



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Young Person's Guarantee generation Z series: annual report 2023

Our 2023 progress on how we are helping people aged 16 to 24 find education, employment, or training.

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Background

The Young Person's Guarantee (YPG) is a Programme for Government commitment, launched by the Minister for Economy in November 2021. The YPG aims to provide young people aged between 16 and 24 in Wales with an ongoing offer of support to gain a place in education or training, find a job or become self-employed.

This is the second Annual Report and is being published alongside the YPG National Conversation Phase 2 and 3 reports and initial response.

2022 to 2023

What are young people saying

Welsh Government : YPG - National Conversation exercise

Young people have faced an extraordinary set of circumstances over the last few years, concerned their career and wellbeing prospects will never recover from the pandemic and cost of living crisis.

Our **first phase report** from the YPG National Conversation found young people experiencing stark issues around confidence and mental health, 76% of participating young people reported lacking confidence prevents them from achieving their work, education or training goals. Almost half of respondents had either been officially diagnosed with a mental health condition (20%) or advised that their mental health is suffering (24%).

Other issues included transport availability and costs, with 79% of respondents

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sighting it as a making it harder for them to access the job, education or training they want, either sometimes or all the time.

The other main barrier reported was that 21% of young people had never done any work experience.

Our second and third phase reports in 2023 focused on dissecting further these and other barriers to education, employment and training.

A recurring theme during conversations with young people was the profound impact of exam anxiety, with many having expressed the immense pressure they feel to excel academically and secure a university education. This pressure was not isolated to their academic pursuits but extended to their social interactions, where the return to social environments after the pandemic had been a source of stress for some. Moreover, the digital age seemed to have exacerbated self-doubt, often magnified by the pervasive nature of social media. Young individuals frequently compared themselves to their peers, leading to a belief that others were invariably more qualified or better suited for roles they apply for.

Young people's experiences with transport tended to be negative. Unreliability emerged as a significant concern, with frequent mentions of services being full, late, out of service, or cancelled without sufficient notice. The cost of public transport, even when discounted through passes, continued to be a point of contention for respondents. The financial burden remained significant, and the perceived value of such discounts was diminished when weighed against the overall expenses incurred from regular travel. For some, particularly in rural areas, the absence of public transport options in proximity to their residences forced a reliance on car lifts, which may not always be readily available or convenient, leading to a sense of isolation and dependency. Health and wellbeing concerns, such as anxiety associated with using public transport, were significant barriers for some too. The stress of navigating crowded or unreliable transport systems can exacerbate such conditions, making public transport a

less viable option for those dealing with these issues

Young people saw work experience as a key to unlocking life skills and presenting opportunities that could shape their career trajectory. Young participants expressed that such experiences were a preliminary step to ‘test the waters’ of a potential career path, offering them a glimpse into the practicalities of working life and aiding in their decision making about future pursuit.

For those young people who had undertaken work experience, the accounts in focus groups were predominantly positive. Young participants recounted a variety of experiences, ranging from structured programmes in educational settings, to informal arrangements made through personal networks. Among young people who were NEET, however, the picture was not as positive with almost a third having never engaged in any form of work experience.

Our reports found that disabled young people were often disproportionately affected by all of the aforementioned barriers. For young disabled people in Wales, a lack of confidence and poor mental health prominently stood out as barriers in accessing jobs, education, or training. Transportation emerged as a significant barrier for disabled young people in Wales when accessing jobs, education or training opportunities. 34% of disabled young respondents consistently faced challenges due to transport issues, while half encountered these difficulties occasionally. Disabled respondents were significantly more likely to report dissatisfaction with their work experience in several aspects.

The conversations with disabled young respondents also revealed that many chose to remain in education as a default option due to being uncertain about their next steps. Some reiterated that they were not entirely sure how they came to decide to take their next step on leaving education.

In exploring key transitional periods (commonly when making choices about subjects and qualifications to pursue) young people surveyed tended to be most aware of the more ‘traditional’ qualifications such as GCSEs and A levels, yet

there was a significant disparity in awareness of vocational qualifications between young people and their parents. While 74% of parents surveyed reported they were aware of such qualifications, only 46% of 16 to 24-year-olds had heard of them. During the pivotal transition periods at Year 11 and Year 13, young people presented diverse aspirations and experiences. Some had clear and ambitious career goals, while others faced challenges in pursuing their dreams due to their circumstances and actual and perceived barriers faced.

As noted earlier in this report, the full YPG National Conversation Phase 2 and 3 reports and the Welsh Government's initial response have been published alongside this report.

Prince's Trust NatWest Youth Index

Elsewhere, there are several UK wide surveys including the **Prince's Trust NatWest Youth Index** which provides an annual picture of how young people are feeling about their lives and how do they feel about their work, their physical and emotional health, their education and their relationships, amongst other things. The findings include: the challenges resulting from the cost of living are also disproportionately affecting NEET young people. One in ten (9%) young people who are NEET have turned down a job because they couldn't afford the costs associated with it and a third (33%) of young people who are NEET reported not being able to afford to get the qualifications they need for the job they want.

The findings also show that young people who are NEET are more likely to experience poor mental health and worry about the cost of living than those who are in work, training or education. This, in turn, can impact their ability to find work, with many finding it harder to get back into employment the longer they are out of it.

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Rapid Evidence Reviews

In 2023, the Welsh Government also commissioned rapid evidence reviews on:

- **Supporting young people who are not in employment, education, or training to achieve their goals: young people's thinking and behaviours**
- **Supporting young people who are not in employment, education, or training to achieve their goals: what works**

As the reports note, there is no 'defining' characteristic, or even a set of characteristics, that means a young person will be NEET. Instead, there are a series of risk factors, some of which it appears can have a more powerful impact than others and which can interact with each other, further increasing the risk that a young person will be NEET by limiting their motivation, capability and/or access to opportunities.

What action have we taken (2023)

Additional support

In January we introduced additional support around **Jobs Growth Wales+ (JGW+)** including doubling the rate of the Training Allowance to £60; a new free meal allowance; temporarily allowing 100% of travel costs to be claimed and extending the eligible age range to 19 years old, given the scarring from the pandemic in those within that age cohort. JGW+ met its target of supporting over 5,000 young people in its first year and since its launch in April 2022 (and by end of September 2023) there had been 8,420 Jobs Growth Wales+ programme starts (16 to 19 year olds). Of the programmes that have ended, **59% had a positive outcome** based on the participants destination within four weeks of leaving the programme.

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The turn of the year also saw over £700,000 additional funding to support the health and wellbeing of apprenticeship learners, staff and organisations. Between November 2021 and the end of April 2023, there were 12,725 apprenticeship starts by under 25s, according to provisional figures.

In March 2023, the Further Education colleges in Wales shared £900,000 to address the support needs of learners and fill the gaps in existing FE provision, with the broad aim of reducing the risk of those learners' becoming NEET. The funding supported early interventions to meet the varying complex needs of the learners. The main use of the funding was to ensure staff were available to give more time to at risk learners, at a critical time, ensuring high risk learners did not become NEET. Early evaluation work indicates that over 3,000 learners were supported.

In the 2023 to 2024 academic year there was a further £3 million available for Further Education Colleges and Local Authority sixth forms for Transition Funding which supports year 10 and 11 learners with making the next step in their education or training journey. This includes opportunities to visit colleges and where possible participate in relevant transition activities for example, college taster days, masterclasses, interactive workshops and summer programmes.

In April 2023, Wales became the first nation in the UK to increase the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), increasing it from £30 per week to £40 for eligible further education students in sixth form or college. There was also a 6.5% increase to the Further Education Financial Contingency Fund for 2023 to 2024, to help alleviate some of the issues faced by vulnerable learners in the cost-of-living crisis.

Furthermore, the rate of maintenance support paid to full and part-time higher education students from Wales increased by 9.4% for the 2023 to 2024 academic year. In contrast, the UK Government announced a 2.8% increase for students ordinarily resident in England.

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All our Employability Programmes continued to enable participants to access direct financial support for barriers such as travel and subsistence costs whilst undertaking training, attending work experience or interviews. Similarly childcare costs can be funded whilst individuals are undertaking training and essential start-up costs for those entering self-employment are also funded.

Many of our programmes offer holistic support to individuals, which includes, as required, referrals to housing and debt advice and to local foodbanks. Delivery teams also promote the financial support available from Welsh and UK Governments to tackle the cost of living crisis.

We also increased our network of Disabled People's Employment Champions, supported by Business Wales Disabled People's Employment Advisors, to provide advice, information and support to employers across Wales.

The Welsh Government funded Working Wales service continued to enhance its **Support Finder tool** including streamlining the facility for professionals to perform searches of available programmes and enabling direct contact to be made between professionals.

Following a successful pilot with year 10 learners, Careers Wales are engaging further with employers and aim to provide up to 500 targeted work experience placements in 2023 to 2024. Careers Wales have received funding of £500,000 to offer work experience placements to support year 10 and year 11 learners who have struggled to re-engage with their education, following the disruption caused by the pandemic.

For the pilot, the Careers Wales annual destinations survey showed that of the 87 learners that completed their placement at the end of year 11 in 2023, 80 had moved from year 11 into a positive post-16 destination.

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Guidance

In November, as part of our work to support partners in using the **Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF)** we published further **guidance** on the early identification of young people at risk of becoming NEET or becoming homeless. It aims to provide greater consistency in the early identification of young people on a national level while maintaining flexibility around processes in place in local areas.

Pilots, research and reviews

Opportunities for people that identify from an ethnically diverse background

The second phase of the **Get into Housing project** was launched in October, supported by Young Person's Guarantee funding alongside the Principality Building Society and Registered Social Landlords. First launched in 2022 by Cardiff Community Housing Association, Cadwyn, Hafod Housing, United Welsh, Taff Housing, Wales and West Housing and Linc Cymru, the project offers opportunities for people that identified from an ethnically diverse background. The latest phase

Requires participants to be between the age of 18 and 24; unemployed; living in South Wales; and identify as being from an ethnically diverse background. The first phase in 2022 saw 75% of participants securing permanent employment following their time on the project, 47% of which remained in the housing sector.

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Supported employment coaches

The evaluation for the [Jobs Growth Wales+ supported employment coach pilot](#) (evaluation) was published in May. Following the pilot, the offer has now been mainstreamed within the programme.

Teacher-Employer encounters

The findings of a [review of teacher-employer encounters/placements](#) was published in October. The next steps are now under consideration.

14 to 16 Qualifications Offer in Wales

2023 also saw the consultation on the 'Full 14 to 16 Qualifications Offer in Wales'. Qualifications Wales will be introducing new National 14 to 16 Qualifications, to be in place by September 2027. This will include qualifications from entry level to level 2, across a range of subjects. Schools will be able to offer learners a choice of the following types of qualifications:

- [Made-for-Wales GCSEs](#)
- VCSEs (Vocational Certificate of Secondary Education)
- Foundation qualifications
- a Skills Suite: with Skills for Work, Skills for Life and Personal Project qualifications

It is now developing the approval criteria for the new VCSE, Skills and Foundation qualifications, which it will publish in late 2024.

Careers Pathways Pilot

A range of pathways work is also underway including the Ynys Mon Careers Pathways Pilot which was formed in May 2023 and is a collaboration between Anglesey Secondary Schools, the local authority Education department, Careers Wales, Grwp Llandrillo Menai and the North Wales Regional Skills Partnership. The main aim of the pilot is to ensure that young people in Anglesey are aware of the different careers paths that are available in the region and ensuring that all organisations are working in a more co-ordinated, smarter way to ensure that learners are progressed into training or employment. Activities include labour market intelligence (LMI) sessions for teachers on career pathways; ensuring that the college and schools work collaboratively on presenting information, advice and guidance to young people on all routes available to them, including apprenticeships.

Estyn lead worker review

We have commissioned Estyn to 'Assess the depth, breadth, and effectiveness of the NEET lead worker role across Wales'. This will primarily focus on the work of those in Local Authorities whom have a key role in following the YEPF. The review began in late 2023 and will conclude in Summer 2024.

Engaging young people

With the completion of the National Conversation exercises, in April 2023, with the support of Children in Wales, we established a YPG, Young Person's Advisory Board to advise on and help design emerging policies and address and foresee issues. The Board now has up to 16 members and has held sessions with Transport for Wales, Careers Wales, the Money Advice and Pensions service, Jobs Growth Wales+ participants and the South West Wales Regional

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Learning and Skills Partnership, amongst others.

Reach and outcomes

We are making strong progress in delivering our YPG with over 27,000 young people starting on employability and skills programmes alone (since its launch in November 2021).

As noted earlier this includes over 8,000 starting Jobs Growth Wales+ and over 12,700 apprenticeship starts by under 25s, according to provisional figures.

For Jobs Growth Wales+, 24% of JGW+ programme starts in the 2022 to 2023 financial year were by young people who identify as disabled and/or having a learning disability. In 2022 to 2023, 6% of programme starts were by Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority learners. For all learners, based on the learner's destination within four weeks of leaving the programme, 1,160 individuals have so far found employment. **Fuller statistics, including outcomes are available.**

Communities for Work+ saw additional mentoring capacity to support people furthest away from the labour market to access training opportunities and employment. Over 6,800 young people have been supported by it since the launch of the YPG, with over 2,300 progressing into employment so far.

In terms of **self-employment support**, since April 2021 to December 2023, 183,788, young people under 25 years of age have been involved in enterprise workshops and webinars led by entrepreneur Role Models to raise awareness and understanding of self-employment. 2,599 young people have progressed their ideas for business and received business advice and as a result 509 clients have started their business.

The Young Persons Start Up Grant was launched in July 2022 to provide

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additional financial support to unemployed young people. From July 2022 to December 2023, the grant has received 1,308 Expressions of Interest and following receipt of business advice we have issued 456 applications and now approved 403 grants to young people to support them to start a business.

Following the introduction of enhanced **Employment and Enterprise Bureaus** in 2022, the Welsh Government is investing over £2 million for the current academic year in providing a breadth of employment support and opportunities to streamline the transition from learning to working via the Bureaus. It is estimated that the Bureaus have engaged with over 30,000 16 to 24 year olds through their provision which includes: providing learners with regular and structured contact with the world of work through formal business partnerships, employer talks, inspirational employer activities, interview skills, CV writing, industry visits, work experience, careers fairs, college and university visits and links with external providers.

The **Out of Work Peer Mentoring Service (OoWS)** helps the most vulnerable, and those furthest away from the labour market, to rebuild their lives and to get back into training, education and employment.

It is focused on providing long term support to people recovering from mental health and/or substance misuse issues including people aged 16 to 24 who are NEET.

Between October 2022 and December 2023 the service has supported over 1,150 young people aged 16 to 24. Of these:

- 259 have achieved a work relevant certificate or qualification
- 86 entered education
- 191 engaged in job search
- 88 entered employment
- 137 increased employability by completing a work experience placement or volunteering opportunity

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The new **In-Work Support Service** only commenced in April 2023, but between April and December, 99 clients aged 16 to 24 with physical and/or mental ill-health have been supported by the service. Of these:

- 88 are presentees, employees at risk of going absent from work
- 11 are absentees, absent from work
- 30 reported had they had been helped to remain in work
- 31 reported an improvement in their health

Working Wales is the National Careers Advice and Guidance Service in Wales, available to all those aged over 16, the service is delivered by professional Careers Advice and guidance officers who provide impartial, personalised expert careers advice and employment support. It continues to support the YPG and young people in vast numbers.

Between 1 November 2021 and 31 December 2023, Working Wales supported 23,076 young people aged 16 to 24. The support provided included:

- 58,203 individual interactions, totalling over 32,000 hours of direct support
- 26,153 advocacy activities, totalling nearly 5,000 additional hours of work on behalf of customers
- 30,193 onward referrals to further support and opportunities
- 27,952 episodes of Working Wales support, meaning that during that date range it provided an average of just over 1.2 episodes of support per customer

We have strengthened our awareness campaign for the Young Person's Guarantee (**Feed your Positivity**) to ensure that young people know where they can get the help and advice they need for all of their post-16 options, with a focus on short, uplifting videos and audio, used on social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok and via TV and radio campaigns. Our online YPG marketing campaigns have seen in excess of 320,000 clicks, likes and shares as at December 2023.

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As in last year's Annual Report, [Annex 1: Statistical outputs and datasets relevant to Young Person's Guarantee](#) provides detail on the further statistical outputs and datasets relevant to the YPG, which alongside our national conversation and a range of other survey and evaluation work, inform the design and monitoring of the programme.

National milestone

Long term, the YPG, alongside other Welsh Government programmes and the work of our partners, is part of the collective effort to ensure that 90% of 16 to 24-year-olds are in education, employment or training (EET) by 2050, as per the Welsh Government's National Milestone.

For Wales, the [latest release of provisional estimates](#) show that 85.8% of 16 to 24 year olds were in education, employment or training in 2022, up from 83.7% in 2021.

Final estimates for 2021 indicate that the proportion of 16 to 18 year olds who were NEET increased between 2020 and 2021 to 14.2%, the highest level on record. Provisional estimates suggest that this proportion then decreased to 13.3% in 2022.

Final estimates for 2021 indicate that the proportion of 19 to 24 year olds who were NEET increased from 15.6% in 2020 to 17.3% in 2021. Provisional estimates suggest that this proportion then decreased to 14.6% in 2022.

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Annex 1: Statistical outputs/datasets relevant to Young Person's Guarantee

There are a range of Welsh Government statistical publications of relevance to the Young Persons Guarantee. These cover a variety of topic areas, including labour market statistics for young people, participation and outcome statistics for a number of education sectors, and statistics related to Welsh Government employability programmes. Also listed are a number of other publications providing useful contextual information about young people in Wales.

Statistics on the labour market and/or education status of young people

Participation of young people in education and the labour market

- Published annually, usually in July.
- Provides information on the learning activities and labour market status of young people aged 16 to 24.
- Also provides the main measure of young people who are NEET (the Statistical First Release (SFR) series).
- Data published by gender. Data constraints mean that it is currently not possible to disaggregate these statistics by other protected characteristics.

Young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET)

- Published quarterly (usually January, April, July and October).
- Summarises the available statistics on young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET) in Wales, from the Annual Population Survey.
- These estimates are timelier but less statistically robust than the main (SFR)

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measure.

- Estimates published broken down by age, disability, ethnicity, and region for a three-year average period.

Labour market statistics (annual population survey)

- Published quarterly.
- The Annual Population Survey (APS) combines the boosted samples of the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The LFS remains the main source for **headline labour market indicators** at a Wales level. The larger sample of the APS allows for estimates at a local authority level and for sub-groups of the population.
- Includes a section on young people aged 16 to 24 (broken down by sex).

Pupil destinations

- Destinations are the annual survey of school leavers undertaken by Careers Wales on behalf of the Welsh Government.
- Careers Wales is contractually obliged to provide the Welsh Government with data on the destinations of pupils from all maintained and special needs schools who are at or above the school leaving age.
- Destinations provide a useful snapshot of pupil destinations which informs careers staff in their work with clients, parents, teachers and employers.
- The data collected also proves an invaluable aid to partners involved in planning learning, training and employment opportunities.

Other education statistics/sources

Apprenticeship learning programmes started

- Published quarterly (usually February, May, August, November).
- Includes data by region of domicile, programme type, age group, sector,

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gender, ethnicity, disability, and academic year.

- Also includes a measure of progress towards the 125,000 programme for government target.

Further education, work-based learning, and community learning

- Published annually, usually February.
- Information on enrolled learners and their activities by age, gender, ethnicity, disability, region of domicile, mode of study, type of programme and level of study.

Consistent performance measures for post-16 learning - learner destinations

- Published annually, usually September.
- Destinations of learners in school sixth forms, further education, and work-based learning during the academic year after leaving their post-16 learning programme.
- Provides measures of sustained employment and/or sustained learning.
- Breakdowns available by programme type, level, gender, age, ethnicity, deprivation decile, Special Educational Needs provision and Free School Meals eligibility during compulsory education.

Consistent performance measures for post-16 learning - achievement

- Published annually, usually February.
- Achievement within school sixth forms and FE colleges.
- Suspended for two years during the pandemic but data for the 2021 to 2022 academic year will be published in February 2023.
- Breakdowns by type of programme, level, age, gender, and deprivation decile. Further breakdowns will be included in the next release.

Learner outcome measures for work-based learning and adult community

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learning

- Published annually, usually February.
- Learner outcomes data by level of study, type of learning aim, sector/subject area, gender, age, region of domicile, deprivation decile and ethnicity.
- Suspended for two years during the pandemic but data for the 2021 to 2022 academic year will be published in February 2023.

Students in higher education

- Published annually, usually January.
- Details of student enrolments and qualifications for the academic year. Additional information on [StatsWales](#).

Schools' census results

- Published annually, usually July
- Includes statistics on learner numbers in school sixth forms and their characteristics

Levels of highest qualification held by working age adults

- Published annually, usually April.
- Presents statistics on the highest qualification held by adults of working age (18 to 64) in Wales.
- Includes analysis for the 18 to 24 age group.
- Other breakdowns include sex, ethnicity, local authority, employment status and Welsh language.

Global entrepreneurship monitor (GEM)

- GEM creates an index of early-stage entrepreneurial activity (known as TEA), published usually September.
- Presents the level of youth entrepreneurship in Wales by demography with

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specific questions on young people's aspirations for entrepreneurship and their early-stage entrepreneurship activity (TEA).

Intellectual property, start-ups and spin-offs | HESA

- The Higher Education Business and Community Interaction Survey (HEBCI) is the main vehicle for measuring the volume and direction of interactions between UK HE providers and business, and the wider community.

Graduate outcomes survey

- The survey is delivered by **HESA** (Higher Education Statistics Agency).
- The Graduate Outcomes survey is the biggest annual social survey in the UK and captures the perspectives and current status of graduates. All graduates who completed a higher education course will be asked to take part in the survey 15 months after they finish their studies.

Jobs growth Wales plus statistics

Published quarterly (usually March, June, September and December).

- Information on Jobs Growth Wales+ learning programmes and the learners enrolled on them.
- This is a new release. Headline statistics will be published quarterly with a more detailed annual release with breakdowns by protected characteristics.

Estyn annual report 2021 to 2022

- Annual Report by the education and training inspectorate for Wales on what's going well and what needs to improve in education and training in Wales.

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Wellbeing of Wales

Wellbeing of Wales

- An annual update on progress being made in Wales towards the achievement of the 7 wellbeing goals. Provides a narrative around trends with the national indicators and progress against milestones.

Wellbeing of Wales: national indicators

- HTML pages on each of the national indicators (with links to additional information).

Wellbeing of Wales, 2022: children and young people's wellbeing

- One-off report published September 2022.

Population of Wales

- **Mid year estimates of the population** (official set of population estimates for Wales).
- The mid-year estimates refer to the population on 30th June of the reference year and are published annually.

National population projections for Wales

- These projections provide an indication of the possible size and structure of Wales' population
- Population projections are subject to uncertainty and are based on assumptions on future trends in fertility, mortality and migration. The impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on demographic behaviour is not yet clear and this contributes to greater uncertainty.

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Subnational population projections (local authority): 2018 to 2043

- These projections provide an indication of the possible size and structure of local authorities' population for the period 2018 to 2043 by gender and single year of age.
- The projections are not forecasts. They do not attempt to predict the impact of government policies, changing economic circumstances, or other factors (like the coronavirus pandemic) on future population.

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