

# YOUNG PERSON'S GUARANTEE: NATIONAL CONVERSATION



RESEARCH REPORT

2022

#trustin

TRINITY



<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>07</b>
<b>1.0 THEIR ASPIRATIONS</b>	<b>09</b>
<b>2.0 BARRIERS TO ACCESSING EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>3.0 AWARENESS OF SUPPORT AVAILABLE</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>4.0 POSITIVE SUPPORT EXPERIENCES</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>5.0 THEIR SUPPORT NEEDS</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>6.0 ENGAGING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE MORE EFFECTIVELY</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>7.0 CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>72</b>

**YOUNG PERSON'S GUARANTEE**  
**YOUNG PERSON'S GUARANTEE**  
**YOUNG PERSON'S GUARANTEE**  
**YOUNG PERSON'S GUARANTEE**  
**YOUNG PERSON'S GUARANTEE**  
**YOUNG PERSON'S GUARANTEE**  
**YOUNG PERSON'S GUARANTEE**  
**YOUNG PERSON'S GUARANTEE**  
**YOUNG PERSON'S GUARANTEE**  
**YOUNG PERSON'S GUARANTEE**



**YOUNG PERSON'S GUARANTEE**

**The Young Person's Guarantee (YPG) is a new commitment made by Welsh Government to ensure that young people in Wales have the available support and opportunity to reach their potential following the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. The YPG will guarantee an offer of support to young people, to either gain a place in education or training, or to help to get into work or to become self-employed. The guarantee is for every young person aged 16-24 who lives in Wales.**

As part of the YPG, Welsh Government wants to ensure that it continues to listen to Wales's young people. It wants to understand how young people in Wales view the support and offer available to them, what they say they need in terms of support, and to hear about the barriers they face at this moment in time.

As part of this activity, Welsh Government launched the National Conversation with Young People in May 2022. Welsh Government was particularly keen to have **conversations with young people** from more seldom heard groups, for example, those Not in Education/ Employment or training (NEET).

The key themes the Welsh Government were interested in were what young people aged 16-24 had to say about their experiences getting training, education, and work, in particular:

- Their aspirations;
- The challenges they faced;
- Their awareness of support available to them;
- Their ideas for improving engagement with young people in Wales in the future.

This report brings together the **qualitative and quantitative** findings from conversations with a range of young people in Wales, between May and November 2022.

## Methodology

Participants from all over Wales aged 16-24 were involved in these conversations, including **South, West, North and Mid Wales**. The conversations were held with young people who were EET (in education, employment, or training), NEET (not in education, employment, or training), young carers, young people with disabilities (including those with mental health conditions), young offenders, young people with childcare needs, digitally excluded young people, young people in care, care leavers, young people who were homeless or at risk of being homeless, those from ethnic minority backgrounds, refugees/asylum seekers, those identifying as LGBTQ+, and a mixture of Welsh speakers and non-Welsh speakers.

The research consisted of **three separate components**; this report combines the insights from all three components:

- a)** Qualitative focus groups (n=40 participants across seven groups), conducted by Beaufort Research in June 2022
- b)** Quantitative omnibus online survey (n=129), conducted by Beaufort Research in June 2022
- c)** Qualitative discussions (approx. n=100 participants), conducted by relevant training providers, youth workers and support organisation leaders across Wales in October and November 2022

It is important to note that whilst this study has aimed to include the perspectives of a diverse range of young people, the qualitative components mean the views outlined are not strictly proportionally representative of the young Welsh population. Therefore, the findings in this report, particularly the qualitative discussions, are illustrative rather than representative.

Quantitative data has been highlighted in the body of the report where relevant. The full data tables are available upon request.

## 1. Qualitative focus groups conducted by Beaufort Research

This component included a mix of online focus groups, an online triad, and paired discussions, together with a face-to-face focus group and a phone interview (see figure 1). In a few cases, **participants' support workers attended the discussions** as well. This helped to put participants at ease, as well as providing occasional contextual information, where relevant.

Participants in Education, Employment or Training (EET) were recruited using a network of qualitative recruiters who followed a recruitment script and specification agreed by Welsh Government. The remaining participants were recruited using a combination of liaising with organisations that support young people and Beaufort's recruiter network.

**Figure 1: Qualitative Focus Groups Detailed Sample.**

	Circumstances	Age	Method
<b>1</b>	In education, employment or training (EET)	<b>16-18</b>	Online focus group (7 participants, convened in Welsh)
<b>2</b>	Not in education, employment or training (NEET) / have recent experience of being NEET	<b>16-18</b>	Online triad focus group, online individual interview (4 participants)
<b>3</b>	EET	<b>19-24</b>	Online focus group (8 participants)
<b>4</b>	NEET / have recent experience of being NEET	<b>19-24</b>	Online focus group (5 participants)
<b>5</b>	Young carers	<b>16-18</b>	Face-to-face focus group (7 participants)
<b>6</b>	Young people who are homeless / have experience of being homeless / at risk	<b>16-24</b>	Online triad focus group, phone interview (4 participants)
<b>7</b>	Disabled young people	<b>16-24</b>	Online triad discussion, online paired interview (5 participants)

## 2. Omnibus survey conducted by Beaufort Research

The Omnibus sample was designed to be **representative of the adult population** resident in Wales aged 16 and over. Fieldwork for the June 2022 survey took place between 6 – 26 June 2022. A total of 1,000 interviews were completed and analysed. Questions for the YPG's National Conversation survey were answered by 129 participants aged 16 – 24 years.

Interviews were undertaken online using the Cint online panel exchange platform. The Cint platform and its products comply with ESOMAR, MRS, ARF, MRIA, AMA, AMSRO and Insights Association standards. Cint also complies with ISO 20252. Multiple data quality checks are built into the Cint system including GEO IP check and CAPTCHA at registration, unique respondent identification and fraudulent behaviour checks. On top of this Beaufort builds in its own quality control questions and measures within the survey and excludes participants who fail these checks.

The survey was subject to interlocking demographic quota controls of age within gender. A further separate quota control was set on social grade and questionnaires were completed by residents of every local authority in Wales. Online surveys were configured for PC/tablet and smartphone completion and English and Welsh versions of each were offered to every respondent.

Data has been weighted by age group, gender, Local Authority grouping and social grade to match 2011 Census figures and ensure it is fully representative of the adult population (16+) in Wales.

Care should be taken in interpretation of data where the base sizes are

particularly small. The following is a guide showing confidence intervals attached to various sample sizes (showing confidence intervals where the results would be at 50% and at 10 or 90%).

**Figure 2: Un-weighted Sample Size**

**95% Confidence Intervals (excluding design factors) for different results with different sample sizes:**

	1000	100
<b>50%</b>	+/-3.1%	+/-9.8%
<b>10 / 90%</b>	+/-1.9 %	+/-5.9 %

For example, if 90% of a sample of 1,000 answers "Yes" to a question, we can be 95% sure that between 88.1% and 91.9% of the population holds the same opinion (i.e. +/-1.9%). However, if 90% of a sample of 100 answers "Yes" to a question, we can be 95% sure that between 84.1% and 95.9% of the population holds this opinion (i.e. +/-5.9%), etc.

## 3. Qualitative discussions

Golley Slater and Welsh Government developed a simple, open-ended qualitative questionnaire. Welsh Government recruited several voluntary organisations, youth groups and training providers to run focus groups and return the findings via the questionnaire template. The findings were returned to Golley Slater for analysis and inclusion in this report.

The nature of this approach meant that there were no sample specs or quotas set. Responses were received from three different Local Authorities who deliver the Communities for Work

programme; another who ran a focus group through their youth service; a private training provider; and a voluntary youth service with young people of different ages, working status, gender, and support experience. There were also some participants recruited by a charity working with vulnerable young people.

**Verbatims have purposefully been left anonymised** to avoid any participant or support organisation being identified. However, it was evident from the feedback from these discussions that having someone they were familiar with, and trusted, take them through the questions led to some honest and in-depth responses about personal issues.

## Discussion flow

The questions and conversations in each research component followed similar themes including: **the experiences of young people in education, employment, and training**, along with positive facilitators and support, barriers faced, aspirations, the support they would like to help them with education, training and work, and views on reaching them with communications about support.

The discussion guide used in the Beaufort interviews was designed in partnership with Welsh Government and allowed for **free-flowing conversations**.

The questions in the feedback form sent to organisations contained a series of probes to help those running the discussions to prompt young people to feel comfortable giving their views.

The Omnibus survey consisted of closed and open-ended questions addressing the same topics.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Their Aspirations

Aspirations varied amongst 16–24-year-olds, with some focusing on elements of their future pathway, and others focusing on the ultimate careers they wanted. Levels of confidence in achieving these goals varied. For many participants, a more stable and routine day-to-day life needed to be in place before they could begin to focus on their education, employment, or training pathway.

## Barriers to Accessing Education, Employment & Training

There were multiple barriers in place for young people when it came to accessing education, employment, and training opportunities. **Only 5% of 16-24-year-olds who applied for a job or tried to start a new course/start training claimed to have faced no barriers at all.** Many of these barriers felt largely outside their control, for example, personal circumstances and health issues, lack of knowledge about pathways and/or lack of pathway support and the impact of the pandemic on their education and wellbeing.

## Awareness of Support Available

Reported awareness of support available for 16–24-year-olds with regards to education, employment and training was low, and many participants tended to state that they were **not very aware of support targeting young people.**

## Positive Support Experiences

Positively, those who had received advice or support from an organisation or other people found it helped 'a little' (50%) or 'a lot' (44%) with doing the course/training or getting the job they wanted. The young people who had accessed support organisations were often positive about their experiences, particularly where they have developed a relationship with an individual employee/support worker whom they trusted and had opened up to. There were also indications that **having a successful support experience helped to overcome some of the barriers to access,** for example by increasing confidence, reducing anxiety, and assisting with knowledge of pathways/what steps to take next.

## Their Support Needs

There were a number of areas where 16–24-year-olds claimed it would be useful to receive help or support. **'Help to build confidence'** was the number one area where they feel they need help or support. Participants claimed that they would benefit from having more **tailored support at school/earlier in the journey,** specific to the individual and their needs/situation. There were some requests for more tangible connections to be made between what was taught in school and what they might do for work in the future, to motivate and inspire them.

## Engaging with Young People more Effectively

Young people want support for their education/training/employment to be **more proactive** and easier for them to access. Feedback from young people indicates that by improving engagement with them, their awareness of, and access to, support organisations is likely to increase. The evidence suggests that engagement can be improved through using channels that young people use; using engaging formats; optimising content and messaging; optimising design; and considering the role of sponsor identity. Conversations with young people suggest that the overall context of accessing support, and **reducing the stigma** around this, also needs to be addressed.



**1.0**  
**THEIR ASPIRATIONS**



### 1.1 Short-term Aspirations

Participants in the omnibus survey were asked what education, training or job goals, if any, they had for the next 12 months (unprompted) and responses were as follows:

- 19% said none/nothing/they didn't have any;
- 13% mentioned specific job aspirations;
- 12% said they didn't know/couldn't remember;
- 12% wanted to finish their degree/graduate from university;
- 10% wanted to complete their training.

The feedback from qualitative discussions with young people conducted by training providers, youth workers and support organisation leaders echoed this range of aspirations. **Some young people were unsure about where they were headed;** others had a general desire to either 'work' or 'study' but were unsure of the detail.

**"No careers goals in next 12 months..... Nothing, any type of work.....Don't know. I would like to do better in my job and move into my own house..... My short term goals are to ensure I secure and maintain employment."** (YPs aged 16-24)

Some had got to a point where they had something that was 'good enough for now' and did not really aspire for more at the moment.

**"I've just got a job in Tesco and that suits me fine for now."** (YP aged 16-24)

Others were focussed on a particular job aspiration, which might involve a number of different steps. **ail.**

**"In 1 year's time I would like to be doing an apprenticeship in IT which would allow me to learn more, get work experience, get a degree at the end of the year and get paid."** (YP aged 16-24)

**"In the short term I aim to finish my L4 apprenticeship by Mar 2023, after which I hope to do some in-house courses and continue training."** (YP aged 16-24)

There were some participants who articulated a more specific goal, which was often a **stepping stone to achieving their aspirations** longer term. This might include: being able to attend their appointments; meeting with an employment mentor; creating a CV; finding somewhere to live; and, for one participant at least, just leaving their house (their anxiety stopped them from doing so).

There were also some simple, and relatively fundamental, **day to day behavioural changes** young people would like to make to improve their general wellbeing, with an acknowledgement that this would make them more likely to achieve their goals:

- Spending less time on screens (mobile phone);
- Being more productive around the house;
- Exercising more and eating healthier;
- Improving sleeping/sleep pattern;
- Increasing confidence.

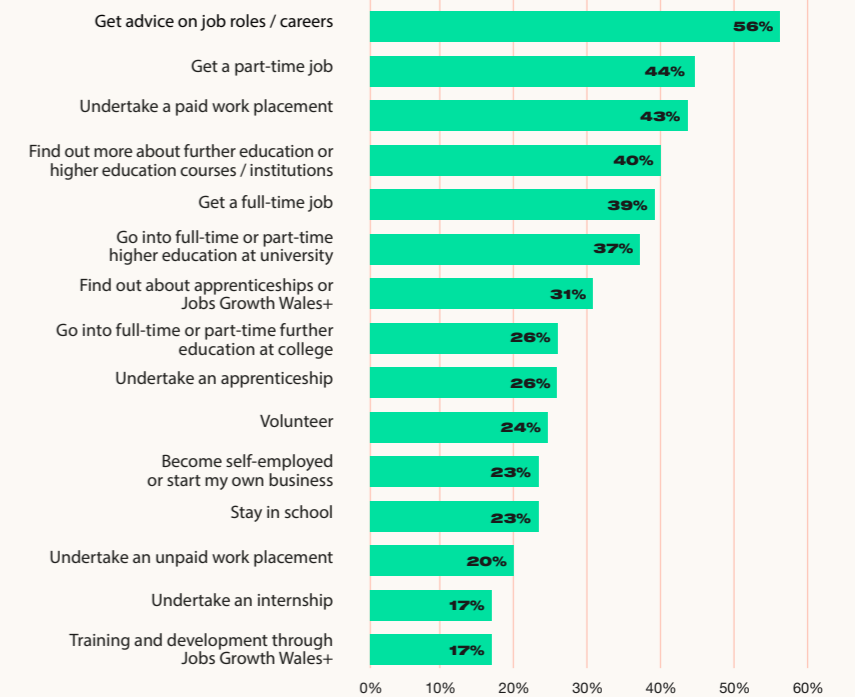
However, upon further questioning young people, it was uncovered that **few had a real plan of action** to actually make these changes, or achieve these goals. These findings suggest there may be a gap between intention and action.

Amongst refugees/asylum seekers, there was a focus on gaining some certainty about their status, and becoming fluent in English, which was seen as key for any future education or employment goals - **"All we need is English"**.

As well as the open-ended question about their short-term aspirations, participants in the omnibus survey were also given a list of education, training and job goals and asked which of these they personally intended to do in the next 12 months. Their responses are shown in Figure 3 below:

**Figure 3: Omnibus Survey Question**

**Here are some education, training or job goals that people might have. Please tell us whether you personally intend to do each in the next 12 months?**





For each intention/aspiration, there were differences by region, gender, age, sexual orientation and whether they were in work or education. These have been highlighted below, but they should be treated with caution given segmentation has reduced the sample sizes further.

### Get advice on job roles/careers

Of the 56% who intended to get advice on job roles and careers (see Figure 3), there were more 16-18-year-olds (67%) than those aged 19-24 (53%). However, this difference could be due to the latter group being more likely to have already chosen a career direction given their older age, thus not requiring advice any longer. **Young people in South Wales were more likely to seek advice** than those in North/Mid/West Wales (59% vs 49%).

### Get a part-time job

72% of 16-18-year-olds intended to get a part-time job, compared to 37% aged 19-24. However, this significant difference could be due to the latter group being more likely to already be in some form of employment. Numbers were higher in North/Mid/West Wales (51%) compared to South Wales (41%), amongst males (50% vs 36% females) and amongst LGBTQ+ (58% vs 42% heterosexual/straight).

### Undertake a paid work placement

Of the 43% who planned to undertake a paid work placement in the next 12 months (see Figure 3), **intentions were higher amongst 16-18-year-olds** (63%) than 19-24-year-olds (38%). More males intended to take a paid work placement than females (48% vs 33%).

### Find out more about further/higher education

Of the 40% who intended to find out more about further education or higher education courses / institutions (see Figure 3), numbers were highest amongst 16-18-year-olds (46%). All other groups were relatively consistent, between 38% and 41%.

### Get a full-time job

53% of those identifying as LGBTQ+ intended to get a full time job, vs 37% of those identifying as heterosexual/straight. Females were more likely to intend to get a full-time job than males (45% vs 38%).

### Go into full time or part time education at University

Numbers were relatively consistent although there were more of those aged 16-18 than 19-24 (45% vs 35%). Also 40% of males vs 32% females, and 40% identifying as LGBTQ+ vs 36% identifying as heterosexual/straight.

### Find out more about apprenticeships or Jobs Growth Wales+

Of the 31% intending to find out more about apprenticeships or Jobs Growth Wales+ (see Figure 3), **2 in 5 males (40%) aged 16-24 intended to find out more about apprenticeships or Jobs Growth Wales+, compared to only 16% females.** Other than gender, the other biggest difference was by region - 36% in South Wales vs only 19% in North/Mid/West Wales.

### Get into full time or part time further education in college

Of those intending to go into full time or part time further education in college in the next 12 months (see Figure 3), numbers were higher in North/Mid/West Wales than South Wales (32% vs 24%), 16-18-year olds than 19-24-year-olds (37% vs 24%), those in education/not working than those working (31% vs 24%).

### Undertake an apprenticeship

When it came to their intention to actually undertake an apprenticeship in the next 12 months (see Figure 3), the demographics were relatively similar to those wanting to find out more about apprenticeships, but just slightly lower. However, there was a decrease in those aged 16-18 (down to 19%), consistent with the fact they were likely to still be in school / college in 12 months' time. There was also a marked decrease in LGBTQ+ who dropped from 37% to 21% (compared to heterosexual/straight who remained at 28%).

### Volunteer

Intent to volunteer varied by region (South Wales 28% vs only 14% in North/Mid/West), gender (female 30% vs male 20%), age (25% aged 19-24 vs 20% aged 16-18), sexual orientation (heterosexual/straight 26% vs LGBTQ+ 15%).

### Become self-employed or start their own business

Those intending to be self-employed or start their own business were more likely to identify as heterosexual/straight (27% than LGBTQ+ (just 4%), be male (28%) rather than female (13%), living in South Wales (25%) than North/Mid/West Wales (18%), working (25%) rather than being in education/not working (18%).

### Stay in school

Of those who intended to stay in school over the next 12 months (see Figure 3), this number was much higher in North/Mid/West Wales than South Wales (36% vs 17%). Also, higher amongst females than males (27% vs 18%) and amongst LGBTQ+ than heterosexual/straight (31% vs 22%).

### Undertake an unpaid work placement

22% of 19-24-year-olds intended to take an unpaid work placement compared to 10% aged 16-18, and more in South Wales than North/Mid/West Wales (23% vs 12%).

### Undertake an internship

17% of 16-24-year-olds, intend to undertake an internship in the next 12 months (see Figure 3), this increases amongst males (21% vs 14% females) and in education/not working (28% vs 9% working).

### Training and development through Jobs Growth Wales+

Intentions were higher amongst those identifying as heterosexual/straight (19%) than LGBTQ+ (6%) and those aged 16-18 (23%) than those aged 19-24 (15%).



## 1.2 Long-term Aspirations

From the qualitative discussions, there were indications that **thinking beyond the next 12 months often seemed difficult for young people.**

They didn't necessarily differentiate between shorter- and longer-term aspirations, and some even framed aspirations as 'expectations'.

**"I haven't thought about my life in three years' time." (YP aged 16-24)**

**"I just want to be happy in a job and get some experience before I set myself expectations." (YP aged 16-24)**

Any unprompted aspirations were relatively vague/general, often focussing more on a sense of security than on a clear goal or vision of what they wanted.

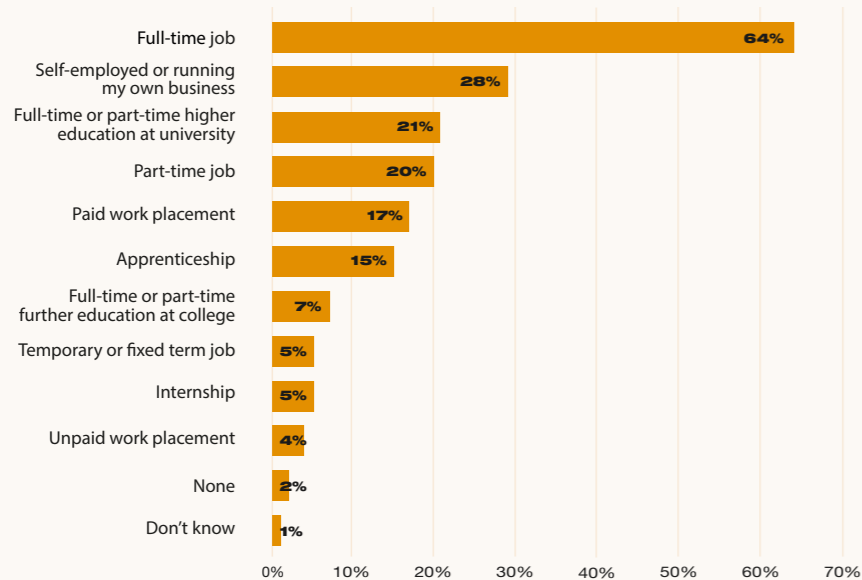
Some of the goals they mentioned included: having a routine, gaining financial security, having good health - both physical and mental, to start driving, to be in a job they enjoyed, to be promoted at work, to live in a (better) house/flat.

**"I need to get into work and be stable in work and life and have a nice routine" (YP aged 16-24)**

When prompted in the omnibus survey with a list of potential education, training, or work aspirations, nearly 2 in 3 (64%) of 16-24-year-olds said they would like to have a full-time job in three years' time (see Figure 4). **Nearly 1 in 3 (28%) wanted to be self-employed or running their own business** (see Figure 4). A full list of responses can be seen in Figure 4 below:

**Figure 4: Omnibus Survey Question**

**Thinking about education or work, which if any of these would you like to be doing in three years' time?**



**There were some demographic differences with regards to these longer-term aspirations:**

- Wanting to be **self-employed or running their own business** was higher amongst those in North/Mid/West Wales (55% vs 17% in South Wales), and amongst those with a long-term illness, health problem or impairment (41% vs 24% of those without).
- Wanting to be in **full time or part time higher education at university** increased slightly amongst 16-18-year-olds (30% vs 19% aged 19-24).
- Wanting to be in a **paid work placement** increased amongst those aged 16-18 (29% vs 14% 19-24), those with a long-term illness, health problem or impairment (22% vs 15% of those without), females (22% vs 12% males), non-Welsh speakers (24% vs 9% Welsh speakers), and those identifying as LGBTQ+ (36% vs 14% heterosexual/straight).
- Wanting to do an **apprenticeship** increased amongst 16-18-year-olds (36% vs 10% aged 19-24).
- Wanting to be in **full time / part time further education in college** increased amongst those identifying as LGBTQ+ (20% vs 5% heterosexual/straight).



### 1.3 Different Types of Aspiration

Young people's aspirations could be grouped into those with a focus on education and training, those with a focus on finding a career, those who wanted to 'find employment' and 'earn money' however they could, and those whose aspirations were connected.

#### 1.3.1 Those with an education and training focus

Examples of aspirations that focused on education and training sometimes included the ultimate goal which they hoped the education and training would help them attain, for example:

- **Finding a suitable pathway** to progress towards a particular job that required training:

**"For the future I'm actually thinking of going to college again and either thinking of doing health and social, or an access course to do nursing."** (NEET participant, 16-18)

**"I'm still looking for a job... I'm quite interested in going back to college and doing a beauty course. But I haven't quite looked into that yet."** (Homeless participant, 16-24)

- Getting good grades in education that reflected their capabilities (currently hampered because they were a young carer):

**"All you want to do is just get through high school, get good grades, and just do the best for yourself and for the person you're caring for. And everything just keeps getting in the way, and everything just creates another roadblock and another gate, and it's just horrible."** (Young carer, 16-18)

- Going to university at some point, or to have successfully completed a current degree.



#### 1.3.2 Those with a career focus

Some of the careers that participants aspired to were in health, care, or uniformed roles, such as social care, nursing, 'something medical', childcare (including supporting children with special needs), the police, the army, and the RAF.

**"People say that university opens doors for you, so that's the only reason I want to go."**

**My ultimate thing is to join the RAF."** (NEET participant, 16-18)

**"When my son grows up, I want to be a carer. I want to care for elderly people because that's my passion. That's what I want to do, and I will do it."** (Disabled participant, 16-24)

Some were also interested in working with animals, for example in a vet practice, a zoo or perhaps in agriculture. Other specific careers of interest mentioned were varied and included being a mechanic, carpet fitter, welder, beauty practitioner, hairdresser, freelance illustrator, landscape gardener.

**"Gobeithio rhyw job i neud hefo weldio 'na i enjoio gobeithio. [Hopefully, some job to do with welding that I will hopefully enjoy.]"** (EET participant, 16-18)

Some also talked about going into a general 'area' of work, for example, catering, housing, acting, computers, working in a hotel.

**"I want to work with computers"** (YP aged 6-24)

Others aspired to become self-

employed and start a business of some sort. One also wanted to become a professional athlete.

**"I'd like to be doing stuff with beauty, things I can like do in my own time. So, I don't know. . . My dream was to get my own little company and do nails, and stuff like that. So I hope something close to that."** (Homeless participant, 16-24)

**"I know I want to be self-employed, but it depends sort of financially what would be like most sensible I guess at the time. But eventually I would like to have my own salon, even if it was like just me."** (EET participant, 19-24)

One disabled participant was keen to **become an advocate for disabled people** and to be able to speak out to government about it.

**"To actually talk for people who don't actually have a voice like, . . . the Welsh Government and helping, actually showing people off that people with a disability got their own minds and we know what we want and what we don't want and stop treating us as like... Some people have treated us like we're imbeciles."** (Disabled participant, 16-24)

### 1.3.3 Those with an employment focus

Some were less concerned about specific careers and were focused more on **earning money**. This would provide some **stability** and potentially mean not having to rely on benefits. A few acknowledged that they did not know specifically what they wanted to do, other than 'work'.

Although there were young people who mentioned they would like to get **work experience**, there were few, if any, specific plans or ideas about how to move forward with this.

**"There's nothing specific I even look for, it's just anything that pays, really. I just want to be working, and I feel like my options will open up from there."** (NEET participant, 19-24)

**"I would like to be in a steady living, just to have a place of my own."** (Young carer, 16-18)

**"My honest answer? I have no idea at the moment, I really don't... My ideal plan would be to get into work, but obviously I have no idea what it is at the moment."** (Disabled participant, 16-24)

**"I have an interest in photography and history and would like to be employed but not sure doing what"** (YP aged 16-24)

**"I just want to get experience and have a job and succeed in it."** (YP aged 16-24)

Apprenticeships were seen as a useful steppingstone for some to get to their chosen career. There was a general sense that apprenticeships gave young people practical skills and opened doors.

**"The beauty of apprenticeships is they provide you with higher skills, whereas college courses don't fully provide skills to learners."** (YP aged 16-24)

However, one or two who were in the process of doing an apprenticeship commented on the problems of trying to combine an apprenticeship with work.

**"It is a challenge juggling a busy job whilst also completing an apprenticeship, I often find it difficult to find the time to complete my coursework. Another challenge with apprenticeships is the increase in distant learning and only having monthly meetings, it is too long between visits to keep engaged and on track with my learning."** (YP aged 16-24)

### 1.3.4 Those with connected aspirations

There were cases where young people described other aspirations that would link to improving their education, employment, and training prospects. Some referred to wanting to **improve their circumstances and personal development**, for example to be able to live independently and to be able to manage money independently. Having an **increased level of confidence** in themselves was a recurring theme and seen as a significant goal for many.

**"I think getting a job and getting more confidence and speaking in front of people [is my aspiration]."** (Homeless participant, 16-24)

**"I'm looking for a secure job and hope to be driving and have a settled home life"** (YP aged 16-24)

### 1.4 Levels of Confidence in Achieving Their Aspirations

A lack of confidence, and self-confidence/self-esteem, was something that many young people mentioned during the discussions and an area where help would be appreciated. When it came to achieving their aspirations, levels of confidence varied across the sample:

- 1 in 2 (49%) of 16-24-year-olds agreed that they **didn't feel well-prepared to do the course or get the job they want**. This increased to 60% amongst males and dropped to 35% amongst females.
- 56% of 16-24-year-olds claimed to **feel confident they could do the course or get the job they wanted**. This increased amongst 16-18-year-olds (63%) and those identifying as heterosexual/straight (61%) but dropped amongst those identifying as LGBTQ+( 33%).
- Just over 1 in 3 (36%) of 16-24-year-olds felt **less confident they could do the course/get the job they wanted because of the Covid-19 pandemic** (and 34% neither agreed nor disagreed which suggested they were uncertain). This decreased confidence was greater amongst those living in North/Mid/West Wales (42%, vs a slightly lower 33% in South Wales), and those aged 16-18 (51%, vs a lower 33% for those aged 19-24).
- 52% of 16-24-year-olds felt they **knew where to get advice or support** to help them do the course or to get the job they wanted. This increased in North/Mid/West Wales (68%, vs 45% in South Wales), 16-18-year-olds (73%, vs 47% aged 19-24) and for those working (57%, vs 43% in education/not working).

Some claimed to feel relatively confident because of the (albeit often ad hoc) **support they were already receiving** and the **progress they were making** with their studies. In one case, a participant who had dropped out of college was confident having spoken with their previous college's advisor about alternatives to A levels in moving forward with nursing. Another felt quite confident because of their own **resilience and determination**, despite adverse circumstances, as well as believing a family member with experience could help.


**"My partner's mother, she's really good at helping people, like her job, because she got professional in that kind of work and stuff. So, I'd probably go to her and ask her, she knows more about [social care]."** (Disabled participant, 16-24)

A small number were starting to feel more confident because the organisations supporting them had helped them to begin to do entry level qualifications. Having a family member who provided motivation to progress and/or was supportive often increased their confidence levels.

However, the point was made by some of the support workers that they saw many **young people who did not have a positive network/relatives to influence them**, and who were therefore dependent on professionals to provide this.

There was a sense that many did not feel able to take a longer-term perspective, or work towards goals, as there were so many barriers in place to achieving them that they did not feel in control over what might happen next and what options might be open to them as a result.





**2.0**  
**BARRIERS TO  
ACCESSING EDUCATION,  
EMPLOYMENT AND  
TRAINING**

The words below were given by some participants to **sum up their experiences** of accessing the education, employment and training they wanted. Only a small number of positive phrases were used, and those were amongst those already in education, employment, or training.

**FRUSTRATING**  
**UNFAIR NIGHTMARE**  
**CRAZY CHALLENGE**  
**QUITE EASY**  
**AGONISING UNFAIR**  
**HOOPS CONFUSING**  
**NOT EASY TEDIOUS**  
**STRESSFUL ROUGH**  
**INFURIATING**  
**HORRIBLE HARD**  
**SUPPORTIVE**

The quote below sums up a prominent theme on the challenge of understanding the education, employment, and training landscape:

**"It's like Lego pieces, but they forgot the instructions, and you're just left with all these things, and there's no, any sort of clue of how to piece it together. And in the end, you give up because you've not got a clue."** (NEET participant, 16-18)

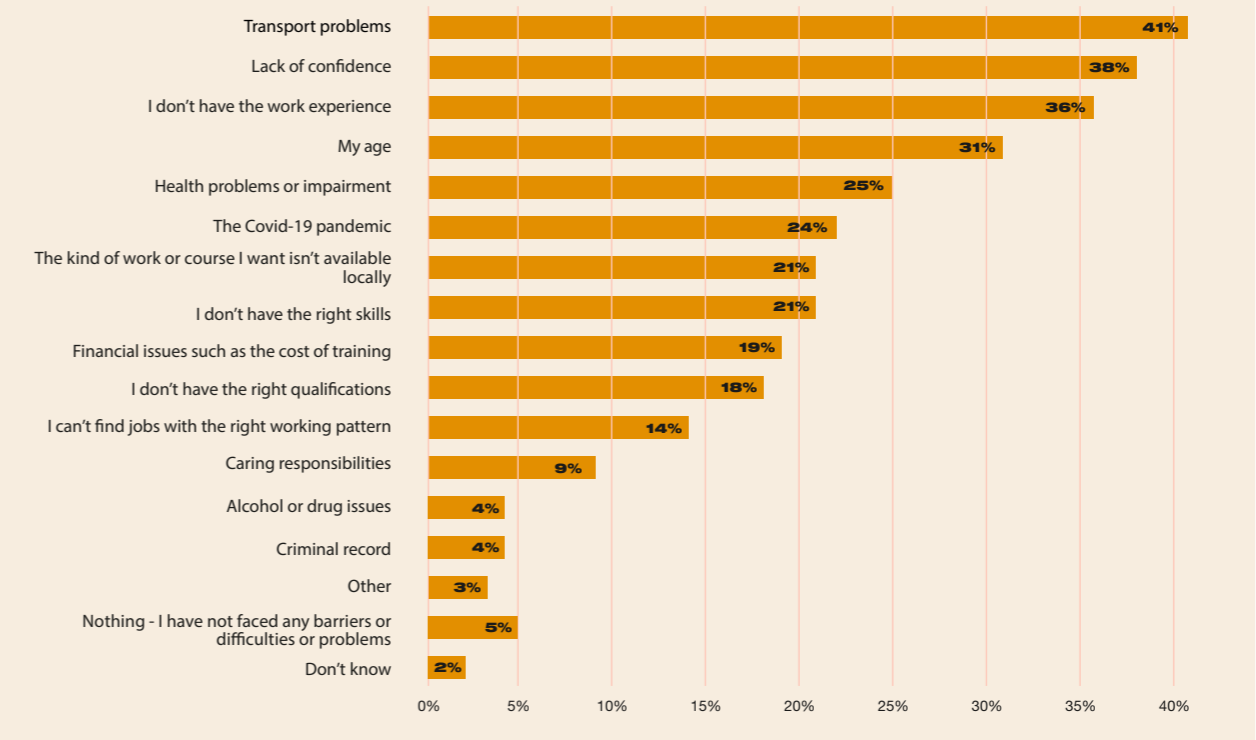
Participants in the omnibus survey were asked what, if anything, made it difficult for them to start a new course/training or to get a job. Their unprompted responses included:

- Covid-19/Covid-19 restrictions/concern about another pandemic (14%)
- Not enough jobs/opportunities (12%)
- Anxiety/mental health issues (12%)
- Lack of experience (11%)

When prompted, **only 5% of 16-24-year olds who applied for a job or tried to start a new course/start training claimed to face no barriers at all** (see Figure 5). The biggest barriers (experienced by around 1 in 3 young people) outlined in Figure 5 were transport problems (41%), lack of confidence (38%), not having the work experience (36%), and their age (31%). Responses to the full list of barriers can be seen in Figure 5 below:

**Figure 5: Omnibus Survey Question**

**Which, if any, of the following are barriers or make it difficult for you to start a new course/training or to get a job?**



Many of these barriers were echoed in the qualitative research and are explored in more detail below.

## 2.1 Personal Circumstances and Health Issues

The barriers faced in finding education, employment and training were often exacerbated by **difficult personal circumstances and health issues**.

### 2.1.1 Home life

There were references to a toxic home life with parents, and relationships breaking down, which had resulted in young people having to leave home.

**“Since leaving school I have suffered severely with my mental health, I have moved away from the family home due to issues and I am not allowed to return or be back in [location]. I am coping well being on my own and living in supported living.”** (YP aged 16-24)

One participant had tried to go to college but did not enjoy it, so turned to drugs and alcohol. Consequently, it had proved very difficult for this participant to get a job because of the lack of qualifications.

**“I went through a really bad patch with my ex. When we turned on the drugs, I literally just switched my life completely off and I was like, you know, I didn’t want to go to college... The whole time I’m just going to take drugs and that.”** (Homeless participant, 16-24)

For one respondent, having a criminal record was a barrier (either real or perceived) to finding work.

**“I had a barrier where people saw my record and assumed that I was a troublemaker.”** (YP aged 16-24)

There was an example of an improving situation where the previously homeless teenage participant had met a new partner who had children. This gave the participant stability, but it did mean that new childcare duties would pose college attendance difficulties. Another barrier for a young single mum was being made to feel **stigmatised and labelled ‘lazy’ by society**. Furthermore, there did not appear to be an obvious pathway for a parent with a baby who wanted to work, and it was expected that employers would be unlikely to employ someone with a young baby.

**“My main problem currently is childcare. Courses have been offered but, have been unable to attend due to childcare. More accessible childcare options would help.”** (YP aged 16-24)

A recurring theme was that young carers found themselves having to put caring responsibilities for parents above their own education and employment opportunities. Tensions could emerge at school, for example with teachers coming to the home to try to take the participant to school, as well as not being offered the option for studying at home (despite the remote learning approach used during the pandemic).

**“I’m in Year 11. When COVID hit, I never went back [to school] because basically my mum’s health deteriorated, so I was a full-time carer and watched her. Basically, looking after her came above school. I’ve got a college course now in September for mechanics.”** (Young carer, 16-18)

**“They come last week for me, and I was like, ‘Well, I ain’t going to go in.’ So, they . . . ‘No point you coming cause I ain’t going to move.’ And then mum tries to tell them that, ‘She doesn’t want to go,’ but they were like, ‘Oh, yeah, but she’s got to go in, it’s her education.’ I’m like, ‘I can do it at home’.”** (Young carer, 16-18)

Adding to these difficulties, some young carers felt that their **school teachers were largely unaware of their responsibilities and challenges** outside of school, and/or unsympathetic towards them as young carers.

**“I would have appreciated more understanding about me being a young carer, especially if I was ever tired.”** (YP aged 16-24)

Furthermore, some were having to manage their own illnesses and disabilities which compounded the issues faced. According to one young carer, the college wanted to remove them from the course because of attendance issues. This was perceived to be a lack of understanding of young carers on the college’s part.

**“I was looking after my mum full-time because she got worse, and she ended up passing away. So, then it went mostly to my dad, so I was able to do sixth form and I ended up failing that, helping my dad with the emotional side of everything. And ended up trying to go college but my mental health has deteriorated a lot, to the point where I was taking time off. Now they’ve tried to kick me off the course multiple times, because of my days off.”** (Young carer, 16-18)



### 2.1.2 Physical and learning disabilities

Barriers arising from an impairment and other health issues were faced by several participants. Recounting school experiences, **it had been difficult for some who had had to cope with a learning disability or behavioural challenge** from a young age, for example ADHD or dyslexia.

**“I have ADHD, so for me, school was quite difficult as it was anyway and work and stuff like that. But yeah, there’s not really a lot about me. I’m quite simple... Focusing, for me, is extremely difficult. In terms of education, I struggled quite a bit in school.”** (NEET participant, 16-18)

Some had found, or believed that, their education **subject options were severely limited** because of their impairment or learning difficulty.

**“I chose drama, graphic design, and cooking [after GCSEs]. I was only allowed to keep one course, because they wanted to throw me into a different course that took up two courses. And it was kind of like, ‘No, your disabilities won’t allow that to happen.’ It’s like, I kind of felt discriminated back then... You only had the option to do one.”** (NEET participant, 19-24)

**“We got our options to choose for year 10. No preparation to that, just like, ‘Yeah, okay, need to choose now. Choose now.’ What did I do? I chose my three, and then they gave me, I think, a term, and then I wasn’t good enough, or I wasn’t coping enough, they thought, so they took my choice away from me**

**[childcare] and took me off that to put me on another one, which was Life Skills or something, I got put on, and that was basically sit in a classroom with this booklet in front of you, and you just write whatever was on the whiteboard.”** (NEET participant, 19-24)

There were also a number of references to a lack of support in deciding which options would be appropriate, and fulfilling, for them. One disabled participant described how she had only been given three options at college because of her lack of GCSEs.

**“The only three choices I had in life is these three things [hairdressing, cooking, carpentry] ... Apparently, that’s all I could do.”** (Disabled participant, 16-24)

Some participants revealed that **it could be difficult in an education setting to explain a hidden impairment**; and it was embarrassing having to keep asking for information to be explained again. One participant commented that they had not wanted to annoy education practitioners by always asking for help or for information to be repeated so that they could grasp it, which **made learning more challenging**.

**“When I was in school, because of my learning difficulties, when you get embarrassed, you just don’t want to do the work or what not.”** (Disabled participant, 16-24)

One young person said they had felt **overwhelmed by the volume of information** communicated by a careers advisor but did not want to be a ‘burden’ by continually asking for help.

**“I couldn’t get along with [the careers advisor]. It was more so for me, again, she chucked me loads of information, and I couldn’t sift through it. Not because I didn’t want to, but I literally couldn’t because it was so much for me to process... You can only ask ‘Can you say that again? Can you tell me that again?’ before you feel like a bit of a burden.”** (NEET participant, 16-18)

In work, one disabled participant had been unable to fully absorb the content of an intensive training period as a support worker for children and had not progressed with the role. A further example given was finding it difficult to understand what was going on in a volunteering role because of reading and writing issues.

**“I left college to go to a full-time job. I was with them for quite a while, but then they ended my contract. I wasn’t quite getting it as fast as the others.”** (Homeless participant, 16-24)

**“It was so difficult because I just didn’t understand what was going on, and it wasn’t, . . . Like I know I’d be suitable for helping, but for the writing and all the understanding, it was so difficult for me.”** (Disabled participant, 16-24)

### 2.1.3 Mental health and lack of confidence

Mental health was a recurring, and significant theme in the qualitative discussions. It was evident from the discussions that poor mental health, including depression and anxiety/social anxiety, had **a knock-on effect** on other areas. It affected their motivation, self-esteem, and confidence, as well as their ability to manage money and to reach out for help. It seemed to be a major barrier to many taking the next step on their education or employment pathway.

**“We sometimes struggle with day-to-day activities so getting the motivation to get out there and find a job and then turn up to work is difficult.”** (YP aged 16-24)

**“My confidence/ mental health has stopped me asking for help.”** (YP aged 16-24)

Some had a perception that employers were put off by candidates with mental health conditions, and this made it more difficult to find work. They believed they needed to find an employer who was sympathetic to their mental health problems and, because they did not know how to identify these employers, or even be confident they exist, this became an ongoing barrier to action.

**School was not seen as a supportive environment** for those with mental health struggles. Many felt that school didn’t listen to them or try to understand them as individuals.

**“I was treated the same as everyone and not for what I was going through with my mental health”** (YP aged 16-24)

From a learning perspective, some

participants acknowledged that they **lacked confidence to speak up** when they did not understand something. Some participants commented that they had found college too academic, dropping out as a result.

One participant had felt pressured to take A levels instead of a BTEC and the pressure had eventually affected their mental health. The anxiety associated with having to drop out of college was a significant barrier for the participant when it came to looking for work instead.

**“I found I wasn’t able to continue it. I had to stop and think about what I wanted to do... But I realised I had no clue what I wanted to do. There was pressure about uni or apprenticeships. I had absolutely no clue. I decided, I think it’s better for me to leave.”** (EET participant, 19-24)

Disability and mental health conditions meant that a few participants struggled with sitting exams, even allowing for adjustments. This meant poor results and limited work opportunities.

**“Exams are not for everyone. So, like, me being dyslexic, exams are my worst nightmare. Like, give me a hands-on job, I can do it, but they just . . . You’ve got to write a CV, and the first thing you’ve got to put on your CV is your GCSE results.”** (NEET participant, 19-24)

General **self-doubt was an issue for many**, and aspirations like getting a medical role or going to university seemed too unattainable to the extent that ‘there’s no point trying’.

**“I have no faith in myself at all. (Young carer, 16-18)**

**“My barrier was my confidence in own ability to complete further training (YP aged 16-24)**

Not hearing back from employers in response to job applications also affected their confidence.

**“I have applied for so many jobs the last few months not hearing back from some is such a knock in my confidence. I know I’m hard working, my CV is up-to-date and I have experience. (YP aged 16-24)**

In contrast, it was evident that being successful in a job, work placement or course often had a positive impact on their mental health and gave them both **encouragement and motivation to continue**.

**“Now I am in this placement now and enjoying it and gaining experiences I am feeling a lot better and people can see what I am like and how good I can be.”** (YP aged 16-24)

## 2.2 Lack of Qualifications and Employment Experience/Skills

Some participants acknowledged that their lack of qualifications and workplace experience made it **difficult to progress** on their education, employment, and training pathway.

“When I was unemployed it was difficult to find jobs because I had no qualifications and I don't drive and the good jobs weren't in [location].” (YP aged 16-24)

“The only barrier I have experienced when attempting to achieve my goal was **lack of experience**. I found it very difficult to find jobs within an events company due to the lack of events organisation I have on my CV.” (YP aged 16-24)

“I knew what I wanted to do but didn't have the grades and there was no help to find a way to get what I wanted.” (YP aged 16-24)

A few mentioned they felt that **no-one was willing to give them a chance** as a result and there was no opportunity to show an employer what they could actually do.

“I feel like getting people to give you a chance. Nobody wants to take a chance on somebody who doesn't definitely have all the experience.” (NEET participant, 19-24)

“Employers kept declining me due to lack of experience, I find it difficult then as I cannot gain the experience if someone isn't willing to take the risk of employing me.” (YP aged 16-24)

Struggles with exam assessments appeared to have closed doors, and a lack of interview experience was seen as a barrier, especially when compounded by mental health factors.

“I was unable to do a plastering course due to lack of GCSE's, there's no support for those with poor grades. Level 3 isn't achievable for myself. There's little support surrounding apprenticeship, it seems to be a grey area.” (YP aged 16-24)

“Interviews worry me. I don't like the thought of speaking to someone I don't know.” (YP aged 16-24)

Some participants mentioned barriers with qualifications and college/school requirements. One participant who had only been interested in one subject for A level, was required by their college to take three. They subsequently found the amount of work overwhelming and dropped out of college completely.

“The two that I didn't want to pick actually ruined the chance of me succeeding in the one I did want.” (NEET participant, 16-18)

Another had found that they needed to have a level 2 qualification or A level to do anything of interest but struggled in their learning environment because of a mental health condition.

Further qualification-related challenges included:

- Being unable to find a suitable course local to home;
- A course being unavailable or cancelled because of lack of take-up;
- A timetable clash meaning a participant could not take the A level they wanted;

- Not being able to find a course that the participant thought would be suitable for their learning needs;
- Poor literacy/language skills hindering their ability to fill in applications effectively and affecting their confidence.

“Better if it was more focused around what's available locally for me/ local opportunities.” (YP aged 16-24)

## 2.4 Negative Workplace and Learning Experiences

Barriers sometimes emerged in the workplace, whether on placement or being employed. A few participants said they had **struggled to keep up with job requirements** (e.g., in a call centre) and had been made redundant as a result, or not been successful with the probation period.

Some negative workplace experience had led to mental health issues.

“I had a job but left 6 months ago because the manager was horrible to me and this affected my mental health. Am not ready to work yet, but definitely want to in the future.” (YP aged 16-24)

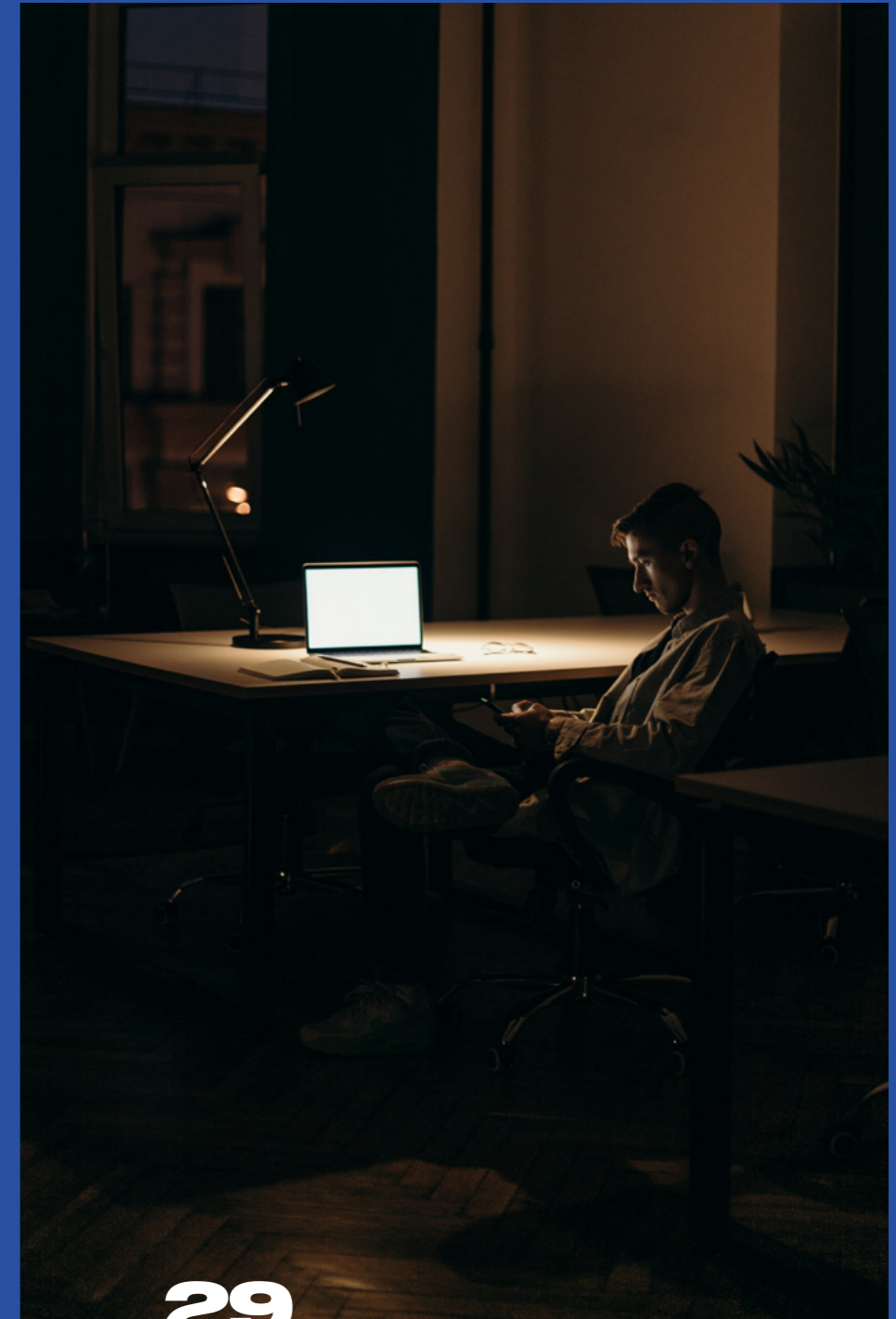
There were also some who had had a negative experience at school which **put them off further education**.

“No, the school really failed me - the school environment didn't suit me.....I had no support in school, school was awful for me... I was bullied at school so couldn't wait to leave education.” (YP aged 16-24)

## 2.5 Uncertainty about Next Steps

Participants often commented that a key barrier was not knowing what their education, training and employment pathway could look like, particularly longer term, and that **they did not receive a great deal of support** in this respect. A lack of awareness and understanding of what pathway to take meant that some were not confident in achieving their goals.

“I want to be on the path, because I can't do it unless I go to college and go to uni. So, in three years' time, I want to be on that path. But I have no idea how to get there. Not a clue. So I'm currently sat in my living room doing nothing. That's the position I'm in, and that's why we need the support.” (NEET participant, 16-18)





### 2.5.1 A lack of focus on next steps at school

There was a general acknowledgement that **school had failed to prepare them for what lay ahead**, although some claimed they had not necessarily been in the right state of mind at school to engage effectively. Some claimed that they had been **led to have unrealistic expectations** (mainly from school) around being able to find work and had been left feeling disappointed.

“Between 16 and 18, it's like an idle position where you're too old to do this, but you're not old enough to do that. And it's just stressful.” (Young carer, 16-18)

Careers advice was sporadic, at best, and not prioritised. If it was missed due to absence, it was not necessarily repeated so some missed it entirely. Some mentioned inadequate follow-ups after a careers' advice discussion, so impetus was lost, and information forgotten.

“I think I missed the day when they talked about careers.” (YP aged 16-24)

“Year 10 and 11 I feel like there was no support or guidance into preparing me for college or employment. There was a careers event but only one I think and I wasn't able to make it, therefore I missed out.” (YP aged 16-24)

“Sometimes we had a teacher who would help with choices and GCSEs but there wasn't very much time.” (YP aged 16-24)

Others felt that careers advice was directed at those who were more academic/high achievers, for example with a visit to the school from Seren<sup>1</sup>.

“We had, for the pupils who had A, A star in every subject, we had some people called Seren, so people would come into school and talk to the pupils about what they wanted to do when they left university. So all of them would be doctors or anything like that, but then we had people like me who didn't actually get A and A star in every subject and had no idea what we wanted to do after school - we didn't get much support.” (EET participant, 19-24)

Participants claimed to have **lacked an understanding** of what options were available, for example not fully appreciating what an A level or apprenticeship was, and not understanding where they were on the 'pathway'. There was also some feeling that not enough emphasis was placed on the ability to change jobs, whether that involved retraining or utilising transferable skills.

“In high school I didn't really know much about what to do in the future. I didn't understand like A levels or what they are, what exactly happens in the next years. I hadn't heard of [apprenticeships] until I got into college.” (NEET participant, 16-18)

“For me, personally, I'd probably say that it's like knowing that you're progressing without actually realising. Because it's like I'd go to college and then done what I did, and then I kind of felt like I didn't really go anywhere with it.” (EET participant, 19-24)

“I would have liked more guidance on what I could do given expected grades.” (YP aged 16-24)

**Some had felt daunted by the prospect of making decisions** at school which might potentially close doors later on or turn out to be 'wrong'.

“Dwi'n meddwl mae o'n daunting bod y fact bod be bynnag dan ni'n dewis neud ryan, mae o fatha domino effect massive. Fatha deud ryan ti'n mynd lawr rhywbeth a ti ddim yn licio fo, then ti'n gorfod ail gychwyn, ac mae o jyst yn kind of scary. [I think it's daunting the fact that whatever we choose to do now, it's such a massive domino effect. Let's say you go down one path, and you don't like it, then you have to start again, and it's just kind of scary.]” (EET participant, 16-18)

As a result, **some felt they chose the 'wrong' course by following friends**, e.g., to sixth form college, rather than focusing on a preferred vocational route or apprenticeship. Similarly, **others felt pushed into academic options** by their school and not given information about, or support for, other options.

“Staying on at sixth form/ going to university was pushed/ favoured more than other options.” (YP aged 16-24)

### 2.5.2 A lack of support after school/college

Many claimed they **did not know what to do next**, having completed school or college. There seemed to be a **lack of prominent and consistent transitional support** for young people from leaving school through to getting into college or work.

“It's quite hard to find help looking for a job or getting advice and knowing where to go.” (YP aged 16-24)

There was no obvious **step-by-step pathway**, and certainly not one that would suit individuals with a mental health condition. **Dropping out of college or university without a plan B** had caused problems for a couple of participants who had little idea what to do next, whilst others finished A Levels but ended up doing a job that did not require these qualifications.

“I completed A Level maths, and I completed A Level business, and then I kind of didn't know what to do with it. I always knew that I wanted to do something in the business world and stem off from there, but I've never really had the chance to, I kind of joined [a courier company], went full time and now like I've done nothing with the A Levels that I

got.” (EET participant, 19-24)

Staying on for sixth form was sometimes used as a **delaying tactic** because it seemed easier/ less risky to do that than to make an active decision about what next.

“Dwi'n meddwl nes i aros yn chweched jyst fatha ffordd i kind of delayio dewis rhywbeth i neud achos mae o'r peth hawdd i neud, I guess...”

Fi yr un peth. Doeddwn i ddim rili yn si r beth i neud, felly nes i jyst aros ymlaen.

[I think I just stayed in sixth form as a way of kind of delaying choosing something to do because it's the easy thing to do, I guess...

I'm the same. I wasn't sure what to do, so I just stayed on.]” (EET participants, 16-18)

Some said they wanted to **explore specific options** but did not have the confidence to do so alone. One participant **worried they might not be able to cope in further or higher education** and would feel **embarrassed** to ask for help during the course, fearing it would annoy the tutors.

There were indications that some young people felt **too proud to ask for help**, and/or believed that support was not relevant to them/



1. See <https://gov.wales/seren-network>

## 2.6 The Impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 had **created and exacerbated barriers** for some young people with regards to getting the education and training they wanted. Some talked about **feeling 'trapped'** at home for long periods which had affected education, work, confidence, mental wellbeing, and opportunities.

**“With lockdown I was at home, I didn't feel confident with going out as my mum was very ill with Covid so I stayed at home as much as I could. I think this has brought on my anxiety as I still feel nervous even in the Kickstart job that I am doing now.”** (YP aged 16-24)

**“I had low confidence over lockdown and for a long time and that is when my anxiety kicked in.”** (YP aged 16-24)

It had not been possible to look for work during certain periods and one participant had been made redundant. Another participant had lost a job as well as having a baby which added to the difficulties faced. **Work placement opportunities had also been very limited.** A further consequence for one young person was doing poorly in their GCSEs which they felt had been affected by the pandemic disruption.

The pandemic, combined with caring responsibilities, had led one young carer to drop out of sixth form. **Learning had been disrupted** as well because of technology issues with online learning.

**“There's the aspect of trying to search for work . . . throughout the time of COVID and the lockdown, it was just mentally destroying.”** (NEET participant, 19-24)

**“I got into sixth form, and I made it to Year 13, and everything got really stressful, so I ended up dropping out.”** (Young carer, 16-18)

Some participants in education, employment or training recalled how it had been harder to learn with the **lack of face-to-face interaction** with teachers. There had also been a noticeable decrease in course support from education centres and in advice on next steps. They consequently felt less engaged with learning and one or two had considered dropping out of their courses.

**“For me, things have been a little bit rocky, like with COVID and stuff, most of my course for two years has been online and everyone's just fell out of love with doing what they like.”** (EET participant, 19-24)

**“Dwi 'di ffeindio fe'n cweit anodd oherwydd gyda COVID, ni 'di colli mas ar fod yn yr ysgol a chael y cyngor. Fel, pan oedd y pandemig wedi dechrau, o'n i fod i neud TGAU, felly ni 'di colli allan y darn hynna o'r ysgol yn siarad os dylen ni fynd i coleg neu ddim. A does gen i ddim brodyr neu chwiorydd sy'n hynach na fi, felly roedd rhieni fi'n newydd i fe hefyd, felly oedd rhaid fi kind of penderfynu ar ben fy hun.**

**[I find it quite difficult because with COVID, we miss out on being at school and getting the advice. Like, when the pandemic started, I was supposed to do GCSE, so I missed that part of school talking about whether we should go to college or not. And I have no brothers or sisters who are older than me, so my parents were new to this too, so I kind of had to decide on my own.]** (EET participant, 16-18)



## 2.7 Negative Support Organisation Experiences

Some participants had received extremely valuable support from a range of organisations, and this is explored further on a later chapter. There were also infrequent cases, however, where young people had experiences that hadn't been as positive.

Direct references to the support organisations have been **censored to preserve the anonymity of participants.**

Their negative experiences included:

- A disabled participant finding that different organisations had not been able to help;

**"I went to [an organisation that supports disadvantaged people] and [an employment agency], and did the [a charity supporting young people], but they haven't really helped me in a lot of ways either. I don't think they had the right, what's the word I'm looking for? The right facilities to help someone like me, really. So, to sum it up, I've found it quite challenging, rough."** (NEET participant, 19-24)

- Supported living where staff were not very proactive in supporting a disabled participant;
- A Job Coach who had not been very proactive and the participant had to chase to get support with completing a job application form.

Some thought that they had received **inadequate careers advice while at school.** There were reported cases of:

- Not receiving advice on a one-to-one basis or feeling as though

they were listened to;

- Only hearing about it at assembly;
- Not getting on with the support organisation's employee;
- Being given unsuitable job suggestions;
- Not being given enough in terms of practical next steps
- Advice coming too late.

**"Do, ges i bach o help hefo [a careers advice organisation], ond nes i'm rili dewis be 'naethon nhw ddeu'tha fi . . . oedd o'n quite pointless achos nes i neud complete opposite o be 'naeth gael ei ddeud. [Yes, I had a bit of help from [[a careers advice organisation], but I didn't really choose what they told me to . . . which was quite pointless because I did the complete opposite of what was said.]"** (EET participant, 16-18)

**"Teachers were saying, 'oh look up on [careers advice website], you do the quizzes and see what jobs come up, but they just weren't accurate at all... I had like stuff like dog walker and just nothing to do with what I liked to do."** (EET participant, 19-24)

**"Obviously, they come to the school and to assembly, but as a, what, 15, 16-year-old child, you're not going to listen to stuff like that. Honest to God, you're not. No. I'm 18 now, do you know what I mean? If you took me back, maybe I would have listened... I was living on my own at 16, you don't really take it all in."** (Homeless participant, 16-24)

**"I spoke to [a careers advice organisation] but not much help, they said what to do but not how to do it."** (YP aged 16-24)





## 2.8 Financial Barriers

Financial issues added to the challenges young people encountered with getting the education, employment and training they wanted, and impacted what route they decided to take.

**“I’m on minimum wage and on no contract hours so I struggle for money.” (YP aged 16-24)**

**“I have looked for training and education but what I was looking at cost a lot of money so I opted to work” (YP aged 16-24)**

**“My main issue is finances- I struggle to afford travel, rent, food, bills” (YP aged 16-24)**

There were several references to the negative impact of working on household benefits. One young carer found, for example, that they could not do the apprenticeship they wanted because of the loss of benefits, so had to choose a different path at college. Another discovered a benefits issue because they were caring for their parent more than a certain number of hours a week. Additionally, one young carer reported that they could not claim a benefit for themselves (PIP) because of the effect it would have on their parent’s benefits.

**“I’m supposed to be on PIP because I have health problems myself, but I’m obviously a bit worried to do that because it’ll just take away from my mum. So I don’t claim anything for myself.” (Young carer, 16-18)**

**“When I took Carer’s Allowance for my Universal Credit, my dad ended up getting a letter saying that they found out that I’m caring for him more than 40, I think it’s 40 or 38 hours in a week, which is the time requirement for being a full-time carer, and I end up getting the letter that said they were going to, they listed benefits and that they were going to stop payments. And on there was like housing benefits, council tax, Jobseeker’s Allowance, and stuff like that, benefits that if we, if me and my dad do not have, we won’t have a place to live, kind of thing.” (Young carer, 16-18)**

For another young person with homeless experience living in floating support<sup>2</sup>, rent could vary significantly on a weekly basis. They concluded that they were **‘better off doing nothing’**. However, having so much time on their hands meant the challenge of trying to avoid substance misuse became even harder.

**“You need to bring over a grand in a month to pay my gas and electric, plus my bills... [Support worker adds] If she started working, she’d lose her UC which isn’t an issue because she’d be earning money, but then she’d lose her housing benefit as well which means she would then be responsible for the £400 a week cost... She’s very much ready for employment, but because of the rental costs of supported accommodation, she can’t. There’s absolutely no way**

**can she be working.” (Homeless participant and support worker)**

According to some young carers, EMA (Education Maintenance Allowance) had **strict education attendance requirements** which were sometimes impossible to keep to with caring duties. EMA was also **not considered by a few to be sufficient to support learners** who needed it.

**“It [EMA] gives you money, though, if you’re on, if you or your family are on benefits and stuff, it gives you 30 quid every week, but you need to be in every day, on time, for that to work, and if you’re a carer, you can’t really get that. Because if you’re late to one lesson, that’s your week gone. The requirements for EMA are quite unfair for the payout of it.” (Young carers)**

Further finance-related points made included:

- The administrative burden of applying for EHCP (‘life has become one big form’);
- The cost of childcare for a mum with recent NEET experience;
- The apprenticeship wage being too low to make it a viable option for some.

2. Floating support – sometimes called tenancy sustainment support – helps people, who might otherwise struggle to cope, to live independently in their own home. It is focused on preventing vulnerable people from losing their home and, in the case of people who have slept rough, can prevent a return to the street.

## 2.9 Transport-related Barriers

Travel was a barrier that was raised frequently in the discussions. For example, the cost of travelling to interviews, finding a means of transport, not being able to drive, poor bus networks - particularly in rural areas, having to ask others for a lift to appointments and not always being able to rely on them.

**“I don't drive so I have an issue of getting to places. I have to rely on family giving me lifts in and getting the bus and they are only around at certain times.” (YP aged 16-24)**

**“The main issue is transport getting to training or employment, as well as money to afford these” (YP aged 16-24)**

There were also anxiety-related issues involved with transport, including social anxiety on public transport.

**“My barrier currently is public transport, my anxiety is so bad I cannot get on any.” (YP aged 16-24)**

## 2.10 Technology-related Barriers

In a couple of cases, participants referred to challenges they had faced with technology. Some did not have access to a computer; others acknowledged that they **struggled to find information they wanted online about training and courses.** They did not know where to look and did not find the search results very clear.

**“I did look online but it was very confusing and I didn't know where to start... I have done a search online but I didn't understand a lot of it and it was quite expensive so I wasn't able to do it” (YP aged 16-24)**

## 2.11 Other Practical Barriers

There were also some mentions of other practical barriers which, in combination with some of the other barriers above, could also play a role in preventing young people from taking the next step. These included:

- Problems getting documentation e.g., photo ID, NU number, especially if having grown up in care;
- Finding clothes for interviews;
- Lack of a permanent address;
- Status as an asylum seeker;
- Coming from a culture where the family did not want the young person travelling to study;

**“I feel like that's quite a distance, so having to obviously make my way there, it's a little bit difficult, especially in the household that I live in. Ethnically and culturally, we don't really leave our city as much, and we stay with our family more.” (NEET participant, 16-18)**





**3.0**  
**AWARENESS OF  
SUPPORT AVAILABLE**



**Reported awareness of support available for 16-24-year-olds with regards to education, employment and training was low. Many participants tended to state that they were not very aware of support that targeted young people, with the exception of some EET participants.**

Despite some positive stories, there was widespread uncertainty and confusion around what help was available, and how to access it:

“I wasn’t sure what help was available to me...I wasn’t sure where to get help and advice from... The only place I heard of is the job centre to get help with jobs or benefits” (YP aged 16-24)

“No I wasn’t aware of what I could do or what help I could get.” (YP aged 16-24)

“I haven’t found it easy to access careers advice or support” (YP aged 16-24)

Those who had accessed support had typically been made aware of it indirectly through other professionals or organisations, rather than the young person finding out and accessing support through their own means.

“I was not aware of any support other than [a careers advice organisation]... I was made aware of [an advisory service] by my Health Visitor” (YP aged 16-24)

“The job centre made me do a confidence course and the woman there introduced me to [a mentor] from [an advisory service] and he helped me apply for jobs and did a practice interview with me before I got my job.” (YP aged 16-24)

“We also had like people come in and have a chat with us about like [a careers advice organisation], they were from [a careers advice

organisation], but I don’t know, I forget about it, I guess. Like I wouldn’t go on there voluntarily, I think. Like, I don’t know, it’s not very spoken about, you know? Like it’s not advertised or anything like that.” (EET participant, 19-24)

The omnibus survey showed that 1 in 3 (33%) of 16-24-year-olds had ever contacted, or gotten in touch with, an organisation (or other people) for advice or support about education, training, or work. This increased amongst:

- 16-18-year-olds (52%, vs 29% aged 19-24);
- Those with a long-term illness, health problem or impairment (43%, vs 27% without);
- Those in education/not working (43%, vs 23% working).

When those young people who had reached out to get support were asked who they had contacted, **more than 1 in 3 (42%) had used Careers Wales**, which was more than any other source (see Figure 6). Friends and/or family, university and college staff were also places they had gone to for support, seen in Figure 6 below:

In the qualitative discussions, however, although Careers Wales had been relatively widely accessed at school, it often still had to be prompted during the discussions as a potential source of support.

When prompted with a list of reasons, over 1 in 3 (39%) of 16-24-year-olds hadn’t contacted any organisations (or other people) for advice or support as they claimed it had not occurred to them.

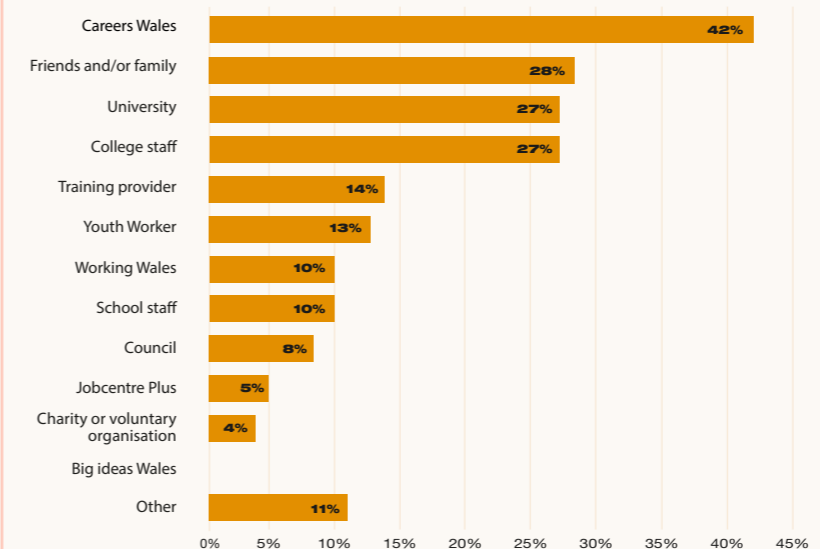
Others said they:

- Didn’t know how to find this kind of service (29%);
- Lacked confidence (27%);
- Hadn’t heard of this kind of service (26%);
- Didn’t think this kind of service could help them (26%).

When asked why they hadn’t ever contacted any organisations (or other people) for advice or support about education, training or work, their responses (unprompted) were as follows:

- Haven’t needed to (30%)
- Don’t know who to contact/ where to look (20%)
- Don’t know/can’t remember (15%)
- Lack of confidence/scared/ nervous/not comfortable (9%)
- Already got a job/at university/ doing an apprenticeship (6%)

**Figure 6: Omnibus Survey Question**  
**Who did you contact for advice or support?**



### 3.1 Awareness of the Young Person's Guarantee

Most of those asked were unaware of the Young Person's Guarantee (YPG), even when prompted with the name. One young person thought they had seen it posted by a politician on social media, alongside a message that guaranteed a job or further education.

Participants shown a brief summary<sup>3</sup> of the YPG (in the qualitative research conducted by Beaufort) said **it sounded promising, helpful and 'good on paper'**. It brought to mind entitlements or rights, money or a money back guarantee and gave an impression that young people would definitely be helped.

**"It sounds good. I would have reservations to see whether it delivers or not, but on paper it sounds really good, I think it's really impressive."**  
(Disabled participant, 16-24)

A few pointed out that **they did not want to be let down by the promise** of a guarantee that didn't amount to anything and claimed that it needed to be ongoing support rather than something one-off. Whilst this aligns with the YPG commitment, this feedback suggests that young people may need reassurance that the guarantee will deliver.

**"Don't say you're getting me a job and then don't get me a job because that will really wind me up. If you're going to help me find a job, you help me find a job."**  
(Homeless participant, 16-24)

It did also raise some questions, for example one asked how it would work if the young person or their household stood to lose benefits if they got a job, especially if living in supported accommodation.

3. The Young Person's Guarantee is a Welsh Government plan. It gives everyone aged under 25 support with getting a place in education or training. It also gives them help to get a job or to become self-employed.







**4.0**  
**POSITIVE SUPPORT**  
**EXPERIENCES**



**In the omnibus survey, those who had received advice or support from an organisation or other people found it helped ‘a little’ (50%) or ‘a lot’ (44%) with doing the course/training or getting the job they wanted. There were indications that once they had had a positive experience of seeking/receiving support, their awareness of, and propensity to engage with - and ask for support from - other organisations/people increased.**

“Now that I have been on a placement I know there is a lot more support on offer.” (YP aged 16-24)

There were indications that, where participants had been carefully handled by, and had positive experiences with, support organisations and employers, some of the barriers could be overcome/managed relatively well.

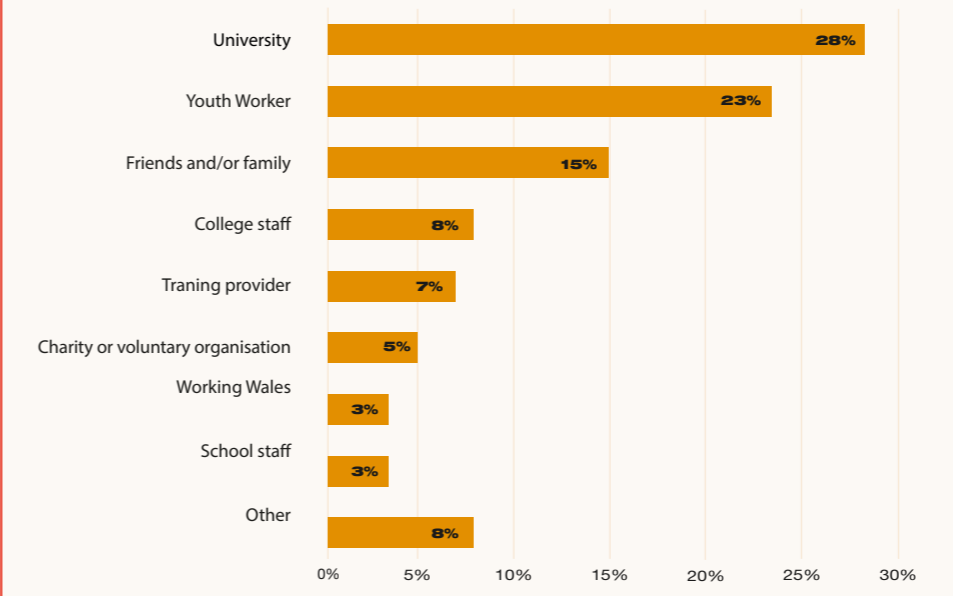
“Young people are nervous to ask for career advice but if they can overcome that they will get good advice.” (YP aged 16-24)

“My advice is to **speak to someone and always look for help and advice** not to be scared. My confidence has got better.” (YP aged 16-24)

“I experience high levels of anxiety but with the support of [an advisory service] I was able to build my confidence to commence on the [employability programme] which didn’t bring so much pressure. Then with the support and encouragement from my [advisory service] mentor I went on the training and secured a job as a swimming instructor.” (YP aged 16-24)

From those who had asked for support from more than one organisation (or other people) – **the advice from their university was seen to be the most helpful** (28%), followed by youth worker (23%), then friends/family (15%), as can be seen in Figure 7 below:

**Figure 7: Omnibus Survey Question**  
**Whose advice did you find most useful? (Only includes those who contacted more than one organisation or other people)**



In the qualitative discussions, the young people who had accessed support organisations were often positive about their experiences, particularly where they had developed a relationship with an individual employee/**support worker whom they trusted.**

Participants were asked if they could provide any examples of what they had found helpful regarding support with education, employment and training and a range of sources emerged. These have been grouped first by more formal sources: education/training centres and Careers Wales; third sector

organisations and local authorities; employers; government; mentors; and funding. Secondly, there are the more informal sources of family and friends. Examples have not been linked to specific experiences to preserve participant anonymity.

#### 4.1 Supportive Education/Training centres and Careers Wales

Some participants recalled how individual staff at their school had been supportive. These included teachers who were aware of a participant's impairment and ensured **they did not rush or pressure them**, having support workers in class, teachers who visited the participant at home to encourage them to attend school and **an understanding teacher** who helped an individual with extreme shyness.

**“They always called me out because I was one of those people who didn't really attend school, so they wanted to make sure I knew what I was doing, and stuff. So it was good.”** (Homeless participant, 16-24)

**“I did have great supportive teachers in school who did work with me 1 2 1 and gave me supporting sessions.”** (YP aged 16-24)

Some also referred to helpful and proactive internal school or college careers advisors.

**“Back in school, for the older years, we had a careers advisor who would regularly talk to us about what we wanted to do when we left school or what we wanted to do as a future career. He would take us out of lessons for 10 minutes every few weeks and give some feedback on what he had found or give us some advice on places where we could look at Universities or job sites, to get an idea if we were unsure on what we wanted to do. The careers advisor was the most helpful advice I had got when preparing for my next steps.”** (YP aged 16-24)

In one example where the participant had dropped out of education, the careers advisor gave advice on what the participant could do to **switch to a vocational pathway** for nursing – and helped explain what an apprenticeship and an access course were.

Some help had also been received with understanding what apprenticeship and university options were available, and also interview preparation.

**“We had interview days where people came in to mock interview us.”** (YP aged 16-24)

Another recalled receiving help with an application form to get onto a Further Education course on mechanics; and there was reference to a university sending regular emails offering support. It had been fairly straightforward for one young person to contact a college via email and **from that point the college was helpful** in providing information on courses available.

**“When I left the college, the college gave out an email to me of like support and things I can access. I could talk to the career advisor and ask them. So I spoke to the career advisor and asked them for different paths and routes... I told them about my interest in nursing... They gave me a good understanding of what I could do. Like it's not the end.”** (NEET participant, 16-18)

**“Emailio coleg rili a gweld pa gyrsiau oedd ar gael. Ac wedyn, ia, 'naethon nhw helpu fi wedyn [Emailed the college and see what courses were available. And then, yes, they just helped me afterwards.]”** (EET participant, 16-18)

One participant described how the sixth form college provided next step support via a dedicated centre within the college. They regularly received emails about jobs, it was straightforward to set up appointments for a chat and the centre sent out surveys to see how learners were doing.

Placements at college had been helpful for another participant as it gave them **a better idea of what the kind of work they were interested in would be like.**

In the event, however, the participant had found the placements a struggle.

Regarding mental health, one school offered learners a reassuring space where teachers would be on hand to chat or where learners could be when they felt anxious or stressed.

Because of a physical impairment as well as caring responsibilities, a young carer had been allowed by their college to study more from home. **This flexibility had been a great help in progressing with education.**

**“The thing that's actually helping me a lot more, and it should be a, more available to other people: because of my pain and, I'm allowed to work from home, I can also work from my own hours. I'm not required to go on a call at a set time every day.”** (Young carer, 16-18)

Often encountered in a school setting, Careers Wales had been helpful for a few participants. Examples included:

- Support in developing CVs;
- Thinking about different options as the participant was not sure what to do after GCSEs;

- On recognising the significant issues a participant with homelessness experience was facing, proactively referring them to local authority support for young people;
- Referring a disabled participant to a 'bridging' course at college (although without providing any practical support on how to apply for it).

**“I'd say [a careers advice organisation] were quite good in terms of, not so much in terms of job opportunities and stuff like that, but they do a lot of CV checking.”** (Disabled participant, 16-24)

**“They helped give advice on education and stuff like that, because I was also considering maybe doing like an apprenticeship and stuff as well.”** (EET participant, 19-24)

Another source of support for a couple of participants had been work based learning providers. **They regularly checked in** with one participant to see how they were getting on and kept them up to date on the information they needed that would help with the training. They had helped another individual with CV development and with preparing to visit a jobs fair (which they had also recommended to the young person). **Face-to-face interactions at the jobs fair felt more comfortable** to the participant, and hopeful, versus waiting for an email response.

From a financial perspective, a couple of participants described how a college had supported them. This included providing funding for a free bus pass and some food (although they still had to maintain EMA attendance to be eligible for this support); and a college that helped a participant with his efforts to secure the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

A final point made was how non-examination assessments (NEAs) made vocational courses accessible to some who struggled with exams or written tasks. However, NEAs were only thought to be available to level 2 on some courses, whereas exams were also used elsewhere.



## 4.2 Supportive Third Sector Organisations / Local Authority Intervention

Some participants were appreciative of support they had received that involved work placements, for example a third sector organisation and local college that worked together to support students with learning disabilities and autism spectrum conditions in a transition to work programme. Support had included help with how to get a job, looking for work, preparing for interviews, work placements and recently finding a job.

“I have not tried to access anything until the last few weeks, where I got referred to [advisory service] for support. I enjoyed meeting in the library it was chilled and relaxed and didn't feel pressured.” (YP aged 16-24)

“My support worker has directed me in and sign posted me in the direction I need to be, that's how I got to your program.” (YP aged 16-24)

A third sector organisation had helped another participant by offering to finance an apprenticeship with them. This helped the participant to develop confidence and realise they could aim higher with future jobs.

“It helped me build the confidence up to sort of go for jobs that sort of like a couple of years ago, before COVID, I didn't think I would have been capable of doing.” (EET participant, 19-24)

For a small number of participants, a third sector organisation had been ‘amazing’ with the breadth of its support and **gone over and above what was expected.** For example, one young person had been helped with emergency housing after they had to leave their parents’ home with a baby because of a relationship breakdown. In addition, the organisation had also helped by facilitating their social interactions/**building their confidence, improving their mental health and getting them ready for a job,** as well as providing a named support worker to go to with any issues.

“They were able to give me a house... This is one of their family houses. They helped me with CVs and training for jobs, and just getting me more social, going more out with my daughter... If I have any trouble, problems or anything, I just go straight to her... They can find me the person I need for anything.” (NEET participant, 19-24)

“They were helping with everything, basically. Because I didn't have much confidence after COVID, obviously, because I'd been stuck in the house for so long... Just getting myself back out there. I wasn't used to being back in that environment... I went from being in a rut, basically, and then, I don't know. [Support worker] got me completely out of it. He got me on the right path, everything was going amazing with him, looking after everything.” (NEET participant, 19-24)

In a few instances, participants referred to third sector organisations and a local authority initiative that helped with accessing online courses (e.g., first aid) and additional qualifications, as well as work experience. These courses helped to bolster CVs and improve confidence levels. The same local authority initiative ensured that **a support worker was always available** to the young people it supported, for example with advice on looking for work and accessing food banks.

“I think at the moment I'm trying to get multiple qualifications here. And then probably trying to find a job in catering. I've done [education] booklets, I've done First Aid, Customer Service, Building Safety... Ever since coming here my confidence has actually grown and I've actually been speaking a lot more which I never used to do.” (Homeless participant, 16-24)

One disabled participant had been offered a job by the third sector organisation that was supporting them. The individual **finally felt that an employer understood their impairment** and explained the job role in a way they could understand. They felt motivated by having someone see their potential.

Valuable support had also been attained from supported living providers, according to a couple of participants with homelessness experience. The providers were able to offer additional funding if the participant decided to rent on their own to make sure they did not become homeless again. **Making friends at the accommodation who had had similar experiences was a further source of welcome support.**

Additional sources of support from organisations included:

- A proactive and supportive Job Coach via a Welsh Government and Lottery funded programme;

“It was just kind of like no matter what I asked, it was like it was done before I was about to ask the next thing, so it was like she knew what needed to be put in place for that support.” (Disabled participant, 16-24)

- A theatre company that had helped a NEET participant develop more confidence.



### 4.3 Supportive Employers

A small number of EET participants described how **employers had been very helpful with their training and employment needs.** In one example, the participant had been offered an apprenticeship by a local beauty salon after the young person had dropped out of university.

Another noted that a childcare employer had **helped them to develop a 'five-year plan'**, including attending training courses to attain qualifications in childcare. A further example of a supportive employer involved a gym that offered the participant full-time work to help pay for an apprenticeship qualification the participant wanted to take but had to self-fund.

**“Really supportive. We’ve got kind of like a five-year plan for me now, what courses I can do through the job and yeah, different careers I can go through after doing this job.” (EET participant, 19-24)**

In a couple of cases, participants referred to how they had been able to learn new skills while on work placements such as answering phone calls and using email. For one young person in employment, their boss had told them that they could do an apprenticeship via a particular college which proved to be helpful signposting.

**“Wel, boss fi 'naeth ddeu'tha fi fynd i Coleg [a local college] oherwydd fan'na lle mae'r unig gwrs sydd rownd fa'ma. Otherwise 'sach**

**chdi'n gorfod mynd i [location], dwi'n meddwl, i studio fo. [Well, it was my boss who told me to go to Coleg [a local college] because that's the only place they offer the course around here. Otherwise, you have to go to [location], I think, to study it.]” (EET participant, 16-18)**

### 4.4 Supportive Government Departments/Initiatives

Participants sometimes identified the Jobcentre as helping them in a few different ways on their education, training, and employment pathways. Some of the examples given included:

- Setting up an interview that had resulted in a job for the participant;
- Providing an easy place to attend interviews;
- Referring participants to relevant third sector organisations for further support;
- Being mindful of an individual's illness, one Jobcentre had suggested a participant take a break from looking for work given a recent mental health diagnosis.

**“They’re helping me get it, because they bring people to interview you in the Jobcentre. So, it’s not like travelling somewhere you wouldn’t already travel to anyway.” (NEET participant, 19-24)**

**“Recently, I – thanks to Universal Credit and the Jobcentre – I ended up getting an interview [at a café]. And the interview went really well.” (Young carer, 16-18)**

An initiative run by higher education organisations and funded by the European Social Fund and Welsh Government had helped one disabled participant to secure a relevant work placement about which the participant was very enthusiastic.

A UK wide disability specialist delivering employment and skills support for national and devolved governments had helped one participant with CV writing and work placements. Some work placements, however, were more successful than others.

### 4.5 Mentors

In a small number of cases, participants described support that could be labelled the same as or similar to mentorship. For example, a few talked about third sector organisations which had been available and supportive over time, and **some young people had clearly developed a positive relationship with particular support workers/members of staff** at these organisations whom they trusted.

Another participant talked about someone at university who they had accessed via the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) and acknowledged that it sometimes felt easier to talk with someone not connected to family and other social circles.

**“When I lost my job, I still kept in touch with [the support worker]. He was still messaging me near enough on a daily basis to see if I was okay. Like, the support was phenomenal off the team. So, honestly, [they] have done**

**so much good for me, I can't say thank you enough to them. (NEET participant, 19-24)**

**“My youth mentor has influenced me, she is the only person who listens” (YP Cardiff)**

**“The support has been helpful and very continuous, weekly / daily texts and calls.” (YP aged 16-24)**

**Knowing someone who had started their own business** in the same sector was a source of useful information for one young person who was looking to start out with their own business.

### 4.6 Funding Support

The DSA had significantly helped a couple of disabled participants in progressing with university studies.

**“The DSA was really important for me in terms of getting good equipment... You get this equipment on a laptop, and it makes writing and reading much easier, when it comes to essays and stuff.” (Disabled participant, 16-24)**

EHCP (Educational Health & Care Plan) had helped one disabled student following struggles at school to get the required support for their impairment.

**“At school, it wasn't the most... I struggled to get the support at first but then when I got my EHCP, which is a council document, I got the support required at school and then that took me through to college as well.” (Disabled participant, 16-24)**

### 4.7 Supportive Family Members / Friends

Some participants talked about the general **support they received from family members.** They saw them as an obvious place to turn to for advice, and some pointed out that they would not know where else to turn.

**“Mum is supportive and she is my main role model at home.” (YP 16-24)**

**“I stay with my nan so she influences me – she was a hard worker when she was in work and I want to be like her and try and support her more like she supported me.” (YP 16-24)**

A parent had advised one participant in education to get a trade, and an uncle advised the young person on which trade to follow. Another example was a mother taking issue on the participant's behalf with the placements offered by a transition to work programme. The parent helped the previously NEET participant to secure a more appropriate placement at a large retailer.

**“Nes i gael cyngor gan Mam. Do'n i'm yn si r be i neud. Ac wedyn 'wnaeth hi bointio fi lawr y lôn o fynd mewn i trade. Ac wedyn nes i jyst ffeindio apprenticeship wrth ofyn rownd. [I got advice from Mum. I wasn't sure what to do. And then she suggested I go down the route of getting a trade. And then I just found an apprenticeship by asking around.]” (EET participant, 16-18)**

In a few instances, **family members had asked friends for opportunities** for participants, such as working with a childcare provider. One participant's sister had organised an apprenticeship for them at her own hair salon.

Friends could therefore play important roles as well, for example having a friend on the same course helped one participant with motivation to stick with studying. In another case, **two disabled friends were supporting each other** with the different skills they had. One supported the other with situations that involved speaking to other people, while the other would help with activities like ensuring the participant had a regular meal routine. Seeing other learners continuing to engage with the course had been motivating for one participant as well.

**“I've got a friend who's a few years older than me and she's helping me with going to meetings, making sure my meals on time, and I help her if she can't talk certain times, I'll talk for her.” (Disabled participant, 16-24)**



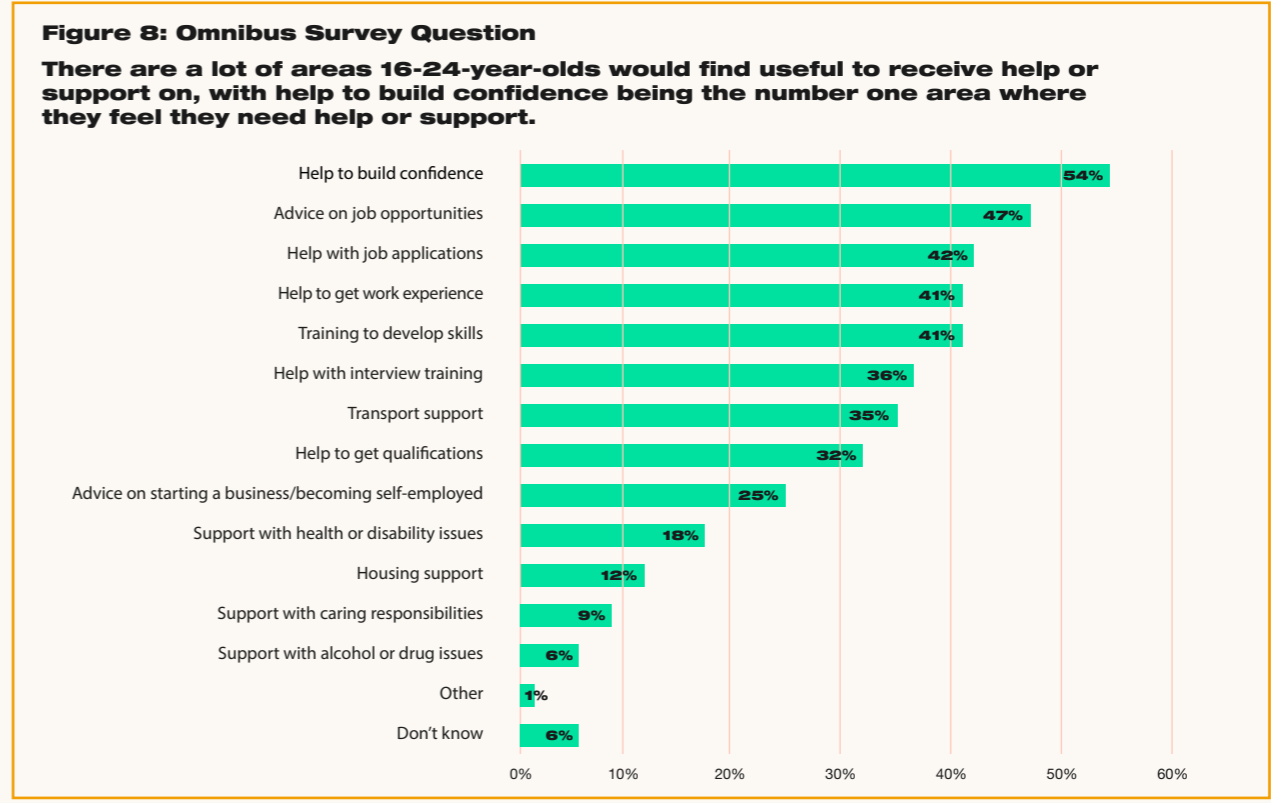
**5.0**  
**THEIR SUPPORT NEEDS**



Over 1 in 2 (53%) of 16-24-year-olds claimed to be **interested in getting help** or support to help them achieve their education, training, or work goals. This increased amongst females (63%, vs 46% males) and those in education/ not working (63%, vs 46% of those who

were working). There were a number of areas where 16-24-year-olds claimed it would be useful to receive help or support (see Figure 8). In line with some of the barriers discussed earlier in the report, **help to build confidence was the number one area** where they feel they

need help or support (54%), followed by advice on job opportunities (47%), help with job search and applications (42%), help to get work experience (41%) and training to develop skills (41%). The full list can be seen in Figure 8 below:



In the qualitative discussions, participants were encouraged to suggest what support they would need to help them progress on their pathways to the education, employment and training they wanted. The following themes emerged:

**5.1 Increased Awareness of Support**

Some believed that **more should be done to increase awareness of the support options available** to young people and what the support could do for them, including options like Careers Wales.

**'Maybe more leaflets just to explain help is out there, maybe post things more on social media about helpers. (Disabled participant, 16-24)**

**'After being with [support worker], she has made me aware of other programmes (YP aged 16-24)**

## 5.2 Improved Pathway Guidance

Participants regularly felt that they would benefit from having **more tailored support at school/earlier in the journey**, specific to the individual and their needs/situation. They also wanted **to know where to turn for help** at later points on their pathway, including in unexpected situations like dropping out of education or losing a job.

**“Start early in school, tell people where they can get help and how.”** (YP aged 16-25)

**“More help for people who are maybe younger as well, like before they get to like near the end of like want to get a job... And trying to find the help that they need before they start realising they need the help and they’ve got that in place.”** (Disabled participant, 16-24)

**“I think it should be more target based, I think you should try and reach out to schools... I think if you set someone right, I’ve just realised talking with you just now like I didn’t have much support of what I was going to do eventually.”** (EET participant, 19-24)

One support worker reported that a participant ‘would have liked to have **reassurance that if she does not have good grades, there are still options outside of education.**’

There were some requests for more tangible connections to be made between what was taught in school and what they might do for work in the future, to motivate and inspire. Also,

to have discussions from an early age around why they were learning, what the context was for what they were learning.

**“There should be more advice and connection between subjects taught in schools and pathways available.”** (YP aged 16-24)

**“Before learners choose their options; should include career sessions regularly through school life with representatives, and/or parents, from varying vocational sectors to speak on these. Online should be a central area which is easy to access and use which contains all information.”** (YP aged 16-24)

Another young person suggested that more extra-curricular activities at school would help learners to think of the possibilities ahead; **there was a sense that their horizons and aspirations were narrowed too early** and that there was more schools could do to inspire them for the future.

There were requests for more inclusive information on what the different qualifications were and what they could enable them to do, regardless of their academic ability. A visual pathway/diagram showing various routes and highlighting the ability to change to avoid them putting off decisions that felt daunting could be useful for many.

**“There’s other ways around things rather than going straight for education and college and university. Like I feel like there’s so many ways you can branch off after high school and after college**

**or wherever you feel like the best place is for you, but I just feel like the Welsh Government need to kind of like back other people as well, like not just the educational side of things.”** (EET participant, 19-24)

There was **a desire for support to be ongoing rather than a one-off** in order to help it be most effective. It was clear that general and sporadic support was unlikely to work effectively; young people needed to be coached/assisted along the pathway.

**“Like a one-on-one chat with people. Like getting them prepared. And more often. Like having a bit more support more often.”** (Homelessness participants, 16-24)

Some believed more face-to-face support was more personal and could overcome the issues experienced trying to research information online, but others suggested face-to-face could sometimes be a barrier to access. It’s likely that a combination of both face-to-face and online will be the best solution; **tailoring the support to their needs** and reducing the barriers in place is part of the challenge.

**“Meeting face-to-face is off-putting not just for me but for some, as a bus journey for a 30’ min chat isn’t ideal when money is already tight.**

**“Keep offering the wide range of ways to contact us, I don’t like speaking on the phone all the time. Texting or whatsapping has worked really well. Also I like meeting face-to-face, it’s more personal and then I feel more connected and**

**know who I am working with.”**

Pathway support could include help with job applications, interview preparation, CVs and personal statements but also with confidence-building, increasing motivation and assistance with managing finances.

From a support worker’s perspective, there did not appear to be one organisation which held all the information on what was available to support young people when they transitioned from school to their next step. Neither did there seem to be an organisation that was able to help and support young people as they took those steps.

**“There’s nobody that holds all of that information at 16. So like [a careers advice organisation] don’t know everything that’s going on, colleges don’t know everything that’s going on. Schools don’t know everything. There’s nobody that holds all that knowledge.”** (Support worker for disabled participant, 16-24)

## 5.3 Disability or Circumstances-related

These suggestions mostly related to educational settings, and included:

- More sensitive ways of explaining hidden disabilities to education centre staff to avoid young people being made to feel awkward;

**“I think some training [for teaching staff] where it’s a bit more discreet, where you don’t have to say in front of everyone, ‘Oh yeah, I’ve got ADHD. You’re going to have to help me out.”** (NEET participant, 16-18)

- School staff and employers to have a better understanding of the challenges faced by young carers;

**“My personal experience is that the teachers have always made it feel like I’ve exaggerated what I do at home.”** (Young carer, 16-18)

- A better learner to classroom support worker ratio in school to improve support quality;

**“So it was ten kids in the class because obviously we were the ones with learning difficulties and stuff. It would only be one support**

**worker or sometimes if you’re lucky, two support workers so they couldn’t constantly help everyone out and stuff. I don’t know, maybe that kind of extra support for people with these kinds of needs and stuff.”** (Disabled participant, 16-24)

- **Alternative learning format opportunities** for those unable to sit in a classroom for a length of time – something with more practical rather than academic elements;

**“Having that outlet for maybe people who can’t sit in a classroom and learn. Because I know I definitely couldn’t... maybe Tuesday and Thursday at five o’clock until half seven, you’ve got a class that you’ll go and actually do practical stuff. If I was to do an A Level that way, I guarantee I could probably do it.”** (NEET participant, 16-18)

- Better support from employers that **recognises staff needs**, for example so that employees still feel supported once induction training is completed.



## 5.4 Mentorship and Emotional Support

Some participants wanted to have a **named individual they could turn to for advice** and/or signposting them to further guidance over a longer period. There was a belief that knowing the ongoing support was there would also help with motivation and **reassure the young person that what they were doing was right.**

“Like my college course, I accidentally applied for one in [one location] when I was trying to apply for one in [another]. I had to call the college today and have them change it for me. Just like someone to ask, ‘Am I doing the right thing, like?’” (Young carer, 16-18)

**The individual providing the support would need to be understanding,**

and not make the young person they were supporting feel stupid/ashamed asking for help with tasks that others would find straightforward.

“Just to have somebody there that can understand like what I’m going through, how frustrating it is for me because like seeing people who can write, can spell, can do things... Because also with me, I always feel like ashamed of myself and saying to somebody like ‘this is the help I need’ because obviously through high school I got really badly bullied... So I’ve always had low confidence.” (Disabled participant, 16-24)

**Some participants wanted support with help believing in themselves and developing confidence which such an individual could offer by focusing on the things the young person they were dealing with could do rather than on the things they could not.**

## 5.5 Work Experience Opportunities

For those whose aspirations included more options for work experience, these needed to include opportunities that related to what they might want to do later in life, but also to be suited to their circumstances regarding their qualifications and any other factors such as mental or physical impairment or caring responsibilities. One participant asked for [in the language of the support worker]

“Increased opportunities for hands-on experience/tasters across vocational routes/pathways for learners to understand what those jobs are like/expectations.” (YP aged 16-24)

There were some suggestions that it should also be easier for young people who might not have the qualifications, or who might struggle with CVs and the pressure of interviews, to show employers what they could do (e.g., via video).

There were also requests relating to employers, including the desire for them to:

- Invest more time in those who initially need more support to be able to show what they can do
- Be more aware and understanding of the flexibility required for some young people, for example, only being able to work for a limited time in one chunk because of an impairment.
- Help staff, and those on placements, to develop their skills and qualifications.

## 5.6 Course-related Support

There were some suggestions for support centred on the suitability, and availability, of courses for young people on subjects that they genuinely wanted to study. This could involve more courses that are adapted to an impairment such as ADHD (e.g., more practical than academic), or with flexible hours for young carers.

“I think **everybody should have a chance of doing something they really, really want to do because then you’ve got more motivation to do that thing.** When that option is taken away, because obviously you need certain GCSEs to do your thing, then it’s not nice, you just give up on yourself.” (Disabled participant, 16-24)

Hands-on experience of courses with taster sessions could also help with decision-making on next steps. Online courses would provide greater flexibility for a young parent or someone working part-time; but face-to-face could help with maintaining focus, for example one NEET participant said they would be too distracted to complete anything online.

“Tua mis yn ôl ‘naeth ysgol ni fynd â ni i Brifysgol Bangor am ddiwrnod, ac oedd ‘na lwyth o ysgolion yna. Oedd pawb yn licio fo achos oedd fatha open day i roi fatha blas i ni. Dwi’n meddwl ella mwy o organised trips i fynd i lefydd achos wedyn ti’n gweld o in real life. [About a month ago our school took us to a university for a day, and there were loads of schools there. **Everyone liked it because it was like an open day to give us a taste.** I think there could be more organised trips to go to places because then you see it in real life.]” (EET participant, 16-18)

## 5.7 Increase Funding

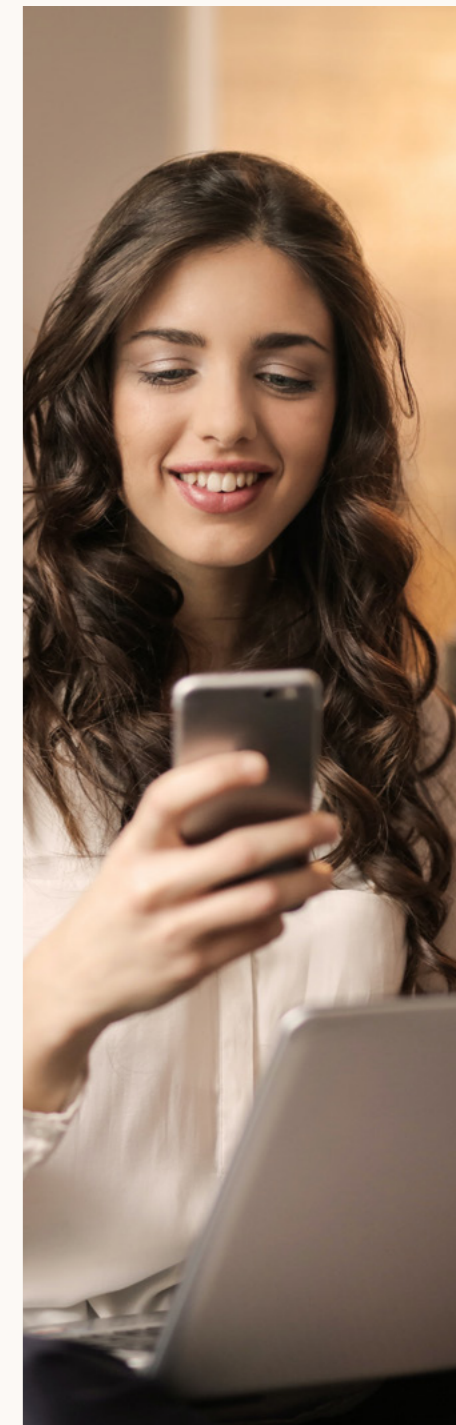
Some felt that more funding to support young people would be helpful, for example:


- Free public transport for young people;
- Better financial support for those in supported accommodation so they could afford to work and not lose benefits; and ideally helping them to move out of supported accommodation because the rent prohibited working;
- Funding support for vocational courses;
- Better support with funding applications;
- Knowing what support was available to start a new business (and potentially assistance with key small business needs, e.g., marketing, finance, etc).

## 5.8 Additional Suggestions

Other suggestions included:

- More of the same from support organisations that currently support young people;
- More sessions (like these) that give young people the chance to share how they feel / have their voice heard;
- Help with managing pressure, anxiety and taking exams, and time management;
- More housing for young people; and supported housing to be further away from town centres to reduce risky behaviour opportunities;
- Quality assurance for supported housing providers so that all at risk of homelessness receive the support they need to be able to progress;
- Ways to hear from people who have experience of the job the young person may be interested in, including networking opportunities with others who could help them in some way;
- Teaching young people to understand how they can showcase their experience/skill set when applying for jobs;
- Assistance with learning English for those who have arrived from another country.





**6.0**  
**ENGAGING WITH**  
**YOUNG PEOPLE**  
**MORE EFFECTIVELY**



Throughout the discussions it was evident that **young people were struggling with multiple barriers that prevented them from accessing support and/or setting and achieving their aspirations. Many participants found it hard to say what would help with engagement, and there were some requests for more 1-2-1 support starting in secondary school, including better pathway guidance. However, some also felt that by making support for young people in general more proactive and easier for them to access, engagement was likely to increase.**

**“If the support is hard to get to most won’t take it. If there was more communication and the support targets the people who need it there may be more luck with numbers who are after support.” (YP aged 16-24)**

There were a number of suggestions to improve engagement, therefore increasing awareness of, and access to, support organisations, and specifically the YPG:

- Using channels that young people use;
- Using engaging formats;
- Optimising content and messaging;
- Optimising design;
- Considering the role of sponsor identity.

### 6.1 Channel

Social media was, unsurprisingly, widely used among participants, in particular Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and Facebook. A small number also identified Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube and Discord. They therefore tended to feel that **social media would be a key channel with which to reach them.**

A homelessness support worker stated that they normally used Snapchat to interact with clients. Another from a local authority said that they had an app with all the support information on it for young people (although the individual they were supporting who took part in the research did not know about it).

**“Because people my age now – I’m 21 years old – I use Instagram quite a bit, and I’ve laid off Snapchat a bit.” (NEET participant, 19-24)**

**“If it was on TikTok, I’d probably definitely look more into it.” (Homeless participant, 16-24)**

**“It’s just social media. I think we spend quite a lot of time on our phones, it’s the thing we see the most... We miss everything else because we’ve got our eyes glued to our phones. I think social media’s probably the best way to reach out to people.” (EET participant, 19-24)**

**“All social media platforms, throw it in our faces everywhere.” (YP aged 16-24)**

One participant mentioned that **Facebook could be useful even if young people were not using it themselves**, as family members may see the communication and signpost the young person to it or click a link on their behalf.

As well as raising awareness of support, social media provides an opportunity to inspire and broaden horizons. One young person talked about seeing learners on TikTok talking about alternatives to university and explaining what they are. This proved helpful to one participant who had dropped out of FE college.

As well as social media, some participants also thought that it would be a good idea to reach them **through support organisations and education centres**: via support staff, visits to the organisations or perhaps young people who were supported could become YPG champions to help signpost their peers to guidance.

**“Everybody who works with people with disability or worked with people in the age of 16- to 24-year-olds, they get the information so they can bring it to other people, and they can bring it to other people from school or college or like I find if one of us does it, for example like if one of us works at one bit, all of us will actually try it out together.” (Disabled participant, 16-24)**

Other suggestions included using public transport and NHS waiting rooms. TV was also suggested for reaching broader audiences who could then signpost those they thought would benefit from the services. **Benefits providers were a further potential channel identified**, for example as a communication from the DWP to those on Universal Credit.

## 6.2 Format

Some young people thought that short videos or social media reels would be effective. It was **what they were used to viewing** and it would help those who struggled with reading, providing it was clear.

**“When you’re going through stories, they come up with these ads, and I feel like the Snapchat ads aren’t as boring as everyone else’s ads, because it’s full-screen and it only takes like five seconds.”** (NEET participant, 19-24)

**“Images, like pictures, like videos, like maybe on TikTok, for example... I can’t really physically read stuff.”** (Disabled participant, 16-24)

## 6.3 Content and Messaging

Suggestions were sometimes made for what communications should say to catch young people’s attention, some of which relate to the barriers described earlier in this report. These included:

- What was being offered and who it was for;

**“If it was something to do with like funding or next steps and like where to go and what to do, that would make me read it because I’d be like ‘okay, useful’, you know?”** (EET participant, 19-24)

- Messages about vocational routes available, not just academic ones, and what was possible without a university degree;

**“[On TikTok] it was actually headlined something like saying, ‘Uni’s not the only route to go’. Something that catches your attention. Because from my understanding I thought uni was the only thing you could get into.”** (NEET participant, 16-18)

- A message style that was straight to the point, catchy, not too formal and with easy-to-read language;
- **Content that was relatable, inclusive, and conveyed a message of tailored support.** This might include case stories that addressed barriers like interviewing and exam pressure, the feeling of seeing friends get jobs (but not them), and seeing people getting positive help from the service;

**“So let’s say if it was a question saying, ‘Are you awkward in front of people?’ or ‘Do you not do interviews very well?’ . . . If you mention these things, people might be like, ‘You know, I have had some issues, because of this; how can this help me?’”** (NEET participant, 19-24)

**“I say get more people involved who are like us who can actually give their own input and their own experiences on it.”** (Young carer, 16-18)

**“It’s putting things out there for everybody, just not for all the A stars and all the Bs. It should be for everybody, not just for the brainier ones.”** (Disabled participant, 16-24)

- Messages about funding support;
- Challenging, motivating messages to help them get their life ‘on track’;

**“There’s a girl called Molly-Mae. She was on a programme called Love Island... She said in an interview ‘we all have the same 24 hours as Beyoncé’. For me, that sticks in my head, because why am I sat on my sofa for 20 minutes when I could go for a walk? I’ve got the same 24 hours as Beyoncé. What am I doing with my day that’s constructive?”** (NEET participant, 16-18)

**“I reckon just even a page on Instagram that would be like daily sharing or weekly sharing, like, motivational. Anything, really, just to get it out there for more people.”** (NEET participant, 19-24)

- An element of ‘fun’;
- Using influencers (e.g., celebrities, sports personalities).

Some of these suggestions are likely to also address barriers to accessing support in general (e.g., pride, fear, anxiety), and help to reduce the stigma around this.



## 6.4 Design

Participants wanted to see something that was **bright, bold, and visually appealing** with warm colours.

With the literacy barriers in place for some, and the concerns around support being focused on those who had done well at school/were more academic, it’s likely that small amounts of easy-to-read text, along with lots of visuals/diagrams/illustrations would be less off-putting.

## 6.5 Sponsor Identity

A few participants commented that if the communications were **labelled as from the Welsh Government, it would feel ‘legit’** and important and would make it clear it was not a scam. However, it was also suggested that there should not be too much emphasis on the Welsh Government or other bodies because that could be off-putting for some, especially those who felt ‘politics was boring’. More insight is needed into how sponsor identity might be used most effectively.

**“We need to listen to young people and what they want. Put in place what is promised, don’t lie and say you can do something and then don’t.”** (YP aged 16-24)



## 7.0 CONCLUSION



## 7. Conclusions

- Many young people have **complex personal situations** and/or health issues that make it difficult to prioritise their career or education. All in all, feedback from young people indicates that there needs to be greater support for young carers and mental health issues, and more emphasis on **inclusive, tailored and consistent pathway guidance from an early age.**
- Half of 16-24-year-olds agreed that they **didn't feel well-prepared** to do the course or get the job they want and the overwhelming majority of young people who have tried to apply for a job or do a course have been met with barriers. This suggests that there is a definite need for support across the country.
- Over one-third of 16-24-year-olds felt less confident they could do the course/ get the job they wanted because of the Covid-19 pandemic, and this decreased confidence was greater in some regions than others. Regional reassurance and empowerment specifically addressing the issues caused by the pandemic will be key to helping them achieve their goals.
- This generation appears to have **an entrepreneurial spirit** - 1 in 4 want to be self-employed or start a business. Being mindful of this and channelling their passions productively is worth consideration.
- Accessing support isn't something that's occurred to many young people – but **support experiences have generally been positive** for those who have accessed it. Building more awareness of the support on offer, and access to it, will be beneficial, so they can understand the breadth of support available and see that it has relevance to them, regardless of their circumstances.
- **The idea of support appeals** to over half of all the young people surveyed – this suggests that the YPG will be seen as good news to many, but **the key will be making them aware of it**, engaging with it and believing that it can help them as individuals.
- **Social media will be a key channel** for reaching, and engaging with, young people. Visual content that addresses the breadth and range of issues and showing the support on offer, how to access it and the results of this support on young people, is likely to engage.
- It will be important to consider the context of any policies or messages being communicated – the current cost of living/ fuel crisis and the repercussions of COVID-19 will affect their decisions.
- There are some clear differences in the data when it comes to gender, location, age, etc. Being mindful of differences in attitudes and perceptions will be important for tailored communications.



**Golley Slater**



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government