



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



STRONGER, FAIRER, GREENER WALES

A Plan for Employability and Skills

MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

A strong recovery in a fairer, greener Wales means an economy that works for everyone. As we emerge from the pandemic and face the headwinds of Brexit and climate change, we recognise that Wales will not prosper if the ability to learn, train and progress at work is not made more equal.

The Programme for Government made clear our focus on driving a stronger, more competitive Welsh economy by narrowing the skills divide and tackling fairness and inequality - to boost good jobs and lift people out of poverty. Prioritising these actions today will deliver life changing opportunities and elevate the prospects of businesses and communities in a Wales that is ambitious about the future.

Against a tough financial backdrop, including the loss of £1bn in post EU funds, our new Plan for Employability and Skills will be a driving priority for this Welsh Government. Difficult decisions are required to support a Welsh economy that is equipped with the skills needed to develop and attract better jobs in more resilient and competitive businesses across our regions.

In order to deliver on our vision for a Fairer, Stronger, Greener Wales this plan details how our employability and skills offer will prioritise **5 key areas of action:**

- **Young people realising their potential**
- **Tackling economic inequality**
- **Championing Fair Work for all**
- **Supporting people with a long term health condition to work**
- **Nurturing a learning for life culture**

As well as meeting the skills demanded by businesses who are central to Wales' long term economic success, the support we provide will help to shape the next generation of employers and embolden more people to consider starting their own business. We will build on our proven record of social partnership, working with trades unions, employers and other key partners to support an economy based on the principles of fair work, sustainability and the industries and services of the future.

We are ambitious about the role the everyday economy around us can play in bringing better jobs closer to home. Our foundational economy approach will help public bodies, businesses and others link new employment and skills opportunities to the investment we can bank on. From food procurement to decarbonising our homes we can retain more value in Wales with grounded firms able to win more business and broaden the skills base in a sustainable way.

We recognise that Wales does not hold all of the macroeconomic levers that influence demand for labour and skills, crucially welfare and matters relating to employment law are matters for the UK Parliament. However, we remain determined to use every lever available to realise a fair work economy.

In the months since the formation of the new Welsh Government, we have worked rapidly to demonstrate our commitment to a fairer labour market from establishing the Young Persons Guarantee, expanding Personal Learning Accounts, investing to make good the shortfall in post EU funding for Apprenticeships and initiating a mainstreaming equality pilot to prevent existing labour market inequalities being carried through into the emerging net zero and digital economies.

We recognise that short term labour market challenges are compounded by inequality that is too often caused by inaccessible work, lack of affordable childcare or employability support. We will support those furthest away from the labour market to find work, and overcome barriers, particularly those impacted by the pandemic.

Our plans are also focussed on accelerating the adoption of new skills which are required to secure jobs, particularly in occupations that care for people, and drive our transition to a low carbon economy. We will publish a Net Zero Skills Action Plan later this year with further detail on how a just transition can help workers and businesses change for a future that is sustainable.

We will help workers respond to a fast changing economy with support ranging from flexible, quality courses for those on low pay to bespoke mid-career reviews.

We want to encourage more young people to feel confident about planning their future in Wales to build stronger tax base in a more vibrant economy that turns back the demographic challenge we face. Providing

a strong employability and skills offer is a crucial part of our collective task to make Wales an attractive prospect for more people and business.

It has taken a Team Wales effort to Keep Wales Safe and we are determined to deliver a Team Wales Recovery, built by all of us. Making this a reality requires a shared sense mission from all partners if we are to maximise the resources we have available.

I look forward to working with you to deliver a new package of employability and skills support that will bolster our mission to create a Fairer, Stronger, Greener Wales for all.



Vaughan Gething
Minister for Economy

INTRODUCTION

Welsh Government is committed to creating a Wales where individuals of all ages can receive a high quality education, with jobs for all, where businesses can thrive in a net zero economy that champions fairness and equality.

The Programme for Government (PfG) set out the actions we will pursue over this Senedd term. Our values of social, economic, cultural and environmental justice sit at the heart of everything we do – to ensure nobody is left behind, nobody held back, through a shared commitment to ensure everyone reaches their potential.

We published the first set of National Milestones in December 2021, to set out our longer term goals to help measure progress, and drive a collective response across all public bodies subject to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

This Plan for Employability and Skills seeks to signal clear policy and investment priorities, sharpen our delivery focus and the activity of partners, on actions over this Government term that will leave a positive legacy for future generations.

Importantly, we will deepen the social partnership we have developed over the last two decades by putting it into law, and use it to focus on the work we need to do collectively, to achieve a fair and equitable labour market in Wales.

It draws on collaboration and involvement in the National Milestone consultation, Race Equality Action Plan, Action on Independent Living Framework and co-development of, and priorities set out in, the Framework for Regional Investment in Wales.

This plan details how Welsh Government will address some of the key labour market challenges and future trends, prioritise our resources to pivot existing delivery to people and skills, and ensure system flexibility and agility to respond to change in the labour market, policy and reductions in funding.

It also sets out the expectations of other parts of the wider employability system such as local authorities, employers, and post compulsory education and training providers, and our expectations of the ongoing relationship with the Department for Work and Pensions, all of whom have a vital role in working together to make best use of resources to create a Stronger, Fairer, Greener Wales.



THE NEW CONTEXT

Welsh Government entered the sixth Senedd term in the midst of a public health emergency, leading the Covid response and critical measures to protect lives and livelihoods. Managing a pandemic has had an enormous impact on us all and on every part of our lives. It has laid bare the deepening inequalities in our society, and we expect to live with the many consequences of it for some time to come.

The actions of this Programme for Government are first and foremost, about recovering from the pandemic, whilst continuing to maximise our contribution to our longer term well-being objectives; to leave a positive legacy for future generations.

The Covid-19 pandemic induced the fastest and deepest economic shock in living memory. However mass unemployment was averted, young people entered education in increasing numbers and the crisis has - so far - led to the lowest post-recession peak in unemployment since 1975, when UK GDP fell by 2% - compared to nearly 10% in 2020.

Employment levels improved during 2021, however, the labour force in Wales has decreased by around 40,000 to 50,000 people, following a trend increase in economic activity observed before the pandemic. The Institute for Employment Studies analysis at a UK level shows that lower immigration explains about one quarter of the reduction, with higher inactivity explaining the rest.

The Office for Budgetary Responsibility suggests some of this reduction in the labour force will prove permanent and so contribute to the economic damage caused by the pandemic.

Like most economic crisis, some groups in the labour market have been hit harder than others and this crisis has highlighted inequalities in the labour market for certain groups including:

- Increase in inactivity by ill health or early retirement for those over 50, and in particular more women than men over 65 have left the labour market.
- Disabled people, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people and those with health conditions continue to be significantly underrepresented in the labour market, with any improvement stalling.
- Enduring pay gaps across groups compared to the general population in Wales for disabled people (9.9%), women (5%) and ethnic minority employees (1.4%).¹
- Self-employment reduced by 6% (12,000) compared with pre-pandemic levels.

Whilst there is currently a sense of cautious optimism about the labour market and economic prospects in Wales, there are a number of risks. This is because of shortages of some key workers, supply chain bottlenecks, higher energy prices and inflation rates of up to 7%, a rate not seen in 30 years. Progress could well be derailed by higher inflation eroding incomes and spending power.

There are also significant disparities between groups within this, in particular for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, disabled people and single parents.

There are significant potential headwinds for the labour market posing particular challenges for policy makers, particularly around risks of business failure, the impacts of Brexit, labour market disadvantage and new COVID-19 variants that may vary in their impact on different groups in society including age groups.

Welsh Government has historically held significant policy and budgetary influence over the Employability agenda in Wales. However future influence is under threat as the UK Government uses Internal Market Act powers in Wales and the UK Government refuses to provide like for like replacement to European funding to Wales - instead funding DWP and using the Shared Prosperity Fund.

The resulting insistence on circumnavigating the devolution settlement, and the role of Welsh Government, will have significant implications for Welsh employability provision and risks the emergence of a system that is fragmented.

¹ To note differing data time series for groups as follows: Disabled People is for 2018, Women is for 2021, Ethnic Minority is 2019.



SHARED PURPOSE

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act² places a legal duty on Welsh Government and public bodies across Wales to improve social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being.

We all need to play our part in taking action to achieve our long term well-being goals for a Sustainable Wales. The seven well-being goals provide us with a comprehensive framework for action to ensure that future generations have at least the same quality of life as we do now. To create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future.

The national indicators for Wales measure our collective progress towards the well-being goals we are seeking to achieve for future generations.

The national milestones seek to drive collaborative, shared action and act as a key measure of the pace and scale of change needed to realise the well-being goals for Wales (fig. 1)

The Socio-economic Duty³ requires relevant public bodies when taking strategic decisions, for example associated with strategic policy development and development plans, to have due regard to the need to reduce the inequalities of outcome that result from socio-economic disadvantage.

The Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget⁴ represents a new phase in our decarbonisation journey with a new net zero target.

It sets out 123 policies and proposals, alongside commitments and action from every corner of Wales. This includes the skills actions for a green recovery and transition to net zero, and the development of a Net Zero Skills Plan that will follow later in 2022.

The Race Equality Action Plan⁵ shone a light on the lived experience structural and systemic racism for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people in the labour market. Whilst ‘Locked out: liberating disabled people’s lives and rights in Wales beyond COVID-19’⁶ surfaced the values, structures and systems that continue to disable people in Wales.⁷

In February 2021 the Economic Resilience and Reconstruction Mission⁶ was published. It set out our vision for a well-being economy which drives prosperity, is environmentally sound, and helps everyone realise their potential.

This plan sets out this Governments commitment to Skills and Employment by investing in people, skills and talent as crucial drivers towards a stronger, fairer, greener economy.

² The Well-being of Future Generations | GOV.WALES

³ Socio-economic Duty: an overview | GOV.WALES

⁴ Second All Wales Low Carbon Delivery Plan (2021-2025) (gov.wales)

⁵ Race Equality Action Plan: An Anti-racist Wales | GOV.WALES

⁶ Locked out: liberating disabled people’s lives and rights in Wales beyond COVID-19 [HTML] | GOV.WALES

⁷ Economic resilience and reconstruction mission [HTML] | GOV.WALES

Well-being goals

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act gives a legally-binding common purpose – the seven well being goals – for national government, local government, local health boards and other specified public bodies. It details the ways in which specified public bodies must work, and work together to improve the well-being of Wales.

The Plan for Employability and Skills will contribute to the Well-being Goals for a prosperous, healthier and more equal Wales.



Fig. 1

WHAT'S BEEN ACHIEVED

Labour market improvement

Wales has seen **significant labour market and skills improvement** since the Employability Plan was produced in 2018.

For example:

- The employment rate for the three months ending December 2021 was 74.5%. This is higher than at any point before the plan was produced in March 2018.
- We reached our target of closing the unemployment gap with the UK by the end of 2019, and unemployment levels in Wales continue to remain lower than the UK.
- Economic inactivity reached a record low in 2018, and fell below the UK level for the first time in November 2018.
- The proportion of 19-24 year olds who were in employment, education or training in 2020 was up by more than 1% since 2018 (84.8%, up from 83.9% in 2019). This is close to the highest level on record (84.9% in 2017).
- The proportion of people aged 18-64 with no qualifications has fallen by more than 1% (from 8.4% in 2018 to 7.3% in 2020.)
- Those with higher education qualifications has increased by nearly 4% (from 37.8% to 41.4%)
- The gender pay gap in Wales, based on median full-time hourly earnings, has fallen by more than 2%, (from 7.3% in 2018 to 5% in 2021) and is now at its lowest rate ever recorded. For part-time employees the gender pay gap has been closed.



Employability and Skills support

Welsh Government has worked closely with partners to deliver a comprehensive suite of national employability programmes. Since 2018:

- Working Wales has supported 66,000 individuals since its launch in 2019.
- 112,600 **high-quality Apprenticeships** were delivered in the last Senedd term, plus new incentives enabled recruitment of close to 5,900 new apprentices during the pandemic.
- Communities for Work, Communities for Work Plus and PaCE programmes have provided **intensive employment** support to 69,000 individuals with complex barriers from our most disadvantaged communities, with over 29,000 entering employment.
- The Out of Work Service, has supported over 3,000 young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and 8,500 adults who are long-term unemployed or economically inactive, who have **substance misuse and/or mental health issues**.
- Close to 9000 people have enrolled on the Employability Skills Programme, which **supports unemployed adults to move closer to employment**, get a job and stay in work.
- Over 5,500 people with **musculoskeletal and mental health conditions** have been supported to stay in work through therapeutic interventions via the In Work Support Service.
- Individuals have been supported to **reskill for new employment** following redundancy through ReAct. Since 2018, ReAct has awarded over 4,500 vocational training grants, and supported recruitment for over 300 employers.
- The Childcare Offer for Wales has been available since April 2019. In July 2021 over 16,500 children benefited from the Offer.
- Welsh entrepreneurs have supported Big Ideas Wales to inspire over 215,500 **young people to learn about enterprise and business creation**.
- Over 6000 individuals have commenced **training and qualifications to switch careers, progress or find new employment** through the national roll out of The Personal Learning Account Programme, with access to training and qualifications, delivered flexibly around existing family and work commitments.
- There have been changes in skills provision and uptake as efforts have been made to better match the supply of skills to the demands of employers. In Further Education and Apprenticeships, there has been proportionally more learning in 'Healthcare and Public Services', 'Science and Mathematics', 'Construction' and 'Engineering', with reductions in 'Hair and Beauty', 'Arts, Media and Publishing', 'ICT' and 'Retail, Commercial and Customer Services'.

WHAT'S BEEN ACHIEVED

Progressing Fair Work

- The Fair Work Commission published 'Fair Work Wales'⁸ in 2019, to guide the ways in which **fair work can be promoted and encouraged**.
- We have consulted on a Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill which, if passed, will introduce new social partnership and socially responsible public procurement duties.
- The Workforce Rights and Responsibilities Campaign raised **awareness of workplace rights, employer responsibilities** and access to relevant information, advice and support.
- The new Retail Forum is promoting a shared vision for a successful retail sector with fair work at its heart.
- A new National Health and Safety Forum is sharing intelligence, concerns and best practice to help **keep Wales safe at work**.
- Over 350 organisations are signatories to the Code of Practice on Ethical Employment in Supply Chains⁹, which **encourages fairer work practices and responsible business behaviours**.
- Welsh Government is **championing adoption of the Real Living Wage**, setting an example as a Real Living Wage employer, and encouraging employers to explore the benefits of Real Living Wage for them and their workers.
- The Advancing Gender Equality in Wales Plan was published in 2020, and will be updated in 2022, to **increase women's participation and progression in the economy**.
- A team of Disabled People's Employment Champions were recruited to actively **support businesses with the recruitment and retention of disabled people**.
- Over 500 full Economic Contracts were agreed with businesses and organisations we support, **ensuring our business investments deliver wider social value**. Over 13,000 companies committed to the principles of the contract through our ERF Funding. The new strengthened contract has fair work at its heart.
- Over **181,000 jobs were safeguarded** through the Economic Resilience Fund. £46.3m supported over 2000 companies to support training and the creation of new jobs, with additional funding to recruit young people under the age of 25.
- Since 2016, the Business Wales service, has supported the creation of 25,000 jobs across Wales, including the **creation of over 5,000 new enterprises**, 2560 businesses have adopted or improved practices with regards to Equality and Diversity, actively committing to the Business Wales Equality pledge.

⁸ Fair Work Wales | GOV.WALES

⁹ Ethical employment in supply chains: code of practice, guidance and training | GOV.WALES

AREAS OF ACTION

FUTURE GENERATIONS

Invest in and strengthen the whole system approach to delivering the Young Persons Guarantee to make it easy for everyone under the age of 25 to access an offer of work, education, training, or self-employment. This offer includes the young people who will benefit from Welsh Labour's 125,000 new Apprenticeships to give people of all ages high quality routes into better jobs.

TACKLING ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

Prioritise and consolidate Welsh Government led, national employability support to ensure sure no one is left behind. Targeting those under-represented in the labour market, those in and out of work with long term health conditions, to find work and progress in employment. Whilst strengthening joint working with DWP to optimise national provision to meet the needs of priority groups.

FAIR WORK FOR ALL

Support and encourage employers to create high quality employment, improve the offer to workers, champion fair employment practices, ensure the social value of investment and encourage the public sector to embed the priorities in workforce planning.

HEALTHY WORK, HEALTHY WALES

Support people with a long term health condition to work by preventing people falling out of employment through health prevention, early intervention, healthy workplaces and maximise role of the health service as an anchor employer.

LEARNING FOR LIFE

Ensure educational inequalities narrow and standards rise, participation in the skills system is widened for disabled people and ethnic minority groups, whilst tackling low qualifications and increasing the mobility workers.

A young woman with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a red and black work jacket, is focused on typing on a laptop. She is in a garage or workshop, with the open hood of a car visible in the background. The scene is lit with warm, focused lighting on her and the laptop.

FUTURE GENERATIONS

Invest in young people to enable
them to realise their potential

INTRODUCTION

Delivering the Young Persons Guarantee to everyone under 25, to pursue work, education, training, or self-employment is central to achieving the Programme for Government well-being objectives. To create a nation where young people feel confident about planning their future.

A range of stakeholders, including the Department for Work and Pensions, Local authorities, Further and Higher Education Institutions, third sector, employers and advice and guidance providers, have a role to play in ensuring there is no lost generation following the pandemic.

To respond to the tightening of the labour market during the pandemic, more young people stayed on in learning in 2020, which mitigated any increases in the number of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). This follows an increasing share of young people in full-time education after age 16, which stands at an all-time high, whilst the demographic of 16-18 year olds is set to increase over the coming years.

Staying in learning affords young people greater opportunities to develop skills and qualifications for life, with Apprenticeships offering important routes to enter the workforce while still learning. However, young people may emerge in a tightening labour market, and may enter an organisation working entirely remotely or in a hybrid way. Overcoming a lack of work experience, an absence of good networks and the business know-how to start their own business will be even more important.

For employers, the shift to stay in learning may restrict the labour supply of young people which is already proving problematic for those industries that have become reliant on young, flexible workforces. Workers being supported to combine fair work and study, to start a business and develop the skills for the changing labour market will be an emerging focus.

Young people's futures should not be blighted because of the pandemic and that is why a catch-up programme for education, and increased support to aid positive transitions and progression in education, employment and training has been put on place to mitigate disruption to learning and missed opportunities to develop employability skills during the pandemic.

Tackling the gap between disabled and non-disabled young people who are NEET is a key focus going forward. 19.7% of disabled young people aged 16-18 were NEET over a three year period to September 2021, which rises to 40.0% for those aged 19-24, this compares to 6.8% and 9.4% respectively for non-disabled young people.

Nurturing a generation of young talent, and activating people into Education, Employment or Training (EET), and optimising opportunities that a greener economy may deliver, is vital to raise aspirations and opportunity particularly for those young people for whom unemployment may already be entrenched in their family, to prevent labour market detachment and the scarring effects of periods of inactivity

Headline Priority

Invest in and strengthen the whole system approach to delivering the Young Persons Guarantee to make it easy for everyone under the age of 25 to access an offer of work, education, training, or self-employment. This offer includes the young people who will benefit from 125,000 new Apprenticeships to give people of all ages high quality routes into better jobs.

Success measure: (National Milestone)

- At least 90% of 16-24 year olds will be in education, employment, or training by 2050.

Recent developments

- Launched the **Young Persons Guarantee**, an ambitious programme to smooth the difficult labour market transitions for young people under 25.
- **Positioned Working Wales as the gateway to the guarantee** for every 16 to 24 year old to receive high quality, impartial careers support, course search with a **new Job Vacancy service and employment bureaus in colleges** helping to match people with recruiting employers.
- **Strengthened partnership approach** with providers, Local Authorities, third sector and UK Government's Department of Work and Pensions. Using Regional Skills Partnerships and the consultation on the review of the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework to shape an integrated approach.

GOING FORWARD

Welsh Government will:

1 Put Young Peoples voices at the heart of the Guarantee, and continue to listen and learn from the experiences of young people, to identify improvements with the current system and any gaps in provision focusing on reaching out to protected groups.

2 Position Community Employability Programmes and successor provision, to prioritise support for young people most disadvantaged within their local communities to help to build confidence, gain some work experience, learn new skills or re-write CVs.

3 Deliver Jobs Growth Wales Plus – to provide a holistic, tailored **package of support for young people who are, or who are at risk of becoming, NEET** to progress into employment, and encourage conversion onto Apprenticeships. The programme will include training and development to address barriers into employment and offer work placements and work trails as well as an employer wage subsidy. (Jobs Growth Wales Plus will replace Jobs Growth Wales and Traineeships from April 2022)

4 Provide high quality careers guidance services via Careers Wales and Working Wales. Impartial careers services will be **accessible to everyone** and support positive transitions, keep people switched on to learning, broaden horizons and awareness of skills required in the modern labour market, and support schools to deliver careers and work related experiences. Setting challenging diversity targets for engagement and progression, and reaching out to all young people who are not in education employment or training.

5 Boost Job Matching support through Working Wales, and Employment Bureaus to support employers with talent pipeline planning to promote vacancies, connect employer vacancies with a pool of suitable job seekers, and support job readiness of individuals to directly match them with suitable roles. Consider ways to support the partnerships between employers, schools and colleges, including looking at how these partnerships can be streamlined and supported.

6 Inspire young people to reach higher and move forward with confidence by showcasing ‘Made in Wales’ role models, Skills Competition Winners, immersive ‘Have a Go’ experiences to encourage primary and secondary school and college students, to learn more about vocational careers and apprenticeships, plus a national ‘Feed your positivity’ Campaign.

7 Support young entrepreneurs and increase the rate of graduate start-ups in Wales by through Big Ideas Wales. To help young people start their own business through role models inspiring the next generation, one-to-one business advisory support, entrepreneur mentoring along with financial support. A network of enterprise champions will work with students and graduates within our colleges and universities.

8 Encourage employers to create opportunities for young people, through the Spring 2020 ‘We’re in your Corner’ campaign, to promote workforce and talent pipeline planning, a clear training and recruitment offer, increase visibility of job vacancies, and link the offer with Business growth programmes to promote and stimulate recruitment and work experience activities.

9 Promote collective responsibility for supporting delivery of the Young Persons Guarantee by refreshing the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF). To support young people at risk of disengaging from education, training and employment by clarifying roles and responsibilities for organisations, the approaches to support the different age cohorts, plus embedding support for emotional mental health and wellbeing and prevention of youth homelessness.

10 Improve engagement and partnership working activities by linking Working Wales, Business Wales, Engagement and Progression Coordinators and Community for Work Co-ordinators. Together this network of mentors, coaches and advisors will work together to engage with and create opportunities young people across Wales. This will include scoping the potential of Careers Wales developing a data intelligence hub for Wales.

CASE STUDY

THIBAUD GAILLIARD

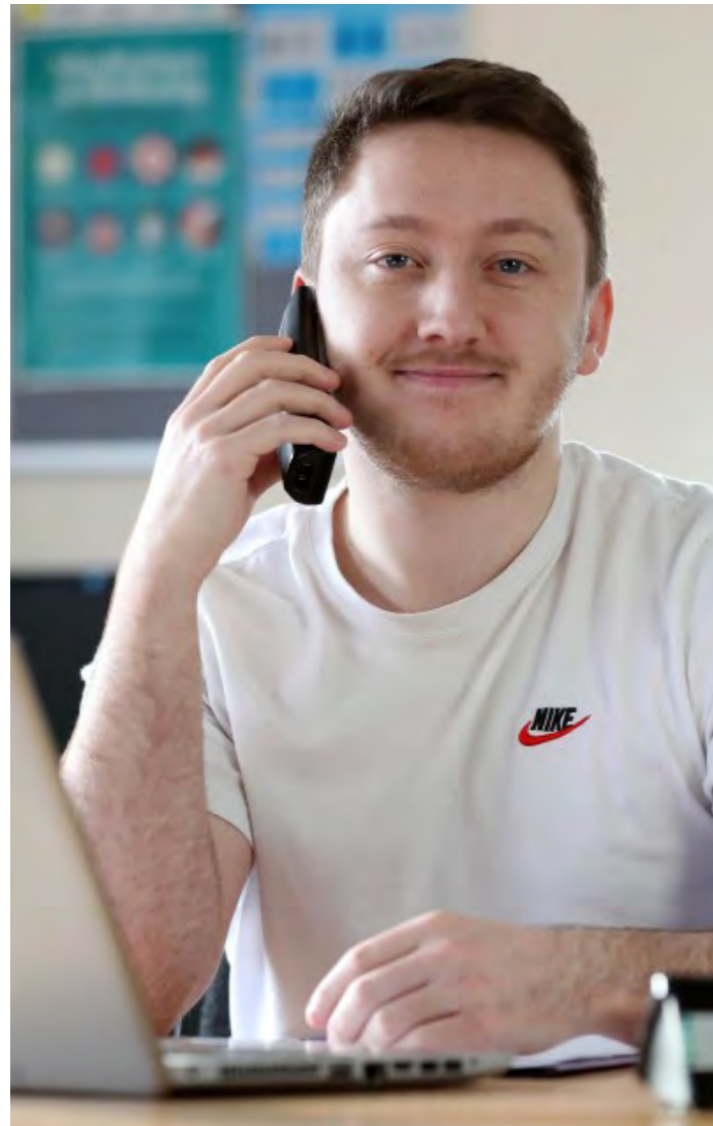
Thibaud Gailliard could speak little English and had no formal qualifications or previous work experience when he arrived in Wales as a shy 16-year-old, following the loss of his mother to cancer. His learning journey since though has been described as “incredible”.

Luckily, Thibaud, 21, from Ebbw Vale, discovered a Traineeship Engagement Programme in Creative Media delivered by Risca-based training provider Sgiliau Cyf and quickly set about learning English, improving his IT, design and music skills and going on to add a long list of qualifications to his name.

Following the Traineeship, Thibaud progressed to an ICT Users Award Level 1 with Sgiliau who now employ him as lead administrator, as well as a Foundation Apprenticeship in IT.

Thibaud said:

I now feel like I belong somewhere and Sgiliau have given me an amazing career opportunity. If I didn't have them, I don't know where I would be, and I can't thank them enough for their help and support.





ECONOMIC EQUALITY

Activate and support adults struggling to find work to enter and progress in employment.

INTRODUCTION

The Programme for Government outlines Welsh Government commitment to celebrating diversity and eliminating inequality in all of its forms. To create a more equal Wales, a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances, and an inclusive workforce that reflects society and our communities.

Skills and employability support can further these aims by focussing investment and interventions on those who are under-represented in the labour market and who face disadvantage and inequity in accessing work, or progressing their skills, qualifications and employment.

Economic inactivity continues to hold back the Welsh Economy, and breaking the links between poverty and those with protected characteristics can significantly improve outcomes for some of the poorest people in Wales. For example, less than 50% of disabled people are in employment, are more likely to have no qualifications than non-disabled people and are less likely to hold qualifications above level 2.

Lone parent families are significantly more likely to be living in poverty than couple households, with women disproportionately impacted.

In addition, most refugees face significant barriers to finding work including English language skills, with employers lacking cultural competence and understanding, an under-valuing, lack of recognition, and prohibitive time and cost to recognise qualifications, skills and/or experience gained overseas.

Racism, workplace cultures, policies and processes continue to create barriers to labour market participation and progression for Black, Asian and Minority ethnic people. It is vital that employers offer an inclusive environment where everyone feels able to participate and achieve their potential. Taking diversity and inclusion seriously is good for business, talent, market competitiveness, and corporate reputation.

Going forward Welsh Government will need to build on evidence, evaluation and the lived experience of those we seek to support, and adopt a more targeted and flexible approach. To better meet the needs of priority groups, whilst developing programmes that can react quickly to local labour markets or shifts in policy and delivery.

Headline Priority

Prioritise and consolidate Welsh Government led, national employability support to ensure no one is left behind. Targeting those under-represented in the labour market, those in and out of work with long term health conditions, to find work and progress in employment. Whilst strengthening joint working with DWP to optimise national provision to meet the needs of priority groups.

Success measure: (National Milestone)

- Eradicate the gap between the employment rate in Wales and the UK by 2050, with a focus on Fair work and raising labour market participation of under-represented groups.

Recent developments

- **Disabled People's Employment Champions**, were appointed to help close the gap between disabled people and the rest of the working population by driving cultural change and influencing the practices of employers, providers and the public sector. 'A More Equal Wales: A practical guide for employers to employing disabled people', dispels myths and offers practical help and advice on recruiting, developing and supporting disabled people.
- As part of the **Race Equality Review and action planning** Welsh Government is implementing a set of actions to improve accessibility, relevance and performance data to deliver better outcomes for ethnic minority groups in relation to Welsh Government Skills and Employability programmes, and embed an anti-racist approach in our employability support.
- The development of the Net Zero Wales Skills Plan is **piloting a Mainstreaming Equality Policy Framework**, a policy development tool developed by Cardiff University to prevent existing labour market inequalities being carried through into the new net zero and digital economies.

GOING FORWARD

Welsh Government will:

11 Continue to **optimise UK wide provision to benefit Welsh citizens, and work constructively with DWP to strengthen the Concordat that defines mutual ways of working.** To improve early engagement and joint planning in Wales on design and deployment of interventions to optimise national provision for mutual benefit, and ensure that together we best meet the needs of priority and disadvantaged groups.

12 Introduce ReAct+ to deliver individualised **support to unemployed and NEET adults 18+ to remove barriers to employment.** To include a Personal Development Support grant, mentoring for young people 18-24, and work experience where this is a barrier to employment. (The ReAct programme will be replaced by ReAct+ in spring 2022)

13 **Improve the employment prospects for economically inactive people,** particularly those most at risk of disadvantage in the labour market; by **bringing together Welsh Government led employability programmes** to deliver a new single operating model from 2023 onwards that will include ReAct+, Community Employability Programmes and Jobs Growth Wales Plus.

14 **Support offender learning** by exploring the development of intensive targeted Support for those who are due to leave the prison estate in Wales, and are identified to have the most need. Make the Young Persons Guarantee accessible to those in prisons. Produce a policy statement on employability support and skills training for learners in the prison estate in Wales.

15 **Deliver a phased expansion of early year's childcare provision to include all two year olds,** with a particular emphasis on strengthening Welsh medium provision. **Fund childcare for more families where parents are in education and training or on the edge of work** to help them to either prepare for the labour market, improve their existing skills or secure more sustainable employment whilst bridging the financial burden of childcare costs.

16 **Set and monitor challenging diversity targets on all Employability programmes and services,** including Apprenticeships to prioritise investment, intervention and co-design approaches to increase participation and outcomes for underrepresented groups. This includes maintaining employment subsidies to incentivise recruitment of under-represented groups, introducing clear eligibility rules, taking steps to diversify the provider base; reporting on performance, use of financial incentives and reduction in contracts if targets are not met. Priority groups include: ethnic minorities, (including migrants), disabled people, those with a learning disability, women, lone parents and carers, young people and older workers.

17 Respond to the recommendations to of the Locked out report, and Disability Taskforce to **drive forward solutions to tackle socio-economic disadvantage of disabled people in Wales.** This includes continued training and awareness raising of the Social Model of Disability for front-line employability services and staff and contractors. Taking forward activity to improve access to, and outcomes on our employability programmes for people with significant learning disabilities by providing specialist intensive job-coach support. Continuing to involve stakeholders through our Disabled People's Employment working group to ensure the best possible outcomes for disabled people on our programmes including Apprenticeships and Jobs Growth Wales+, supporting disabled people to enter and progress in the labour market.

18 **Implement the recommendations of the Race Equality Action Plan to tackle and promote anti-racism approaches to tackle structural and systemic racism** that prevents people from accessing the skills, training and employment prospects. We will undertake an anti-racist review to ensure employability operations are inclusive and not at risk of deepening any existing inequalities and disparities, examine the impact of our actions on ethnic minorities, focus on understanding the impact on ethnic minority women, support professional learning to challenge racism, have difficult conversations, and develop appropriate learning content.

19 **Improve involvement and funding of ethnic minority organisations to continually improve communication and awareness** of support, and trust in post-16 learning and skills programmes. Use evidence and research to review and understand the barriers and circumstances, the influence of language, cultural and religion impacting on employment participation, and co-design better approaches to remove those barriers.

20 Continue to **effect a cultural change and influence the fair work practices of employers,** providers and the public sector in Wales helping people in employment to access better jobs, develop their skills and careers. Employers will be supported through the Wales Union Learning Fund, Disabled People's Employment Champions and Business Wales to increase access to direct support, such as pre-employment training and Access to Work in order to support adaptations in the workplace.

CASE STUDY

LATIFA ALNJJAR (SYRIAN DINNER PROJECT)

Latifa is a Syrian refugee.

Whilst learning English she decided to set up a business because she loves cooking and wanted to share Syrian food with the people of Wales.

Overcoming the language barrier was a struggle and she lacked confidence in her own ability, until she heard about Business Wales.

The Red Cross Project in Aberystwyth put Latifa in touch with Business Wales and a meeting was quickly arranged where she was given advice on how to start a business and what was needed from her.

They also encouraged her to feel more confident and have provided ongoing support which has helped Latifa build a thriving business in Wales.



A man in a workshop setting, wearing a red and blue plaid shirt, safety glasses, and large blue earplugs. He is focused on his work, with his hands on a piece of wood. The background is slightly blurred, showing a workshop environment with various tools and materials.

FAIR WORK FOR ALL

Improve pay, quality and availability
of employment in Wales.

INTRODUCTION

The Programme for Government outlines Welsh Government's commitment to building an economy based on the principles of fair work, sustainability and the industries and services of the future.

Welsh Government will use all of the powers and levers available to ensure that workers are fairly rewarded, heard and represented, secure and able to progress in a healthy, inclusive environment where rights are respected.

Despite significant improvement in employment and labour market participation, concerns remain over the quality of work. Shifts to home working are demonstrating both positive and negative impacts for a minority of workers, whilst workforce shortages continue to be a challenge for key sectors, influenced by short and long term factors, many beyond the powers of Welsh Government, including unattractive pay and conditions in some sectors and occupations.

Employers and trade unions, have a crucial role in advancing fair work and in helping us to meet our ambitions for a stronger, fairer and greener Wales.

We will work with employers to encourage them to improve the quality of work and working conditions so that work is fairer and more secure. This includes the adoption of behaviours and practices that support workforce equality, diversity and inclusion, such as worker centred flexibility and job design. We expect employers who benefit from public investment to act in a spirit of social partnership. We will seek opportunities to promote the role of trade unions, working in social partnership with employers on workforce development, and other matters affecting the workforce.

We have already developed the Economic Contract and Code of Practice on Ethical Employment in Supply Chains, setting out our broad expectations of employers. We will continue to strengthen the links between the support provided through the public purse and the delivery of fair work.

Encouraging shared responsibility, and greater integration across policy areas, tiers of government and optimising the role of public bodies as anchor institutions and employers is critical to embedding fair work into public sector workforce planning. Drawing on the support of employers to spread good practice as we know these actions are good for business and good for workers.

Headline Priority

Support and encourage employers to create high quality employment, improve the offer to workers, champion fair employment practices, ensure the social value of investment and encourage the public sector to embed the priorities in workforce planning.

Success measure:

- Increase the proportion of employees/ employments earning at least the real Living Wage, and are on permanent contracts (or on temporary contracts and not seeking permanent employment).
- Proportion of employees whose pay is set by collective bargaining.
- An elimination of the pay gap for gender, disability and ethnicity by 2050.

Recent developments

- We are delivering our priorities and ambitions for a Wales of Fair Work, using every lever we have to promote and encourage the availability of and access to fair work. We have made a £43 million commitment to progress our Programme for Government commitment to **pay social care workers the real living wage**. This will begin to be implemented from April 2022.
- **The Public Sector Equality Duty & Socio-Economic Duty** are crucial legal tools introduced to safeguard equality and further sustainable development duties. The Welsh Government is working with the Equality and Human Rights Commission to ensure that public bodies are aware of their responsibilities to meet current generations needs without compromising future generations, and to ensure that reporting, monitoring and enforcement arrangements are effective.
- Through the **Economic Contract** businesses already demonstrate the contribution they will make to the principles of Economic Strength and Adaptability, Fair Work, Promotion of Wellbeing and becoming Low Carbon and Climate Resilient in return for Welsh Government support. £35 million was committed in November 2021 to help 1000 small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) relaunch, develop, decarbonise, grow, whilst helping to create 2,000 new jobs and safeguard a further 4,000 jobs.

GOING FORWARD

Welsh Government will:

21 Explore legislation to address pay gaps based on gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability, and other forms of discrimination. In addition, improve fairness in the workplace through the delivery of equality, diversity and inclusion commitments and priorities set out throughout this Plan, including the Gender Equality Review, Disability Task Force and Race Equality Action Plan.

22 Introduce a **Social Partnership and Public Procurement Bill**, which, if passed, will establish a statutory Social Partnership Council and introduce new social partnership and socially responsible public procurement duties. Work with partners to embed the objectives set out in this Plan into public sector workforce planning.

23 Step up our work to **encourage and raise awareness of the benefits of fair work**, decent working conditions and job quality, championing best practice and the positive role of trade unions. Improve access to information, advice and guidance, following up on the workers' rights campaign. Build on the success of the Wales Union Learning Fund to help people in employment to access better jobs, develop their skills and careers. Continue to promote and encourage Real Living Wage adoption and accreditation to tackle income and pay, pay workers in social care the Real Living Wage and support and promote the employment of victims of exploitative labour practices.

24 Drive changes to Wales' working culture so that at least 30% of Welsh workers work from home or near to home, to give more people the choice to work in a way that helps their productivity, their work-life balance, manage caring responsibilities or long term health conditions. Including developing regional co-working and local work hubs to boost the use of community and town centre locations.

25 Develop a culture of entrepreneurship, increasing the rate and sustainability of business start-ups, and social entrepreneurship. Supporting individuals from all communities to start and develop their own business, improving participation by women, Black Asian and Minority Ethnic and disabled individuals. **Provide greater support for worker buyouts and seek to double the number of employee-owned businesses.**

26 Deliver funding through the Development Bank for Wales and targeted advice from Business Wales to **support businesses to create and sustain new jobs**, find new export markets and invest in sustainable green industries. **Strengthen our Economic Contract** so inclusive growth, fair work, decarbonisation and improved mental health at work are at the heart of everything we do, targeting business support and investment to those who set clear commitments to **improving business practices**. Evolve and further embed the Code of Practice on Ethical Employment in Supply Chains to strengthen its impact in tackling unethical employment practices.

27 Evolve and enhance the **Business Wales service post 2022**. We will develop proposals that meet priorities outlined within the Programme for Government, including our commitment to build an economy based on the principles of fair work, sustainability and the industries and services of the future. This includes **supporting businesses to improve management, employment and HR practices**, improve equality and diversity practices, work more inclusively, adopt the Equality Pledge, and become age inclusive employers.

28 Support the Wales TUC proposals for **union members to become Green Representatives in the workplace**. To support workplace transition towards net zero, reflecting sectoral arrangements, collectively bargained agreements, and access to education and support. The representatives will work with members and employers to help cut carbon and ensure that action on climate change is fair, developed collaboratively and is fully supported by the workforce.

29 Deliver Regional Economic Frameworks to **further regional priorities and shared objectives for each region**, and ensure that our engagement models are joined up, flexible and utilise the robust economic and labour market intelligence received from **Regional Skills Partnerships** to further develop our policy in this area. They provide the framework for Economic Well-Being collaboration of future priorities within each region.

30 Continue to foster closer working relationships with local authorities to **co-design a placed-based approach to economic development**. Agree the role of the new Corporate Joint Committees in economic development and establish a new and effective collaborative economic development model which best delivers for businesses, people and communities, whilst learning from our work with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to inform multilevel governance structures for economic development within Wales.

CASE STUDY

ASPIRE BLAENAU GWENT & MERTHYR TYDFIL



Plugging the manufacturing industry's skills gap whilst tackling high unemployment across 2 local authorities has led to the creation of a pioneering Apprenticeship Programme.

Aspire Blaenau Gwent & Merthyr Tydfil's Shared Apprenticeship Programme benefits companies that have adopted its innovative approach where learners are rotated around host employers to achieve units towards their apprenticeship.

In 2015, the Ebbw Vale Enterprise Zone Board identified the significant lack of employees with Level 3 and above skills in Blaenau Gwent, and 2 years later, Merthyr Tydfil also came online.

Aspire is now working with both Coleg y Cymoedd, who link with Coleg Gwent, and Coleg Merthyr Tydfil to foster the next generation of skilled workers through apprenticeships covering Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, ICT, Applied Science, Quality Engineering as well as Business/Commercial Administration and Finance.



A man with a prosthetic leg is working in a wood mill. He is wearing a plaid shirt and grey overalls, and is holding a long wooden plank. He is standing next to a large stack of wooden planks. The background shows a large industrial space with wooden beams and machinery.

HEALTHY WORK, HEALTHY WALES

Support disabled people and those with health conditions to work.

INTRODUCTION

The Programme for Government includes a commitment to move to eliminate inequality in all its forms. Health inequalities are amongst the most striking forms of inequalities where people in the most deprived areas are more likely to live a shorter and unhealthier life than those in the least deprived areas.

We recognise that fair work is good for our physical and mental health and wellbeing. Work can improve the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, increase living standards, move people out of poverty and help to reduce health inequalities.

The prevalence of low pay, poor quality work, plus the effects of racism, discrimination and poor employment practices generates and entrenches health inequalities, and has consequences on health, productivity and in work poverty, particularly for individuals from all protected characteristics.

We want to enable early intervention measures, including direct access to allied health professionals to provide occupational health interventions, and link together health and employability services in a more person centred, holistic way. To support employer's with their legal duty to protect workers' health whilst they are at work, and to create healthy workplaces, that both support people with long term health conditions, and prevent people from falling out of work due to ill-health.

The health system has an important role to play. 'A Healthier Wales: Our Plan for Health and Social Care' plan sets out our long term future vision of a 'whole system approach to health and social care'. This aims to develop a 'wellness' system, which aims to support and anticipate health needs, to prevent illness, and to reduce the impact of poor health.

NHS Wales is estimated to support almost 145,400 jobs and £5.4bn of GVA, accounting for 11% of total Welsh employment and 9% of Welsh GVA. Every £1bn of direct NHS revenue spending supports an estimated 19,000 total jobs in the Welsh economy.¹⁰

There is an expectation that NHS organisations can plan more proactively to contribute to the health and employability agenda, both to protect the health and wellbeing of the existing workforce, directly as large employers and also indirectly as anchor institutions and through their work with a range of partners. Health boards will need to recognise access to work as a health outcome and ensure that rehabilitation services can enable citizen's to remain in, or return to work.

¹⁰ Health, wealth and wellbeing - The NHS' role in economic and social recovery.pdf (nhsconfed.org)

Headline Priority

Support people with a long term health condition to work by preventing people falling out of employment through health prevention, early intervention, healthy workplaces and maximising role of the health service as an anchor employer.

Success measure: (National Milestone)

- The percentage gap between the **employment rate for those with long term health conditions** and the overall age specific employment rate in persons aged 16-64 years.
- The percentage of the population (aged 16-64 years) who want a job that are **economically inactive due to long-term sickness**.

Recent developments

- **Increased investment in health employment programmes to expand provision** to help people with mental ill-health and physical issues to remain in work and those who are out of work and recovering from substance misuse and/or mental ill-health into work.
- NHS organisations are already implementing a wide range of activities to **increase social value and work more systematically to mainstream their role as large employers**. This is being developed through their work with a range of partners, to protect the health and wellbeing of the existing workforce and that of local people, grow more of their future workforce locally, widen access to quality work and embedding an antiracist culture within the workplace.
- To reinforce Welsh Government's commitment to **increasing medical students' places across the whole of Wales**, and establishing a new medical school in North Wales, student places for the C21 North Wales Programme were increased to 25 in September 2021 and 40 in September 2022.

GOING FORWARD

Welsh Government will:

31 Roll out a national framework for social prescribing which will enable people to link into community assets; to manage their own health and well-being; and access support to find and sustain employment.

32 Work with Local Health Boards to ensure that employability is factored into assessments, annual **Integrated Medium Term Plans** and forms a core role in terms of prevention and early intervention.

33 Focus on improving sickness absence management through a multi-agency approach, including introducing regulations to allow a wider range of eligible healthcare professionals to sign fit notes. To encourage hospital doctors to issue fit notes, reduce the burden on GPs in primary care, streamline delivery to support workplace adjustments or return to work conversations with employers and active vocational/ occupational rehabilitation to improve patient outcomes.

34 Increase employability support for people recovering from, or living with mental ill-health, an impairment and/ or long term health condition through vocational rehabilitation and multi-professional occupational health services, peer mentoring support and working collaboratively with DWP to draw on the Work & Health Programme.

35 Guide employers on how to support disabled people and those with long-term health conditions (including mental health conditions) in the workforce, promote employer obligations to protect and prevent employee health. Revise the Healthy Working Wales model to increase access to information and advice for employers, and support employers to create healthy working practices and environments, effectively manage sickness absence, return to work, promote flexible and home working, and ensure that workplaces are healthy and safe.

36 Expand rapid access to occupational therapy support by increasing investment to extend In-Work Support and community based rehabilitation for people across Wales to help them return or remain in work or self-employment by managing their conditions or symptoms. Continuing to work with businesses to tackle mental health stigma through the Time to Change Wales programme.

37 Work with the market and key stakeholder organisations to explore innovative ideas to increase the purchasing of multi-professional Occupational Health by SMEs and the self-employed. Work with UK Government through the consultation on 'Health is Everyone's Business' and with key partners to assess capacity and future options across occupational health using the Social Model of Disability.

38 Include employability expectations in planning guidance issued to the NHS, plus the Foundational Economy Health and Social Care Programme to widen access to work experience, training, Apprenticeships and employment for young people, disabled people and other under-represented groups; to grow the future workforce supply locally and equitably, make the NHS a great place to work, and support the health and wellbeing of staff.

39 Ensure Health and Social Care anchor institutions model best practice in implementing healthy and fair work, deliver a national mental health service, to support all staff within health and social care to access mental health support and counselling, to ensure that they are fully supported and valued. Plus use of procurement processes and contracts to drive healthier, more inclusive workplaces among contractor organisations.

40 Embed a culture which does not accept any form of discrimination or inequality for employees, or service users within the NHS in Wales. To remove barriers and open up opportunities for those with protected characteristics, driven by compassionate and committed leadership across the NHS in Wales and ensure staff are able to work in safe, inclusive environments, built on Allyship.

CASE STUDY

SWANSEA BAY UNIVERSITY HEALTH BOARD



A healthier and more equal Wales are at the heart of Swansea Bay University Health Board's Apprenticeship Programme, which currently has 29 apprentices and a further 18 awaiting starts across 17 Apprenticeship Frameworks.

Working with training providers NPTC Group of Colleges and Gower College Swansea, the Health Board's Apprentice Academy offers a 'try before you buy' opportunity whereby a learner can change pathway to a more suited course.

Apprentice and staff development co-ordinator Abbie Finch said:

I now feel like I belong somewhere and Sgiliau have given me an amazing career opportunity. If I didn't have them, I don't know where I would be, and I can't thank them enough for their help and support.



LEARNING FOR LIFE

Improve skill and qualification levels,
and mobility of people in and out of work.



INTRODUCTION

The Programme for Government sets out a range of priority actions to ensure educational inequalities narrow and standards rise.

Removing barriers to participation and widening access to learning will be essential to increase participation, broaden access, and improve equality of outcome, as will improving skills and employability amongst groups that currently experience low employment rates.

A series of challenges and opportunities continue to disrupt the demand for, and of, labour across both the public and private sectors. These include digitalisation, automation and artificial intelligence, the changes and opportunities associated with moving to a net zero economy, the demand of Covid-19 on many sectors and businesses to adapt and adopt new business models, societal changes and changes to international markets.

Conversely, the economic impacts of Covid-19 and a reduction in the free movement of labour has impacted the supply of a skilled workforce, and accelerated labour market contraction due to a declining working age population. The success of the economy is increasingly dependent on the availability of a flexible, resilient and diverse workforce that is able to respond to changing market conditions.

Skills and qualifications are the biggest single influence on a person's chance of being in employment, and on them earning a good income, offering a route out of poverty and protection against it.

We must nurture a culture of learning and adaption throughout life, and working environments that welcome workers of all ages and stages in their career. Attracting people to live and work in Wales, incentivising graduates to stay, whilst stimulating and rewarding job opportunities are crucial factors in attracting, growing and retaining talent in Wales.

Employers have a central role in developing skills fit for the future, through a much closer connection between supply and demand of people and qualifications, and supporting people to continue to develop skills in the workplace, throughout their careers.

Going forward the four Regional Skills Partnerships will continue to act as a vital interface to represent the skills and occupational demands of employers and deliver labour market intelligence to Welsh Government, setting regional priorities to inform the deployment of employability and skills funding.

The post compulsory education and training ecosystem of colleges, universities, sixth forms, adult and work-based learning have a vital role in raising the level and relevance of skills and training to contribute to economic growth. For improving the employment prospects of learners, increasing workers resilience and transferability, responding to the needs of employers whilst making best use of resources to improve individual and national outcomes and contribute to the civic mission.

Headline Priority

Nurture a Learning for life culture to ensure educational inequalities narrow and standards rise, participation in the skills system is widened for disabled people and ethnic minority groups, whilst tackling low qualifications and increasing the mobility workers.

Success measure: (National Milestone)

- The percentage of working age adults with no qualifications will be 5% or below in every local authority in Wales by 2050
- 75% of working age adults in Wales will be qualified to Level 3 or higher by 2050.

Recent developments

- The Personal Learning Account (PLA) Programme was rolled out in 2020, to **tackle low pay and progression in work** by supporting people with flexible courses, delivered around individuals work and family commitments.
- **Enhanced support to address the barriers that impact disabled learners accessing and progressing on Apprenticeships**, including dedicated learner coaches, flexibilities for essential skills qualifications for people with learning disabilities, and increasing Apprenticeship starts by people from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds.
- **Increased Apprenticeships in growth sectors** which benefit learners and businesses alike including introduction of degree apprenticeships in 2018, validation and issuing of new and refreshed apprenticeship frameworks from 2020, and the launch of the apprenticeship vacancy service in late 2020.

GOING FORWARD

Welsh Government will:

41 Reform the post-compulsory education and training (PCET) sector, introduce a **Tertiary Education and Research Bill**, and build a sustainable, collaborative tertiary education ecosystem where all learners can easily access the right development opportunity at the right time and place, in a fair and equitable way. Set up a **Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER)** to provide strategic leadership for different providers of tertiary education to ensure that it meets the needs of students, the workforce and employers and better meets the strategic aims of government and improve individual and national outcomes.

42 Publish a Net Zero Wales Skills Action Plan in autumn 2022, to ensure that skills is a key enabler for our Net Zero journey. To enhance access to skills training critical for successful decarbonisation, help to create new, high-quality green jobs, enhanced regional growth, and improved access to growing 'green markets'. Development will include the use of the Mainstreaming Equality Policy Framework developed by Cardiff University to prevent existing labour market inequalities being carried through into the new net zero and digital economies.

43 Strengthen the role of the four Regional Skills Partnerships to broaden their influence and scope particularly with the public bodies and local authorities, to promote shared responsibility for accelerating progress on National Milestones, lead stakeholder engagement on national policy, provide recommendations to Welsh Government

to inform the regional and local deployment of national provision, and promote the delivery of a coherent offer within their local area, whilst providing an effective interface with other regional structures. They will continue to act as a vital interface to represent the skills and occupational demands of employers, and produce regional employment and skills plans to identify skills demand to shape provision that meets employer and regional need.

44 Create 125,000 apprenticeships over this Senedd term, tackling skills shortages and gaps and driving productivity in sectors critical to economic growth such, accelerating the delivery of net zero skills, offering STEM routes and drive up higher level qualifications, widening participation and inclusivity, support a higher proportion of young people, and stabilise the workforce within social care. We will increase opportunities for people of all ages and background to develop transferable skills in the workplace and increase their life chances. We will also invest more in supporting disabled people to take up apprenticeship opportunities. A Refocused apprenticeship policy will be published later in 2022.

45 Expand Personal Learning Accounts to support workers to upskill or reskill to access a wider range of job opportunities with higher pay, respond to key challenges for Wales including strengthening resources in health and social care and equipping individuals to take advantage of new opportunities in sectors such as digital, green construction and renewable energy.

Continue to explore with Further Education Institutions and Regional Skills Partnerships how to maximise provision and generate greatest benefit in response to evolving economic demand.

46 Push forward towards a million Welsh speakers and ensure future generations of Welsh speakers, through investment in the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and the National Centre for Learning Welsh to increase the proportion of apprenticeships and further education that are Welsh-medium, and provide free Welsh language learning for 16-24 year olds. Additional capital investment will increase opportunities for learners to be taught through the medium of Welsh, contributing towards reducing the current inequality of access to Welsh medium education.

47 Introduce Mid-Careers Reviews, to encourage workers aged 50 to proactively think about career and skills development, health and wellbeing, finance and Work-Life Balance through Working Wales. Working Wales will offer specialist careers advice and guidance, a skills review, and signposting and support to access financial planning ahead of retirement. This supports Our Strategy for an Ageing Society.

48 Review adult education and lifelong learning to increase the number of adults learning in Wales by improving quality and access to skills based, formal, and informal adult learning and support progression for learners. This includes considering the structural and systemic changes necessary to ensure equity of access, better connectivity across providers, curriculum improvements to support progression to further learning, and workforce requirements.

49 Explore opportunities for financial and non-financial incentives to encourage wider participation in learning, and to encourage more people to stay in Wales or return to Wales to work after study. This includes ensuring that the student finance system remains flexible to respond to an anticipated need for increased flexibility, upskilling and retraining as individuals will be less likely to remain in a career or sector throughout their working lives.

50 Publish a new National Occupational Standards Strategy in early 2022, jointly with devolved governments. It will set out how generic/transferable workforce competencies will be identified, developed and valued to facilitate portability and movement across sectors, regions and nations and into emerging and expanding occupational areas. This includes maintaining alignment between the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) and the other UK and international frameworks to facilitate the recognition, comparability and transferability of qualifications to aid mobility and progression beyond borders. Plus new guidance will be developed to enable employers to recognise the value of prior experience and learning, and the use of Unitised Accredited Learning to facilitate transition from vulnerable sectors into emerging roles.

CASE STUDY

DAVID WILLIAMS (CAMBRIAN GARDENING CONSULTANCY)

David cared for his elderly parents before deciding to set up a business.

He found it difficult to find a job at his age and couldn't continue to live off his savings, so he set up a business providing gardening services.

He initially struggled with finding the start-up costs needed to set up a website and to take the training courses he needed to improve his knowledge.

He also needed guidance on how to develop his original idea into a viable business.

When walking along the Aberystwyth Prom one day, he picked up some leaflets on Business Wales, which provided him with the information he needed to get his business off the ground.

Business Wales has helped his ideas become a reality.

They guided him through each step, from his original idea to a working model of a business.

The financial help he received made a huge difference and he was able to study the courses he needed and start building a website.

His business, Cambrian Garden Consultancy, has been growing steadily and he is grateful that the advisors are always there when he has any questions.



WHAT WE MEASURE IS WHAT WE VALUE

In December 2021, the first set of National Milestones were published. The national milestones are a series of measures against the national indicators that set out our longer term expectations, and help us understand whether we are moving in the right direction as a nation towards achieving the well-being goals.

The national milestones of relevance to this Plan are:

- 75% of working age adults in Wales will be qualified to Level 3 or higher by 2050
- The percentage of working age adults with no qualifications will be 5% or below in every local authority in Wales by 2050
- At least 90% of 16-24 year olds will be in education, employment, or training by 2050
- Eradicate the gap between the employment rate in Wales and the UK by 2050, with a focus on fair work and raising labour market participation of under-represented groups
- An elimination of the pay gap for gender, disability and ethnicity by 2050.

The national indicators of relevance to this Plan are:

- **No 8:** Percentage of adults with qualifications at the different levels of the National Qualifications Framework.
- **No 16:** Percentage of people in employment, who are on permanent contracts (or on temporary contracts, and not seeking permanent employment) and who earn at least the Real Living Wage
- **No 17:** Pay difference for gender, disability and ethnicity
- **No 20:** Proportion of employees whose pay is set by collective bargaining
- **No 21:** Percentage of people in employment.
- **No 22:** Percentage of people in education, employment or training, measured for different age groups.

*The Technical Annex sets out the current trajectory, areas to accelerate progress, and monitoring and reporting arrangements for our Plan for Employability and Skills.



