

# YOUNG PERSON'S GUARANTEE: NATIONAL CONVERSATION



RESEARCH REPORT

• YPG • YPG •

2024

#trustin

TRINITY





## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**07**

### **1.0 DIGGING DEEPER: BARRIERS TO EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND TRAINING**

**11**

### **2.0 EXPLORING KEY TRANSITIONAL PERIODS**

**37**

### **3.0 THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN EASING ACCESS**

**65**

### **4.0 THE EXPERIENCES OF DISABLED YOUNG PEOPLE**

**77**

### **5.0 THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS**

**95**

### **6.0 CONCLUSION**

**99**



NATIONAL CONVERSATION  
NATIONAL CONVERSATION  
NATIONAL CONVERSATION  
NATIONAL CONVERSATION  
NATIONAL CONVERSATION  
NATIONAL CONVERSATION  
NATIONAL CONVERSATION  
NATIONAL CONVERSATION  
NATIONAL CONVERSATION  
NATIONAL CONVERSATION

YPG



**The Young Person's Guarantee (YPG) is the Welsh Government's key commitment to provide everyone aged 16 to 24, living in Wales, with support to gain a place in education or training, help to get into work or self-employment. The YPG provides an umbrella structure that sits above Welsh Government funded programmes for young people, aiming to create a straightforward support journey for young people regardless of circumstances and background.**

Following its launch, our first report explored the experiences and aspirations of young people in Wales, aged 16-24, in a post **COVID-19 era**. This report delves deeper into the complex tapestry of their lives, particularly as they navigate the current **cost of living crisis**.

Conducted between January and July 2023, this research included two rounds of focus groups and two quantitative surveys via the Wales Omnibus, which offered a rich and diverse understanding of the challenges young people face.

This report focuses on dissecting the barriers to education, employment, and training, highlighted in our earlier conversations, namely **work experience, transport, confidence, and mental health**. The first wave of research highlighted the disproportionate impact of these barriers on **disabled young people** in particular, which is why in this report we delve deeper into the specific difficulties they face.

Some of this is viewed through the lens of the cost-of-living crisis and the additional pressure it adds to young people's experiences.

The report also provides an insight into the experiences of young people during **key transitional periods in their education**, namely their next steps after completing Year 11 and Year 13. These pivotal moments are crucial in shaping future opportunities and paths.

This report also assesses the role of communication in connecting young people with the support they need. Effective communication is not just about what we say but how we say it; we look at how to remain relevant and accessible during these challenging times in young people's lives.

## METHODOLOGY

**Young people aged 16-24** from all over Wales contributed to rounds two and three of the National Conversation. The conversation included young people who were in EET (education, employment, or training), young people who were NEET (not in education, employment, or training), disabled young people (including those with a long-term illness or health problem), those with mental health conditions, Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic young people, and a mixture of Welsh and non-Welsh speakers.

The research consisted of **two separate components:**

**a)** Qualitative focus groups (n=55 participants across ten groups), conducted by Beaufort Research Ltd in January, June, and July 2023

**b)** Quantitative omnibus online surveys (n=421), conducted by Beaufort Research Ltd in January and June 2023

The findings highlighted in this report combine the insights from both components: (i) two rounds of focus groups and (ii) two online surveys. Further details of each component can be found below.

It is important to note that, while this study has aimed to include a **diverse range of young people**, the qualitative components mean the views outlined are not fully representative of the young Welsh population. Thus, the findings in this report, particularly the qualitative discussions, are illustrative rather than representative. Verbatim comments made by participants are included in the report but **anonymised to protect their identity.**

### 1. Qualitative focus groups conducted by Beaufort Research Ltd

Two rounds of qualitative focus groups (n=55 participants in total) were conducted by Beaufort Research Ltd in January 2023 and again in June/July 2023. Details of participant demographics can be found below:

Figure 1: Qualitative Focus Groups Sample January 2023

|   | Circumstances  | Age   | Method                            |
|---|--|-------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | EET  | 16-18 | 7 participants, convened in Welsh |
| 2 | NEET / have recent experience of being NEET / at risk of becoming NEET | 16-18 | 5 participants                    |
| 3 | EET  | 19-24 | 5 participants                    |
| 4 | NEET / have recent experience of being NEET / at risk of becoming NEET | 19-24 | 9 participants                    |

Figure 2: Qualitative Focus Group Sample June-July 2023

|   | Circumstances  | Age   | Method                                   |
|---|--|-------|--|
| 1 | EET  | 16-18 | 7 participants, convened in Welsh (Zoom) |
| 2 | NEET / have recent experience of being NEET / at risk of becoming NEET | 16-18 | 4 participants (Zoom)                    |
| 3 | EET  | 19-24 | 6 participants (Zoom)                    |
| 4 | NEET / have recent experience of being NEET / at risk of becoming NEET | 19-24 | 5 participants (Zoom)                    |
| 5 | Disabled young people (EET)  | 19-24 | 3 participants (Zoom)                    |
| 6 | Disabled young people (EET)  | 19-24 | 4 participants (face-to-face discussion) |

Young people who were in EET were recruited using a network of qualitative recruiters who followed a recruitment script and specification agreed by the Welsh Government. Young people who were NEET were recruited using a combination of liaising with **organisations that support young people** and Beaufort's recruiter network. Young disabled people were recruited by approaching relevant support organisations.

Participants included those who took part in the first two waves of focus groups during July 2022 and January 2023 (in cases where participants were contactable and still met the inclusion criteria of the research) and some newly recruited participants. Overall, 14 participants took part in phases one and two, 12 participants took part in phases two and three, and six participants took part across all three phases. A mix of **online focus groups** in English and Welsh were held as well as a **face-to-face** focus group. In a few cases, participants' support workers attended the discussions to help put participants at ease.

Participants were shown outlines of existing and planned support schemes around topics such as mental health and wellbeing, travel and work experience, among others, to facilitate discussions and understand their views on the support available.

### 2. Omnibus survey conducted by Beaufort Research Ltd

Two quantitative omnibus online surveys (n=421) were conducted by Beaufort Research Ltd between January and June 2023.

The Wales Omnibus is designed to be representative of the adult population resident in Wales aged 16 and over and consists of a sample of 1000 respondents. Questions for the YPG National Conversation report were asked as part of the Omnibus in both January 2023 and June 2023 and answered by 154 and 107 individuals aged 16 – 24 years respectively. For the June 2023 wave, some questions were also answered by **160 parents of 16-24-year-olds.**

Figure 3: Sample Breakdown

| Demographic         | Segment              | Jan-23 Sample Size | Jun-23 Sample Size  |
|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Total Sample</b> | <b>16-24s</b>        | <b>154</b>         | <b>107</b>          |
| Region              | North/Mid/West Wales | 44                 | 35                  |
|                     | South Wales          | 110                | 72                  |
| Gender              | Male                 | 81                 | 50                  |
|                     | Female               | 69                 | 55                  |
| Age                 | 16-18                | 36                 | 28                  |
|                     | 19-24                | 118                | 79                  |
| Social Grade        | ABC1                 | 84                 | 63                  |
|                     | C2DE                 | 70                 | 44                  |
| Disability          | Disabled             | 28                 | 30                  |
|                     | Not disabled         | 111                | 77                  |
| Sexual Orientation  | LGBTQ+               | 26                 | 29                  |
| NEET/EET Status     | NEET                 | 24                 | Insufficient sample |
|                     | EET                  | 140                |                     |

ABC1 and C2DE are NRS social grade classifications, a system of demographic classification used in the UK. ABC1 is taken to equate to middle class, whilst C2DE equates to working class.

Given these base sizes, 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 4: Confidence Intervals **95% Confidence Intervals (excluding design factors) for different results with different sample sizes:**

|          | 1000     | 100      |
|----------|----------|----------|
| 50%      | +/-3.1%  | +/-9.8%  |
| 10 / 90% | +/-1.9 % | +/-5.9 % |

The omnibus surveys consisted of closed and open-ended questions addressing topics such as mental health and wellbeing, travel, work experience, transitions at age 16-18 and communication preferences.

**Care should be taken in the interpretation of data where the base sizes are particularly small.**

A breakdown of the demographic base sizes of each survey are outlined below:

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. More details on the methodology used and full data tables are available upon request.





# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**





## Digging deeper: barriers to accessing education, employment, and training

**A lack of quality work experience** was identified as a significant barrier for young people in Wales. Many of the young people surveyed viewed work experience as essential for acquiring life skills and understanding potential career paths. However, challenges in accessing these opportunities were noted, particularly due to a lack of awareness about where to find them and a lack of confidence in applying.

Transport was also a considerable barrier for many respondents, especially for those in rural areas or facing **financial constraints**. 79% of young respondents reported that transport issues sometimes or always hindered their ability to reach their desired destinations for work, education, or training. Notably, the issue was more pronounced among male respondents and respondents who were NEET.

Additionally, according to those surveyed, mental health issues and a **lack of confidence** were also pervasive barriers. It was notable that female respondents tended to struggle more with confidence, while male respondents often hesitated to seek mental health support.

### Exploring key transitional periods

Young people surveyed tended to be most aware of the more 'traditional' qualifications such as A levels, yet there was a significant **disparity in awareness** of vocational qualifications between young people and their parents.

While 74% of parents surveyed reported they were aware of such qualifications, only 46% of 16-24-year-olds had heard of them.

During the pivotal transition periods at Year 11 and Year 13, young people presented **diverse aspirations and experiences**. Some had clear and ambitious career goals, while others faced challenges in pursuing their dreams due to their circumstances and actual and perceived barriers faced.

Young people's preparedness for their next steps varied with more or less half feeling least prepared in managing finances and making new friends. In particular, around 1 in 2 did not feel well prepared in terms of understanding how to manage money and open a bank account (51%), understanding what financial help was available to them (45%), and being confident they could make new friends (45%). **Personal networks**, especially family members and friends, played a significant role in the decision-making processes of some participants. However, those in Year 13 often struggled to access advice and faced **difficulties in securing jobs** without established contacts.

### The role of communication in easing access

Around 3 in 4 young people surveyed (77%) claimed to have received information on A Levels whilst at school, significantly more than any other route queried noting a **skew towards informing pupils about the more 'traditional' routes**. Fewer young people reported receiving information on apprenticeships (51%), courses offered at college (43%) or vocational qualifications (12%).

This indicates a need for more balanced communication in schools about the various educational and vocational pathways available to young people.

**Online research and social media were popular channels** for young people to access information, but nearly one-third of those surveyed stated that they preferred **face-to-face interactions**. This highlights the importance of using a mix of digital and personal communication methods to reach and engage young people.

### The experiences of disabled young people

Disabled young people that we spoke to in Wales faced **distinct challenges** in accessing education, employment, and training. 92% of disabled respondents identified lacking confidence as a barrier, the highest of any other segment, whilst 90% reported that their mental health hindered their pursuit of these opportunities.

91% had undertaken some form of work experience, mainly through school, exceeding the rate among non-disabled young people. Despite this, many expressed **dissatisfaction with their work experience**, citing a lack of responsibility and insufficient insight into jobs.

Additionally, transportation was a significant barrier for some disabled young people, particularly for those in **rural areas**. The cost-of-living crisis further exacerbated these challenges.





**01**  
**DIGGING DEEPER:**  
**BARRIERS TO ACCESSING**  
**EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT,**  
**AND TRAINING**



## WORK EXPERIENCE

During our first conversations back in 2022, accessing quality work experience emerged as a significant barrier for young people. We wanted to dig deeper into this issue to uncover the underlying factors contributing to this barrier and how young people felt work experience could be improved to help them reach their goals.

### What work experience means to young people

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

**Basically, mynd mewn i gwaith i gael yr profiad, blas ohono fo cyn i chi neud eich meddwl i fyny os dyna be dach chi isio neud neu ddim. (Basically, go into work to get the experience, a taste of what it's like before you make up your mind if that's what you want to do or not.) (Participant who was in EET, 16-18)**

Young people identified multiple advantages to work experience, including the opportunity to establish professional contacts and relationships that could lead to subsequent employment.

Some participants thought young people should be remunerated for their contributions, especially when those contributions benefit the business. However, **many were unaware that paid work experience existed** or thought that it was limited to things like

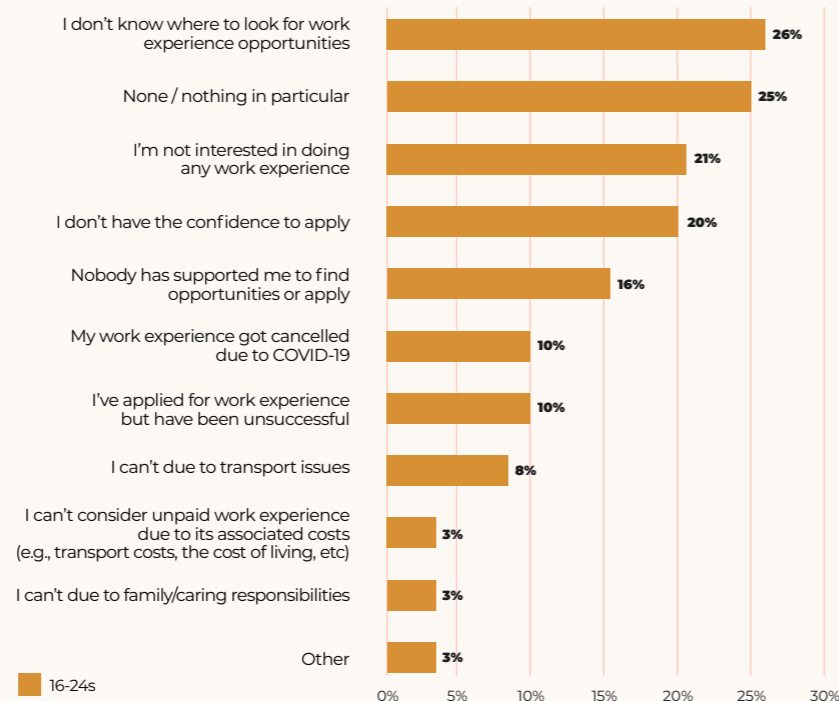
apprenticeships. This discussion reflected that young participants understood of the value of work experience – both to themselves but also to the businesses that provide it as their contribution would benefit their employer too.

### Barriers to work experience

4 in 5 (79%) young people surveyed had done some form of work experience in the past, meaning around 1 in 5 (21%) had not.

Our survey showed that a significant proportion of young people in Wales faced various challenges in accessing work experience.

Figure 5: Omnibus Survey Question | January 2023 Wave  
**Which, if any, of the following factors have prevented you from undertaking work experience?**



**1 in 4 young people who had never engaged in any work experience reported a lack of awareness about where to find the opportunities.** 20% of young people admitted that a lack of confidence was a major hurdle in applying for work experience positions.

A similar proportion, 21%, expressed a lack of interest in pursuing work experience. This finding opened up a dialogue about the perceived value of such opportunities among young people, a value that although apparent in the focus group discussion, wasn't as obviously understood among surveyed participants.

Additionally, 1 in 10 respondents had attempted to secure work experience but faced the disappointment of **unsuccessful applications.** This could be due to a variety of factors, such as possible challenges in the application process, fierce competition for opportunities, or due to the businesses they reached out to not offering any work experience placements. Transport issues, followed by caring responsibilities and costs, were also identified as barriers to undertaking work experience by some respondents.

## Finding opportunities

Participants in the qualitative research felt there was a **lack of a clear, centralised source for information on work experience opportunities.** Most said they used their school, college, university, or personal networks (i.e., friends/ family) as their go-to for such information. A number highlighted the absence of work experience programmes during their school years, leaving them uncertain about where to begin their search.

**I would have liked to have done [work experience], but I didn't think or realise it was an option. I don't think it was in my school. I didn't do Sixth Form, so maybe it was later on in school. (Participant who was NEET, 19-24)**

**I've never had the opportunity for work experience. So, I wouldn't really even know where to begin with it. (Participant who was NEET, 16-18)**

The reliance on family contacts was seen as a significant factor in securing work experience – they felt **if you weren't connected, you would struggle.** What's more, a lack of confidence was mentioned as a barrier to applying for opportunities - the process was often described as daunting.

For those living in rural areas, the scarcity of local opportunities further compounded the difficulty of finding work experience.

**I'm finding it quite hard to do that right now. I haven't found any. And every time I do find any [with St John's Ambulance] they're always packed with people, so they say, oh, sorry, we're full. (Participant who was NEET, 16-18)**

According to one participant, some peers in Sixth Form had paid a significant amount to carry out work experience courses specifically related to health roles. This was not an option for her, and she felt disadvantaged as a result, highlighting an **inequality in access** to these experiences.

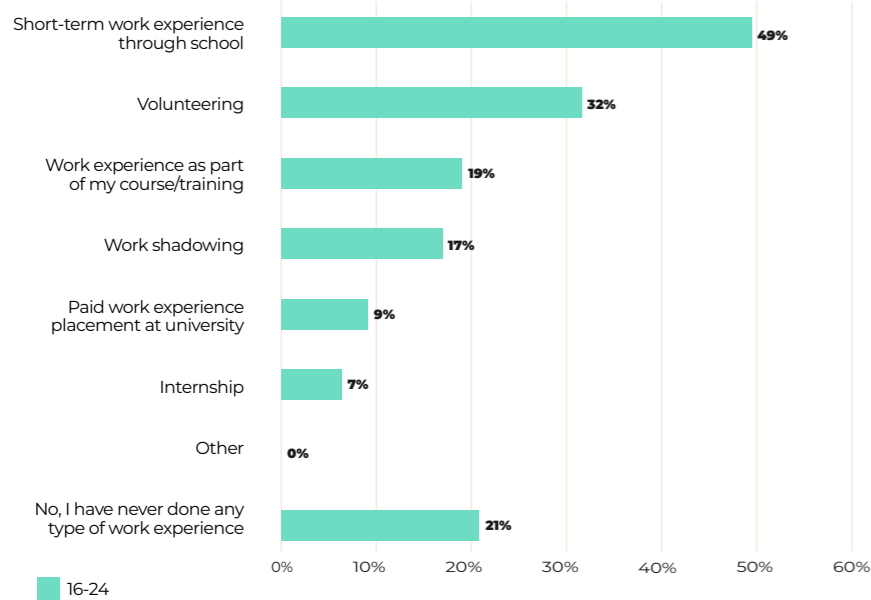


## Types of work experience

Nearly half of those surveyed (49%) had done **short term work experience through school**. Additionally, almost one-third of respondents (32%) had gained experience through volunteering, reflecting the willingness of young people to engage in community service and highlighting it as an important avenue for acquiring valuable skills and work experience. This left **1 in 5 (21%) of respondents who had never undertaken any form of work experience**.

Figure 6: Omnibus Survey Question | January 2023 Wave

Have you ever undertaken any of the following types of work experience?



In our survey, gender differences in work experience emerged, with female respondents more likely than male respondents to have participated in multiple types of work experience. 58% of female respondents had engaged in short-term work experience through school vs only 39% of male respondents, and 37% had taken part in volunteering activities vs only 25% of male respondents. The reason for this difference was unclear but could be related to female respondents having an increased level of access or inclination to undertake work experience.

Among young people who were NEET, however, the picture was not as positive. While 65% had completed short-term work experience through school, **almost a third (29%) had never engaged in any form of work experience**. This highlights a significant disparity in the experiences of young people who were NEET compared with those in some form of education or training.

## Positive experiences

For those young people who had undertaken work experience, the accounts in focus groups were predominantly positive. Young participants recounted a variety of experiences, ranging from structured programmes in educational settings, to informal arrangements made through personal networks. For many, **these experiences were pivotal in shaping their educational and career choices**, providing clarity on whether to pursue a particular path. Work experience served as an eye-opener to the existence of certain job roles and offered valuable sector-specific insights, which in turn bolstered their confidence.

**If you've already got a feel of what it's like to be in a workplace, I don't think it'll feel as intimidating if you go and work when you're 19-ish. I think that it'll ease you into it a lot better instead of being thrown in. (Participant who was NEET, 16-18)**

One notable account involved a participant who gained significant **interpersonal skills**, contributing positively to their mental health. The development of **transferable skills**, particularly in communication, was a common benefit cited by many.

**Dwi definitely 'di gwella hefo social skills fi achos bod fi'n receptionist am fatha ddau fis. A communication skills fi hefyd. (I have definitely improved with my social skills because I was a receptionist for two months. And my communication skills, too.) (Participant who was in EET, 16-18)**

In one case, a participant's work experience **directly resulted in employment**, demonstrating the tangible benefits of these opportunities.

Quantitative data reinforced this further. **90% of the young respondents who had done work experience in the past believed it had been useful to them**. 48% of all those who had done work experience before cited the enhancement of their CV as a key benefit, indicating that work experience was not just a formality but a substantial addition to their professional profiles. 46% also felt that their experiences **boosted their confidence** in applying for jobs, suggesting that work experience serves as a crucial stepping stone in transitioning to the workforce.

Beyond these immediate benefits, over one-third of respondents recognised that their work experience had been instrumental in **providing clarity** on the skills and qualifications required for their desired job roles. This suggests that work experience can be valuable in helping young people align their educational pursuits with their career aspirations. Furthermore, the same proportion of young people reported that their experience had helped crystallise their thoughts about the type of job they wanted in the future. This indicates that work experience not only equips young people with practical skills but also aids in their long-term career decision-making process.







## Negative experiences

Though most young people shared positive examples, it's worth highlighting the examples of negative experiences. Negative experiences tended to be down to **how useful or valued the young person felt** during their placement. Some felt they were more of a burden rather than a contributing member of the team, gaining little in the way of practical knowledge or skills. Around 5% of the respondents who had undertaken work experience felt they had not had a meaningful insight into the job, nor were entrusted with adequate responsibilities.

**This sentiment was echoed in the conversations with young people:**

**It's almost like you were a burden type thing they would just put you just doing something that wasn't even really what was part of the job type thing. (Participant who was in EET, 19-24)**

Age and gender also played a role in how work experience was perceived. Younger participants (aged 16-18) were more likely to find their experience useful compared to the 19-24 age group, suggesting that earlier exposure to work environments can be more impactful. Additionally, female respondents were less likely than male respondents to report an increase in confidence for job applications following their work experience.

**The contrast in perceived value of work experience was most stark among respondents who were NEET compared to respondents who were in EET.** Although 71% of respondents

who were NEET had engaged in some form of work experience, predominantly through school, their feedback was significantly less positive:

- Respondents who were NEET were 183% more likely to report that they had not gained a good insight into the job.
- 77% less likely to say it had given them the experience they needed to apply to the job they wanted.
- 56% less likely to say it had helped them decide on their future job type.
- 51% less likely to believe it had aided in understanding the necessary skills and qualifications.
- 42% less likely to report an increase in confidence in applying for future jobs.

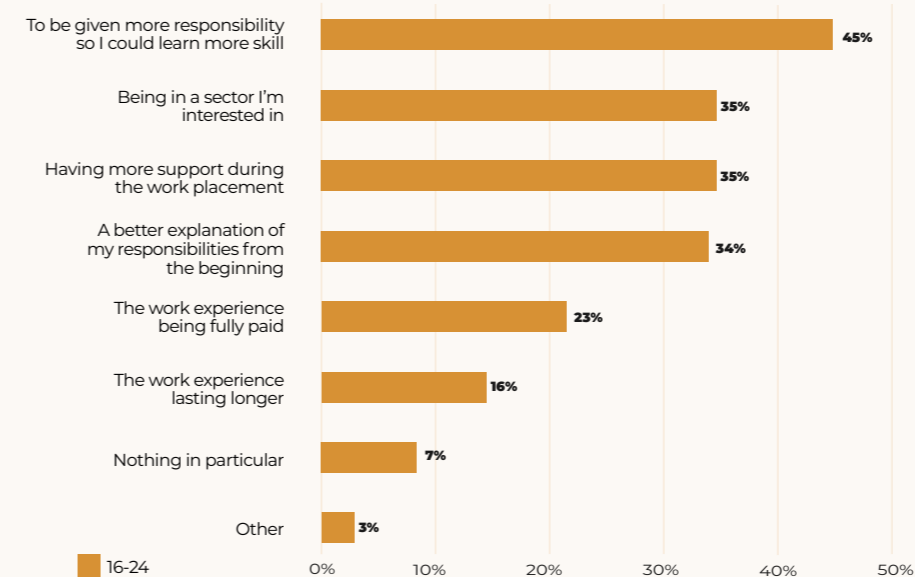
Geographical differences were also evident, with respondents from North/Mid/West Wales having been less likely to believe their work experience contributed to skill development or understanding of job requirements. However, a positive note was seen among LGBTQ+ respondents, with 75% feeling that their experience was beneficial in developing skills to enhance their CV, compared to only 43% of heterosexual respondents.

## Improving experiences

The survey revealed key areas where young people felt work experience programmes could be enhanced to better serve their needs and aspirations.

Figure 7: Omnibus Survey Question | January 2023 Wave

### What could have made your work experience better?



45% of the young respondents surveyed believed that being entrusted with **more responsibility** would have substantially improved their experience. This desire for increased responsibility reflects a keenness to engage more deeply with their work and acquire a broader range of skills. Additionally, over one third (35%) expressed a preference for undertaking work experience in **sectors that aligned with their interests.**

The same proportion (35%) highlighted the importance of **receiving more support** during their placement, whilst 34% felt that a **clearer explanation of their responsibilities** at the outset of their work experience would have been beneficial.

This could suggest a need for better communication and orientation processes, ensuring that participants are fully aware of what is expected of them and what they can expect from the experience.

Focus group participants also suggested several **improvements to enhance the value of work experience.** They advocated for a clearer explanation and promotion of work experience opportunities, ensuring equal access for all.

**Just awareness really. Promote the benefits, because I've heard of work experience, but I never really understood the benefits of what it actually could provide for me. (Participant who was NEET, 16-18)**

Young participants recommended that work experience be customised to align with individuals' career interests, aiding in their decision-making process about future directions. Additionally, they proposed for school learners to get the opportunity to do courses connected to various sectors that might be of interest to them, providing students with relevant skills and knowledge that could **inform their career choices.**



## TRANSPORT

As evidenced by our survey findings, transport continued to be a significant barrier for young people in Wales seeking to access jobs, education, or training.

**79% of young respondents reported that transport issues sometimes or always hindered their ability to reach their desired destinations for work, education, or training.**

This challenge was not uniformly experienced across demographics, with notable differences observed:

- A higher proportion of male respondents (84%) reported transport as a barrier compared to female respondents (72%).
- The issue was particularly acute among respondents who were NEET, with an overwhelming 94% having identified transport as a major obstacle.

According to the survey, the primary factor contributing to this barrier was the **availability and accessibility of public transport**. Two in five respondents pointed to the lack of public transport options to their specific destinations, while 27% cited insufficient transport services in their own areas. Additionally, 26% of young people indicated that reaching their destinations would require driving, something not possible, either due to lacking a vehicle or a driver's license. Furthermore, **the cost of public transport was prohibitive for one in four of the respondents**, making it an unaffordable option.

## Young people's transport needs

Over half of young respondents (54%) said **better public transport availability** would help them travel to the job, education or training they want. Additionally, approximately two in five (39%) claimed **more direct public transport routes** to their destination would help.

The survey also revealed that about one third of respondents saw **extended operating hours, financial support** for travel, and **increased reliability** of public transport as crucial issues. These aspects – longer timetables, affordability, and reliability – are evidently important in making public transport a viable option for young people pursuing their career and educational goals.

Figure 8: Omnibus Survey Question | January 2023 Wave

Which, if any, of the following transport issues have made it harder for you to access the job, education or training you want?

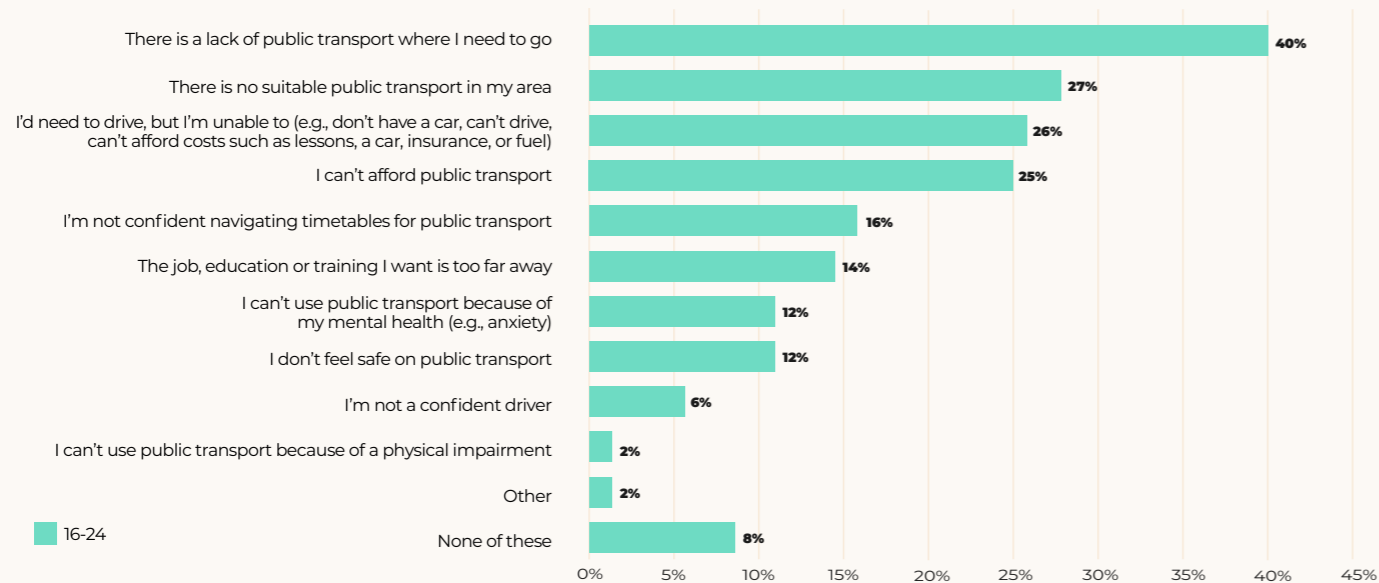
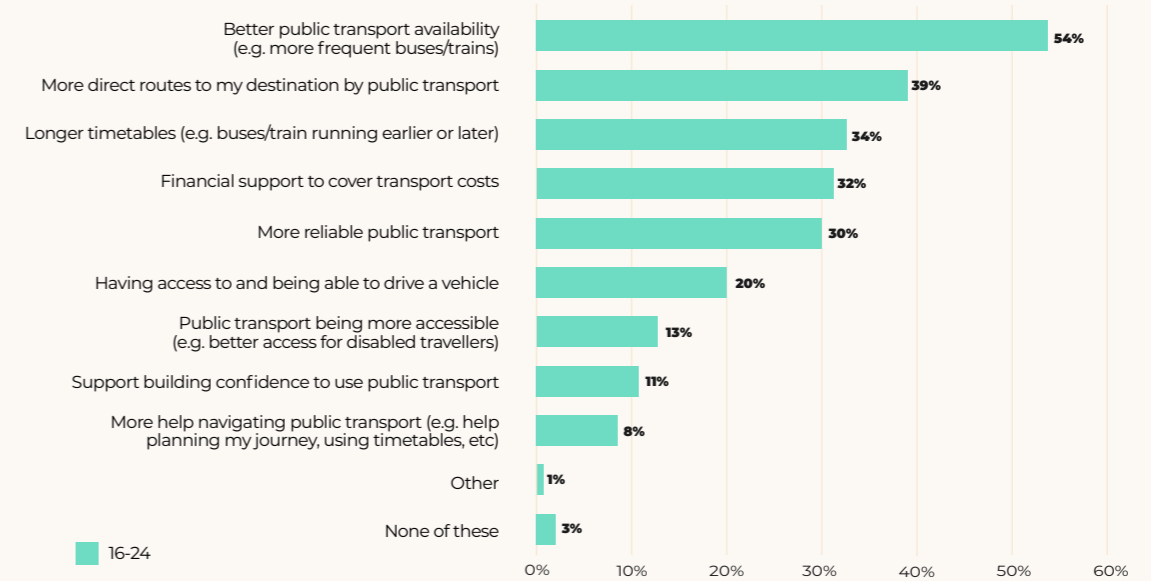


Figure 9: Omnibus Survey Question | January 2023 Wave

What would help you be able to travel to the job, education or training you want?





## Transport experiences

Young people's experiences with transport tended to be negative.

**Unreliability emerged as a significant concern**, with frequent mentions of buses being full, late, out of service, or cancelled without sufficient notice.

O'n i'n gorfod mynd i [x] weithiau, ac o'n i'n gorfod cael dau fws, so un o Fethesda i Fangor, Bangor i Llangefni. Ond weithiau 'sa'r un Bethesda i Fangor ddim yn troi fyny, neu ffordd arall rownd, so'r un Llangefni ddim yn troi fyny. So oedd o jyst bach yn frustrating weithiau... Roeddwn i yn methu boreau weithiau. Do'n i'm yn gallu mynd i mewn tan amser cinio achos oedd yr amseroedd ddim yn rili matsio. (I had to go to [x] sometimes, and I had to get two buses, one from Bethesda to Bangor, Bangor to Llangefni. But sometimes the one from Bethesda to Bangor wouldn't turn up, or the other way round, the one from Llangefni wouldn't turn up. So it was just a little frustrating sometimes. I'd sometimes miss mornings. I wasn't able to go in until lunchtime because the times didn't match.) (Participant who was in EET, 16-18)

**Train strikes were another source of frustration**, adding to the sense of unpredictability and inconvenience. The strikes often led to a complete halt of services, leaving young people with few alternatives for travel.

The cost of public transport, even when discounted through passes, continued to be a point of contention for respondents. **The financial burden remained significant**, and the perceived value of such discounts was diminished when weighed against the overall expenses incurred from regular travel.

The process of obtaining financial support for travel from further education (FE) colleges was cited as a negative aspect by one participant, with the **administrative burden** being described as a 'massive hassle'.

I had issues when it came to my travel due to not being able to claim any type of benefit, so the college itself had to somehow try and fund my travel, which was a bit of an issue because they would have to take it out of some type of loan from the college to then support me travelling back and forth, which was about £7.70 a day, which I just didn't have. But that was the only way that we were able to go round it. . . . It was a massive hassle, it was constantly having to go back and forth to one of the centres in the college itself, making sure that I've got all of my train tickets with me to show them that I've been travelling every day. (Participant who was NEET, 19-24)

This **complexity can act as a deterrent to accessing available support**, potentially leaving some students without viable options for commuting to their educational institutions.

For those in rural areas, the infrequency of bus services compounded the issue, with **long waits and limited schedules** that do not align with their needs.

I think it's a bit difficult up in North Wales because we're quite rural. For example, when I live, the buses are every hour and a half if we're lucky. (Participant who was in EET, 19-24)

The **absence of public transport** options in proximity to their residences forced a reliance on car lifts by some, which may not always be readily available or convenient, leading to a sense of isolation and dependency.

The use of online timetables and route planners was another area where some young people encountered difficulties. Navigating these **digital tools can be daunting** for some, particularly if the information is not user-friendly or updated in real-time to reflect delays or cancellations.

Lastly, **health and wellbeing concerns**, such as anxiety associated with using public transport, were significant barriers for some. The stress of navigating crowded or unreliable transport systems can exacerbate such conditions, making public transport a less viable option for those dealing with these issues.



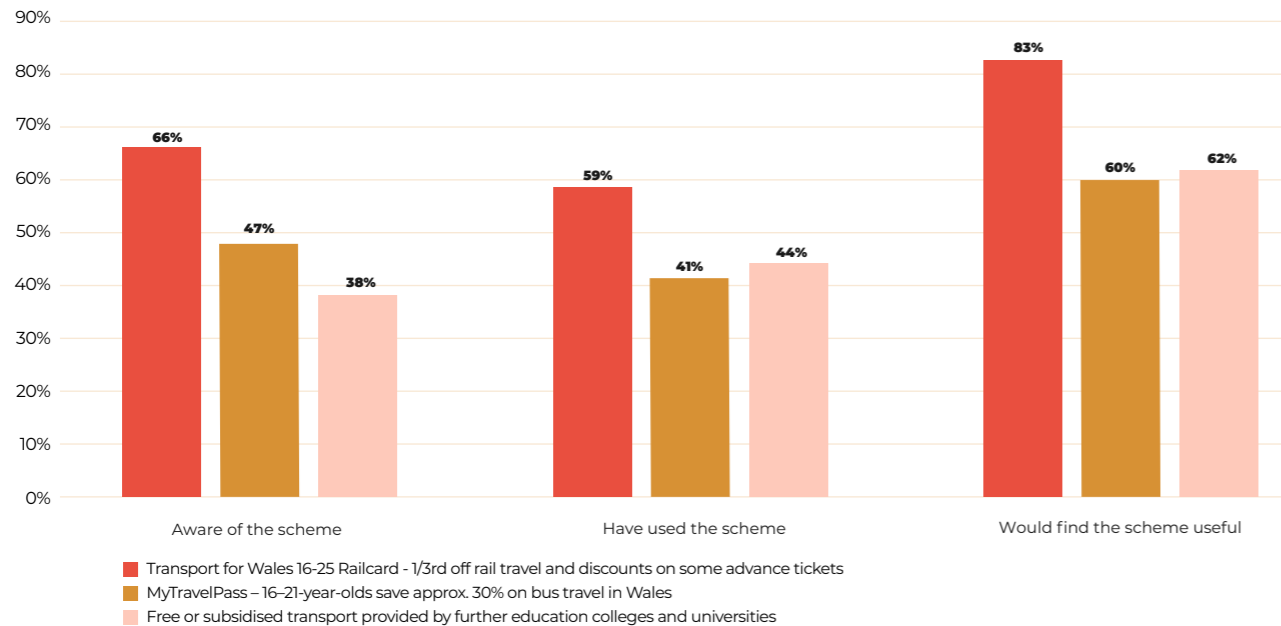


## Reactions to the available support

Given there are already transport support schemes available for young people, we set out to understand how these were regarded by young participants.

Overall, young people's perspectives on available support measures revealed a **mix of optimism and concern**. Many of the young people surveyed as well as some who participated in the focus group conversations had taken advantage of the support available but with mixed results.

Figure 10: Omnibus Survey Question | January 2023 Wave  
Transport Support Schemes



## 16-25 Railcard

16-25-year-olds (and some others in full-time education) get 1/3rd off rail travel and get discounts on some Transport for Wales (TfW) advance tickets, too.

The TfW 16-25 Railcard was the most popular transport scheme. Four in five believed it would be useful for them (83%) and almost 3 in 5 of those aware of it were currently using it (59%). During the focus group discussions, some **young people noted the financial benefits of the railcard** as it reduced their travel expenses.

**Swn i'n deud bod o'n safio dipyn bach o bres. Ac oedd o'n ffastach na mynd ar bws, so oedd hynna'n cweit handi. (I'd say it saved me a little bit of money. And [travelling on the train] was faster than going by bus, so that was quite handy.)** (Participant who was in EET, 16-18)

## My Travel Pass

16-21-year-olds can save approximately 30% on bus travel in Wales.

Whilst 3 in 5 young people felt MyTravelPass was useful, only 47% were aware of this scheme prior to being given the information. In the conversations with young people, MyTravelPass was highlighted for its practicality, with users reporting that **it had saved them money and reduced their stress** associated with travel costs.

## Free or subsidised transport

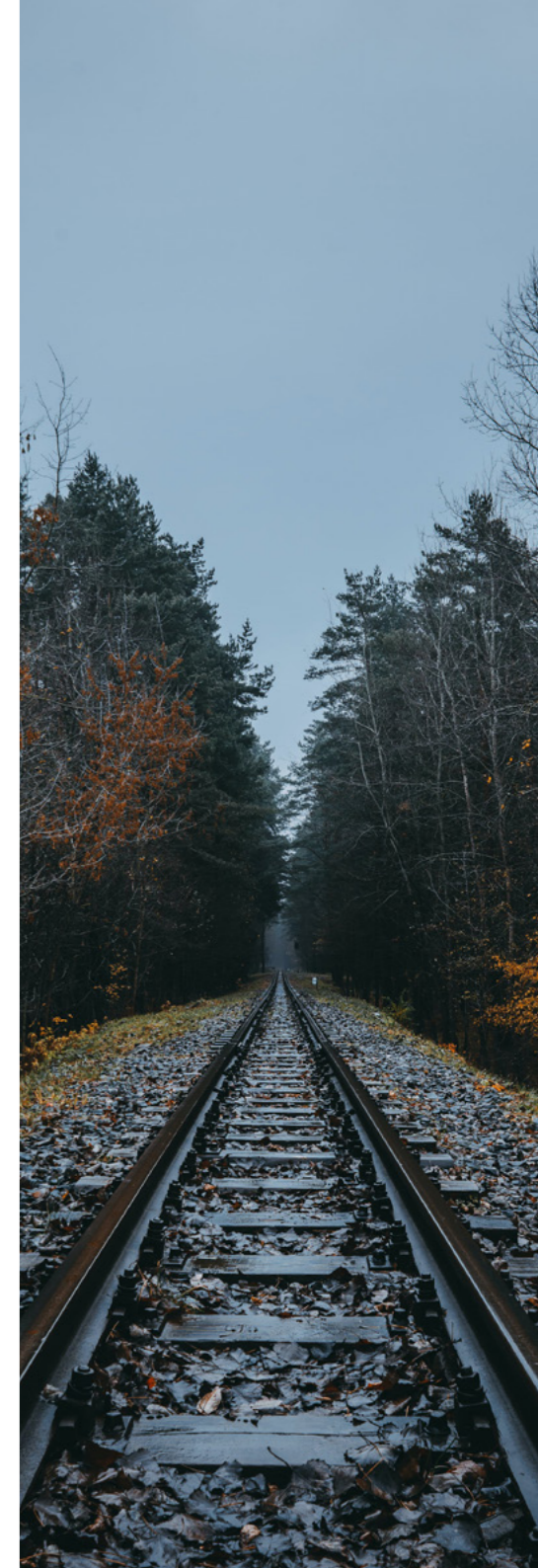
Many further education colleges and universities provide free or cheaper transport.

3 in 5 survey respondents felt free or subsidised transport provided by FE colleges and universities was useful. However, only 38% were aware of this scheme prior to being given the information. The focus group feedback on subsidised travel provided by FE colleges and universities was mixed. On the positive side, some students were **well-informed** about the support and found it **extremely beneficial**.

**It made the world of difference really. It was just a massive weight off obviously my parents' shoulders, not to pay for anything. It was obviously good of the college to offer and it was the, I think it was a 16 to 25 one. It was just a lot easier. And I don't really know what I would've done without it when I was there.** (Participant who was NEET, 16-18)

The forms of support mentioned included reimbursed travel costs, free bus passes, dedicated university bus services, and cheaper bus pass options. These measures were appreciated for **easing the financial strain** of commuting to educational institutions.

But not all experiences with subsidised travel were favourable. Some suggested there was a **cumbersome administrative processes** involved in accessing the support, which could be off-putting and inefficient. Additionally, there were comments about the **reliability of dedicated buses** for learners, with instances of them being late and causing students to fall behind on their academic tasks.





## A connected, simplified transport network

Buses are being timetabled to connect with each other and with trains; and a single, simple, easy to use ticketing system. It will consider the lack of school transport for over 16s and young people with additional learning needs; and continuing to develop the South East Wales, Swansea Bay and West Wales and North Wales Metros. This is to provide better - and better connected - public transport (bus, rail and active travel).

The concept of a connected transport network with a **simplified ticketing system** was met with enthusiasm by the young participants engaged in the discussions. They perceived such an initiative as **a potential game-changer** that could positively influence their daily commutes and travel experiences. The simplification of ticketing processes was particularly attractive as it promised to **make travel more straightforward and less cumbersome**, addressing a common frustration among travellers related to the complexity and inconvenience of current ticketing procedures.

Dwi'n licio'r syniad bod nhw i gyd yn connected hefo'i gilydd fel bod yr amserlen yn gweithio hefo'i gilydd. Mae o'n rili anodd cael bws. Dwi'm yn dreifio, so mae o'n rili anodd trefnu fo. Ti'n gorfod neud o dy hun a ti'n ffeindio dy hun yn aros am stwff lot. So mae hynna'n annoying. (I like the idea that they are all connected with each other so that the schedule works with each other. It's really hard to get a bus. I don't drive, so it's really hard to organise it. You have to do it yourself and you find yourself waiting for a lot of stuff. So that's annoying.) (Participant who was in EET, 16-18)

Participants expressed **optimism** that a more integrated transport network would not only **ease movement** from one place to another but also **expand their access** to various locations. This improved access was expected to unlock new opportunities for young people, such as better employment prospects, educational facilities, and leisure activities that may have previously been difficult to reach. A few young people highlighted their hope that such connectivity would **bridge the gaps** in the current transport system, making it **more inclusive and accommodating** of their needs.

## Support challenges

However, despite the positive feedback on the available schemes, there was a consensus among focus group attendees that **more effort was needed to promote them** to ensure that all eligible young people were aware and could benefit.

Even with the discounts, the cost of travel was still a concern, as **discounts weren't considered substantial enough**.

**When I used to work in my old job, I feel like I was paying so much, I had to get a train then a bus to work. . . . [The 16-25 Railcard] definitely helps a lot, but then at the same time it still builds up after a while. It'll help for a period, then if you're going every single day, it's still god knows how much.** (Participant who was NEET, 19-24)

This feedback may **highlight a gap** between the support available and the actual needs of young people, particularly when it comes to managing travel expenses.

Young participants from rural areas expressed scepticism about the impact of current support. They felt that the measures in place would not substantially improve their situation due to the unique challenges posed by **rural transport infrastructure**, which often included less frequent services and longer distances to travel.

The survey echoed much of the insight from focus groups:

### Age restrictions and eligibility

Many young people found themselves ineligible for the schemes due to age restrictions, with 51% being over the age limit for MyTravelPass and 10% nearing the age cut-off for the TfW Railcard.

### Convenience and accessibility

The convenience of trains and buses was reported as a concern, with 19% finding trains and 12% finding buses not aligning with their needs, either due to station location or route limitations. Public transport was also inconvenient for those who found it too far from their homes (5%) or those who believed it didn't cater to their destination needs (7%).

### Alternative transportation preferences

A proportion of young people had alternative transportation means, with 5% driving instead of using the railcard and 6% preferring to drive instead of using public transport provided by educational institutions. Proximity to education also reduced the need for public transport for some, with 4% stating their college or university was within walking distance.

These grouped reasons reflect the **diverse needs and circumstances of young people**, suggesting that while transport schemes are beneficial for some, they may not address the broader challenges faced by all young people in accessing convenient and cost-effective transportation.

## Suggested improvements to transport support

Young people participating in the focus group discussions suggested a range of improvements that could help enhance the transport support for people like them:

- The need to raise awareness about the existing support, as many young people are unaware of the travel discounts available to them.
- Further or new concessions on travel costs, especially for those with particular needs, such as unemployed individuals attending job interviews, low-income apprentices, frequent travellers
- More dependable public transport services to avoid disruptions in their daily commute
- Increased seat availability for disabled young people or those who experience anxiety while traveling.
- Reliable online information regarding bus schedules to help young people plan their journeys more effectively

**I didn't even realise I could get a discount on travel . . . But apparently I can. So I feel maybe they could make it a bit more obvious to people.** (Participant who was in EET, 19-24)



## CONFIDENCE AND MENTAL HEALTH

**Confidence and mental health** are ever present challenges in the lives of young people today. This chapter provides a more detailed understanding of these barriers as experienced by the young people surveyed and interviewed.

### The role of confidence

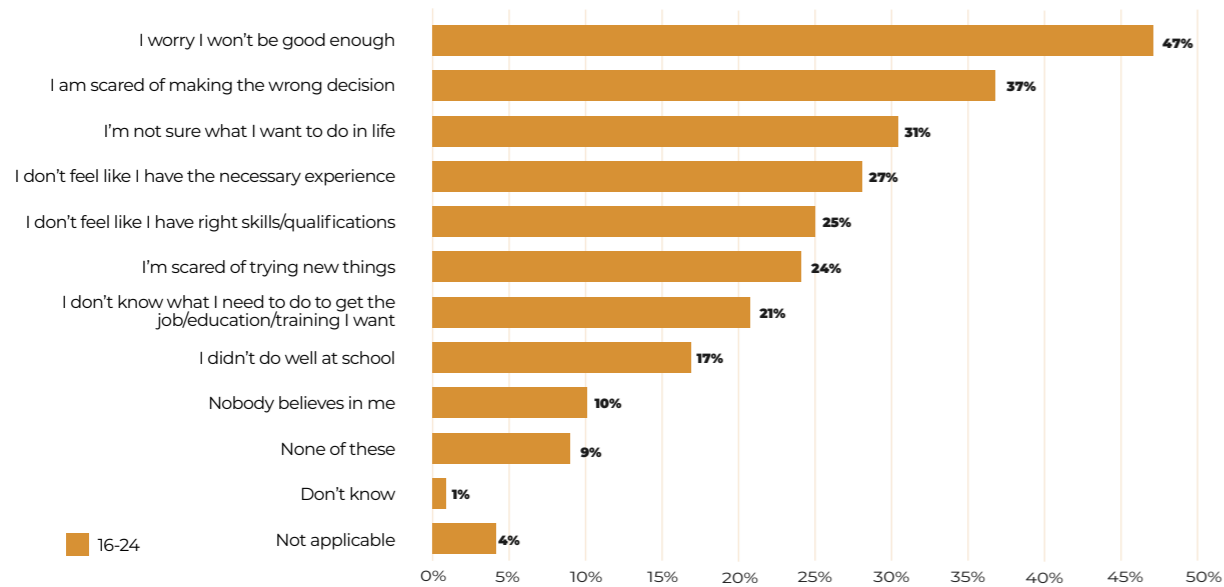
The impact that low confidence has on young people's ability to reach their aspirations cannot be underestimated. **76% of those surveyed reported that insufficient confidence was a significant hurdle in achieving their goals.**

This issue was even more pronounced among specific groups: 90% of respondents who were NEET, 86% of female respondents, and 83% of LGBTQ+ respondents cited a lack of confidence as a more substantial barrier than the average. These figures set the stage for understanding the **critical role** confidence plays in the lives and futures of young people.

### Factors driving a lack of self-confidence

In exploring the factors that contributed to a lack of self-confidence among young people, several key concerns emerged.

Figure 11: Omnibus Survey Question | January 2023 Wave  
Which, if any, of the statements below apply to you?



Nearly half of the respondents (47%) were **worried about not being "good enough"**. This was compounded by the fear of making incorrect decisions, a concern shared by over a third (37%). Additionally, 3 in 10 young people (31%) faced **uncertainty about their life's direction**, while approximately a quarter felt hindered by a perceived lack of necessary experience or the appropriate skills and qualifications.

The landscape of self-confidence issues among young people varied significantly across different demographics and regions. Around 1 in 2 young respondents surveyed in South Wales worried they won't be good enough (53%) compared to a notably lower rate of 35% across the rest of Wales. Young individuals surveyed in South Wales were also over twice as likely to fear making the wrong decision (45%) than those across North, Mid and West Wales (22%). **Gender differences were also notable**; female respondents were more afraid of new experiences and more uncertain about the steps needed to achieve their desired goals. Among age groups, 16-18-year-olds were more concerned about making incorrect decisions than older individuals, which may reflect the significant pressure and uncertainty faced by younger individuals at pivotal decision-making stages. As individuals age, it seems they may be gaining more experience and perspective, leading to increased confidence and a sense of wisdom in their choices.

**For the young respondents who were NEET, the challenges were more pronounced.** They were 42% more likely than those engaged in education, employment, or training to doubt their adequacy and were 111% more likely to be unsure about what was required to attain their career or educational objectives. Additionally, LGBTQ+ respondents were significantly more likely than the average to struggle with feelings of inadequacy and the fear of making wrong decisions. These insights paint a picture of the **varied and complex challenges** impacting young people's self-confidence.



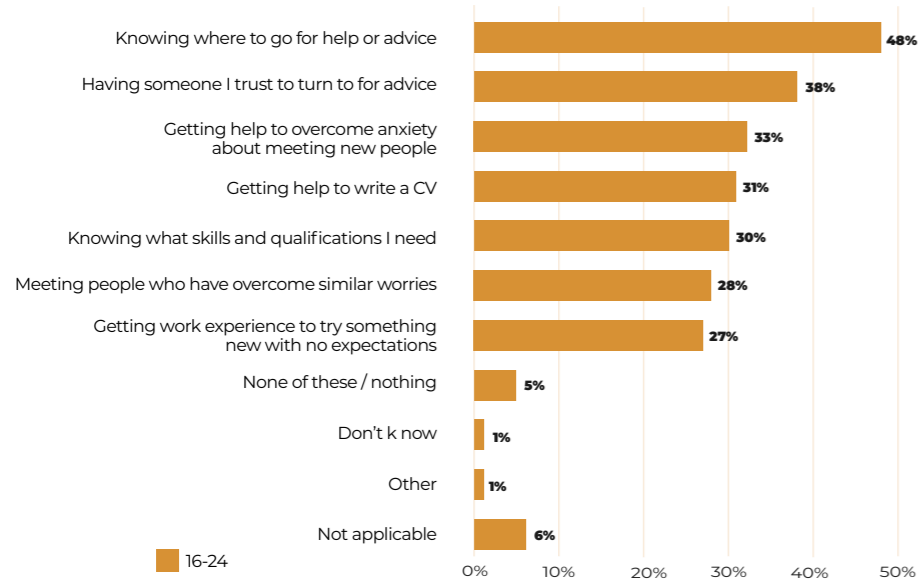
### Sources of self-confidence

For young people, the primary sources of self-confidence stemmed from the **support and encouragement** they received from others, especially from **friends and family**. Beyond this external affirmation, about one-third of young people found confidence in academic success and receiving assistance with applications and interviews.

Beyond identifying the factors that already made them feel confident, we also asked young people about what they believed could improve their confidence further.

Figure 12: Omnibus Survey Question | January 2023 Wave

#### What do you think would help improve your confidence?



**Knowing where to seek help or advice** and having a **trusted individual to consult** emerged as crucial in boosting their confidence. Additionally, aiding young people in overcoming anxiety about meeting new people (33%), assisting in CV writing (31%), and helping them identify the necessary skills and qualifications (30%) were identified as effective ways to further enhance their confidence. These findings indicate a multifaceted nature of building self-confidence in young people, highlighting the importance of both **supportive relationships and practical guidance** in helping them navigate their paths to success.





## Mental health

Nearly half of the respondents reported significant mental health challenges, with 20% having had an official diagnosis and an additional 24% acknowledging their mental health was suffering. Female respondents were notably more proactive than male respondents in seeking support from friends and family and were three times more likely to receive a formal diagnosis. In contrast, male respondents often acknowledged the need for help but were less inclined to seek it.

**I never really reached out to get any, but I probably should have. But never did. . . . I guess I just didn't really want to. I'm sure I could have and it would have been some help, but I just didn't get around to it. I wasn't in college for that long either. (Participant who was NEET, 19-24)**

Among respondents who were NEET, 37% had been formally diagnosed with a mental health condition, and 27% had sought professional help, rates which were notably higher than respondents who were in EET, of which only 20% had been diagnosed and 17% had sought professional help. These differences further highlight how poor mental health can be a significant barrier to accessing or maintaining education, employment, and training.

Geographically, roughly 1 in 4 young respondents across all regions of Wales reported that their mental health was suffering. However, individuals surveyed in North, Mid and West Wales were roughly half as likely to reach out to friends/family for support on their mental health (15% vs 28%) and generally less likely to seek professional help (15% vs 23%).

LGBTQ+ respondents were about twice as likely as those who did not identify as LGBTQ+ to have a diagnosed mental health condition and to have sought professional help.

60% of young people reported that their mental health significantly impacts them in their pursuit of jobs, education, or training, either always or sometimes. This figure dramatically increases to 83% amongst LGBTQ+ respondents and respondents who were NEET, and 92% for disabled respondents, who were about twice as likely to view their mental health as a constant barrier.

Over half of those affected by mental health issues cited anxiety about meeting new people (56%) as a primary concern. Nearly half struggled with concentration and motivation (47%), and 43% were stressed by interviews and fear that their mental health will hinder their success.

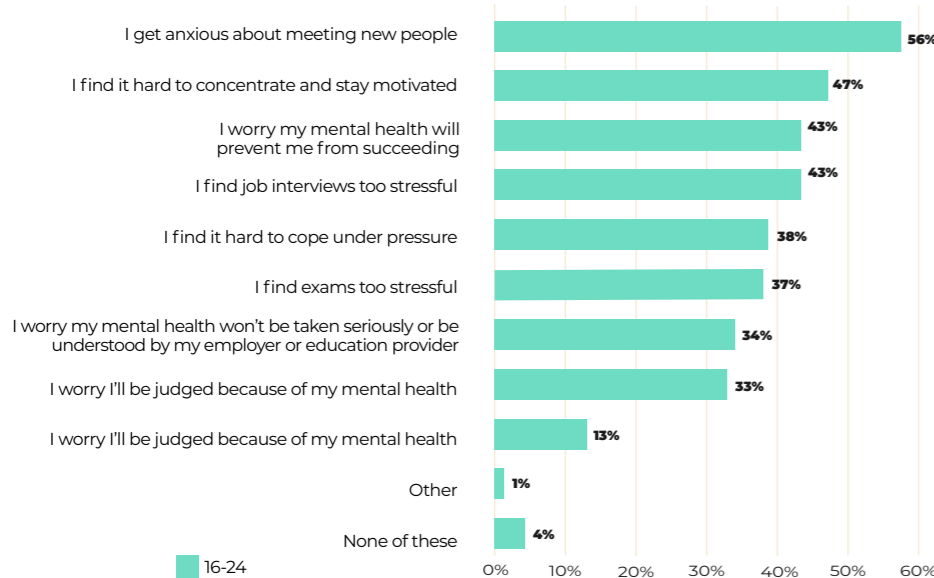
**The whole interview process can be quite intimidating. It's something I've never really been a fan of. I know it's made to put you on the spot, but it's just not really my type of thing to be on the spot to be honest. (Participant who was NEET, 16-18)**

Additionally, about one-third worried about being judged or not being taken seriously in work or educational settings due to their mental health.

Female respondents generally had higher anxiety about meeting new people, while respondents who were NEET particularly struggled with concentration and motivation, and feared judgment about their mental health. LGBTQ+ respondents experienced a broad range of these concerns, marking them as the demographic most affected by mental health issues.

Figure 13: Omnibus Survey Question | January 2023 Wave

Reasons why their mental health made it harder for them to get the job, education or training they want.





## Examples of situations impacting young people's mental health

A recurring theme during conversations with young people was the **profound impact of exam anxiety**, with many having expressed the **immense pressure** they feel to excel academically and secure a university education.

**There's so much pressure as well on young people. It's oh, you have to get As, Bs and Cs to go to places. [It left me feeling] quite [s\*\*\*]. (Participant who was in EET, 19-24)**

This pressure was not isolated to their academic pursuits but extended to their **social interactions**, where the return to social environments post-COVID-19 had been a source of stress for some.

Moreover, the digital age seemed to have **exacerbated self-doubt**, often magnified by the pervasive nature of **social media**. Young individuals frequently **compared themselves to their peers**, leading to a belief that others were invariably more qualified or better suited for roles they apply for.

**Just because how competitive it is and everyone is so social media heavy at the moment and you see like people doing better than you. So it's just having it in your head that you're not doing well as someone else. So it's something that just stops you from maybe even getting the qualifications before you even get into a job. (Participant who was in EET, 19-24)**

The challenge of **balancing a heavy workload with education and training commitments** had also been a significant strain on young people's mental health. Some noted their feelings

of underachievement and the persistent worry that they may not be making the right decisions regarding their future.

**You have to get these certain grades so then you're stressing about making sure you get the right grades to carry on. And then finding the time to study and everything, if you had a part time job. So yeah, I found that quite stressful like that. (Participant who was NEET, 19-24)**

The **uncertainty and stress associated with redundancy** only compounded these concerns, leaving many to grapple with the question of 'what next?'

The **support system** (or the perceived lack thereof) was also a critical factor affecting young people's mental health. Some young people reported poor experiences with educational support services and inadequate employer support:

**I struggled in high school, I didn't really like it, I didn't think it was a place for me because I got judged and stuff, because I've got a processing disorder. I found some of the teachers there didn't really give me the support I needed sometimes. My parents had to try and talk to the teachers for me, because I don't like bringing it up much. (Participant who was NEET, 19-24)**

Additionally, the struggle to **manage study time while working** was a common hurdle, with many having expressed a need for more flexible and understanding support structures in both educational and work settings.

## Positive support experiences

Some participants identified actions taken by their educational institutions and employers to support mental wellbeing. These included:

- Actively promoting available support services
- Employing pastoral coaches for guidance and support
- Offering bereavement counselling services
- Implementing peer support training programs
- Establishing dedicated spaces for mental wellbeing
- Offering in-school counselling and open dialogues with teachers as additional support
- Utilising Zoom for accessible mental health support
- Workplace mental health initiatives, such as fostering an open culture
- Providing access to dedicated mental health staff in the workplace
- Offering round-the-clock online counselling services
- Universities proactively offering support during the pandemic to address student mental health

The role of supportive family, engaging in physical activities, and music as personal wellbeing strategies were also noted.

**I think they're doing enough because at my college we got mental health people. . . . They wear different badges . . . so people know who they are. (Participant who was NEET, 16-18)**



## Reactions to existing support

Most participants said that they were **unaware of the mental health and wellbeing support** from the Welsh Government and other organisations shown during the discussion. Overall, they felt that from the support illustrated, a good deal was being done. However, some participants felt that **more needed to be done to raise awareness.**

Although none of the participants were aware of the Mental Health Toolkit, they quickly acknowledged its potential benefits. Young participants appreciated that the toolkit was easily accessible online, which was a significant advantage for those who found the prospect of speaking to someone about their mental health difficult.

**I know from personal experiences that I don't think I'd be happy speaking to somebody who I didn't know. (Participant who was in EET, 19-24)**

The comprehensive coverage of relevant topics within the toolkit was also seen as a positive feature, indicating that it could serve as a **valuable resource** for a wide range of mental health issues. Despite these perceived advantages, some participants expressed **concerns about the toolkit's format,** which could require quite a bit of reading that could potentially lead to information overload.

**I think it's a lot of reading. For somebody with mental health issues, I don't think they would want to sit there and just read loads of information. (Participant who was in EET, 19-24)**

There was also some **lack of awareness** with participants behind the funding for mental health support in further education colleges. However, participants welcomed the news of **investment in learner support,** which many agreed would have been beneficial during their college years.

However, some participants expressed **discomfort in discussing mental health issues** with staff members with whom they were not familiar, and some young people stated a preference for more informal and accessible forms of assistance. Additionally, a concern was voiced by one young person that support seemed to be more focused towards older learners in school/college rather than including younger learners who might find it harder to come forward with an issue.

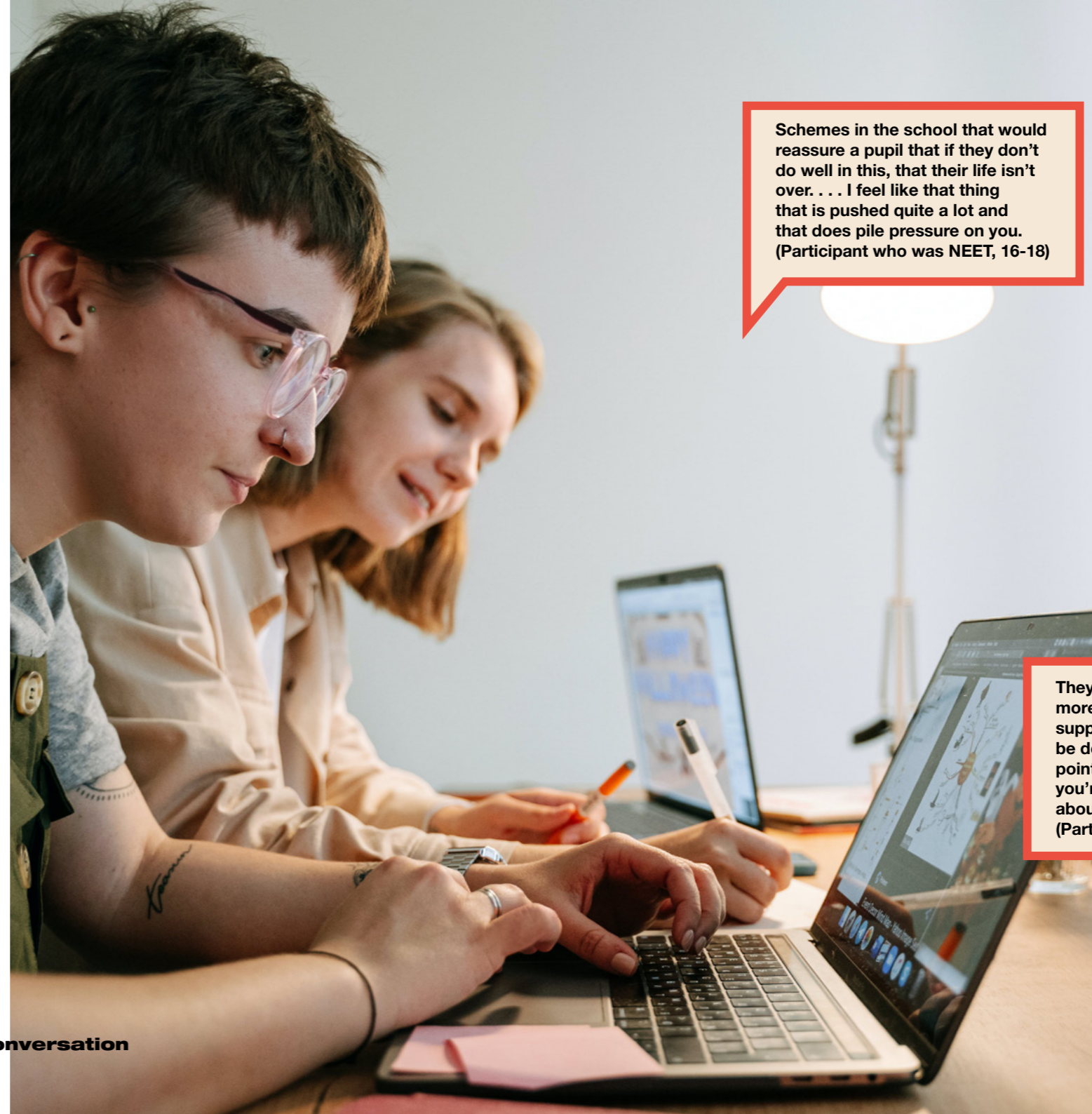
**I just feel with mental health, it's you have to go and help yourself before anything. You see a lot of people who have mental health and who won't even speak about it or won't even say anything about it. So they're spending the money, you need to gather people to actually speak about it first so they can get the help that they need. (Participant who was in EET, 19-24)**

**Schemes in the school that would reassure a pupil that if they don't do well in this, that their life isn't over. . . . I feel like that thing that is pushed quite a lot and that does pile pressure on you. (Participant who was NEET, 16-18)**

Some young people suggested a few ideas outlining how to **enhance existing support:**

- Raise awareness of the support available, including the routes to access it.
- Make support feel routine and informal, so that people are more comfortable in using them
- Continue normalising asking for help with mental health so people feel confident to ask for help.
- Offer more tailored, 1-2-1 support in school and offer it to all.
- Offer tailored support to help with decision-making, to relieve anxiety in this area.
- Promote alternative routes so that those who struggle with mental health issues linked to exams are aware of other options.
- Ensure younger learners in school feel supported (i.e., not just those in the last few years at school).

**They're saying they're going to do more to tell young people about the support available, but they should be doing that already. There's no point bringing out more stuff if you're not already telling people about the stuff you've already got. (Participant who was NEET, 19-24)**







**02**  
**EXPLORING KEY**  
**TRANSITIONAL PERIODS**



**To effectively support young people in Wales in achieving their goals in education, employment, and training, it's crucial to delve into their experiences during the critical transition stages at the end of Year 11 and Year 13.**

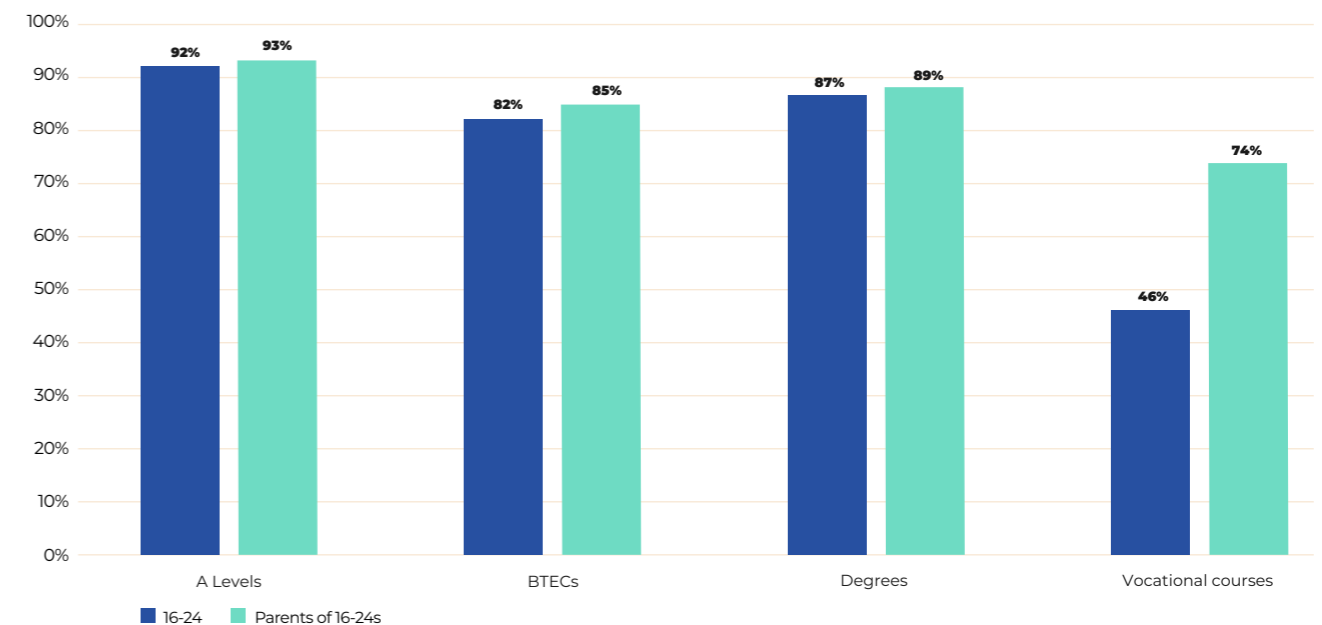
**AWARENESS OF OPTIONS**

Our quantitative survey sought to uncover young people and their parents/carers' awareness of the qualifications and programmes / interventions available to young people.

As indicated in the graph below, there were **high and similar levels of awareness** of most qualifications amongst 16-24-year-olds and their parents/carers, with roughly 9 in 10 having heard of A Levels and degrees, and circa 8 in 10 knowing of BTECs.

However, parents were much more likely to have heard of **vocational courses** when compared to young people (74% vs 46% respectively). The variation in the number that had heard of vocational courses might suggest that there was a **lack of understanding** of a BTEC as a vocational qualification.

Figure 14: Omnibus Survey Question | June 2023 Wave  
Which if any of the following qualifications have you heard of?



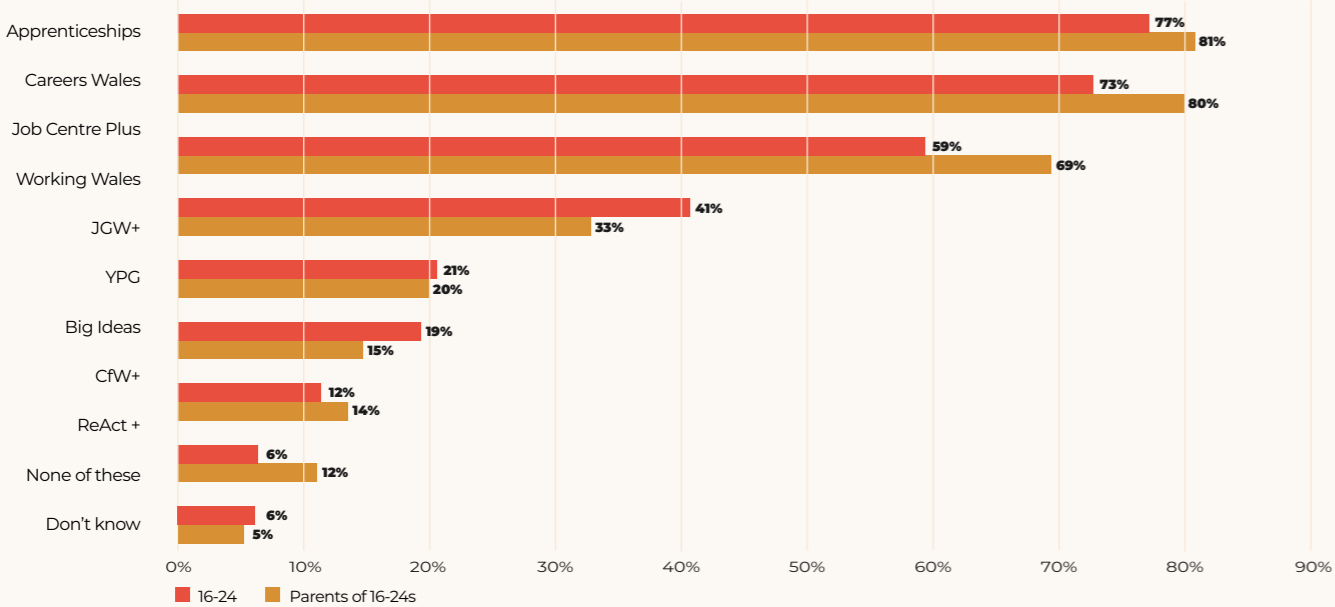
Parents seemed to be more in the know about this route, with 74% aware of such courses, whereas **only 46% 16-24-year-olds surveyed had heard of the term.**

Programme / intervention awareness levels were generally similar between young people and parents, with Working Wales, JGW+, YPG & ReAct+ slightly higher amongst 16-24-year-olds:



Programme / intervention awareness levels were generally similar between young people and parents, with Working Wales, JGW+, YPG & ReAct+ slightly higher amongst 16-24-year-olds:

Figure 15: Omnibus Survey Question | June 2023 Wave  
**And which if any of the following programmes/ interventions that can help support young people with their education, training or employment have you heard of?**





## YEAR 11 TRANSITION

### Young people's aspirations

In the transition period of Year 11, young participants in Wales illustrated a **diverse range of aspirations and experiences**.

#### Highly specific aspirations

Some had **clear and ambitious career goals** in mind, such as working for large international companies like Lego, becoming authors, game designers, or professional footballers, but they often considered these dreams as unrealistic and faced various challenges in pursuing them.

**My dream job I want to do would be a famous author, and as of now I'm looking to work in retail basically.**  
(Disabled young people group, 19-24)

While many of these determined individuals chose relevant courses in education or training to align with their aspirations, some ultimately discovered during their courses that their initial career choices were **not the right fit**, leading to course changes or even dropouts. Conversely, a subset of participants had stayed in education because of **peer pressure** or family choices, with limited consideration of alternative paths.

#### Financial aspirations

A small number of participants exhibited a strong focus on financial independence as their primary goal after Year 11. This group, predominantly composed of male participants, aspired to make money through various means, including self-employment in fields like barbering.

**I started a business when I was 17 and been doing that since then. . . . I quite enjoyed making money myself rather than working for someone. When I first started working that's when I realised.**  
(Participant who was in EET, 19-24)

For some, making money was even seen as a means to afford returning to education, highlighting the interconnectedness of financial stability and educational choices.

#### Unclear aspirations

In contrast, many participants found themselves **uncertain about their future** pathways or interests during Year 11.

**I think the main one for me also was not really knowing what you want to do. Not knowing what career path to take. I don't feel like there's enough help, you're just pushed into, . . . everyone's like you should know what you want to do.**  
(Participant who was NEET, 19-24)

Many felt that this stage was **too early to make definitive career decisions**, and some attributed their uncertainty to the challenges encountered whilst being home-schooled during the **COVID-19 pandemic**, which limited their exposure to guidance available in school. One participant faced permanent expulsion from school, reporting that they received minimal support and subsequently grappling with uncertainty about their next steps.

### Young people's next steps

Studying A levels was the most likely next step after Year 11 for the vast majority surveyed (70%), outlining the **prevalence of following traditional routes at this age**. The second most popular step amongst respondents to our survey was full-time employment, with 1 in 10 (9%) having chosen to follow this path. Amongst those surveyed, only 6% had chosen (or were planning to choose) a vocational qualification, and only 3% had opted for an apprenticeship. Nevertheless, data from the 21/22 academic year published by Gov.Wales indicates that the actual rates of young people in Wales taking up vocational qualifications (either full time or part time) after Year 11 were much higher at 36%.

While the sample was small and should be treated with caution, there were some **demographical differences** to note. Male respondents were more likely to opt for full-time employment (14%) compared to female respondents (3%), whereas female respondents were more inclined towards vocational learning (7%) compared to male respondents (2%).

Furthermore, **social grade disparities** revealed that respondents from higher social and economic groups (ABC1) were more likely to attend school sixth form (61%) than respondents from lower social and economic groups (C2DE) (34%). Conversely, respondents from lower social and economic groups (C2DE) were more likely to enter full-time employment (15%) and part-time employment (8%) compared to respondents from higher social and economic groups (ABC1) (2% and 3%, respectively). Respondents from lower social and economic groups (C2DE) were also more inclined towards vocational learning (7%) compared to higher social and economic groups (ABC1) (1%).





## Sources of advice

Various sources of advice and guidance played **pivotal roles** in shaping the decisions of young participants during their transition periods.

### Formal sources of advice

**School teachers emerged as influential figures**, particularly in advising students to continue their education and pursue A levels. They offered valuable support during sixth form evenings, providing a platform for students to discuss subjects of interest and explore potential academic pathways.

**I think we were prepared for it. The second you sort of got into Year 11 they started talking to you about what you're going to do next and where do you want to go, and are you going to go to Sixth Form to do your A levels, are you going to go to college to do your A levels, or are you going to follow a completely different course and go to college.**  
(Participant who was in EET, 19-24)

However, it's important to note that not all participants received comprehensive career guidance from their schools, with **some feeling that the educational institutions prioritised exam success over offering guidance on diverse career options.**

**When I was in school we had a careers advisor but we didn't ever really see her but they made us do this careers test like what careers would be good for you. Obviously at the time we were doing our exams and no one really cared about it that much.**  
(Participant who was NEET, 16-18)

**It's sort of stressful when you're having to think about studying for your exams and making sure that you do the best that you can, and having to decide what do I do next, because that next step then is sort of deciding your life path really.**  
(Participant who was in EET, 19-24)

**Special schools played a distinct role in supporting students** during their sixth form years by providing a range of courses, including opportunities to explore activities like the Duke of Edinburgh award and life skills. These offerings aimed to help students develop a broader skill set and discover their interests beyond traditional academic subjects.

In contrast, **the effectiveness of interactions with Careers Wales varied** among participants, and the disruption caused by the pandemic sometimes led to missed work experience opportunities.

**I talked to the [Careers advisor] two times, then I tried arranging another meeting [...] but she was busy, so I ended up not even having another meeting.**  
(Participant who was NEET, 19-24)

In one case, however, Careers Wales had helped a 16-year-old participant devise a plan B. She had wanted to join the army, but a health problem left her uncertain what to do. Careers Wales advised that she could still be part of the armed forces by studying to become a lawyer for the army:

**So wedyn oedd gennyn ni bobl o Gyrfa Cymru yn dod i ysgol i siarad hefo ni am be oedden ni isio neud. So nes i siarad hefo hi amdano fo, ac oedd hi'n gofyn be arall o'n i'n meddwl neud, a nes i feddwl am lawyer. So o'n i'n siarad hefo hi, ac wedyn os 'sw'n i yn cael y qualifications lawyer fi, 'sw'n i'n gallu mynd i neud army lawyer wedyn. So wedyn o'n i'n siarad hefo Mam amdano fo, a 'naethon ni ddau ddeud mai hwnna 'di'r ffordd orau i fi fynd ymlaen. (So then we had people from Careers Wales come to school to talk to us about what we wanted to do. So I talked to her about it, and she asked what else I was thinking of doing, and I thought of a lawyer. So I talked to her, and then if I get the lawyer qualifications, I can go to be an army lawyer. So then I talked to Mum about it, and we both said that was the best way for me to go on.)**  
(Participant who was in EET, 16-18)

## Informal sources of advice

**Family members also exerted a significant influence on decision-making**, offering recommendations and conducting research to guide their young relatives.

**[My mum] was a massive help and really great guidance. That being said, I did feel a little bit rocky still because there was no professional guidance or help whatsoever to make the decision [on which college course to apply for].**  
(Participant who was NEET, 19-24)

**I wasn't really sure what to do when I left school but I ended up doing a carpentry apprenticeship. . . . I don't know [why I chose that]. My uncle recommended it and then I just kind of started from there.**  
(Participant who was NEET, 16-18)

Friends played a similar role, with some participants basing their choices on friends' recommendations, such as pursuing specific college courses or qualifications. However, **following their friends' advice did not always work out:**

**There was Sociology and I asked a lot of my friends and they said it was fun, they said they enjoyed it but when I went there, I didn't enjoy it at all. I ended up dropping out.**  
(Participant who was NEET, 19-24)

**Online information and research** also emerged as valuable resources for participants, enabling them to explore various career paths independently and make informed decisions, such as opting for a career in barbering or enrolling in business courses.

These different sources of advice

collectively contributed to the decision-making experiences of young people who responded as they navigated their transitions into further education, employment, and training. However, not all young people who responded benefitted from these sources of advice.

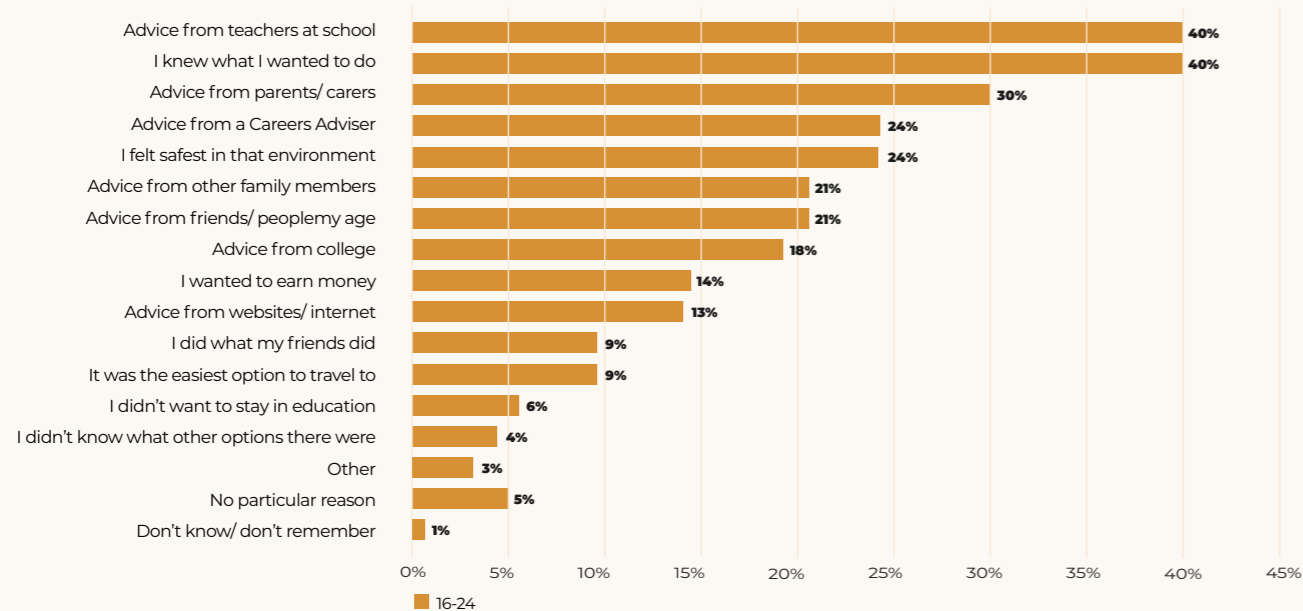




## Decision influences

In the end, multiple factors led young people to choose their next step, with external advice from teachers (40%), parents/carers (30%), and Careers Advisers (24%) being the most common.

Figure 16: Omnibus Survey Question | June 2023 Wave  
Why did you (or will you) choose that next step?



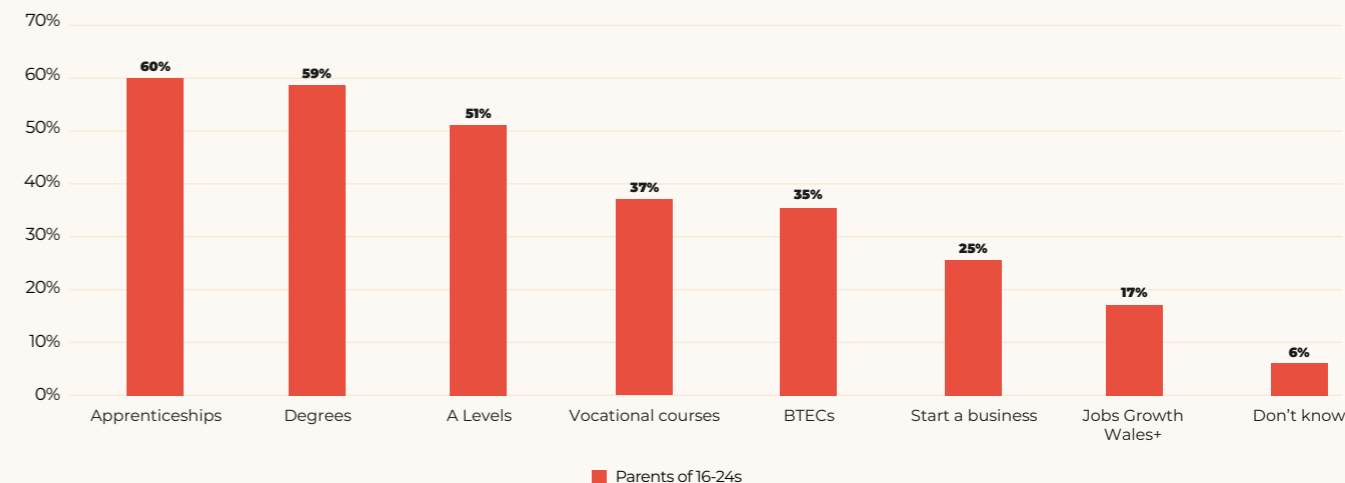
There were some demographical differences worth noting. Male respondents tended to be more likely than female respondents to base their choices on advice from most sources except for careers advisers and advice from college, which female respondents were more likely to pay attention to. In terms of social grade, higher social and economic groups (ABC1) were more likely to rely on guidance from teachers at school and from parents/carers.

Conversely, **lower social and economic groups (C2DE) were more inclined to seek advice from careers advisers and other family members** - a trend worth noting, as it exceeds advice from their parents/carers. Additionally, respondents from higher social and economic groups (ABC1) were more likely to factor in feeling safest in their environment, doing what their friends did, and the ease of travel when making their decisions.

Interestingly, **parents, who emerge as one of the primary sources of advice for young people, exhibit a propensity to advocate for more traditional and well-established educational routes,** such as apprenticeships, higher education, and A levels.

This tendency highlights the enduring influence of conventional pathways in decision-making processes. However, it also implies a **potential misalignment** between the preferences of parents and the evolving landscape of educational and career opportunities.

Figure 17: Omnibus Survey Question | June 2023 Wave  
What if any of these would you be most likely to encourage your child to do?



## Struggles with identifying sources of advice

Many expressed **difficulty recalling or locating sources of guidance,** highlighting a perceived lack of support and unclear direction, particularly when it came to job-seeking. This challenge was especially pronounced for one participant with who wasn't doing A levels, who claimed they found themselves without proper guidance.

**Most of my friends are cleverer than me so they got to sit down with people from Careers Wales and the head of year and stuff and discuss**

**their futures and that. But when it was like the lower set people, we had nothing like that, we didn't speak to any advisers or nothing. (Participant who was in EET, 19-24)**

However, others stated that they spoke to an advisor, but one respondent said they felt the advice was too general:

**We had like a careers advisor, but they didn't really help too much with stuff like that. I don't know if they did for other people, but for me they just sort of asked you what your career aspirations were, and**

**then if you didn't really know they would just say, 'Just follow what you're already doing' type thing, or, 'Just do what you love' type thing. But that wasn't really too helpful. (EET young people group, 19-24)**

Some participants showed **a willingness to follow advice even if it did not align with their own aspirations,** often relying on decisions made by supportive family members or teachers.



### Limited guidance

Several participants expressed the **sentiment that schools predominantly promoted A levels as the primary post-GCSE educational pathway**, with vocational options receiving comparatively less attention. This imbalance in emphasis left some students with limited exposure to alternative educational and career routes.

Awareness of apprenticeships among the participants varied, with several individuals reporting not having received clear explanations about them from their schools. Instead, they **often relied on information provided by family members** or other external sources to gain a better understanding of apprenticeship opportunities.



### Timing of advice

The timing of advice and decision-making played a significant role in the experiences of the participants during the transition period. For those who already had a clear idea of their aspirations, they often had ample time to make informed decisions about their educational and career paths. **Interactions with careers advisors and the services provided by Careers Wales were generally seen as appropriate**; however, some participants found it challenging to fully engage with these resources due to the intense focus on their GCSE exams, which created a competing demand for their attention.

**I'd say talk more about when you finish school instead of teachers keep going on about doing exams, like talk about what's next after school life.**  
(Participant who was NEET, 16-18)

Interestingly, the lockdown period during the pandemic unexpectedly provided a **unique window for reflection** and decision-making for some participants. The temporary pause in normal routine allowed them to think about their aspirations and explore potential paths more deeply.

When it came to the **ideal timing for advice**, participants had varied views on when was best to start receiving such counsel and guidance on their future education and career paths. Some felt that the beginning of Year 11, aligning with the transition from GCSEs, was suitable.

**Gawson ni neb i siarad yn iawn hefo ni am tan jyst cyn exams Blwyddyn 11 ni. So dwi'n meddwl dylen ni wedi cael yr help 'na bach mwy buan. (We had no one to speak to us properly until just before our Year 11 exams. So I think we should have got that help a little sooner.)**  
(Participant who was in EET, 16-18)

Others suggested an earlier start, like Year 9 or 10, before choosing GCSE options, to allow for more informed decisions without exam pressure. A few were unsure whether to start at the time of choosing GCSEs or after getting exam results.

**I feel like kind of a split because you kind of need to start looking at what you want to do before you choose things and go into your exams, but you don't really think until you have your results and you know how you've done what you really could do with that.**  
(Participant who was NEET, 16-18)

Some worried that discussions from Year 9 might be too early, as students were still exploring interests. These differing opinions may highlight a need for **flexible timing in offering guidance**, considering individual readiness.



## Levels of preparedness

### Areas young people felt least prepared for

Our quantitative survey asked 16-24-year-olds about their transition to their next step and how well prepared they felt they were across a variety of elements. **Overall, they felt least prepared when it came to financial aspects and confidence in making new friends.**

Figure 18: Omnibus Survey Question | June 2023 Wave

### When moving to your next step after school how well prepared did you feel in terms of...? Net NOT WELL PREPARED



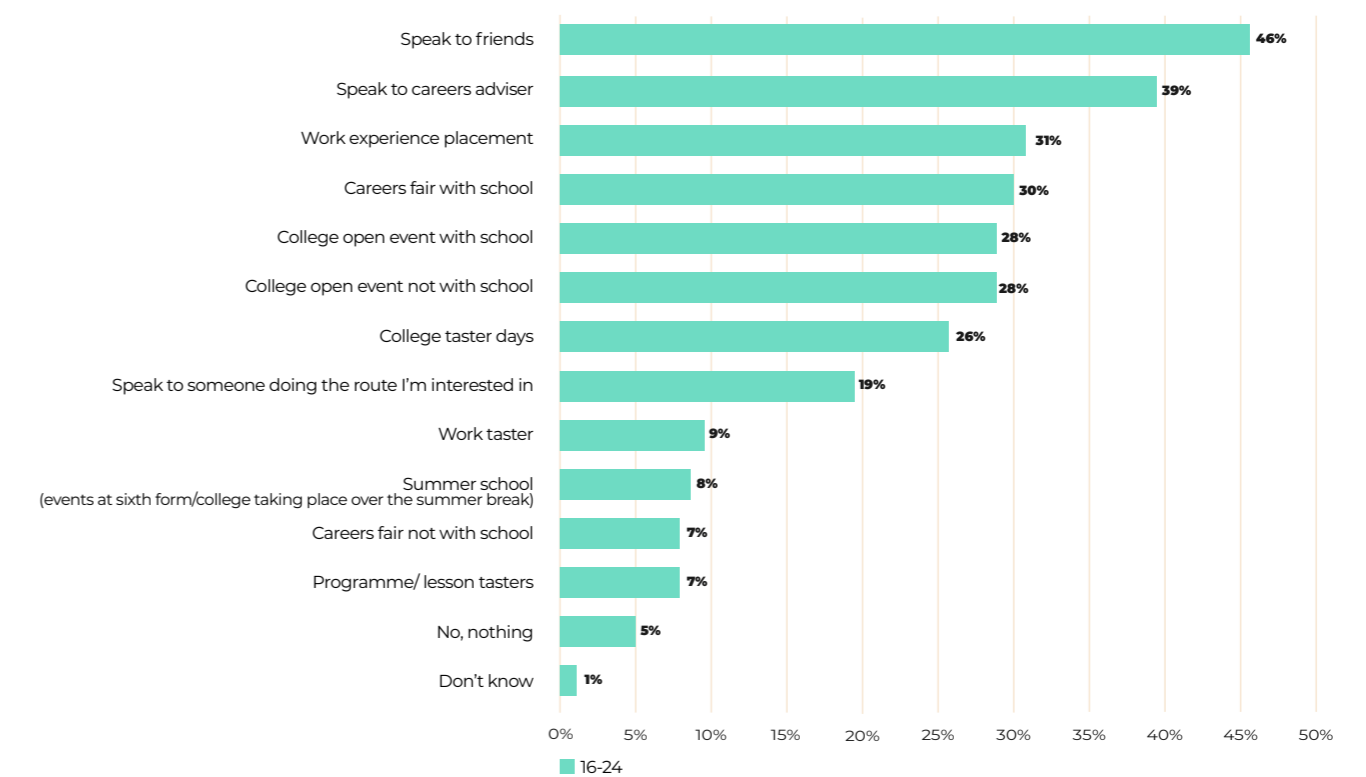
Some demographics felt better prepared for certain elements than others. 16-18-year-olds and respondents from higher social and economic groups (ABC1) felt better prepared when it came to managing money and opening bank accounts. However, respondents from higher social and economic groups (ABC1) expressed one of the lowest levels of confidence in being able to make new friends – with over 1 in 2 (52%) not feeling well prepared compared to 39% of young people from lower social and economic groups (C2DE) backgrounds. Additionally, female respondents reported lower levels of preparedness vs male respondents in terms of understanding their employer’s expectations.

## What young people did to prepare for their next step

We then asked what actions they had taken to help them prepare for their transition and what may have made it easier. **The first port-of-call for young people to prepare for their next step after leaving school was to speak to others – particularly their friends:**

Figure 19: Omnibus Survey Question | June 2023 Wave

### Did you attend or do any of the following to help you prepare for your next step after leaving school?



Differences in how young people prepared for their next steps after leaving school were apparent across demographics. Male respondents were more likely to go to college events with their school (37%) than female respondents (19%). On the other hand, female respondents preferred going to these events on their own (39%) more than male respondents do (19%), perhaps an indication that young female respondents tend to be more proactive.





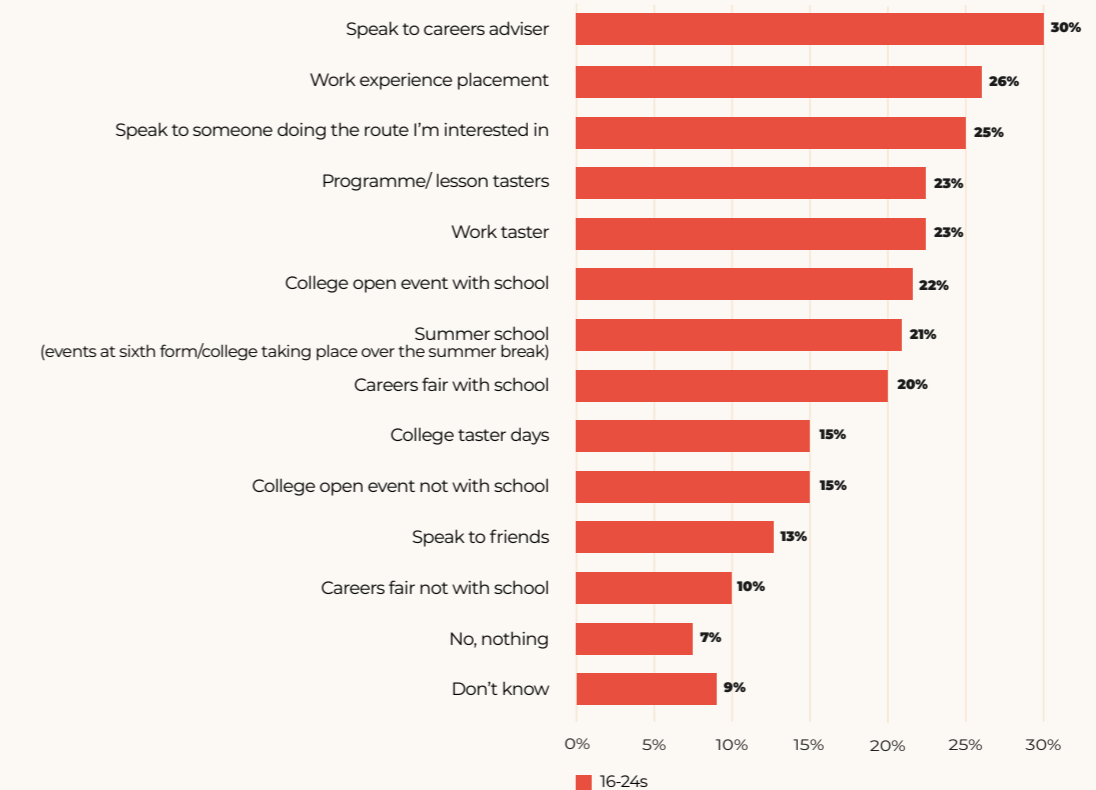
When looking at social and economic backgrounds, those from less affluent groups often chose work experience (40%) to prepare for their next step over those from wealthier backgrounds (23%). However, it's important to note that **young people who were NEET, who usually come from less affluent backgrounds, were 77% less likely to feel that their work experience helped them get the job they wanted.** In fact, only 5% thought it had been helpful.

Young people from less affluent backgrounds were also more engaged in school activities like career fairs (35% vs. 24% for wealthier groups), college open events (34% vs. 21%), college taster days (32% vs. 19%), and summer schools (13% vs. 3%). However, those from wealthier backgrounds were more likely to try out programme or lesson tasters (14%) compared to those from less affluent backgrounds (0%).

In hindsight, only 13% of young people thought that speaking to their friends would have made their transition to their next step easier. Whilst earlier insight found that turning to friends tended to be their first port-of-call to prepare for their next step after leaving school, **many eventually realised that perhaps taking their friends' advice had not been the wisest idea.**

Figure 20: Omnibus Survey Question | June 2023 Wave

Which of these (if any) would have made your transition from school to the next step easier?



Instead, most believed speaking to a **careers adviser** (30%), undertaking a **work experience placement** (26%), and **speaking to someone with insight into their chosen route** (25%) would have proven more useful.



## Young people's ideal experience

During our conversations with young people we set out to understand what could be done to improve their experiences during this important time of change.

To help ease their transition, young learners called for **support and activities dedicated to helping them make smarter choices and get ready for the education and training they'll encounter**. One fundamental element was the provision of relevant work experience or taster options, which participants widely considered as highly beneficial.

**A work taster, that would have been brilliant. (Participant who was NEET, 16-18)**

However, the consensus was that such experiences should ideally **extend beyond brief encounters**. Longer work experience periods, lasting a week or two, were deemed more effective in providing a comprehensive understanding of potential careers and educational choices.

There was also a call for **more and earlier discussions** at schools about post-GCSE options.

**Probably at the beginning of Year 11, just to prepare you for what it is like outside of high school. (Participant who was in EET, 19-24)**

Other suggestions included:

- Organising careers fairs within schools to introduce learners to a wide array of opportunities and pathways.
- Face-to-face interactions with individuals already on the career paths of interest, to provide learners with a tangible and informative perspective.
- Face-to-face open days at colleges for Year 11 learners, allowing them to explore options, chat with current students, and connect with potential employers.
- Ensuring the availability of a prominent advice service for learners whose further education (FE) college applications are rejected, offering crucial support and alternative pathways, promoting inclusivity and resilience in the face of setbacks.





## YEAR 13 TRANSITION

### Aspirations

Young people's aspirations at Year 13 reflected a **mix of clarity and uncertainty**. While many had a fairly clear idea of their intended paths, others still grappled with indecision. Some remained committed to their initial career trajectories, aiming for self-employment or to continue their education. For others, Year 13 served as a point for reassessment. Armed with newly acquired qualifications, they explored fresh opportunities, such as aspiring to become nurses or working with animals, indicating a dynamic and adaptable approach to their future endeavours.

**O'n i'n rili enjoio Health and Social, so nes i feddwl, ww, 'na i edrych mewn i ba bethau fedra i neud yn uni hefo hwnna, a daeth nyrsio fyny. A nes i feddwl, o duw, 'na i edrych mewn i hwnna, ac o'n i'n licio fo. (I really enjoyed Health and Social, so I thought, wow, let me look into what things I can do with that, and nursing came up. And I thought, oh god, let me look into that, and I liked it.) (Participant who was in EET, 16-18)**

Simultaneously, a portion of participants experienced a **pivotal realisation** that their initial aspirations were no longer suitable, prompting them to make substantial changes to their plans.

**Then I think I realised when I was maybe 18, 19 [that the course was not for me] and then I left all of that [performing course] and went into beauty. (Participant who was in EET, 19-24)**

**Uncertainty still lingered** for some, however. Four young people participating in the focus groups mentioned dropping out of their further education course without a clear direction, whilst several others recalled finishing the course (FE or HE) with no next steps in mind.

### Sources of advice

During Year 13, participants had access to a range of sources of advice, and their effectiveness varied considerably.

#### Formal

Some participants reported receiving **robust support from education centres**, particularly further education (FE) colleges.

**Coleg rili, 'naethon nhw rili helpu. A hefyd oedd un o tiwtors fi, oedd hi'n un o'r gyrfya pobl yn yr actual coleg. So o'n i hefo'r bond 'na hefo hi lle oedd hi'n helpu fi. A hefyd oedd hi'n helpu fi ar bethau eraill o'n i angen concentratio ar hefyd. Ia, wedyn pan nes i basio'r cwrs, oedd hi dal in contact hefo fi trwy'r ha' wedyn tan September. Naeth hi rhoi reference i fi gael yr swydd dwi'n gweithio yn r an. (College, they did really help. And also one of my tutors, she was one of the careers people in the actual college. So I had that bond with her where she helped me. And she also helped me with other things that I needed to concentrate on as well. Yes, then when I passed the course, she was still in contact with me throughout the summer until September. She gave me a reference to help me get the job I am working in now.) (Participant who was in EET, 16-18)**

These institutions offered **valuable assistance** with tasks such as crafting personal statements, navigating job fairs, providing references, and offering suggestions for improving CVs.

**Interactions with Careers Wales, whether in-person or online, yielded mixed results in terms of effectiveness.**

While some participants reported that they found these interactions helpful, others claimed that they did not receive the comprehensive guidance they were seeking. Online sources of advice were infrequently mentioned, suggesting that digital resources may not have played a prominent role in their decision-making process.

#### Informal

In terms of personal networks, **family members**, particularly **mothers**, and sometimes **friends** played **pivotal roles** in the decision-making processes of some participants. Family members often provided valuable support by helping with career decisions, utilising their contacts, and conducting research on potential pathways.

**I have a lot more support now from my friends and family [having moved away from a difficult situation with certain family members]. So they've obviously told me about what routes and steps I can take next and the main one was childcare apprenticeships. (Participant who was NEET, 16-18)**







### Lack of advice and support

During Year 13, participants encountered varied challenges in accessing sources of advice. For older participants, especially those seeking employment, the **difficulty was often in their ability to secure jobs without established contacts**, suggesting an importance of networking, mentorship, and work experience opportunities in their journey.

**I did gardening, I did bar work and they were all through friends and family, despite the fact of how many times I applied for a job or again, looking for a job in a window and all that, it just did not work. I'd throw in my CV anywhere I could, didn't get any of it. (Participant who was NEET, 19-24)**

Some participants faced a **lack of guidance regarding alternative pathways to university**, as they felt educational institutions primarily emphasised higher education options:

**I feel like when you're in college or like Sixth Form, they only encourage you to go uni. They don't really give that many other options. (Participant who was EET, 19-24)**

**Ond dwi'n meddwl bod 'na definitely y tueddiad o ysgolion rili pwsio uni. Ag o ran rhywun fatha fi, doedd gen i ddim ideas, y peth hawsa' neu'r peth mwya' obvious, 'O ia, jyst dos i uni a jyst gwna rhywbeth', sort of thing. (But I think there is definitely a tendency for schools to push university. And when it comes to someone like me, I had no ideas, the easiest thing or the most obvious thing, 'Oh yeah, just go to uni and just do something', sort of thing.) (Participant who was in EET, 16-18)**

Moreover, participants who had chosen to drop out of further education (FE) college found themselves in a precarious situation, **struggling to identify where to turn for advice and guidance** once they were no longer actively engaged in formal education.

**I'd say this year when we all finished college, even if you pass your qualification, you kind of get stuck on what you want to do, and there isn't anyone to guide you. As soon as you finish your qualification you just leave and maybe you can't find anywhere to use your qualifications that you were working hard for in college. That's for me because I finished all my qualifications and I'm struggling to find a seat in a barber's shop. (Participant who was NEET, 16-18)**

This lack of clarity surrounding available resources posed a substantial challenge for this group of individuals.

### Ideal experience

Young people offered valuable suggestions for **improving the support and advice they received** during this crucial transitional period.

Young people called for:

- Tailored resources for learners who have just completed their further education (FE) qualification to help them navigate the next steps
- Enhanced careers guidance within school Sixth Forms and colleges
- More careers fairs with the option of direct interaction with individuals already enrolled in courses or working in desired sectors, offering real-world insights into various career paths.
- Opportunity to get closer experiences of key sectors and industries. A chance to make contact with employers.

Young people also expressed their **interest in a dedicated service** for those not in education to help with job seeking, CV writing and support for entering the workforce for the first time. Given this service already exists in the form of Working Wales, making more young people aware of it will be key.



## REFLECTING BACK ON DECISIONS

Our survey asked young people whether they felt they had made the right choice on what to do next and why. **2 out of 3 respondents felt they had made the right choice of what to do next after Year 11, though this decreased amongst respondents from lower social and economic backgrounds (C2DE).** “Should have done something else” was the main reason for those who felt they had not made the right choice on what to do next after Year 11.

## Happiness with decisions made

In general, participants in the focus groups expressed contentment with their current positions and future plans. For many, their satisfaction extended to decisions made during these pivotal years, even if those choices had not yielded immediate success.

**I think it was a good thing I went to college, I think that's given me this perspective now that I don't want to [follow the trade that the apprenticeship was in].**  
(Participant who was NEET, 16-18)

Some younger participants had eagerly looked forward to their college experiences, expressing confidence in the paths they had chosen.

**Dwi'n reit ecseited. Ond mae o'n drist i adael ysgol, ond otherwise, na, reit ecseited. O'n i yn gwybod be o'n i isio neud, so fydd o'n neis gobeithio cyrraedd fanna. (I'm quite excited. But it is sad to leave school, but otherwise, no, quite excited. I knew what I wanted to do, so it will be nice to hopefully get there.)**  
(Participant who was in EET, 16-18)

While there were instances where participants wished for slight variations in their past decisions, **they remained reasonably content** with their present situations.

Young participants who regretted their decisions felt this way due to having felt **rushed, pressurised or not having properly understood** the requirements for a particular course or role, highlighting, again, the value of work experience.

**I didn't have a clue so I just went for college because I didn't really want to stay at school. It was a rushed decision for me and I think it was a bad decision, college, obviously because I went back to Sixth Form.**  
(Participant who was NEET, 19-24)

**To be fair I feel like I'm in a position now where I'm like I've kind of got what I would need, but then at the same time I wish I'd had more opportunities to do work experience and stuff like that, so that now I had more connections to go straight into it rather than now, I need to be looking for connections.**  
(Participant who was NEET, 16-18)

Transitioning from school to a further education (FE) college posed **emotional difficulties** for some participants, who grappled with the **unfamiliarity and self-motivation** required in college settings. Additionally, respondents with mental health conditions reported facing unique challenges in seeking advice and support, which contributed to **heightened stress levels** during these critical transition periods.

**I'd get quite anxious about it and it becomes a bigger issue with then my anxiety, my depression and then I'd**

**fall in on myself to the point where I'm going to push this aside and just give up on it, which is a shame.**  
(Participant who was NEET, 19-24)

## Further advice needed

Participants in Year 11 and Year 13 expressed a range of additional advice needs that could have significantly enhanced their preparedness for the future.

- Guidance on entrepreneurship, including aspects like business planning, financial management, and legal requirements
- Job seeking support – including interview techniques and what to include in a CV. A couple of disabled participants in particular wanted advice on finding a suitable job.
- Comprehensive information on apprenticeships – including details on opportunities, application processes and benefits
- Advice on essential life skills needed for after school – including how to manage finances and live independently





## Advice to their younger selves

We asked participants what advice they would give to their younger selves. If participants could **travel back in time to offer advice** to their younger selves, they would tell themselves to:

- Explore a wider range of opportunities and be open to them
- Follow your own dreams and do not be unduly influenced by teachers, parents, or friends
- Take the available help and support instead of trying to do everything alone
- Do not rush into plans; give yourself time to discover the right path
- Do not give up easily when faced with stress or challenges
- Do not worry too much if initial plans do not work out; there is still time to figure out what you want to do
- When applying for jobs, remember that everyone is in the same boat; be confident and maintain that confidence
- Avoid negative experiences like getting expelled from school or bullying others.

I would probably say don't be so narrow-minded about what you want to do, explore all options that are out there. (Participant who was NEET, 16-18)



It's just the constant pressure of you need these grades to do this and then you can do that and you can do this and then you're sorted. No. People need to think on what they actually want to do. (Participant who was in EET, 19-24)

Gwrando ar gut chdi, achos nes i ddim. (Listen to your gut, because I didn't.) (Participant who was in EET, 16-18)



I think to not stress as much about getting ahead because everyone is seriously in the same boat as you are. There's such a pressure, or at least the pressure I put on myself to do my best and get every interview I can. (Participant who was NEET, 19-24)



I'd tell my younger self probably just to reach out a little bit more and take more of the opportunities that I missed out on. . . . I was always a bit scared to take any opportunity because I only knew what I knew. (Participant who was NEET, 19-24)





**03**  
**THE ROLE OF**  
**COMMUNICATION IN**  
**EASING ACCESS**



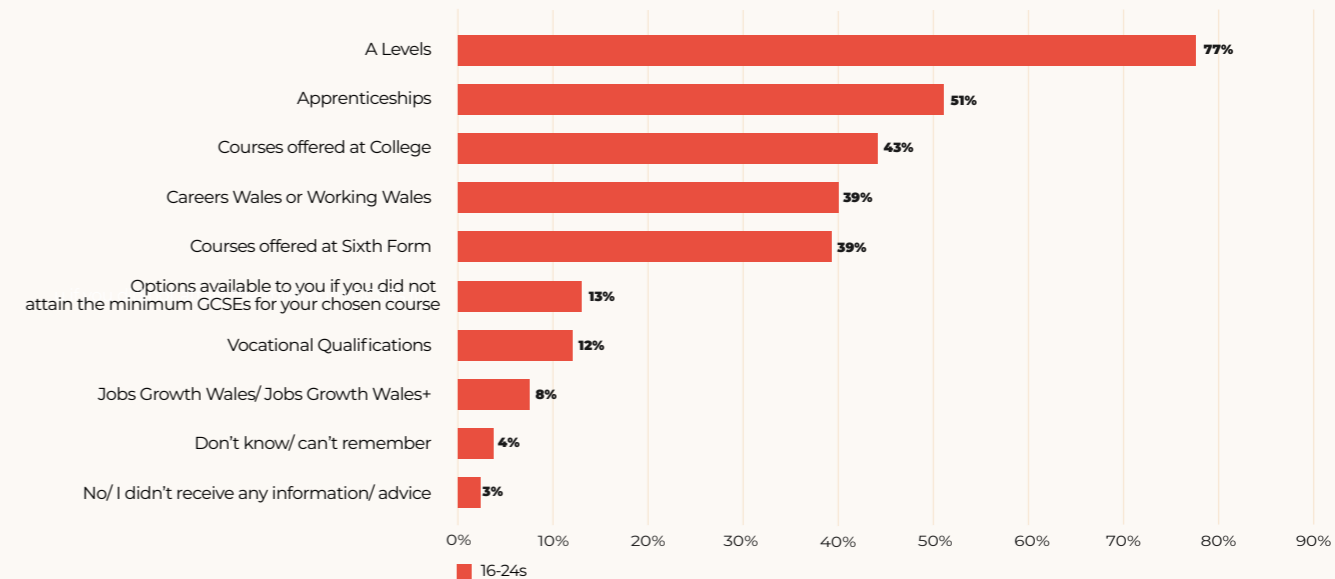
**Communication plays a pivotal role in facilitating young people's access to opportunities and resources that align with their work, education, and training goals. We explored how effective communication channels, supportive networks, and informed decision-making processes could empower young individuals to navigate their educational and career pathways with confidence and success.**

## INFORMATION RECEIVED WHILE AT SCHOOL ABOUT THEIR OPTIONS

Our survey revealed that receiving information on the more 'traditional' routes when finishing school was most prevalent. By contrast, few received information on vocational qualifications or JGW+.

Figure 21: Omnibus Survey Question | June 2023 Wave

While you were at school, did you receive information on any of the following?



While at school, 77% of survey respondents received information about A Levels, the highest across all options, followed by apprenticeships (51%), courses offered at college (43%) and courses offered at sixth form (39%).

**[Sixth Form and FE college] were talked about in school before I left. They give you the college websites to have a look at and stuff, so I think that was covered. (Participant who was in EET, 19-24)**

Contrastingly, awareness and understanding of apprenticeships was much lower amongst the young

people in our focus groups, as young participants noted that the explanations they'd been given had not been very clear or detailed in terms of what was available and how to go about applying.

**I feel like apprenticeships weren't explained properly. Nobody really knew what it actually was in my class or school. . . . They just poorly explained what it was, so nobody really opted for an apprenticeship. . . . I think they were from Careers Wales. (Participant who was in EET, 19-24)**

Only 12% of young respondents had received information at school about vocational qualifications, and only 8% about Jobs Growth Wales/ Jobs Growth Wales+.



Female respondents reportedly received information on a wider range of options available while at school than male respondents.

- Female respondents were 38% more likely than male respondents to receive information about courses offered at college.
- 44% more likely to learn about courses offered at sixth form.
- Three times more likely to learn about the options available to them if they did not attain the minimum GCSEs for their chosen course.
- Over twice as likely to receive information on vocational qualifications, and three times more likely to learn about Jobs Growth Wales/ Jobs Growth Wales+ at school.

Receiving information on apprenticeships and vocational qualifications was reportedly more prevalent amongst respondents from lower social and economic backgrounds. 56% of respondents from lower social and economic backgrounds (C2DE) claimed to have received information on apprenticeships while at school vs only 46% of respondents from higher social and economic backgrounds. The difference was even more pronounced when it came to vocational qualifications, where 19% of respondents from lower social and economic backgrounds (C2DE) were given information on this pathway vs only 6% of respondents from higher social and economic backgrounds.

63% of 16-24-year-olds who took part in the survey felt well informed about all the options available to them after Year 11 in school. This rose to 80% of 16-18-year-olds. It's difficult to know the exact reasons for this but it could be that they were not aware of the full picture at this age and so felt well informed, based on their relative experiences. In any case, it demonstrates a sense of confidence that's positive.





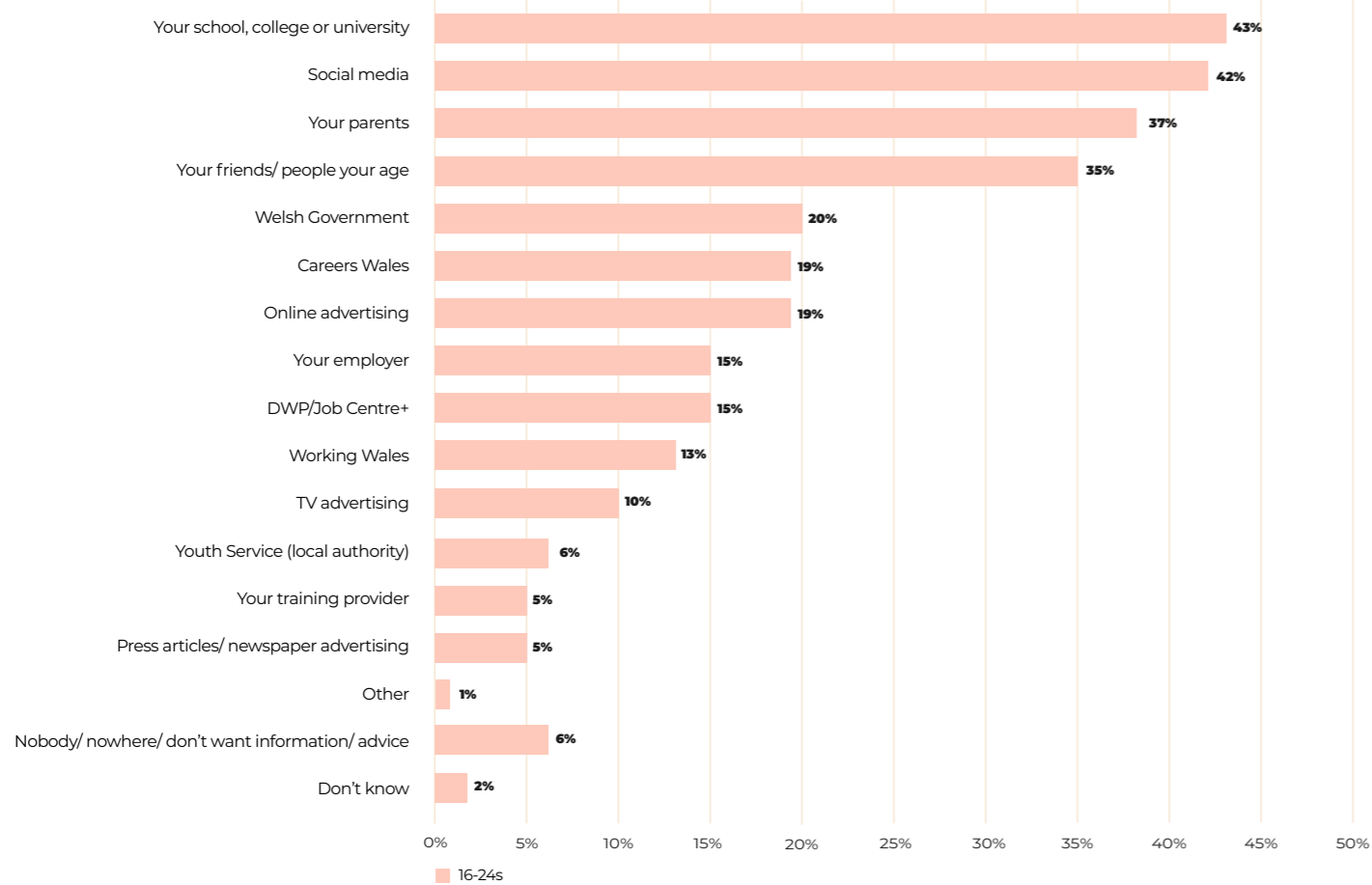
## COMMUNICATION SOURCES

### Current sources

The young people surveyed **tended to access multiple sources of information and advice** for information on education, employment and training, with educational institutions (43%), social media (42%) and family / friends (37% and 35%) being the most common.

Figure 22: Omnibus Survey Question | June 2023 Wave

Thinking about education, employment and training, where do you get information and/ or advice from at the moment?



Of the young people in our survey, **around 1 in 5 were getting information and advice from Welsh Government (20%) and Careers Wales (19%),** whereas 13% were currently getting their information from Working Wales. 19% also cited receiving information and advice through online advertising.

Demographic differences in how young people acquired information and advice regarding education, employment, and training were evident. Male respondents were more inclined to seek information from social media (51%) compared to female respondents (33%), while female respondents tended to rely on parental guidance (44%) more than male respondents (33%). Additionally, female respondents were more likely to obtain information from TV advertising (16%) than male respondents (5%).

In terms of age, 16-18-year-olds were more likely to rely on schools, colleges, or universities (58%) and parental input (61%) compared to 19-24-year-olds (38% and 29%, respectively). However, older individuals (19-24) were more prone to seek advice from online advertising (22%) and employers (18%) than their younger counterparts (16-18) (9% and 6%, respectively).

Furthermore, when considering social grade, **respondents from lower social and economic groups (C2DE) were more likely than those from higher social and economic groups (ABC1) to acquire information from sources such as Careers Wales (31% vs. 7%), online advertising (28% vs. 9%), DWP/Job Centre+ (20% vs. 9%), and Working Wales (19% vs. 7%).** These demographic variances demonstrate the diverse communication channels and sources of guidance that young individuals utilise in their pursuit of educational and career goals.



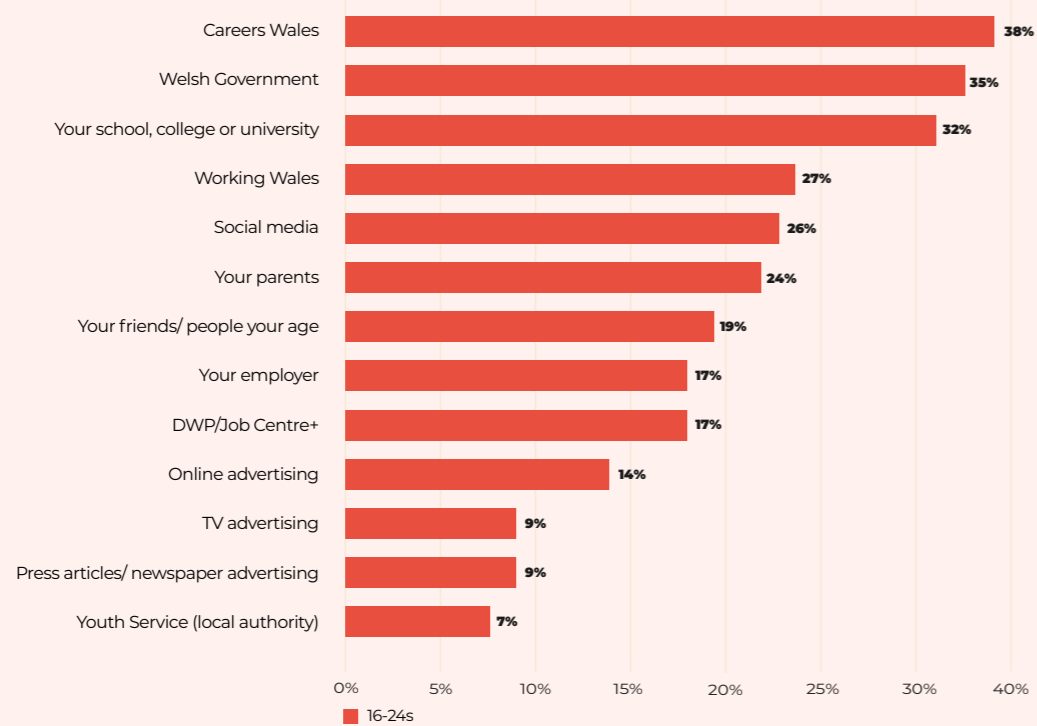


## Preferred sources

Young people wanted information and advice on employment, education and training from **Careers Wales and Welsh Government**. They seemed to prefer these sources over their educational institutions and family/friends.

Figure 23: Omnibus Survey Question | June 2023 Wave

Who would you prefer to get information and/ or advice on education, employment and training from in future?



There were a few demographical differences to highlight.

Among male respondents, 34% stated they would prefer to receive guidance from Working Wales, compared to 20% of female respondents. Additionally, 32% of male respondents would opt for information from social media, as opposed to 19% of female respondents.

In terms of age, 19-24-year-olds expressed a preference for information from various sources compared to 16-18-year-olds, including Working Wales (30% vs. 17%), DWP/Job Centre+ (20% vs. 8%), online advertising (19% vs. 0%), and TV advertising (12% vs. 0%).

Social grade disparities also revealed differences in preferred sources. Respondents from lower social and economic group were more inclined to seek information from Welsh Government (40% vs. 30%), Working Wales (38% vs. 15%), and DWP/Job Centre+ (28% vs. 5%) compared to those from higher social and economic groups (ABC1), these demographic distinctions highlight the diverse communication channels that young people favour.





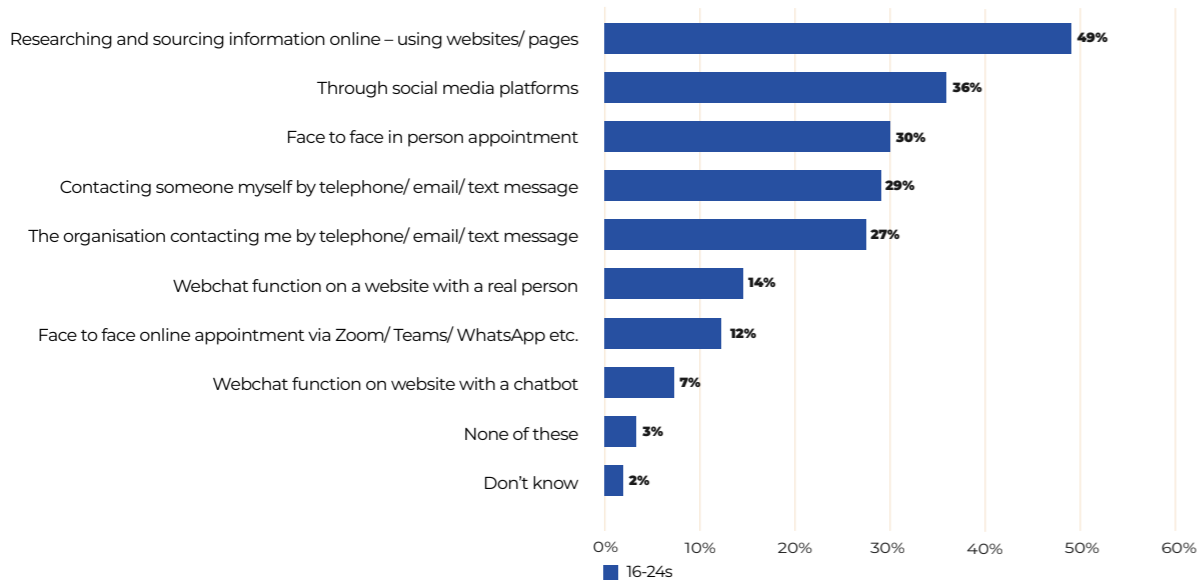
## COMMUNICATION PREFERENCES

### Accessing information

49% of 16-24-year-olds surveyed stated they prefer researching and **sourcing information online** to access information about education, employment, or training.

Figure 24: Omnibus Survey Question | June 2023 Wave

**What's your preferred way/s of accessing information about education, employment or training?**



After that, **social media platforms** were the most popular, with 36% of respondents liking to access this kind of information that way. **Face-to-face appointments were also popular with almost 1 in 3 young people (30%) preferring it**, a surprising high proportion given the common assumption that young people prefer to do everything online. This method was preferred over face-to-face online appointments, for which only 12% stated an interest.

There were a few differences of note amongst certain demographics. Amongst male respondents there was a greater preference for face-to-face, in-person appointments (36%) compared to female respondents (25%). Regarding age, 16-18-year-olds exhibited a stronger preference than 19-24-year-olds for face-to-face, in-person appointments (51% vs. 24%), contacting someone themselves via telephone/email/text message (41% vs. 25%), and having the organisation contact them via telephone/email/text message (37% vs. 24%).

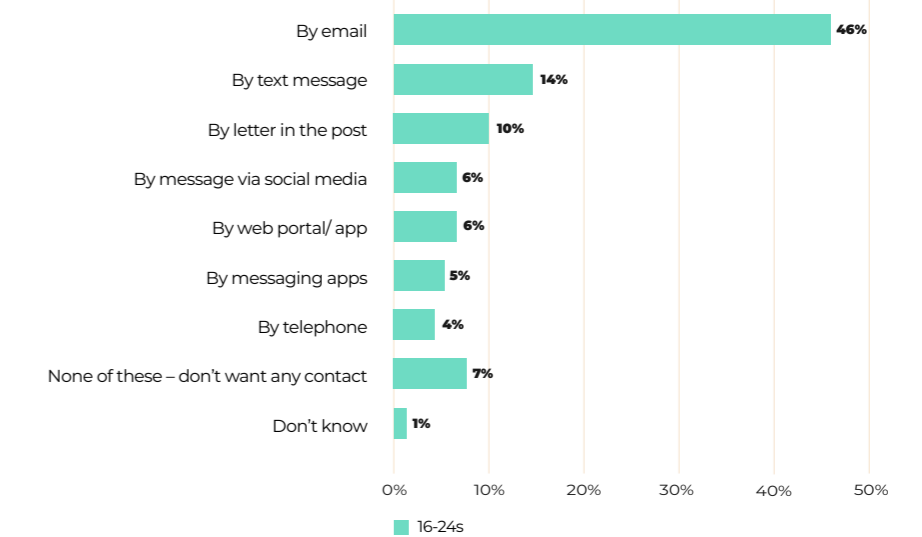
In terms of social grade, respondents from higher social and economic groups (ABC1) preferred to research and source information online using websites/pages (57%) and also showed a greater preference for face-to-face, in-person appointments (36%) compared to respondents from lower social and economic groups (C2DE). Conversely, respondents from lower social and economic groups (C2DE) in the same age group had a stronger preference than respondents from higher social and economic groups (ABC1) for contacting someone themselves via telephone/email/text message (36% vs. 23%), having the organisation contact them through these means (33% vs. 21%), and utilising the webchat function on a website with a real person (20% vs. 7%).

### Being contacted

Lastly, our survey let young people know of the intent by Welsh Government – in partnership with Careers Wales – to contact young people at different stages in their education, training or employment journey to offer them available support to help them achieve their goals. With that in mind, **we asked them what the best way would be to reach out to them to inform them of these opportunities**. By far, **email was their preferred method** to be contacted about this.

Figure 25: Omnibus Survey Question | June 2023 Wave

**Welsh Government, working alongside Careers Wales, will contact young people at different stages in their education, training or employment journey so that they can ensure they offer available support to help them achieve their goals. What is your preferred way to be contacted?**







**04**  
**THE EXPERIENCES  
OF DISABLED  
YOUNG PEOPLE**

**77**



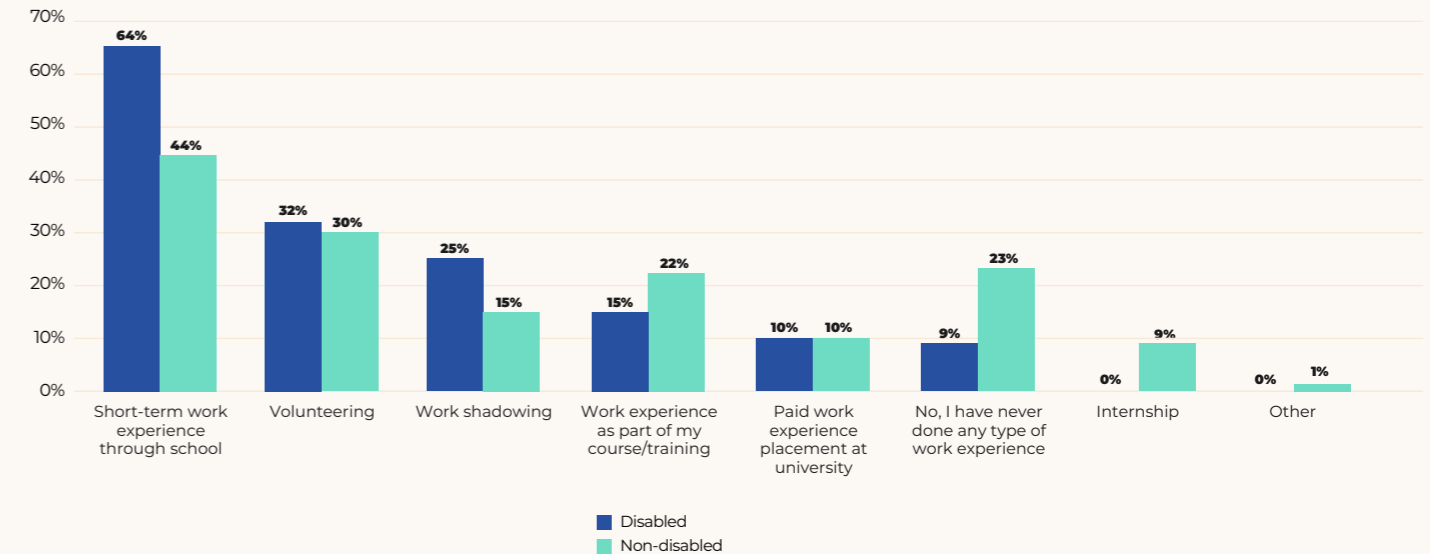
**Disabled young people were often disproportionately affected by the barriers explored thus far in this report. For the purposes of this report, our sample classified disabled young people as those with a physical or mental impairment, including those with a long-term illness or health condition.**

## WORK EXPERIENCE

At a first glance, disabled young people's exposure to work experience seemed very positive. 9 in 10 (91%) of those surveyed had done some form of work experience, predominantly through school (64%). This figure surpassed the rate observed among non-disabled young people, which stands at 79%. This indicates that **disabled young respondents were 15% more likely to have had work experience in the past than the non-disabled young people surveyed.**

Figure 26: Omnibus Survey Question | January 2023 Wave

Have you ever undertaken any of the following types of work experience?



However, disabled respondents were significantly **more likely to report dissatisfaction with their work experience** in several aspects:

- They were 140% more likely to say they had not been given enough responsibility.
- 133% more likely to say they had not gained a good insight into the job.

- 46% less likely to say it had helped them decide the type of job they wanted to do in the future.
- 35% less likely to say their experience had helped them enhance their CV.
- 20% less likely to say it had given them more confidence to apply for jobs in the future.



Figure 27: Omnibus Survey Question | January 2023 Wave

Which, if any, of the following statements regarding work experience apply to you?



### Improving their experience

Nearly 3 in 5 (59%) believed that an **increase in responsibility** during their work experience would have been beneficial, allowing them to acquire more skills. In contrast, only 38% of non-disabled respondents felt this way.

Over 1 in 3 (37%) would have preferred **work experience in a sector of their interest**. Whilst around half (44%) of non-disabled young respondents noted that more support during work placements would have made their experience better, only the 1 in 3 (34%) disabled respondents selected this option.

### TRANSPORT

Transportation emerged as a significant barrier for disabled young people in Wales when accessing jobs, education, or training opportunities. **34% of disabled young respondents consistently faced challenges due to transport issues, while half encountered these difficulties occasionally.**

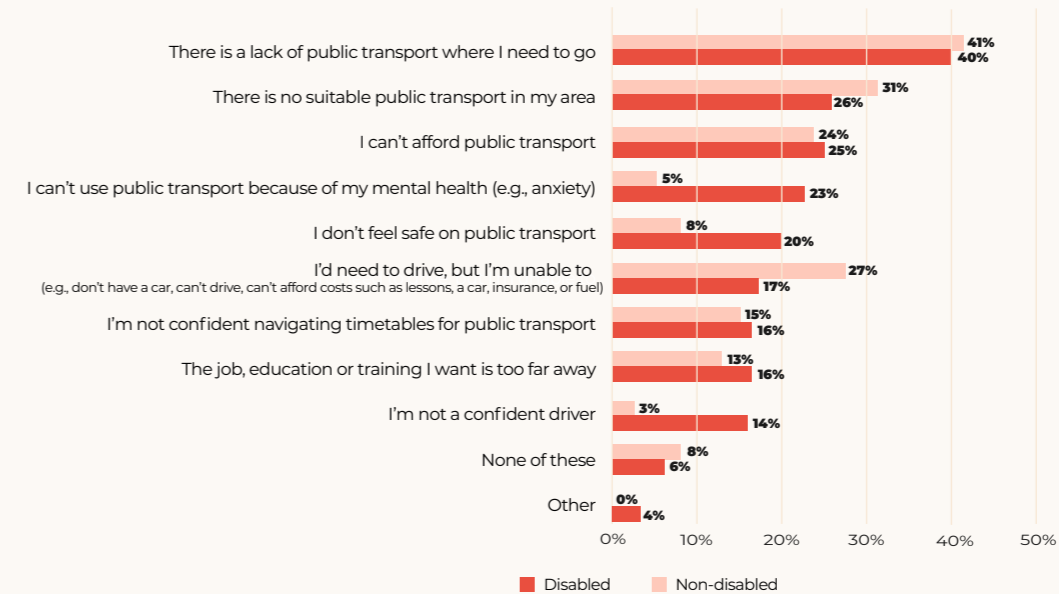
**There's too many people in comparison to the amount of buses and transport. And I am disabled so I need to sit down as well.**

**So, there's often times, especially during lunchtime and mornings and around three o'clock, four o'clock where I need to miss several buses just in order to be able to sit down because I don't have the evidence that I need to sit down yet, nor the confidence to get on a bus and tell someone I need to sit down. . . . I ended up just not getting a grade in the subject I was initially studying, because it affected my mental health so badly. In part due to the requirement of needing to catch a bus to get to college. (Participant who was NEET, 16-18)**

- The primary reasons contributing to this barrier included:
- A lack of public transport availability, especially where they needed to go (40%) but also within their own areas (26%).
  - Affordability issues, with 1 in 4 young disabled people reporting that they were unable to afford the cost of public transport.
  - Mental health concerns, which prevented 23% of young disabled people from using public transport.

Figure 28: Omnibus Survey Question | January 2023 Wave

Which, if any, of the following transport issues have made it harder for you to access the job, education or training you want?



The disparity between disabled and non-disabled young people in terms of transport barriers was stark across a few factors:

- Disabled respondents were over four times more likely

to have reported a **lack of confidence in driving** than non-disabled respondents.

- They were over four times more likely to have cited **mental health** as a reason for being unable to

use public transport compared to non-disabled respondents.

- They were over twice as likely to have expressed **feelings of unsafety on public transport.**



## Overcoming transport as a barrier

To mitigate these transport barriers, over half of the disabled respondents (55%) suggested that improved public transport availability would significantly ease their travel to jobs, education, or training. Financial support for covering transport costs was seen as a potential solution by 37% of respondents. Furthermore, 30% believed that having direct routes to their destinations would be beneficial, and **28% emphasised the need for public transport to be more accessible, such as by having better access for disabled travellers.**



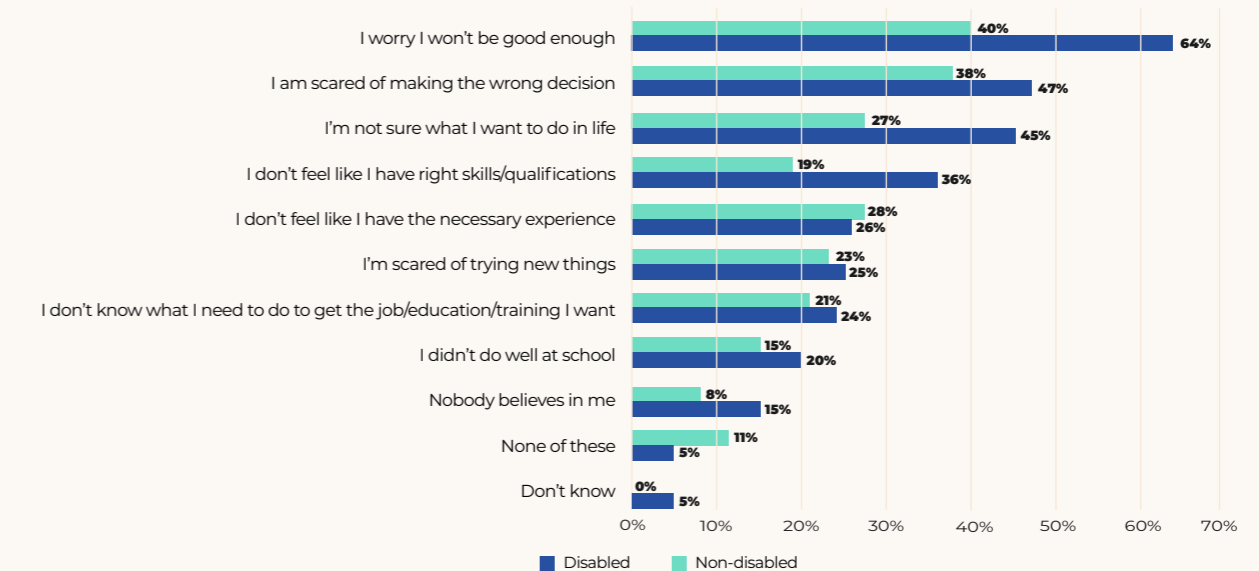
## CONFIDENCE AND MENTAL HEALTH

For young disabled people in Wales, a lack of confidence and poor mental health prominently stood out as barriers in accessing jobs, education, or training.

**A striking 92% of disabled respondents identified lacking confidence as a barrier, the highest of any other segment,** with 44% of them stating they felt this way all the time, which was twice the rate (22%) of their non-disabled peers.

To understand the underlying factors of this lack of confidence, we explored common worries and insecurities among disabled young people, especially in comparison to non-disabled young people.

Figure 29: Omnibus Survey Question | January 2023 Wave  
Which, if any, of the statements below apply to you?

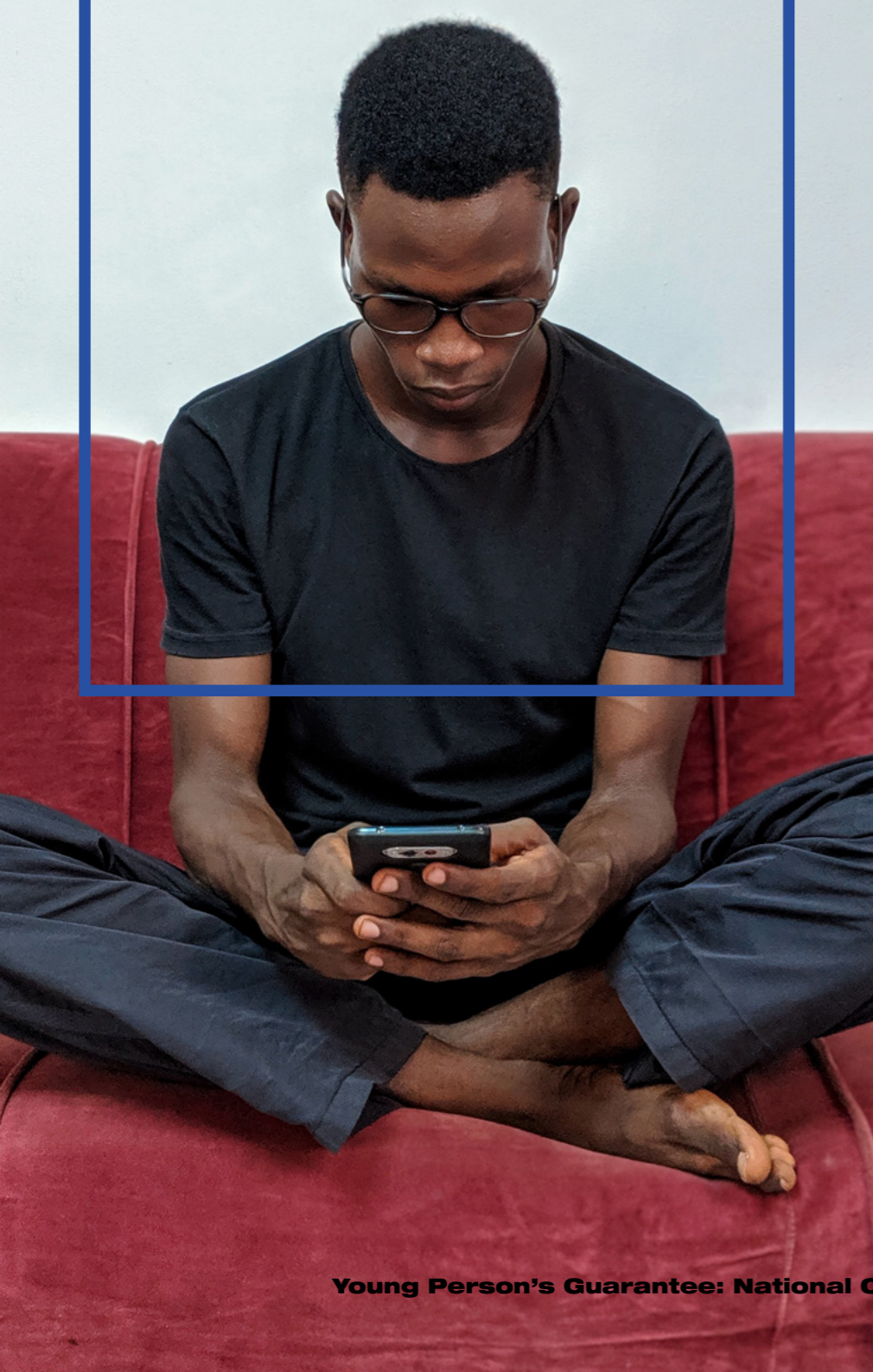


The findings were revealing - disabled respondents were:

- 89% more likely than non-disabled respondents to feel they lacked the right skills or qualifications.
- 88% more likely to think that nobody believes in them.
- 67% more likely to be uncertain about what they want to do in life.

- 60% more likely to worry about not being good enough.
- 24% more likely to fear making the wrong decision.





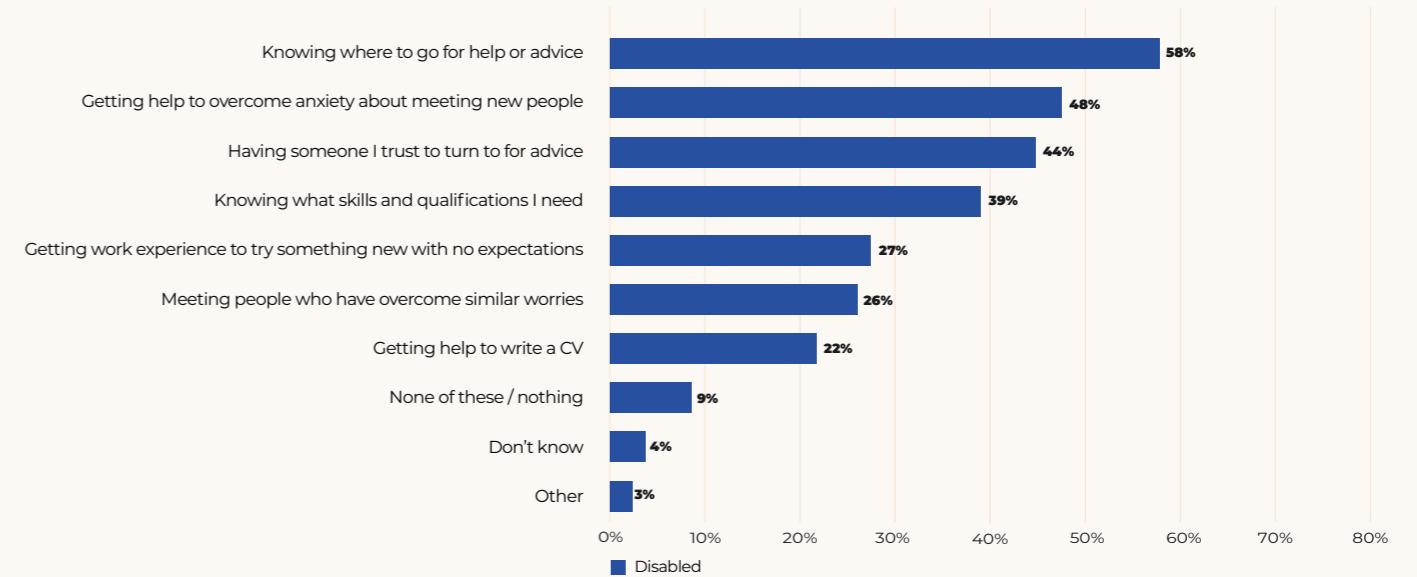
Mental health issues further exacerbated these challenges. While a quarter (26%) of disabled young people acknowledged the positive impact of being in education, employment, or training on their mental health, **90% reported that their mental health hindered their pursuit of these opportunities.** Disabled respondents were approximately **twice as likely** as their non-disabled peers to consider their mental health as a barrier.

Among those who viewed their mental health as an obstacle, 65% were primarily **anxious about meeting new people.** More than half (55%) found **job interviews excessively stressful,** and 50% struggled with **concentration and motivation.** Additionally, for 20%, the potential impact of employment on **family members' benefits** was a concern.

### Improving confidence

Disabled young people identified knowing where to go for help or advice (58%) and assistance in overcoming anxiety about meeting new people (48%) as ways to **boost their confidence.**

Figure 30: Omnibus Survey Question | January 2023 Wave  
**What do you think would help improve your confidence?**



Other supportive measures included having a trusted individual to turn to for advice (44%) and clarity on the skills and qualifications they need (39%).



## THEIR HOPES AND CHALLENGES DURING KEY TRANSITIONAL PERIODS

The journey of disabled young people in Wales during pivotal educational transitions, particularly at Year 11 and Year 13, is marked by **unique challenges and aspirations**. These transitions are critical in shaping their future educational and career pathways.

### Choosing their next step

Over 1 in 3 (35%) disabled young people surveyed knew what they wanted to do after Year 11. Yet for many others, the transition at Year 11 was typically fraught with **uncertainty and limited options**. Young respondents who did not know what they wanted to do tended to make their decision based on the **advice from others**, predominantly careers advisors (30%), teachers at school (29%) and wider family members (24%). Sometimes they would heed this advice even when it did not align with their aspirations.

Compared to their non-disabled peers, disabled 16-24-year-olds were 36% more likely to have chosen their next step based on **advice from a careers adviser** and 20% more likely to have chosen their next step based on the **advice from wider family members**.

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

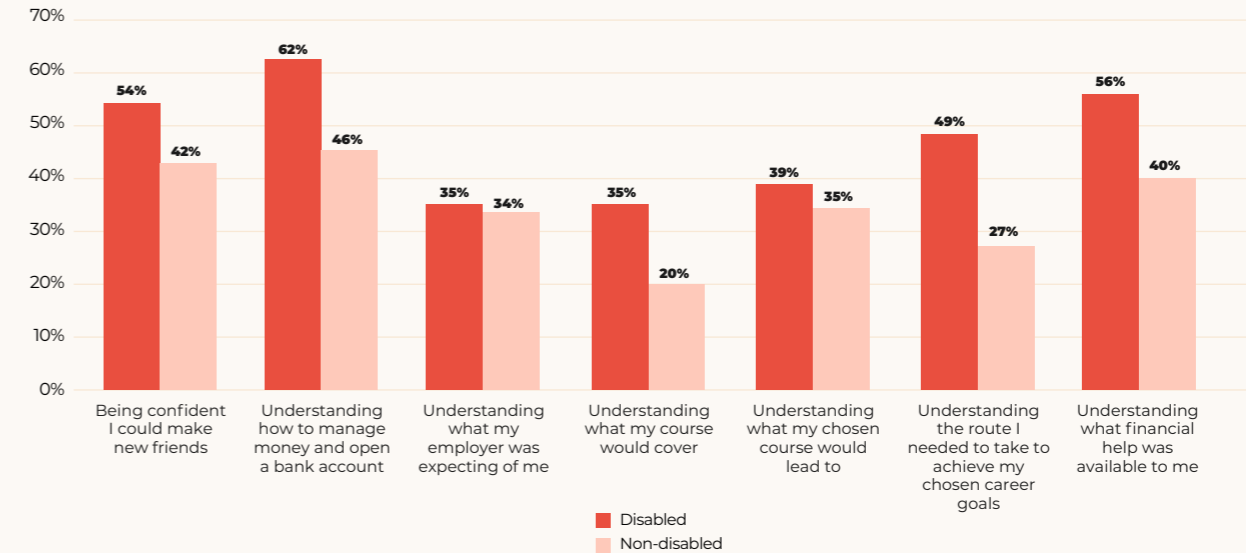
I'm not really sure what brought me to [the support organisation]. To me it felt like it kind of just happened. Like I remember someone, I don't who it was, suggesting, and again I was like, I'll give it a go, see what it's like. (Disabled young people group, 19-24)

Data from our survey corroborated that staying in education was a frequent choice for disabled young people. A significant number (59%) highlighted they opted for A levels, although this rate was lower than that of their non-disabled peers (74%). Employment, either full-time (15%) or part-time (7%), emerged as the second most common path, with disabled young people having been twice as likely to have chosen this route immediately after Year 11 compared to non-disabled young people.

Other pathways chosen by disabled respondents to our survey included **programmes supporting young people** with training or employment (5%) and starting their own business (5%).

Figure 31: Omnibus Survey Question | June 2023 Wave

**When moving to your next step after school how well prepared did you feel in terms of...? Net NOT WELL PREPARED**



However, **disabled young people also felt less prepared than others during key transition periods:**

- 54% of disabled young people felt unprepared in terms of making new friends in their next educational or career step, compared to 42% of non-disabled peers.
- 62% felt unprepared in managing finances and understanding banking, higher than the 46% among non-disabled youth.

- 49% felt unprepared in understanding the route to their chosen career goals, significantly higher than the 27% among non-disabled young people.
- 56% were unsure about available financial support, compared to 40% of non-disabled peers.

**It was quite scary for me, because I wasn't sure what to do for a job. My parents were worried. I got a bit depressed. (Disabled young people group, 19-24)**





## Sources of advice

To prepare for their next step after leaving school, **disabled young people often relied on different sources for guidance.** Nearly 3 in 5 (59%) spoke to a careers adviser, something they were 97% more likely to do than non-disabled respondents. Other notable differences amongst non-disabled respondents included:

- Disabled respondents were 136% more likely to have undertaken work experience placements.
- They were 30% less likely to have sought advice from friends.
- They were around half as likely to have attended college open events.

However, despite their efforts in seeking guidance, **only 54% felt confident about their post-Year 11 choices,** compared to 72% of non-disabled young people. Our survey revealed that looking back, 1 in 3 disabled young people believed that consulting a careers adviser would have eased their transition at Year 11. Given that nearly 3 in 5 had consulted with a career adviser previously, this suggests it may be those who had not that now appreciated this would have been useful in hindsight. Lastly, 29% saw value in speaking with someone already on their desired path.

During conversations, many disabled young people expressed **difficulty recalling or locating job seeking sources of guidance,** highlighting a perceived lack of support and unclear directions. Others showed **a willingness to follow advice even if it did not align with their own aspirations,** often relying on decisions made by supportive family members or teachers.

**My mum doesn't really think that it's going to be good [at FE college] for me, because she just thinks I'm just going to like sit around, not do much, and that's what she doesn't want me to do. (Disabled young people group, 19-24)**

**Support workers also noted the limited choices available for disabled young people** transitioning from education centres.

**For some young people that we work with, college is the only option that they've been given. (Support worker)**

This limitation sometimes resulted in young individuals opting to stay in education primarily “to have something to do”.

**When I left school, because I left school at 19, work wise I didn't know what I wanted to do, so I went to college because it was basically something for me to do. (Disabled young people group, 19-24)**

Support workers observed that disabled young people, once they completed college, encountered limited support networks and **parents were unaware of available choices.**

**So they can stay in college till they're 26. . . . So that kind of option after is a little bit of a gap. So we've got lots of young people here that are a bit older, and they've done college and now they're not doing anything, that transition, or they have to look for it themselves, which is fine, but it's really hard to get on anything, or to get where you need to be. We've got some really talented young people that could contribute, but where do they go to contribute? (Support worker)**

However, not all experiences were negative. Young people highlighted **vocational courses and independent living skills programmes as beneficial,** with supportive parents playing a crucial role in accessing these opportunities.

**In September I'll be in college. . . . Life Skills. . . . Yeah I did have help. Yes, from the school. And college teachers as well. . . . Yeah, so I had help from my mum and dad. (Disabled young people group, 19-24)**

Following school, teachers at college also helped a disabled young participant make the decision on what to do next after Year 13.

**I want to do animal care. The teachers [at the college], they helped [me decide]. (Disabled young people group, 19-24)**

Another disabled young person referred to the help they had had in **finding supported work placements and preparing for work** from an organisation funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and the Welsh Government. It had proved helpful transitioning from college (aged 19)

at a point where one participant and his parents did not know what to do once the participant had finished school. They reported **not knowing what they would have done next without the support of the organisation.**

**I didn't really know what to do. Like once I was done and my parents was thinking like, right, he's done the exams, he's finished everything, but he still hasn't looked for a job. . . . [Once with the organisation] it felt like it was more like an extended time for me to think of what I wanted to do. (Disabled young people group, 19-24)**

**I spent like about two or three years in [college], and once I was done it was like, yeah, where can I go now? What's next for me? So yeah, that's when [the support organisation] came. (Disabled young people group, 19-24)**

**I wouldn't know what to do [without the organisation], but I would do something, like go on the internet, look for a job on there. . . . I'd be lost. (Disabled young people group, 19-24)**



## The ideal experience

### Clear signposting

Participants suggested that, for disabled learners, it was crucial to provide **clear signposting** to specialist organisations that offer supported placements for work preparation. This **tailored approach** can help disabled people transition into the workforce more effectively and confidently, rather than simply continuing in education.

**I think get as much help as we need, like actually tell the teachers and school what you really want to do, and if nothing happens, do what I did, like go to [the support organisation], because they help like drastically. (Disabled young people group, 19-24)**

### Tailored volunteering opportunities

In line with inclusivity and empowerment, participants stressed the need to create **additional volunteering opportunities** specifically tailored to disabled young people. These opportunities would enable them to explore different types of work, gain valuable experience, and build confidence in a supportive environment.

### Specialised advice

Two disabled young participants noted that they'd benefit from getting **advice on finding employment opportunities** suitable to those with additional needs:

**Finding a job that would be suitable for me, and for my learning needs, and yeah, the type of jobs I would like to look for, and for the sort of thing that I need help with. (Disabled young people group, 19-24)**

From a skills perspective, some disabled participants wanted **advice on life skills**, such as how to pay bills, understanding what tax is and how to pay it, and how to live independently:

**If I had a life of my own like that, like I would kind of be like, well kind of pointless, because obviously I've never had experience. I can't cook, like that, can't tidy up for myself. So if I had a life of my own it's going to be scary for me. (Disabled young people group, 19-24)**

### Better pathway recognition

A support worker wanted to emphasise that Wales needed schools to be **better at recognising what disabled young people's pathways were**, and for parents to be **better equipped for expectations around employment**, in that it is an opportunity, and it is a justified pathway for young people.

**Make sure that the young person, whoever that may be, has all the options, and they have as much detail [as possible]. (Disabled young people group, 19-24)**

### Quality work experience

Support workers also **called for more employers to engage with schools** and offer learners **'good, solid work experience'**, including large employers who can provide opportunities for learners with impairments.





## COMMUNICATION

The communication and information regarding future pathways for disabled young people in Wales revealed **distinct patterns and preferences**, especially when compared to their non-disabled peers.

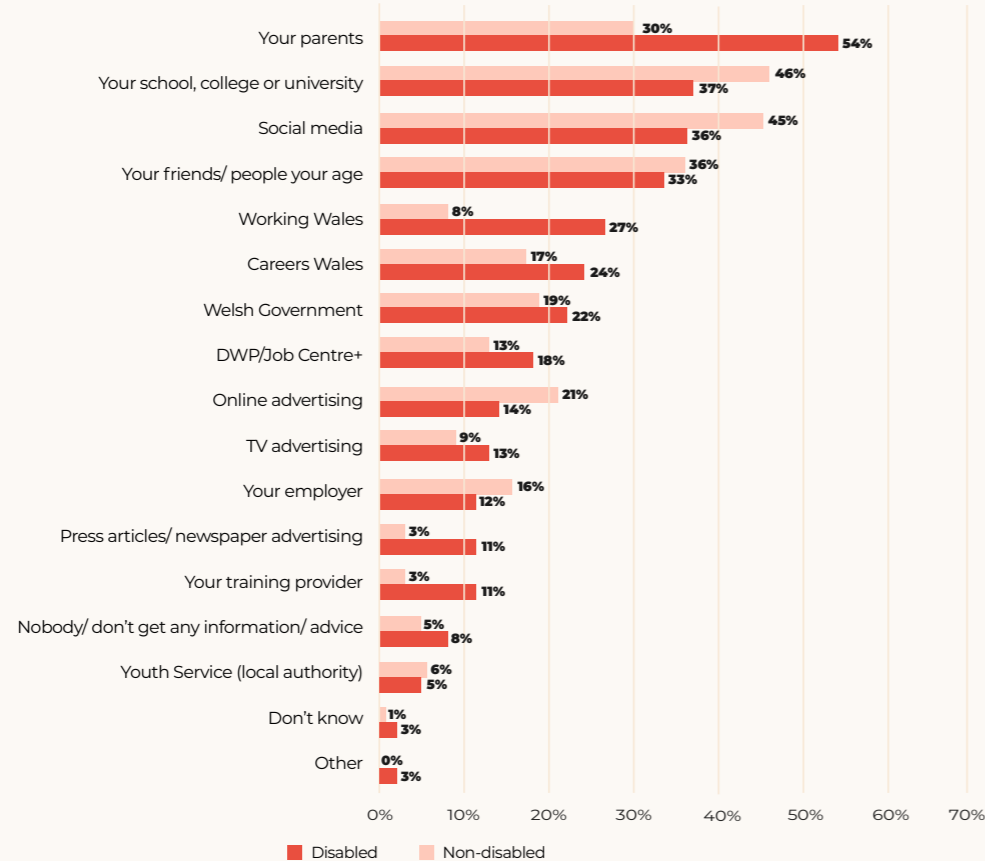
### Information received

Disabled young people notably **felt less informed** about their options post-Year 11, with 44% not having felt well informed, as opposed to 32% of non-disabled young respondents. In terms of information received at school:

- 76% were informed about A levels, and 54% about apprenticeships – more than any other option.
- Disabled young people were 61% more likely to have received information about sixth form courses (53% vs 33% for non-disabled) and 67% more likely to have been told about Jobs Growth Wales/ Jobs Growth Wales+ (10% vs 6%) than non-disabled young people.
- 9% said that they had not received any information or advice on their options while at school.

Figure 32: Omnibus Survey Question | June 2023 Wave

**Thinking about education, employment and training, where do you get information and/ or advice from at the moment?**



## Sources of information and advice

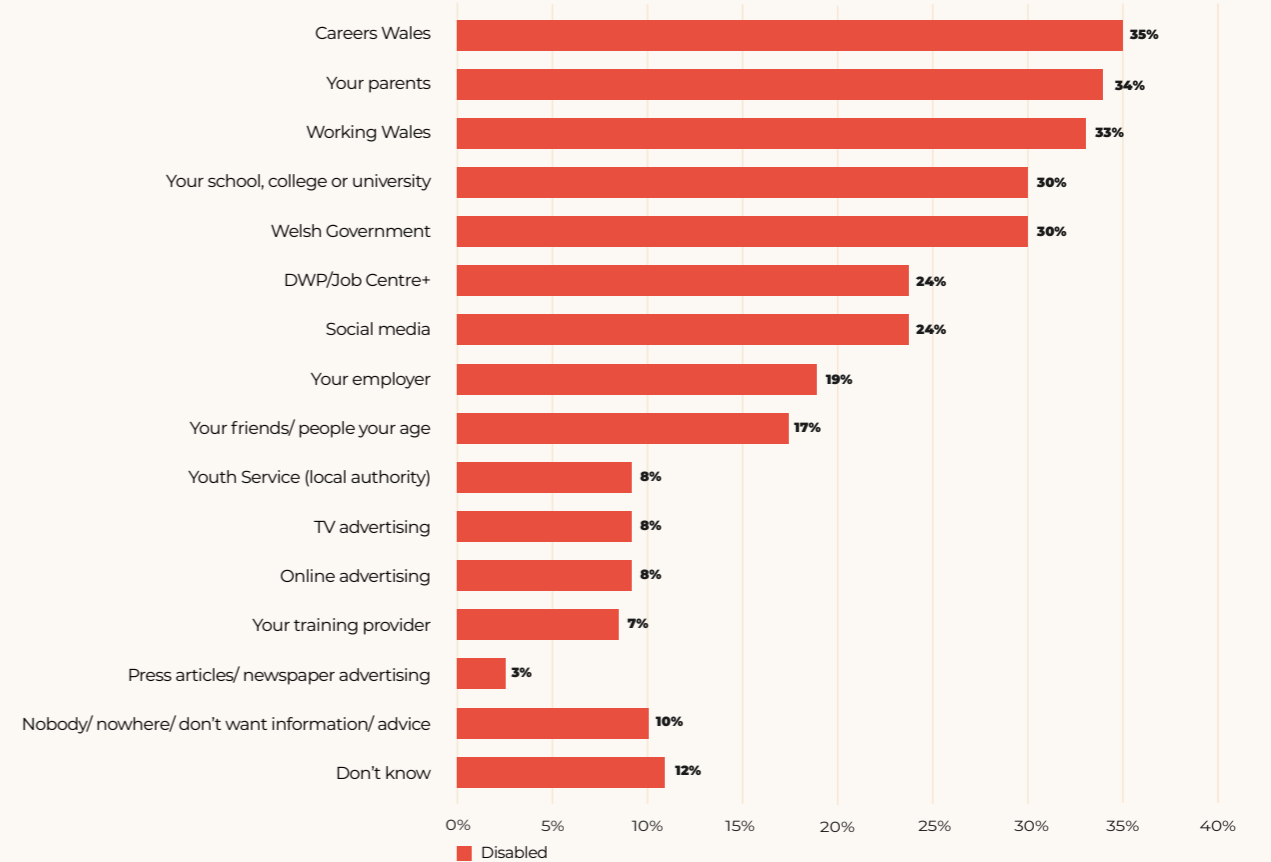
Disabled young people tended to **rely more on their parents (54%) for information and advice**, compared to non-disabled peers (30%). Disabled respondents also **turned to Working Wales** more frequently (27% vs 8%).

## Communication preferences

Moving forward, disabled respondents stated they would prefer to get their information on education, employment and training from **Careers Wales, their parents, and Working Wales**.

Figure 33: Omnibus Survey Question | June 2023 Wave

**Who do you prefer to get information and/or advice on education, employment and training from in the future?**



Disabled respondents were **79% more likely to say they would want to rely on their parents** when compared to non-disabled young people, and they were 71% more likely to say they would seek information from the Department of Work and Pensions/ Job Centre+.

When it came to accessing this kind of information, about half (49%) of

disabled young people stated **they preferred researching online**, similar to non-disabled young people. However, they showed a **stronger preference for initiating contact themselves** via telephone, email, or text message (36%), rather than being contacted directly by organisations (19%).

When it came to being contacted by the Welsh Government about available support, email was the most favoured method among disabled young respondents (36%), though less preferred than by non-disabled respondents (50%). Text messages were favoured by 21%, and 17% preferred receiving letters in the post.





**05**  
**THE COST-OF-LIVING**  
**CRISIS**

**95**



The cost-of-living crisis presents a **challenging backdrop** to the barriers faced by young people in Wales. This increases the issues experienced by young people in achieving their education, employment, and training goals.

The importance of **affordability and the need to earn money** became apparent when exploring young people's experiences with work experience. Over 1 in 5 young people surveyed (23%) who had previously undertaken work experience believed their experience would have been more beneficial if it had been fully paid. This sentiment was echoed in the focus group discussions, as some young participants indicated that they should receive compensation for their contributions to businesses whilst undertaking work experience. In one instance, being able to access work experience opportunities relied on being able to afford it. A young person noted that some of her peers had been able to pay for work experience courses in health to enhance their applications to medicine, which tend to require work experience to apply. Unfortunately, she had not been able to afford it, particularly given some of them were 'a couple of grand'. She felt that these courses knew you need work experience to apply to medicine, so they take advantage and charge for it.

**The income potential of young people's chosen pathways was also critical to some**, with a participant going as far as abandoning their apprenticeship upon realising the limited earning potential in their chosen career.

Moreover, the **cost of transport also**

**emerged as a pivotal issue** for young people. A quarter of young people who reported transport was a barrier to them noted that they simply could not afford public transport, while **26% found the costs associated with driving – including lessons, a car, insurance, and fuel too expensive**. This barrier to mobility significantly hindered access to jobs, education, or training. In fact, 32% of young people believed that financial support for transport costs would greatly facilitate their travel to these opportunities.

Existing transport support such as the **TfW 16-25 Railcard and MyTravelPass were seen as helpful for some young people**, but others highlighted that the existing **support measures were often insufficient** due to the high costs of travel. The focus group participants acknowledged the benefits of these support schemes too but **called for more extensive financial assistance and increased awareness of the available support**. Many young people found reimbursed travel, free bus passes, and cheaper bus passes beneficial, yet the overall experience with transport remained negative, with high costs persisting even with discounts. The sometimes-reported bureaucratic process of obtaining travel funding through further education colleges was also cited as a hurdle. Consequently, young people in the focus group discussions called for greater concessions on travel costs, particularly for those in dire need, such as unemployed individuals attending interviews, apprentices with low incomes, or those requiring more frequent travel.

At times, mental health difficulties exacerbated financial concerns further. Of those young people surveyed who said their mental health makes it harder for them to get the job, education or training they want, 13% expressed worries that securing a job might negatively impact their family member's benefits.

Making decisions about their future at Year 11 and Year 13 was sometimes influenced by money too. For some young people, Year 11 choices were **influenced by financial motivations**, with some young male participants prioritising money-making and opting for self-employment in fields like barbering to achieve financial independence. This trend was mirrored in the broader survey too, where 14% of young people chose their post-Year 11 pathway primarily to earn money.

However, whilst financial concerns appeared to be front-of-mind for young people, a significant **51% felt unprepared in managing finances and understanding available financial support after Year 11**.







**06**  
**CONCLUSION**





Throughout this report, work experience, transport, confidence, and mental health all emerge as **critical barriers** preventing young people from fulfilling their potential. Addressing these barriers will be key to ensuring that **16-24-year-olds in Wales** have access to the training, education, and employment opportunities they deserve, and **will require collaborative efforts** from educational institutions, employers, and policymakers to create a more supportive environment for young people.



## Work experience

- Work experience is a key factor in **developing confidence, skills, and career insights**. 90% of young people surveyed who had done work experience in the past believed it had been useful to them. 48% believed it enhanced their CV, whilst 46% felt that their experiences boosted their confidence in applying for jobs.
- However, 21% of young people surveyed had not taken any form of work experience in the past, rising to 29% amongst respondents who were NEET. A lack of awareness on where to find work experience opportunities, a lack of interest and a lack of confidence were outlined as the key reasons for not engaging in any work experience opportunities.

## Transport

- 79% of young respondents reported that transport issues sometimes or always hindered their ability to reach their desired destinations for work, education, or training. **This increased to 94% amongst respondents who were NEET**. With availability, affordability and suitability cited as the reasons causing the issues.
- 54% said better public transport availability would help them travel to the job, education or training they want, whilst 39% claim more direct public transport routes to their destination would help.
- While young people in the focus groups welcomed the transport support available, they felt **more needed to be done to raise awareness**. Further financial assistance, infrastructure development, and simplification of processes to access the support available was also voiced as necessary.

## Confidence and mental health

- A lack of confidence amongst young people is getting in the way of their future. 76% of young people surveyed reported that **insufficient confidence** prevented them from achieving their goals, **which rose to 90% amongst respondents who were NEET**. Worrying about not being “good enough” was a concern shared by nearly half of young people surveyed (47%), whilst about a third (37%) shared a fear of making the wrong decision.
- **Poor mental health** also emerged as a pervasive barrier. 60% of young people surveyed found that their mental health made it harder for them to get the job, education or training they wanted, **rising to 83% amongst respondents who were NEET**.
- 56% of those young people who noted that their mental health got in their way outlined anxiety about meeting new people as a primary concern. For 47%, their mental health made it harder for them to concentrate and stay motivated, whilst 43% found job interviews too stressful and feared that their mental health would hinder their success.

## Transitional periods

- There were high and similar levels of awareness of most qualifications amongst 16-24-year-olds and their parents/carers, with roughly 9 in 10 having heard of A levels and degrees, and around 8 in 10 knowing about BTECs. However, **parents were much more likely to have heard of vocational courses when compared to young people** (74% vs 46% respectively).

- Vocational pathways and **support programs like Jobs Growth Wales+ were typically less known** (than the more traditional pathways), with 21% of 16-24-year-old respondents and 20% of parents / carers of 16-24-year-olds having been aware of Jobs Growth Wales+.

## Communication

- The majority of young people surveyed (77%) remembered receiving information on A levels whilst at school, **more than any other pathway**. This was followed by apprenticeships (51%), courses offered at college (43%) and Careers Wales / Working Wales (40%).
- Young people currently accessed **multiple sources of information and advice** on education, employment, and training, with educational institutions (43%), social media (42%), family (37%) and friends (35%) being the most common. However, when asked who they would prefer to hear from in the future, **Careers Wales and Welsh Government were the preferred options for most**.
- Young people predominantly wanted to access this kind of information online, specifically via **websites** (49%) and **social media** (36%). However, just under 1 in 3 young people preferred face-to-face interactions (30%) for advice on education, employment, and training.

## Disabled young people

- 91% of disabled young people surveyed had done some form of work experience. However, disabled respondents were **significantly more likely to have reported dissatisfaction with their work experience** compared to non-disabled respondents, with 12% feeling they weren't given enough responsibility and 14% feeling it did not give them a good insight into the job.
- When it came to transport, 34% of disabled young respondents consistently faced challenges, with **accessibility, affordability and their mental health being pronounced barriers** in comparison to their non-disabled peers. 55% of disabled young people suggested that improved public transport availability would significantly ease their travel to jobs, education, or training, whilst 37% noted that financial support to cover transport costs would help them. Furthermore, 28% emphasised the need for public transport to be more accessible, such as by having **better access for disabled travellers**.
- 92% of disabled respondents identified lacking confidence as a barrier – more than any other group, whilst 90% also reported that their mental health hindered their pursuit of education, employment, and training opportunities. 64% worried they wouldn't be “good enough”, 47% feared making the wrong decision and 45% were unsure what they wanted to do in life.
- **49% felt unprepared** in understanding the route to their chosen career goals, significantly higher than the 27% among non-disabled young people. Additionally, our conversations with disabled respondents revealed that many chose to remain in education as a **default option** due to being uncertain about their next steps.





Golley Slater



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government