to our Outreach Team’s video supported this view:

“There is a loop: you either can’t get the job because you’ve not got the qualifications and then, once you’ve got the qualifications, you can’t get the job because you haven’t had the experience.” – Shannara McFarlane

“It’s that whole situation about, ‘We won’t employ you unless you’re experienced’, but it’s like a ‘how are we going to get experience if no-one is going to employ us’ kind of thing.” – Kheti Ncube

“Sometimes employers are unrealistic about the skills and the experience they expect from young people when they consider them for work.” – Will Jeffs

44. Stakeholders at our Swansea event told us that many employers were wary of taking on young people, particularly those with challenging behaviour, because they were investing a lot of time and effort and it did not always work out for them. This was especially the case with smaller employers.

45. However, the Urdd spoke very positively of its experience of employing young people, saying:

“The Urdd employs 260 people and, interestingly, 30% of them are under the age of 24. So, we do manage to recruit young people well – we are successful in that. Very many young people join us having volunteered with us initially, so we do have a pathway to identify

¹² Written evidence AYP 12, Working Links

¹³ Written evidence AYP 08, UK Commission for Employment and Skills

young people who want to be involved in our activities; we can then train them and they become employees who are loyal to us.”¹⁴

Work experience

46. Many respondents highlighted the important role good work experience can play in preparing young people for the work place.

47. The Children’s Commissioner for Wales said that the provision of high-quality work experience opportunities in school was a core component to ensuring young people are equipped for the world of work but suggested that improvements were needed:

“Young people have told me that they would like clearer information about the choice of work experience placements available to them and that improved support is needed from Careers Wales in securing work experience placements. Many young people described to me that they used their family members and schools to secure work experience opportunities instead of utilizing the services provided by Careers Wales. Young people also told me that they would like to see greater quality and breadth of work experience placements being offered.”¹⁵

48. National Training Federation Wales said:

“The key thing is about giving young people the opportunity to engage with the world of work, be it through work experiences or work taster sessions. Also, through the school sector, pre-16, it would be developing young people’s understanding of the world of work and what employers expect.”¹⁶

49. City and County of Swansea suggested that work experience opportunities needed to be more along the lines of the work-related education programme they ran where, instead of being three or four days at the end of term, it was one day a week for 30 weeks in the last year of term. This had proved to be very beneficial with some of the students they had worked with, who had gone on to secure employment with them at the end of it.

¹⁴ RoP para 149, 6 November 2014

¹⁵ Written evidence AYP 09, Children’s Commissioner for Wales

¹⁶ RoP para 126, 20 November 2014

50. We are aware that the Welsh Government's remit letter to Careers Wales for the financial year 2015-16 made it clear that Careers Wales will no longer be required to undertake Health and Safety vetting of work experience placements or to provide a National Work Experience Database.

51. The Welsh Government's remit letter also stated that it is fully the responsibility of schools to secure delivery of the Careers and the World of Work curriculum framework, including any related experiences of the world of work. It also said that the Welsh Ministers would write to all schools reminding them that responsibility for this lies with them and not with Careers Wales.

52. However, we heard concerns from teaching representatives about schools' ability to provide good quality, work experience in the future:

"From the point of view of pupils, what they enjoy more than anything else is the opportunity to undertake work experience that is relevant and specific.

"We can offer work experience, but it is becoming more difficult because Careers Wales are telling us now that they are not going to be willing to arrange work experience. They have the database; they have the list of employers that have been vetted, and if they pull the plug on work experience, we don't have the funding, I'm sure, to employ people administratively to be able to do that. ...I felt that this was a crisis because if there isn't a way for our children to be able to do work experience regularly ... they are going to be under a great disadvantage."¹⁷

53. The Deputy Minister told us that, as part of the Welsh Government's employer engagement programme, she is reviewing the provision of work experience in order to make it more meaningful for all the parties involved.

The Welsh Government should make fundamental changes to work experience for young people. They should review best practice on work experience; consider making it longer; do more to ensure that more employers are involved; and ensure that sufficient resources (either in Careers Wales or in schools) are in place for work experience to be properly organised.

¹⁷ RoP para 87, 15 January 2015

We recommend that the Deputy Minister reinstates the responsibility on Careers Wales to undertake Health and Safety vetting of work experience placements and to provide a National Work Experience Database.

54. We ask the Deputy Minister to come back to the Committee following the completion of this review to discuss the findings.

Volunteering

55. The British Red Cross emphasised the important role that volunteering can play in gaining paid employment. It recruits staff through volunteering opportunities; non-salaried opportunities such as internships, work experience and work placements; and employment schemes and apprenticeships. It suggested that:

“Greater emphasis and recognition should be given to the impact of volunteering for young people in helping them to build the skills, experience and confidence to secure employment. Volunteering is a less formal introduction to the workplace in which they can develop at their own pace in a supported and structured environment.”¹⁸

56. The importance of volunteering as a means to employment was also raised with us by the young people we met at Info-Nation and during the round-table discussion with stakeholders in Swansea.

Vocational courses and sector specific skills

57. Working Links told us that many young people were referred to them with no qualifications and most employment sectors required entry level qualifications - such as the Constructions Skills Certificate Scheme (CSCS) for construction:

“We do provide funding and support to gain these qualifications. However, it would be useful if more education under the age of 16 could focus on vocational skills.”

58. The UK Commission for Employment and Skills suggested that:

“Employers and education institutions should engage closely in order to create programmes of high quality work experience and co-

¹⁸ Written evidence AYP 17, British Red Cross

designed vocational qualifications that more closely match the needs of business.”¹⁹

59. However, stakeholders at our Swansea event told us that there were sometimes problems with a lack of respect for certain professions and vocational training still did not have parity of esteem. Young people needed to understand that vocational qualifications were no less important than academic learning and that manual work could pay well and lead to a good career.

60. We also heard concerns from the schools themselves about collaboration to provide greater vocational options:

“What the 14-19 learning pathways did was to enhance the curriculum to provide greater vocational options. What is happening now is that those partnerships are going to be lost or certainly they will be restricted. Schools are doing in different ways. I don’t want to dominate the discussion here, but from the point of view of the common application and so on, schools are working now on the preparation of handbooks and prospectuses for years 10 and 12, but there is a great question mark over the content because of the question mark over the funding, because if the funding is not in place, we cannot maintain the partnerships.”²⁰

Labour market information

61. According to the Children’s Commissioner for Wales:

“Research conducted by the JRF found that in order to enhance their chances of employment success, young people required strong knowledge and intelligence about the labour market. Estyn, however, has found that overall schools do not make effective use of labour market information to effectively support children and young people to make informed decisions about their futures.”²¹

62. Young Enterprise Wales also said:

“Advice and guidance needs to reflect local issues and local market intelligence. There are huge and insurmountable local differences in the quantity and type of employment available. Information, advice

¹⁹ Written evidence AYP 08, UK Commission for Employment and Skills

²⁰ RoP para 76, 15 January 2015

²¹ Written evidence AYP 09, Children’s Commissioner for Wales

and guidance needs to be careful and thoughtful to reflect this and should be heavily tailored to the opportunities afforded by the local labour market and the needs of individuals reflecting the opportunities base locally, regionally and nationally accurately.”²²

63. In describing the common area prospectus and application process currently being developed by the Welsh Government, the Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology told us:

“One of the really good things about this is that it will have local employer labour market information on it. We want people to be aspirational, but we want them to be aspirational in a realistic way. So, for example, you do not want to train—I am trying to think of something—97 theatre managers in a place where there are only two theatres and that young person does not actually want to travel for their work. It is about making people understand what they need to travel for as well, what is locally available, what their life plan is and whether it matches with that. So, I think that that local labour market information, and the national and international labour market information, is really important at an early stage so that you can make those right decisions.”²³

The Welsh Government should review and evaluate the roll-out of the common application process and prospectuses to ensure that school pupils have information and access to vocational, as well as academic, courses (either through other schools or further education colleges).

Parity of esteem for work-based training

64. The National Training Federation for Wales also felt there was a fundamental imbalance between academic and work-based learning, with just 0.3% of school leavers in Cardiff last year starting an apprenticeship, and 87% going on to further education. It felt that apprenticeships were undervalued as a cost-effective means of creating employment opportunities for young people:

“It is probably 20 times cheaper to put someone through an apprenticeship than it is to put someone through a degree. We have people on Jobs Growth Wales who have got degrees. I guess that it is

²² Written evidence AYP 10, Young Enterprise Wales

²³ RoP para 98, 26 November 2014

good for that employer, but you have to query the return on investment and the expenditure going forward.”²⁴

The Welsh Government should review the outcomes of the *Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009* and evaluate the opportunities that young people have in school to choose vocational courses at age 14 and age 16, either in other schools or in further education colleges.

The Welsh Government should produce an analysis of the balance between academic and work-based learning post-16 and assess whether this balance is appropriate for the modern Welsh economy.

Transport – a barrier to finding work

65. The cost, frequency and reliability of public transport were cited as a major barrier to employment for young people. Many witnesses said that public transport may not fit in with the needs of employers, for example shift work, part-time evening work or at weekends.

66. Working Links told us:

“Particular geographical areas of Wales are not easily accessible for young people to travel to work, and many of our young people are not able to apply for certain roles as they may not have the transport to access work, and public transport may not fit the employer demands. Therefore for some larger scale employers such as Amazon, especially during periods of high employment such as at Christmas, we do pay for a mini bus. It is our belief that a review of public transport is required to identify ‘black-spots’ as well as the possibility of a subsidy for young people who are unemployed.”²⁵

67. Feedback from Careers Wales staff also identified transport as a significant barrier. They said that public transport in Ceredigion, west Wales, cross-valley transport in south Wales and public transport in many rural areas of north Wales were particularly problematic. Cuts in rural services, infrequent services and lengthy travel times were cited as specific concerns. The problem was not limited to rural areas: transport limitations also affected young people entering the labour market in cities, with clients in Cardiff identifying cost as a major barrier.

²⁴ RoP para 142, 12 November 2014.

²⁵ Written evidence AYP 12, Working Links

68. We did hear about some innovative schemes to try and help overcome the issue. For example, the Scooter Scheme operating in Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire, aims to enable people to accept or keep a job where they have no other means of transport to access that job by lending them a scooter for a period of up to 12 months. Stakeholders at our Swansea event also told us that in London, the Oyster card gives free bus and tram travel to Londoners aged 16 or 17, and those aged 18, and in some cases, 19, who remain in full-time education.

69. We were also told that the Jobcentre gives vouchers to young people to use on buses, but the drivers don't always know what they are and young people can be embarrassed if they have to persuade the driver that it is a genuine ticket.

Further to the new Youth Concessionary Fare scheme for 16 and 17 year olds (from September 2015), the Welsh Government should undertake a study to examine the costs and feasibility of extending this scheme to young people aged 18-24.

Advice and guidance

Careers advice and guidance

70. The young people who contributed to the Outreach Team's video had mixed views of the careers advice provided in schools:

"In school, we have a careers officer and I have been to see her before, but I think it's very hard for a careers officer to learn what all the options are for the set job that you want to do. There are a lot of jobs out there and a lot of different universities. Sometimes, it kind of feels like they are not quite trained to handle that mass, that amount of knowledge." – Shannara McFarlane

"I actually had really good careers advice when I was in school. We had a careers officer and just before we were leaving school, we were all given an appointment for a certain time to go and see her to talk about where we were going to go after school, any future plans after college, and she would give us like the booklets of the different colleges, different advice on the courses you wanted to do." – Jessie Fuge

"I have received careers advice, but I've not found it very useful because there's not been enough offered." – Kheti Ncube

71. The Children's Commissioner for Wales felt there was a significant need to improve the awareness levels of the careers services available to children and young people:

"In their Annual Report 2012/13 [Funky Dragon] found that 71.9% of the young people they surveyed for their research project, *Funky's United Nations Challenge*, felt that they were unable to or didn't know how to meet with careers advisors in schools. They also found that the majority of young people surveyed had not used the internet to access careers advice. This finding is further reinforced by 78.6% of those young people surveyed, at risk of being excluded, had not used the internet to access careers advice, and that in general, many young people were unaware of the post-16 opportunities available to them."²⁶

²⁶ Written evidence AYP 09, Children's Commissioner for Wales

72. Careers Wales told us:

“One of the developments we are leading on at the moment is an online prospectus and application process for all provision for 16 to 18-year-olds. What we hope that will do—and it is a massive technological undertaking—is raise the awareness of young people about the range of opportunities that are available to them, because our research shows that, despite the best efforts of our staff, certainly within schools, there is a lack of awareness of some of the routes that are available out there.”²⁷

73. According to the Children’s Commissioner for Wales, it is crucial that young people are provided with the right level of information, support and guidance and there is a significant need to improve awareness levels of the careers services available, including raising awareness of vocational opportunities and the Apprenticeship Matching Service:

“Young people often find the employment services confusing and the information provided to them is not easy to understand.”²⁸

74. Young Enterprise Wales said it was “imperative that careers advice and guidance reflect the changing nature of the labour market and offer young people the chance and opportunities to develop key 21st century employability skills.”²⁹

75. Careers Wales said that tailored job search support had the most impact in helping people gain employment:

“So, what we find works best is when either our staff or the agencies that we work with in partnership sit down with young people, identify their individual needs and then produce a programme, often a multi-agency programme, that addresses the specific issues that they face. You cannot generalise about the needs of young people in this category. Some people may need help with CVs and others will not; some people may need help with confidence building, resilience and decision making. So, it is very individual and we find that it is about that approach, where you have a face-to-face diagnostic or interview

²⁷ RoP para 259, 6 November 2014

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Written evidence AYP 10, Young Enterprise Wales

with a young person and really get under the skin of the issues that they face.”³⁰

76. This view was supported by the young people we met at Info-Nation, who told us that you need to talk to a person not a website for careers advice and that person needs a passion for their job.

Careers Wales

Funding

77. During scrutiny of the Welsh Government’s draft budget proposals for 2015-16, the Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology told us:

“Careers Wales is taking quite a significant budget hit, and Members will be aware that it has only just been reorganised from the previous arrangement of a number of different Careers Wales companies across Wales to an internal Government organisation that is unified. It gives us the opportunity, since there is such a newly formed organisation, to refocus completely what its work will be, as the Minister has already said. That refocus will very much concentrate on online and web-based systems.

“We will be protecting the one-to-one service for the hardest-to-reach youngsters and those in danger of being not in education, employment or training. We have a new programme of targeting those youngsters as soon as we become aware of them in our school system. A named worker will be allocated to those young people—it might be a schoolteacher, a Careers Wales adviser or some other person in the education environment—and that person will track that young person all of the way through, making sure that the one-to-one appointments are still available to them from Careers Wales under its new remit. One-to-one appointments will drop by about 50%, we anticipate, but those that remain will be targeted at those youngsters who need that one-to-one intervention the most.

“The rest will be an enhanced web service. We are in the process of renegotiating the web arrangements. We will be doing a lot of work on online chat. We know from surveys of young people that webchat, as it is called, is a very popular way of doing it. Young people, as we all know, do not do much on the phone these days; they do everything online. So, we are going to have webchats and web rooms,

³⁰ RoP para 228, 6 November 2014

where people can discuss particular areas of interest to them, and they will be able to request a one-to-one interview, but it will not be a matter of course.”³¹

78. Careers Wales told us:

“The pressures that we face are going to be challenging and there will need to be a significant change to the services that we deliver—at least some of those services; it may well mean fewer young people accessing face-to-face support. It will probably have a further impact on the adult services that we provide. In all of those difficult decisions, however, we will keep coming back to the needs of the individual and focusing whatever resource that we have on those individuals who need our support most.”

79. However, participants at our Swansea engagement event said that it was not easy for everyone to access the technology, and the young people we met at InfoNation told us that they would much prefer to receive careers advice from a person rather than an online service.

80. Given the importance respondents have placed on one-to-one support, we are concerned about the ability of Careers Wales to provide this level of service, in light of the recent funding cuts and remit changes it has undergone.

We recommend strongly that the Welsh Government should ensure that Careers Wales provides face-to-face advice and guidance for every young person who needs it.

Engagement with post-16 training providers

81. National Training Federation Wales expressed concerns that there was a significant lack of brokerage, co-ordination and support between schools; further education colleges and post-16 work based learning providers, which it believed was having a detrimental effect on young people’s ability to be able to fully exploit the relevant opportunities that were available to them.

82. They told us:

“One of the big barriers is the huge perception in terms of staying on in school and staying on in institutions, to be honest, with very little understanding of the world of work that is outside in your local

³¹ RoP paras 42-44, 16 October 2014

communities. There is a perception job for us to do in moving people into work, with parents and peers. Youngsters are not even aware of the opportunities that are available to them on their doorstep, and that is a big piece of work that, collectively, we need to do.”³²

83. It went on to outline the difficulties that not being allowed into schools to talk about the opportunities outside of the school setting were causing:

“The problem that we face with it all is that, when we meet an employer and we talk to them about taking on young people, the employers are keen to get involved, but if we are only getting referred those people who are really hard to help, their expectations are slightly higher than that, and if we are not getting a stab at those youngsters who have more potential - there is not an easy phrase for it - we could engage with as many employers as we liked, but if we cannot supply them with those young people who are going to be great in their businesses, it kind of falls flat.

“The answer is that we cannot allow schools to continue to do it. It is not right for the young people, and it is not based around them.”³³

84. ColegauCymru also raised the issue of not being able to gain access to schools, particularly those with a sixth form:

“It is one of our ongoing problems, which is fundamentally driven by the fact that, if a school has a sixth form, we just do not get access to those students to share information and make them aware, and because we do not get access in many cases, parents do not know or understand what is available. Do they really know what an apprenticeship is? Do they really know that, with an apprenticeship, you can progress to higher education? I am afraid that they do not, in many cases.”³⁴

³² RoP para 118, 20 November 2014

³³ RoP para 161, 20 November 2014

³⁴ RoP para 216, 20 November 2014

Employer engagement

Employer engagement

85. National Training Federation Wales said:

“I think that there is a crucial role for employers to play in the whole of this across the whole of Wales, but for employers to be able to play their part in terms of this, the gates of the school will need to be open. If the gates of the school remain closed and there is no employer engagement, with employers coming into the school, we are never going to break this, if you want me to be frank.”³⁵

86. Young Enterprise Wales suggested that:

“Meaningful employment experiences and opportunities to bring ‘business into the classroom’ may help young people make the school to work transition.”³⁶

87. The teaching representatives told us of the work their schools had done to build relationships with local employers. The Headteacher of Ysgol y Preseli also highlighted the role that school governors could play in this respect:

“There will be a percentage of governors who are employers. In our school, we have established what is called an industry panel, or an employers’ panel. The employers’ panel meets once a term. The specific terms of reference are to monitor and to appraise the work-based learning programme, and also to give advice to teachers in terms of what employers want. There are representatives, for example, from the CITB and so forth on that panel. It has been established over time and, evidently, has led to a number of activities that are very good.”³⁷

“Those programmes, which have grown out of the employer panel, show you how a partnership and partnerships with employers can give advice to schools on what they are looking for.”³⁸

88. In response, the Deputy Minister’s official told us:

³⁵ RoP para 141, 20 November 2014

³⁶ Written evidence 10, Young Enterprise Wales

³⁷ RoP para 40, 15 January 2015

³⁸ RoP para 42, 15 January 2015

“Picking up on the point that you made, that people do not always know what they need to look for, we are linking that to a much better approach to employer engagement with schools, right through from age 11 in year 7 all the way through, up to age 18. We are looking at an enhanced employer engagement approach where we want to encourage employers to link with schools and colleges so that young people have real access to individuals who are engaged in the world of work.”

We recommend that the Deputy Minister’s review of employer engagement is progressed as a priority and published by end July 2015. We ask the Deputy Minister to write to us with more details of the review and her timescale.

Additional barriers for vulnerable young people

Young people with a disability

89. During the inquiry, we looked at the additional requirements that some young people have in finding work.

90. According to Barnardo's Cymru:

“Evidence suggests that disabled and learning disabled young people are not prepared for employment as a destination of transition into adulthood and are often denied access to employment or training opportunities. Disabled young people remain twice as likely to be not in education, training or employment than those who are not disabled.”³⁹

Negative attitudes and discrimination in the workplace

91. RNIB Cymru and the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) believed this to be a barrier to finding work. RNIB told us:

“One Department for Work and Pensions study found that nine out of ten employers rated blind and partially sighted people as 'difficult' or 'impossible' to employ.”⁴⁰

92. NDCS said:

“Research for the Royal National Institute for the Deaf (now Action on Hearing Loss) in 2007 found that even at a time of near full employment severely and profoundly deaf people were four times more likely to be unemployed than the general population, with negative attitudes from employers being seen as the main barrier.”⁴¹

Advice, guidance and support for vulnerable young people

93. According to the Children's Commissioner for Wales, many children and young people with learning disabilities and special educational needs faced substantial difficulties in accessing opportunities and services that enabled them to develop the skills and experience necessary to successfully secure employment. He was concerned about the lack of job opportunities, training and support options available to them that took account of their specific

³⁹ Written evidence AYP 02, Barnardo's Cymru

⁴⁰ Written evidence AYP 05, RNIB Cymru

⁴¹ Written evidence AYP 06, National Deaf Children's Society

needs and vulnerabilities. Young people had said they needed a job centre mentor (especially for young people with learning disabilities), talked about poor treatment/lack of respect for young people by employment service staff and said there was a need for a better range of opportunities such as volunteering and education.

94. Vale of Glamorgan Council told us:

“Specifically those with a disability need a benefit system that is flexible enough to allow young people to work, but that does not penalise the young person allowing them to earn less than on benefits or a system that does not allow these young people to re-access benefits should employment not work (for whatever reason). There is a need for more tier 2 services, organisations such as Innovate Trust that will engage young people with disabilities to help them build their soft and hard skills, through a vocational route, and better connections with local employers. Employers need to be more aware of young people with disabilities or care leavers, and provide opportunities of engagement through schemes, that will benefit the employer in putting something back in the community as well as advantaging the young person in gaining skills and confidence.”⁴²

95. RNIB Cymru told us that while there are a range of schemes available to support young people into work, in its experience young people with visual impairments have difficulty in accessing information about the schemes available, including Access to Work and other support mechanisms.

96. In her evidence, the Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology told us:

“The lead worker is designed to assist people with the most needs. That is why we talk all of the time about getting the right lead worker in place, making sure that that person has the right training and skills to broker for the young person all of the things that they need to meet their needs. I specifically mentioned earlier looked-after children, for example. You may need lead workers with specific training in order to be able to conquer some of the barriers that people in the looked-after system encounter. Exactly the same is the case for people with additional learning needs and other specific barriers.”

⁴² Written evidence AYP 16, Vale of Glamorgan Council

Recruitment processes

97. In RNIB Cymru's experience, a key barrier faced by blind and partially sighted people was the increasing reliance on web-based advertisement of opportunities and online recruitment processes which were inaccessible to people with sight loss. It said:

“Many websites are not compatible with the accessibility software that people with sight loss use (for example, screen magnification or screen readers). As a result, often one-to-one support is essential in assisting people to locate job opportunities and apply for them. This key stumbling block means that many visually impaired jobseekers simply don't get past the first hurdle.”⁴³

Travel and transport

98. RNIB told us that mobility and independent travel skills are key to blind and partially sighted young people's ability to access employment opportunities. As they are unable to drive, they are reliant on public transport or taxis, or assistance from family and friends to get around. In rural areas, in particular, this may limit their ability to find and access work. Where it is available, travelling independently by public transport requires confidence and resilience – the problems encountered in doing so are some of the most frequent issues raised by their members.

99. The Children's Commissioner for Wales also told us that disabled young people were concerned about a lack of services and problems associated with the built environment (for example pavements) which make it difficult for them to get around the city.

Looked after children and care leavers

100. In its written evidence, the Fostering Network Wales stated that:

“Looked after children and Care Leavers remain one of the most vulnerable groups of children and young people, their outcomes in terms of educational achievement, independent living and stable employment remain of acute concern. They require a unique set of interventions and support in recognition of their lack of family support, and vulnerability. It is critical that statutory services working in partnership with the voluntary sector are able to prioritise and

⁴³ Written evidence AYP 05, RNIB Cymru

support improved employment outcomes for this vulnerable group of young people.”⁴⁴

101. It goes on to say that there are a number of reasons for care leavers’ poor employment outcomes:

“Care leavers have a much lower educational attainment than their peers with the resulting lack of qualifications then impacts on their chances of employment. Between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014, 663 care leavers aged 16 or over ceased being looked after and 72 per cent of these children had at least one qualification. The proportion of care leavers aged 16 or over with 5 or more GCSEs at grade A* to G was 37 per cent in 2013-14. In 2013-14, 77 children in this cohort (12 per cent) achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grade A* to C.

“Statistics suggest that looked after children mostly come from a very disadvantaged population and many have had disrupted schooling before they became looked after. In the past this has been used as an ‘excuse’ as to why looked after children have such poor levels of attainment. Increasingly it is being recognised that the public care system may itself be contributing to these poor outcomes. Even when this is not the case, there is always more that can be done to ensure that looked after children achieve their potential.”

102. It suggests that there are seven factors that contribute to poor outcomes for looked after children:

- a lack of ambition;
- placement instability;
- high rates of school exclusion and poor quality educational provision;
- a lack of remedial help;
- leaving foster care too young;
- the low educational achievements of foster carers;
- the failure of corporate parenting.

103. In response to the question “What support is the most effective in assisting care leavers into employment?” the Fostering Network Wales said that the most effective support would be improving educational attainment:

⁴⁴ Written evidence AYP 18, The Fostering Network Wales

“No single measure or activity will transform educational outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. To achieve this will require sustained investment in the foster care system and it will require action to improve stability and the Fostering Network are currently working with Welsh Government to develop regulations to underpin Part 6 of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014, around the promotion of placement stability.”⁴⁵

104. It went on to add that there was a need to focus on improving the educational attainment of children in care and entry to higher and further education, which in turn would impact on care leavers’ ability to secure meaningful employment:

“The Fostering Network have worked in partnership with Welsh Government to inform a strategy for the educational attainment for looked after children, we strongly believe a similar piece of work should be undertaken for care leavers.”⁴⁶

Homelessness or lack of suitable accommodation

105. Barnardo’s Cymru told us:

“Young people leaving care have to cope with the challenge of compressed and accelerated transitions to adulthood (relative to their peers). It is clear that if care leavers are to have the best chance to succeed in education, training and employment, they must have a secure base from which to start. Suitable accommodation, access to health care, appropriate financial and personal support must all be in place. Too often, care leavers are forced to side-line education, training and employment as they face the challenge of living independently for the first time.”⁴⁷

106. It went on to say:

“Homelessness almost trebles a young person’s chance of developing a mental health problem and homelessness is frequently associated with substance misuse problems. Young people may face real difficulties in accessing appropriate support for their additional needs in order to provide them with the personal resources and stability required to engage in education, employment and training. At the

⁴⁵ Written evidence AYP 18, The Fostering Network Wales

⁴⁶ Written evidence AYP 18, The Fostering Network Wales

⁴⁷ Written evidence AYP 02, Barnardo’s Cymru

same time, using a hostel address has been reported as a major barrier in applying for work by young people and they have also talked about the 'poverty trap' in terms of securing employment that will demand a big enough wage to cover housing costs as they struggle to secure accommodation."⁴⁸

107. In its oral evidence, Barnardo's Cymru cited a recent case which demonstrated this very issue:

"A young woman who had worked very hard to get catering qualifications to get a job in a pub restaurant was then immediately disadvantaged and was looking to give it up because she was no longer able to support her tenancy, because she immediately lost half of her housing benefit. So, the wages that local employers are able to give to those young people, who are on a very low rung, will not then enable them to sustain a tenancy. They are not living at home with their families; they are living independently because they have left the care system."⁴⁹

108. This issue was also raised by stakeholders at our Swansea event, who told us that for young people who have been homeless, accepting a job can mean losing their accommodation. They want to work, but they need tailored support. It is easier for those who still live with their parents.

The Welsh Government should work with the Department for Work and Pensions to address anomalies in the benefits system, for example the difficulty young people face in sustaining a tenancy if their housing benefit is cut as a result of taking up low-paid employment.

Hard to reach young people

109. A number of respondents highlighted the important role the third sector can play in engaging and supporting hard to reach young people.

110. We were particularly interested in the work of Barnardo's Cymru and Llamau in helping prepare these young people for work, what they termed as "micro steps".

111. Barnardo's Cymru told us:

"It is very difficult to try to explain to young people who have not done at all well in school, perhaps, because they have had quite

⁴⁸ Written evidence AYP 02, Barnardo's Cymru

⁴⁹ RoP para 96, 6 November 2014

chaotic lives or lived in care, that they cannot, with no qualifications at all, go to a job in one jump.”⁵⁰

112. Llamau agreed, saying:

“They think that they are work-ready because they want a job. If they are motivated, they think that they can walk straight into one, and we have to work with them to make them see the very small steps that they need to take to improve. Work tasters, again, are incredibly effective. On the life skills project, last year, we got 63 young people to do tasters, and that is a very small step to say that they understand the skills and behaviours that they need. It is about getting them to take the small steps. They cannot go straight into a job. If they could, they would. The very fact that they have not shows that they need support from Barnardo’s and Llamau to learn what the behaviours are, to learn the small steps and to make gradual progression.”⁵¹

113. Barnardo’s Cymru went on to say:

“What we know about, as Llamau does, is how you work with those most disadvantaged young people, who are furthest away from the job market, and we can provide that personal close support with those small numbers. What we found from the evaluation was that what you have to have for those programmes to be successful is for them to be tailor-made for individuals, using personal outcomes, rather than tick-box outcomes.”⁵²

The Welsh Government should fund more flexible courses that can accommodate young people who need more time to achieve the required outcomes.

Practical support

114. We also heard about the very practical help the third sector can provide. Barry Communities First said that it offered young people reimbursement of their travel expenses for their first month of travel to and from their new work placement on the condition of a letter of employment from their employer. They could also help with interview clothes and one to one interview preparation.

⁵⁰ RoP para 80, 6 November 2014

⁵¹ RoP para 81, 6 November 2014

⁵² RoP para 86, 6 November 2014

115. Llamau told us:

“We have also found in our experience of working with young care leavers that even when we have set up work placements and tasters, it is about the amount of support that they need to go those very first days, because they do not have a parent to nag them, get them up, make sure they have got clothes and make sure they have had breakfast. So, we often have to provide that support, and there has to be a support worker to provide that transition because otherwise they are not going to make it through the door on the first day. So, it is about all that extra support, which you automatically do for your own children and you take for granted, but these young people do not have that support out there.”⁵³

116. Barnardo’s Cymru also said:

“Our part in that work was texting somebody asking, ‘Are you out of bed? Are you there? You’ve got to get there’, and being quite hard and cajoling, as your mum or dad would do if you were at home. That is what we need to be doing. ‘We care enough about you that we want you up, ready, had your breakfast and you’re going to work or education, and you’re going to be there’.”⁵⁴

Funding

117. We heard about the importance and difficulty of measuring the success of programmes such as the Life Skills project and Symud Ymlaen:

“It is very important that you have to prove whether or not you have been effective. If you have received funding, for example in Wrexham and Rhyl, through the Big Lottery fund’s Life Skills project, you have to ensure that you can conduct the evaluation at the end of the project, and that you can put down consistently what has happened through the programme, and also that you can measure the distance travelled.”⁵⁵

⁵³ RoP para 105, 6 November 2014

⁵⁴ RoP para 107, 6 November 2014

⁵⁵ RoP para 78, 6 November 2014

“It is very difficult to price the worth of these programmes compared with young people’s life experiences. So, it is a true invest-to-save, if you can make it work.”⁵⁶

The Welsh Government should increase their co-ordination and planning of existing financial support for the third sector to minimise duplication and to prioritise support for the hardest to reach young people in accessing the jobs market.

118. We also heard about the difficulties associated with the short-term funding of these projects. Barnardo’s Cymru told us:

“There is another element, which is about the length of time that these programmes run for. So, the lottery funding, for instance, was for four years. So, those programmes that I am talking about now have now ended. I have not got any continuance funding, and you think, ‘Right, there was a large group of young people who were helped over a period of four years: what happens now? Are there other programmes?’ We are constantly trying to find funding to re-energise these programmes and make them happen. We talk about respect for young people, but what are we saying? That you were okay as a guinea pig and we tried it for four years and that is it now—we have done that and we will write up the results.”⁵⁷

119. This view was supported by Llamau:

“Similarly with the life skills project, again, it was a very successful pilot. It helped us gain the Symud Ymlaen contract, we know that, but we want it to continue. It was a successful pilot, and there should then be mainstream funding coming in.”⁵⁸

⁵⁶ RoP para 115, 6 November 2014

⁵⁷ RoP para 115, 6 November 2014

⁵⁸ RoP para 117, 6 November 2014

Young people who are not in education, employment or training

120. Working Links felt that the Welsh Government's commitment to and support for young people who were not in employment, education or training was evident from the various schemes that had been launched but were unsure that these schemes were truly reaching the young people that most need the service. It said that:

“Our referrals show us that many young people that come onto our programme have dis-engaged from mainstream education at an early age and have been lost to various support services from then on. We are probably one of the few organisations that they have engaged with for quite some time and we make the assumption that this is mainly due to the mandation element of the Work Programme. The Welsh Government's not in employment, education or training strategy needs to focus more on this more 'difficult to engage' sector if it is to be effective.”⁵⁹

The Welsh Government's Youth Engagement and Progression Framework

121. According to the Children's Commissioner for Wales:

“Provisions such as the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework and Jobs Growth Wales have, at least in the first instance, had positive impacts on improving the employment opportunities available to young people in Wales.”⁶⁰

122. The Welsh Government's *Youth Engagement and Progression Framework Implementation Plan* was formally launched in October 2013. The Framework aims to start to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training over a two-year period. We heard that it is based on existing best practice among local authorities.

123. In practice, young people should receive two new offers under the Framework: (a) a single point of contact (lead worker) for young people most at risk to ensure joined up, co-ordinated support; and (b) a 'youth guarantee' of a suitable place of learning for every young person post-16.

⁵⁹ Written evidence AYP 12, Working Links

⁶⁰ Written evidence AYP 09, Children's Commissioner for Wales

124. The Plan gives local authorities a key strategic leadership role in their local area. They will need to work closely with Careers Wales, youth services, schools, providers and other partners to develop plans for the implementation of the Framework.

125. The Wales Audit Office, *Young People not in education, employment or training*, July 2014, found that while the Welsh Government was well placed to help to reduce the numbers of 16-18 year olds who were not in education, employment or training:

“It is less well placed to reduce the number of 19-24 year olds who are not in employment, education or training.”⁶¹

126. Wrexham County Borough Council also felt that the Welsh Government’s strategy currently seemed to be aimed at 16-18 year olds and lacked any real focus on EET opportunities for 19-24 year olds.

127. On 16 December 2014, the Welsh Government published a summary of the interim findings from their formative evaluation of the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework.⁶²

128. Some of the key findings are that all local authorities have made progress with implementing the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework, although some local authorities are still further ahead than others; all local authorities have appointed a Senior Accountable Officer and an Engagement and Progression Co-ordinator; however some of the action plans are of variable quality. Early identification systems are relatively well developed but, in general, processes for identifying young people who are at risk of disengaging are less well developed for the 16-18 year olds. Arrangements for lead workers are in progress in many local authorities but the milestone in the national implementation plan is unlikely to be achieved.

Early identification

129. Working Links told us:

“Our referrals show us that many young people that come onto our programme have dis-engaged from mainstream education at an early age and have been lost to various support services from then on.”⁶³

⁶¹ Written evidence AYP 01, Wales Audit Office

⁶² Welsh Government, [Formative evaluation of the Youth Engagement Progression Framework](#), 16 December 2014

⁶³ Written evidence AYP 12, Working Links

130. It believes that schools and colleges could do more to encourage young people who are at risk of becoming not in employment, education or training to address what the issues are so that they can be supported in the school environment:

“Whether that is to provide more educational psychology support or counselling within the school environment as well as more vocational schemes, as it seems that once they dis-engaged it is too late.”⁶⁴

131. National Training Federation Wales agreed:

“With some of these complex issues that we are talking about, in terms of individuals, these opportunities are known way before they are 16, and way before they come out of what I call the compulsory education system. This is for 12, 13 or 14-year-olds, where, literally, individuals can be identified who might be wavering into potentially becoming a not in employment, education or training; we could do much more with them at that age. Sometimes, when they are 16, it is too late.”⁶⁵

132. Young Enterprise Wales suggested that the increasing number of young people not in employment, education or training who had not made a successful transition from education into a first job suggested that the first step onto the employment ladder was becoming harder to obtain. It says:

“It is therefore important that provision focuses on supporting young people in making links into work, from primary school onwards. Helping young people to understand that their career planning starts here not when they ‘leave school’.”⁶⁶

133. Careers Wales told us:

“In terms of the early interventions, again, this is something that we are continually developing, but we have made progress in becoming better at identifying the needs of young people. So, we work with schools very closely and we track young people using a range of indicators, including attendance and various other factors, to allow us

⁶⁴ Written evidence AYP 12, Working Links

⁶⁵ RoP para 128, 20 November 2014

⁶⁶ Written evidence AYP 10, Young Enterprise Wales

to target our resources more efficiently. I think that has been a very positive step over the past couple of years.”⁶⁷

Data sharing to improve early identification and tracking

134. The Wales Audit Office suggested that data sharing was better developed at the younger age group than in the over-18 age group, where much more work was needed to develop the data sharing that is necessary with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

135. Careers Wales told us:

“The youth engagement and progression framework has, I think, clarified the responsibilities of a wide range of agencies and we are now better able to use the data that we have to refer young people to the most appropriate service. I think that, however, coming back to the 16 to 18-year-olds, having the data that we now hold helps to co-ordinate that provision, and we would be delighted to try to extend that up to the age of 25, but there are data-sharing issues there, because young people who are unemployed go to the jobcentre and Jobcentre Plus is the lead organisation working with them.

“We work very closely with Jobcentre Plus, and we have an excellent relationship with it, but, as that is not a devolved function, there are data-sharing issues that we are currently working through with it. However, it is working towards the same ends as we are, in terms of a positive outcome for clients, and we are looking to see how we can get better at sharing data about young people up to the age of 25.”⁶⁸

136. The Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology said:

“In terms of the current cohort, we are having a provision-mapping exercise to make sure that we can get as much data as we possibly can. I took a legislative consent motion through Plenary yesterday about data sharing, which is very much designed to get the outcome data that we need in order to track the young people and to try to get them back into a programme that best suits their needs.”⁶⁹

137. The Deputy Minister’s official went on to say:

⁶⁷ RoP para 256, 6 November 2014

⁶⁸ RoP para 261, 6 November 2014

⁶⁹ RoP para 87, 26 November 2014

“Certainly, in terms of data collection, at a local level, all authorities have either got or are working towards an approved Wales accord on the sharing of personal information scheme, so that the data sharing between agencies can help. Once we get beyond the age of 18, there are much greater difficulties in terms of data protection, and one of the issues with data sharing with DWP is sharing information at an individual level. It is very complex. That does not mean that we are not working to look at how we can improve it, but it is not a simple thing to do.”⁷⁰

Lead workers

138. Chwarae Teg welcomed the integrated approach outlined by the framework and the inclusion of the lead worker role, which it believed allowed for a personalised approach to employment support that was vital if young people were to be supported to find sustainable employment.

139. Careers Wales also welcomed the lead worker approach but raised concerns about its longer-term sustainability:

“The lead worker approach is sensible and it is working, but there is not always sufficient provision out there. Every area has had its cuts, whether it is the youth service or the third sector, and these organisations often will undertake the lead worker role for the individual.”⁷¹

140. In his value for money study report on Young People not in Education, Employment or Training and Review of related work in local councils, the Auditor General for Wales concluded that:

“The Framework sets out a key role for youth services as providers of lead workers for young people in greatest need. The review of councils found inconsistent understanding of the responsibility of councils, as set out in *Extending Entitlement: Supporting Young People in Wales (2000)*, for leading and co-ordinating youth services for 16 to 24 year olds that will encourage, enable or assist young persons (directly or indirectly) to participate effectively in education and training, take advantage of opportunities for employment; and

⁷⁰ RoP para 157, 26 November 2014

⁷¹ RoP para 254, 6 November 2014

participate effectively and responsibly in the life of their communities.”⁷²

141. In responding to this, the Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology said:

“I think we have got some very good practice emerging across the sector. There are differences in local authorities at the moment, because they started in a different place, so you cannot expect them in one year to have all got to the same place. Nevertheless, they are all doing very well and we are expecting the targets that the programme sets to be met.”⁷³

142. The Deputy Minister also pointed out that the Wales Audit Office study was undertaken during the development and publication of the framework and did not cover progress since then.

143. We commend the provision of lead workers as part of the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework and recognise that it is resource intensive. However based on the evidence from several charities, we believe there is a need for greater investment.

The Welsh Government should increase the investment in its provision of lead workers for vulnerable young people to ensure that they have the one-to-one support that they need to help them find work.

⁷² Written evidence AYP 01, Wales Audit Office

⁷³ RoP para 64, 26 November 2014

Welsh Government programmes

144. We heard evidence that while there is a huge and varied range of schemes available for young people in Wales, this can at times cause confusion for young people and employers as well as duplicate efforts. In their view this is not a cost-effective approach to delivery.

Jobs Growth Wales

145. Wrexham County Borough Council said:

“Jobs Growth Wales does appear to offer a positive route into full-time employment for some young people mainly those who are high achievers and are more likely to engage in employment without additional support.”⁷⁴

146. Grŵp Ieuenctid Sengl Digartref Arfon (GISDA) said that they thought Jobs Growth Wales was a good scheme but felt that it would be better if it offered employment for a year instead of six months.

147. The Vale of Glamorgan Council’s written evidence stated:

“The decision by Welsh Government not to allow Work Programme customers to access JGW is unfortunate and reduces opportunities for Welsh young people. Work Programme customers in England can access ESF funding streams, but this isn’t allowed in Wales, which again reduces resources for young people. This has led to numerous individuals missing out on vital training.”⁷⁵

148. We received mixed views about Jobs Growth Wales at our stakeholder event in Swansea. Participants said that it heavily depended on the company where the young person was placed. We were told of one instance where a client was let go at the end of their placement, only for the job to be re-advertised through Jobs Growth Wales. There was a feeling that this was a potential problem with Jobs Growth Wales because employers were not expected to make any financial investment in the programme.

149. We heard about problems with double funding where, for example, people on the Work Programme were not able to access Jobs Growth Wales. Monmouthshire County Council also told us that as a local authority they had

⁷⁴ Written evidence AYP 07, Wrexham County Borough Council

⁷⁵ Written evidence AYP 16, Vale of Glamorgan Council

been unable to benefit fully from the scheme owing to the criteria and eligibility.

Traineeships

150. According to the National Training Federation (NTF), the primary objective of traineeships is to equip young people with the skills, qualifications and experience to enable them to progress at the earliest opportunity to learning at a higher level or to employment. Traineeships are a non-employed-status training programme for 16-18 school leavers not otherwise engaged in post-16 education or employment.

151. In its oral evidence, the NTfW said:

“I think there is, particularly within traineeships, a programme there that is flexible enough to identify how far that individual is away from the job market in order that they can have some engagement work, maybe in a centre, to prepare them in readiness for when they actually go into work, in a supervised position with regard to the assessors and the trainers. So, there is flexibility within that programme to manage that transition into work, depending on where that individual is.”⁷⁶

152. However, Llamau told us:

“With the traineeships, and certainly with the engagement and progression framework, there is still a focus on the mainstream. The strength of Llamau and Barnardo’s is that we are working with young people who have not fitted into the mainstream. School? They have not attended school. School has not worked for them. They are outside the system. So, we are still striving to be included in consultations and for us to be included when traineeships are coming down, and in the engagement and progression framework.”⁷⁷

153. This was supported by Barnardo’s Cymru, who told us that the young people they worked with were so far away from the labour market that they required an incredible amount of preparatory work to get them to that point where they could even consider a Traineeship.

⁷⁶ RoP para 153, 12 November 2014

⁷⁷ RoP para 97, 12 November 2014

154. We commend the Welsh Government for protecting the budget for 2015-16 for Traineeships, however we believe it should also invest in the stage leading up to traineeships.

The Welsh Government should improve the availability and provision of pre-entry level training to better equip young people to undertake a Traineeship.

Apprenticeships

155. A number of witnesses told us that schemes such as apprenticeships could be very valuable in preparing young people for the workplace, but according to the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, “only 15% of Welsh employers currently offer apprenticeships”.⁷⁸ One reason for this could be the complexity of accessing these schemes, particularly for smaller employers. The Urdd told us:

“As an employer, it is not always easy to find out how to access these schemes or the funding that is available through these schemes.”⁷⁹

156. City and County of Swansea agreed, saying:

“The only slight concerns are around some confusion for individuals as to accessing programmes and where the funding is to be found. I suspect that we are quite fortunate, as a large employer, but we know from speaking to small employers that they find it very difficult to know which programme pays what and where they go for the training.”⁸⁰

157. It went on to say:

“We have been at it for 10 years and still keep stumbling across different opportunities and different funding models that may be out there. So, one suggestion would be to bring those together in a single programme or a single place; I think that that would help young people to know where to access these things and also help the employers who perhaps have not got such large workforces, and people who do this as their day job could assist. That also links into opportunities around shared apprenticeships and other things, because, of course, some employers do not have the opportunity to

⁷⁸ Written evidence AYP 08, UK Commission for Employment and Skills

⁷⁹ RoP para 202, 6 November 2014

⁸⁰ RoP para 212, 6 November 2014

employ somebody full time, but they can employ them on a shared basis.”⁸¹

158. In its evidence, ColegauCymru highlighted other options that were available to young people for whom an apprenticeship might not be suitable:

“What is worth emphasising is that, as well as apprenticeships, 19 to 24-year-olds can also go to college to do part-time courses that, for those who would not be able to go on a full-time apprenticeship, would be quite appropriate for them. So, people with caring responsibilities or childcare responsibilities would be able to reskill and upskill on part-time programmes rather than have to go for a full-time apprenticeship.”⁸²

159. The Children’s Commissioner for Wales raised concerns that the reduction of funding for apprenticeships from the Welsh Government’s budget would hamper progress and damage the future employment opportunities available to young people.

160. ColegauCymru also expressed concern about funding:

“There has been an expansion over a four or five-year period; there has been an increase in work-based learning resources over that time horizon. We just hope that the fiscal scenario that we are facing in the next four or five years means that there are enough places on apprenticeships and other programmes to enable that good work to continue.”⁸³

161. Chwarae Teg highlighted that while schemes and initiatives in Wales, such as Jobs Growth Wales and the Apprenticeship programme were having success it was important that this was being felt by both men and women and action was taken to ensure these schemes did not perpetuate gender stereotypes.

The Welsh Government should do even more to promote information on apprenticeships more widely.

Progression

162. In his written evidence, the Children’s Commissioner for Wales said:

⁸¹ RoP para 212, 6 November 2014

⁸² RoP para 204, 20 November 2014

⁸³ RoP para 265, 20 November 2014

“Establishing effective routes of employment progression for young people is a core component to ensuring that the gains made in tackling youth unemployment and to improving overall social mobility are long-term sustainable.”⁸⁴

163. Young Enterprise Wales also suggested that there was considerable scope for improving the routes into and progression within some of the growing service sector occupations which do employ more young people:

“While growing apprenticeships will support this, more needs to be done to ensure these offer sustainable and productive careers with clear opportunities for progression.”⁸⁵

Gaps in provision

164. Vale of Glamorgan Council told us there was a need for more tier 2 services.

165. Monmouthshire County Council and City and County of Swansea Council both agreed that more effective provision was needed in tier 2, but that needed to be very closely aligned to the provision in tier 4:

“I think that there are gaps in provision and they are quite common across all local authorities—or at least the local authorities that I have spoken to as part of the regional groups. There are gaps in provision in tier 2—those hardest to reach—and in tier 4.”⁸⁶

166. It was suggested that this was a result of “NEET churn - where people move into tier 4, dip their toe in the water of education, employment or training, and then they drop back out again.”⁸⁷

Funding for courses for young people age 18 plus

167. ColegauCymru raised concerns about their ability to continue providing some full and part time programmes aimed at the 19-24 age bracket:

“The options at 18 are going to be very limited, given the funding constraints that we are facing in Wales.”⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Written evidence AYP 09, Children’s Commissioner for Wales

⁸⁵ Written evidence AYP 10, Young Enterprise Wales

⁸⁶ RoP para 90, 12 November 2014

⁸⁷ RoP para 94, 12 November 2014

⁸⁸ RoP para 251, 12 November 2014

Youth Entrepreneurship

168. In November 2013, we published our report on youth entrepreneurship⁸⁹ which contained a number of recommendations for Welsh Government aimed at improving the promotion and support for youth entrepreneurship.

169. In his evidence, the Children's Commissioner for Wales told us that while he welcomed the progress that the Welsh Government had made in relation to empowering young people to take control and create their own jobs market through the Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy, he felt that improvements were needed for effectively promoting a culture of social entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship through the education curriculum.

170. In a UK study, the Carnegie UK Trust says that Welsh respondents were the most interested in entrepreneurship and had the strongest intentions to pursue self-employment. However, we met a young person at Info-Nation who was interested in starting his own business but had received no advice or guidance in this respect. This is disappointing and suggests that more could be done to promote entrepreneurship among young people.

171. Stakeholders at our Swansea event also told us that entrepreneurship was not part of the curriculum in schools, yet could be an alternative path for those who were not attracted by further education.

Monitoring and evaluation

172. A number of respondents suggested that there needed to be greater evaluation of the current schemes in order to assess value for money.

173. In his value for money review: *Young people not in education, employment or training*, the Auditor General for Wales found:

“There was not a common approach to the evaluation of individual projects and schemes. Evaluation was not undertaken routinely and it was therefore difficult to assess the value for money.”⁹⁰

Funding

174. Participants at our Swansea engagement event said that there was often duplication between the various agencies but the way they were funded did not encourage working across agencies.

⁸⁹ Committee report: [Youth Entrepreneurship](#)

⁹⁰ Written evidence AYP 01, Wales Audit Office

175. Working Links agreed:

“In relation to Value for Money, we see many missed opportunities of joint working across providers and funding streams that could improve value for money. We have many examples of where we are not currently utilising funding to provide the best value or the best out-comes for young people. For example, young people accessing training and support pre-work programme, once referred to WP are not able to continue to access this provision. This stipulation means that those accessing assistance could be half way through a basic skills or other training programme and then, when referred to the Work Programme, become ineligible and have to cease their participation.”⁹¹

176. The Wales Audit Office also told us:

“One of our concerns was that the framework, for instance, involves an expectation of levels of specific support to young people that can be provided by different partners. So, the lead worker could come through the youth service, could come through the careers service, could be provided by a third sector agency, or another local authority approach. The streams of funding do not move as easily as deciding who is the key and best placed person for a young person to play that lead role of making sure that the agencies are co-ordinated. So, one of the recommendations that we make is that there is a mapping and a reviewing of how the resourcing ties with what turns out to be the roles on the ground, because it could be that some money needs to go from the careers service to the youth service or vice versa, but those decisions are not made in the same place.”⁹²

177. This problem of duplication of funding has been recognised for a long time but the on-going funding of similar provision in similar areas means that limited budgets are not spent as effectively as they could be.

⁹¹ Written evidence AYP 12, Working Links

⁹² RoP para 54, 6 November 2014

Welsh Government Reviews

178. The Deputy Minister outlined a number of reviews and projects in her oral evidence.

We recommend that the Deputy Minister progresses the following reviews as a matter of urgency and ask her to provide us with greater detail about the implementation plans and timescales for these reviews and projects including:

- the review of work experience;
- the review of the structure of Careers Wales; and
- their plans for an enhanced employer engagement approach to provide accurate labour market information to young people.

Annex A – Terms of reference

The terms of reference for this inquiry were:

- What support is most effective and what are the main barriers that face young people trying to enter the labour market?
- To what extent is the Welsh Government's strategy for young people who are not in education, employment or training effective and value for money?
- What progress has been made to date on the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework Implementation Plan?
- How effective is the strategic role of local authorities and other key stakeholders including the Careers Service, the Youth Service, and the education regional consortia?
- The extent of discrimination and its impact on the recruitment of young people;
- How effective are the range of schemes, initiatives and projects aimed at supporting young people into work, for example: Jobs Growth Wales; apprenticeships; traineeships; other projects supported by European funding; and third-sector-run projects? Do they provide good value for money?

Issues that the Committee is considering as part of these terms of reference include:

- The impact of the Welsh Government's prioritisation of support for young people age 16-18; and the impact of this prioritisation on those aged 19-24;
- Transport (especially in rural areas): what are the problems and what assistance can be provided?
- The need for softer skills: e.g., effective interview and job application skills; ready-for-work skills;
- What can be done to assist the groups of young people who are more affected by barriers to re-entering the labour market, for example those with disability?
- The impact and value-for-money of European funds;
- Regional variations and local challenges;

- The social problems that prevent young people from finding work, and how to change the culture and attitudes that entrench unemployment for many.

Annex B – List of written evidence

Organisation

Wales Audit Office
Barnardo's Cymru
BBC Cymru Wales
Sense Cymru
RNIB Cymru
National Deaf Children's Society (NCDS)
Wrexham County Borough Council
UK Commission for Employment and Skills
Children's Commissioner for Wales
Young Enterprise Wales
Carnegie UK Trust
Working Links
National Training Federation Wales
Barry Communities First
Chwarae Teg
Vale of Glamorgan Council
British Red Cross
The Fostering Network Wales
Monmouthshire County Council
Careers Wales
Grŵp Ieuenctid Sengl Digartref Arfon
BT Wales
Llais Ni Fforwm Ieuenctid Ynys Môn
Mentrau Iaith Cymru

Annex C – Witnesses

The following witnesses provided oral evidence to the Committee on the dates noted below. Transcripts of all oral evidence sessions can be viewed in full at:

www.senedd.assembly.wales/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?Ild=1307

6 November 2014

Steve Martin Claire Flood-page	Wales Audit Office
Yvonne Rodgers	Barnardo's Cymru
Elizabeth Stokes	Llamau
Andrew Viazzani	Admiral
Wendy Rees	BBC Wales
Martin Nicholls	City and County of Swansea Council
Efa Gruffudd-Jones	Urdd Gobaith Cymru
Richard Spear	Careers Wales

12 November 2014

Jo-Ann Walsh	City and County of Swansea Council
Leanne Ward	Monmouthshire County Council
Arwyn Watkins Jeff Protheroe Andrew Cooksley	National Training Federation Wales
Dr Greg Walker Mark Jones	ColegauCymru

26 November 2014

Julie James AM Huw Morris Teresa Holdsworth	Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology Welsh Government
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15 January 2015

Nia Wyn Roberts	Ysgol Uwchradd Caergybi
Joanna Murray	Treorchy Comprehensive
Michael Davies	Ysgol y Preseli

Annex D – Notes of stakeholder events

Engagement event with stakeholders

Gower Conference Centre, University of Wales Trinity St David, Swansea Campus - Thursday 20 November 2014

Purpose

The aim of this event was for Members of the Enterprise and Business Committee to hear the views and experiences of stakeholders.

The event was split into three groups, each consisting of stakeholder representatives and Assembly Members.

Group 1 consisted of the following people:

- Jeff Cuthbert AM (Chair)
- Jaime Spooner, Transitions into Employment
- Lesley Rees, Careers Wales
- Rachel Kingdon, Careers Wales
- Natasha Davies, Chwarae Teg
- Charlotte Davies, YMCA Swansea
- Michaela Lloyd, YMCA Swansea
- Alan Mackey, A4E
- Anne Thomas, Research Service, National Assembly for Wales (notes)

Summary of the main points made:

Barriers to joining the workplace

- A lack of experience, but it is really difficult for an inexperienced young person to get relevant experience; volunteering opportunities can help;
- There is lots of competition for the opportunities that are available and those with lower levels of qualifications tend to lose out to others who are better qualified;
- Not all young people are ready to enter work-based learning or a further education college course or have the necessary skills or qualifications;
- Schools should do more to address literacy and numeracy issues; literacy and numeracy is a significant issue;

- Some young people lack the experience and confidence to do things independently; a lack of confidence is a key barrier generally;
- There is not enough pre-entry (or gateway) level provision; possibly about a third or a half of young people on engagement level
Traineeships actually needed *pre-engagement* level support; the Welsh Government should fund more pre-engagement or gateway level provision as a matter of urgency.

Preparing for the workplace

- The range of courses that colleges can offer has been adversely affected by recent decreases in funding from the Welsh Government;
- The wider range of options within the curriculum for 14-19 year olds has helped young people who are not interested in traditional academic subjects;
- Employers often value “work-ready” skills as much, or more than, formal qualifications;
- Schools should do more to teach “work-ready” skills to those who need them; young people from workless households often do not learn these skills at home.

Work experience

- Work experience and placements need to be good quality, interesting and relevant if they are to be of real help; employers should take a major role in maximising the opportunities for young people through work experience;
- Employers should engage with schools to a much greater extent.

Work based learning / apprenticeships

- Provision has to be flexible; work-based learning (WBL) providers are usually funded to provide provision for 12 weeks but some young people need longer than this. If the young person stays on longer than 12 weeks, the WBL provider does not receive any funding for the extra weeks;
- Current resources should be used as efficiently as possible because resources are finite;
- Progression through work-based learning courses is essential; there has to be a “learner journey”;

- Traditional gender stereotypes, especially in apprenticeships, should be addressed;
- Good practice on the use of shared apprenticeships should be made widely available; shared apprenticeships can be very useful for small employers but take-up is currently limited;
- Planning the provision of work-based learning needs to be well informed by accurate and up-to-date local labour market intelligence;
- Some parents have concerns that training can be “slave labour” for low training allowances (£30 or £50 per week). Relevant organisations should try to address misunderstandings about training allowances (i.e they are not wages).

Agencies providing support to young people

- Sometimes young people are not treated as individuals; a personalised approach is essential to help them address their individual barriers;
- There can be a lack of co-ordination, or even barriers, between supportive organisations; a seamless multi-agency approach is essential.

Careers advice

- There is not enough information in schools about other, non-academic, opportunities available for example vocational courses, Traineeships, and Apprenticeships;
- Careers Wales provides more balanced advice on the range of academic and vocational opportunities available;
- Face-to-face advice is essential; online advice is not personal enough and therefore not as effective. “It is a myth that young people want everything online”.

Group 2 consisted of the following people:

William Graham AM (Chair)
Nigel Sheppard, Transitions into Employment
Karen Snowdon, ACO Training
Sue Entwistle, Pop Up Talent
Michelle Pengelley, Working Links
Jess Bartini, St Giles Trust
Gerald Davies, Centre for Business and Social Action

Summary of the main points made:

Preparing for the workplace

- A lot of young people don't lack skills they just don't know how to sell themselves to employers. This can apply to graduates as much as hard to place young people.
- There is a need to improve basic skills but employability skills also need to be taught. Preparing young people for the workplace is so important in terms of attitude, time keeping, social skills, and this needs to happen much earlier than 14-16 as by then, poor habits have already been learned.
- Educating employers is key. A lot of employers are wary of taking on young people, particularly those with challenging behaviour, because they are investing a lot of time and effort and it does not always work out. This is especially the case with smaller employers.

Apprenticeships

- Apprenticeships offer opportunities for real work experience, paid for by the employer, and by the end, the apprentice is valuable to that employer.
- Through the course of an apprenticeship, the apprentice grows up, becomes an adult and becomes good at something, possibly for the first time in their lives.

Work experience

- Employer engagement is hugely important in getting quality work placements and needs to start as early as possible.

Subject Choices

- Young people are making decisions at Key Stage 4 without any knowledge of the workplace and what that entails. Often their decisions are based on peer pressure and what their friends are doing rather than thinking of their own long term career aspirations.
- There is a perception that creative subjects are less worthy than maths/science subjects.

Careers Wales

- Experience of working with Careers Wales was generally very positive, although there was some frustration at not being able to directly telephone the appropriate person anymore.

Jobs Growth Wales

- There were mixed reviews of Jobs Growth Wales. A lot seemed to depend on the company the young person was placed with.
- In one instance, a client finished their placement and was let go, only for the job to be re-advertised through Jobs Growth Wales.
- There was a feeling that this was a potential problem with Jobs Growth Wales because employers don't make any financial investment.
- The goal at the end of the placement should be employment and it was felt that Jobs Growth Wales was not delivering this.

Agencies providing support to young people

- More cohesive working is needed between statutory and voluntary agencies. The Youth Engagement Framework is starting to look at the different organisations but Careers Wales has the hold over who gets the young people.
- There is a lot of duplication between the agencies but the way they are funded does not encourage joint working.
- The young person's needs should be at the heart of services and it was felt that this is not always the case - the needs of the organisation came first.
- Drug and Alcohol Services had introduced a single point of contact and they point people in the direction of the most appropriate agency, whether that is statutory or voluntary sector. Consideration should be given to adopting a similar approach for education and employment training.

- As voluntary agencies were competing against each other for the same pot of money there was a danger that they could become parochial.

Transport

- The cost and availability of public transport is a real barrier for young people seeking employment or training. In London, the Oystercard gives free bus and tram travel to Londoners aged 16 or 17, and those aged 18, and in some cases, 19, who remain in full time education.

Starting up a business

- There are a number of initiatives that provide support to young people who want to set up their own business, such as the Prince's Trust, by providing a loan. Although it was not clear how much post-loan support they provide.

General points

- More focus and support is needed for the 19-24 age group.
- Increasingly, young people are becoming alienated from society because there is nothing there for them. They need a role and a voice in society.
- It's more useful to go out to young people and tell them what help you can offer rather than expect them to come to, e.g. youth groups.

Group 3 consisted of the following people:

Rhun ap Iorwerth AM
Helen Devitt, Construction Youth Trust
Nia Griffiths, GISDA
Stephen Griffiths, St Giles Trust
Helen Healey, ACT
Emma Lewis, Scooter Scheme

Summary of the main points made:

Barriers

- Lack of transport is a barrier, especially in rural areas. Buying a car is expensive, as are the running costs and insurance. The Scooter Scheme has made a difference in Pembrokeshire, enabling young people to rent a scooter cheaply when they have a job offer.
- The benefits system can be a barrier, too. For young people who have been homeless, accepting a job can mean losing their accommodation. They want to work, but they need tailored support. It's easier for those who still live with their parents.
- Wage levels are a barrier. Young people are expected to accept jobs for the sake of experience, sometimes without getting the minimum wage. This is more difficult for those who are most disadvantaged. If a young person lives with their parents and has everything provided for them, it's easier to accept jobs that don't pay a living wage. Even apprenticeships can pay as little as £2 an hour. Zero-hours contracts also tend to be offered to those who are most disadvantaged.
- Everyone assumes that young people have access to mobile phones, the web, broadband, etc. That is not always the case.

The Big Picture

- Work is often just part of the picture. There are young people who come from chaotic backgrounds where they are not getting basic support from their family. It is not always easy for them to see where to turn for help. Life is exhausting for people in such situations, and they don't have the time or energy to look for work.
- There are specific problems in rural areas. For example, it can be a challenge to get to a library to use computers and apply for jobs. More and more employers are asking people to apply online; again, not everyone has access to the technology.

- In some areas, young people are ostracised by their peers if they apply for jobs.

Preparing for Work

- The Committee has heard evidence that young people are not ready for the workplace when they leave school. How can they prepare for the world of work?
- Employers sometimes take advantage of young people – learning about rights is part of preparing for work.
- There should be more opportunities to learn about the workplace in school – and more widely than through the work experience that is currently available.
- It could be helpful for young people to hear from those from similar backgrounds who have been successful after leaving school.
- It might be necessary to teach soft skills to the current generation; social media can mean that they don't develop these skills the way previous generations did. Schools could look at this.
- However, support is also needed outside school. The most disadvantaged do not necessarily have much contact with school.

Apprenticeships and Vocational Learning

- The Welsh Government has invested in apprenticeships recently. Has this made a difference? The panel's opinion was that things had improved, but there was still some way to go.
- There is a problem sometimes with a lack of respect for certain professions. We need to show young people that manual work can pay well and lead to a good career. There are many opportunities in professions that are seen as old-fashioned.
- Colleges could be more flexible in terms of the courses they provide. Sometimes the structure isn't suitable for either learners or employers.
- Vocational training still does not have parity of esteem. We have to teach young people that it is no less important than academic learning. Schools could do more to challenge this perception. There can be particular problems in schools with sixth forms.
- Entrepreneurship is not part of the curriculum in schools, yet it is an alternative path for those who aren't attracted by further education.

Careers Wales

- We have to communicate better in terms of the opportunities for young people, particularly in disadvantaged areas. However, the cuts make this difficult – for example, a careers office in Caernarfon has recently closed.
- Training providers, Careers Wales and schools should work together more closely.
- Careers advice is moving on-line, but it is not easy for everyone to access the technology.
- Young people are afraid of making a bad career choice. We have to explain that it is also possible to change careers later.
- Careers Wales could be more proactive in connecting with young people.

Transport, and other issues

- The availability of transport changes the way young people approach the jobs market. It broadens the opportunities that are open to them.
- The Jobcentre gives vouchers to young people to use on buses, but the drivers don't always know what they are. Young people can be embarrassed if they have to persuade the driver that it is a genuine ticket.
- Young people can be territorial. Sometimes they do not want to travel to the next town for work.
- Language can be a barrier if young people don't speak the language of the community where they live.