



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION, DOCUMENT

Youth engagement and progression lead worker review: government response

What we plan to do in response to Estyn's report on youth engagement and progression lead worker review.

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Report details

The role of lead worker is explained in the [Youth Engagement and Progression Framework](#). Lead workers play a crucial role in supporting young people with significant barriers to engagement to transition into post-16 education, training, or employment.

The review was commissioned to better understand and improve the capacity and capability within the system, and consider opportunities for sharing good practice and networking by lead workers across local authorities and organisations.

Summary of main findings

Estyn's main findings are:

- Lead workers played a critical role in supporting young people in their current situation and helping them to access progression opportunities. Lead worker support often had a positive impact on the family and wider community.
- In the wake of the pandemic, lead workers often supported young people with social anxiety, mental health issues, and financial struggles.
- There was significant variation in relation to the lead worker role across Wales. These differences arose in response to local circumstances.
- There was an increase in the complexity of need and the rates of referrals.
- Whilst transition into colleges at 16 was well structured, there was a lack of collaboration between lead workers and post 16 providers once a young person had enrolled. This meant young people lost continuity of support. Many training providers were unaware of the lead worker role and its benefits.

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- Effective lead worker support depends on collaboration between agencies, and this was variable. There were often challenges, due to concerns about GDPR and a lack of understanding about what information could and could not be shared.
- There was insufficient collaboration at a regional and national level to share knowledge, experiences, and professional learning.
- There were difficulties in attributing successful outcomes to the support of lead workers as there are so many other support services that are active in this space.
- There were recruitment and retention challenges around the lead worker role, including Welsh speaking lead workers.

Recommendations

A total of 5 recommendations are presented in the report, these are joint recommendations for the Welsh Government, Careers Wales, local authorities and all other partners involved in supporting young people through lead workers. This means we have shared responsibility and shared accountability for taking forward the recommendations.

Officials will write to Careers Wales, local authorities and other partners, to highlight the report and the shared responsibility to work towards achieving the recommendations.

The Welsh Government will maintain ongoing dialogue with relevant stakeholders, seeking regular updates on their progress against the recommendations.

Recommendation 1

Improve post-16 transition support by ensuring continuity of a young person's lead worker until 31st January following a young person's move into their post-16 destination, whether this is in school, at college, with a training provider, or employment.

Welsh Government response

Implementing this recommendation could potentially help us hold on to vulnerable young people and keep them in EET by providing ongoing support for their post-16 transition. It will need to be considered in more detail given the likely financial and resource implications required for it to be taken forward, and the current financial climate, with significant funding pressures across Welsh Government. As set out in Estyn's report, lead worker roles are funded through a variety of different funding streams, with decisions often made at a local level as to which particular stream might be the most appropriate.

Due to its cross-cutting nature, Welsh Government will explore this recommendation with local authorities and partners to understand what could be delivered within existing resources.

As a first step in this process, the Welsh Government arranged the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF) national meeting on 9 July 2024 to discuss the report and its recommendations with representatives from local authorities, Careers Wales and CWVYS. Officials will also arrange to meet with other stakeholder groups to take forwards this conversation.

Recommendation 2

Develop ways to measure the success of work to prevent young people becoming NEET that are based on longer-term evaluations and do not over-emphasise the value of initial destination survey data.

Welsh Government response

In 2021 to 2022 the Welsh Government commissioned a feasibility study report on **Education, Employment and Training data sources and scope**. Whilst funding pressures have not enabled us to pursue all of its recommendations, we have been able to fund Careers Wales to create richer data sets that cover intersectionality impacts more widely and have seen Careers Wales now sharing data with the Department for Work and Pensions, meaning we have a much fuller representation of the population, particularly for those under 25 and NEET.

Ongoing evaluation work for the Young Person's Guarantee (YPG) and YEPF includes consideration of how these two programmes could be measured in terms of the additional impact they have made in respect to ongoing progress towards the Welsh Government's National Milestone that 90% of 16 to 24-year-olds are in education, employment or training (EET) by 2050. An evaluability assessment, theory of change and proposed evaluation framework for the YPG will be published in September 2024. The evaluation framework includes proposed measures of longer-term outcomes. It provides a way of measuring the success of the YPG as a policy to help achieve the National Milestone. A qualitative process evaluation concerned with reviewing the design, implementation, and delivery of the YPG against its strategic intent is ongoing and due for completion in March 2025.

The **Young Person's Guarantee Annual Report 2023** also sets out further statistical outputs and datasets that the Welsh Government has identified

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as relevant to the YPG/YEPF.

The current work on progressing a potential new young person's employability offer includes developing a Single Operating Model (SOM) for Jobs Growth Wales+, ReAct+ and Communities for Work+. The Welsh Government is undertaking a full review of the current provision and how the employability programmes can work together under a similar model. This includes a review of the data collected on participation and outcomes for different groups of participants, and exploring opportunities to understand longer term outcomes.

The Welsh Government participates in the Longitudinal Education Outcomes study, which matches education, employment and benefits data in order to identify the destinations of learners after they leave their courses. Over a period of time, this data offers rich opportunities to explore the long-term destinations of learners in the years after their studies, and to analyse these outcomes by learner demographics.

Recommendation 3

Support better data sharing about the circumstances of individual young people to facilitate stronger collaboration between all partners, including education and training providers, and enable young people to receive relevant and timely support.

Welsh Government response

We recognise that sharing accurate and timely data is critical in the delivery of the YEPF. Data sharing allows local YEPF partnerships to monitor the progression of young people, including individuals with an unknown destination or who are known to be NEET and who need support. If data is not shared, or is not shared promptly, this can leave individuals who are NEET without support

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during a critical transition period, when they are particularly vulnerable. This has serious consequences for those individuals: there is clear **evidence that being NEET has a scarring effect on young people's longer term outcomes**.

Data sharing arrangements are covered in the **YEPF Handbook**, which signposts to information and guidance on the **Information Commissioner's Office website** and to the **WASPI**.

As data protection is not a devolved matter, the Welsh Government does not have the power to require other organisations to share data, regardless of its use. This is a decision for organisations to make themselves, and all arrangements must be in line with UK General Data Protection Regulation (or UK GDPR). The Welsh Government will, however, play a role in clarifying for organisations across Wales, how data sharing helps underpin the delivery of the YEPF, so that YEPF partner organisations can make an informed decision about their data sharing arrangements.

In 2023 Welsh Government officials worked with Careers Wales and local authorities to develop practical resources on data sharing, which were shared with local authority engagement and progression co-ordinators. Officials will review these resources, update as necessary, and work with local authorities to ensure they are cascaded to wider YEPF partnerships. This will help YEPF partner organisations develop their understanding of data sharing and its importance in the context of the YEPF.

See Recommendation 2 for further relevant detail.

Recommendation 4

Support the professional learning needs of lead workers in all agencies and share effective practice in the provision of lead worker support.

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Welsh Government response

All agencies are responsible for the training and professional development of their staff who act as lead workers.

Local authorities organise regular YEPF regional meetings and the Welsh Government brings together local authority engagement and progression coordinators and other partners at a national level. The national YEPF meeting on 9 July, provided the opportunity to have an initial discussion with local authorities and other partners on what opportunities exist for sharing good practice in the provision of lead worker support. This dialogue will continue and help inform our next steps.

We will also explore how wider youth work workforce development and support activity can share effective practice in the provision of lead worker support.

Recommendation 5

Improve practice in line with the effective practice featured in this report and address the shortcomings highlighted in this report.

Welsh Government response

The Welsh Government will disseminate the report to all relevant stakeholders and initiate engagement on the report's findings, particularly through its YEPF network and YPG Stakeholder Advisory Group

To address shortcomings, the YEPF national meeting in July 2024 provided the opportunity to highlight the report and have an initial discussion about how all partners can tackle the areas for improvement identified in the report.

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Publication details

The report was published on 9 July 2024 and may be [accessed on the Estyn website](#).

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