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# Evaluation of the Traineeships Programme: Interim Report

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# Evaluation of the Traineeships Programme: Interim Report

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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## Glossary

Acronym	Definition
ALN	Additional Learning Needs
ALS	Additional Learning Support
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CW	Careers Wales
EAG	Employment Advice Gateway
EDMS	European Data Management System
ESDGC	Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship
ESF	European Social Fund
EW	East Wales
FE	Further Education
ILP	Individual Learning Plan
JGW	Jobs Growth Wales
LLWR	Lifelong Learning Wales Record
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
QCF	Qualifications and Credit Framework
SHELL	Skills, Higher Education and Lifelong Learning
TRF	Traineeship Referral Form
WBL	Work-based Learning
WEFO	Wales European Funding Office
WLHC	Work-limiting Health Condition
WWV	West Wales and the Valleys
YEPF	Youth Engagement and Progression Framework

## Executive Summary

1. This interim report contains the findings from the first phase of research undertaken by Learning and Work Institute (L&W) and Wavehill Research to evaluate the Welsh Government's Traineeships programme.
2. The overall evaluation aims to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the second phase of the Traineeships Programme for the period of January 2015 to March 2019. It will consider and present the findings for both West Wales and the Valleys (WWV) and East Wales (EW), as well as for the programme overall. In particular, the evaluation explores:
  - The impact the programme has had in both its hard and soft outcomes.
  - The overall value the programme has added through a cost-benefit analysis.
  - Lessons learned for the future delivery of similar programmes and how good practice can be replicated and benefited from.
3. The evaluation is being delivered between April 2017 and March 2019. It includes the following elements:
  - Desk based review and secondary data analysis.
  - Analysis of the Wales European Funding Office 'ESF Participant Survey' data.
  - Interviews with Welsh Government Officials and key partners.
  - Interviews with providers and subcontractors delivering the Traineeships programme.
  - Interviews with employers and learners participating in the programme.
  - A counterfactual and impact assessment.
  - A cost-benefit analysis.
4. This interim report contains the findings from the initial stages of the evaluation, completed by October 2017, interim conclusions and recommendations. It is based on the following elements:
  - Desk-based review and early secondary data analysis of the Progress Output Result Reports for the January 2017 ESF claim.
  - In-depth interviews with seven Welsh Government Officials and partners.
  - In-depth interviews with 17 Traineeships providers, including nine lead contractors and eight subcontractors (including private and third-sector contractors).

## Findings from scoping and desk review activities

5. The proportion of 16-18-year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) in Wales has, except for a dip in 2005 and 2006, remained above 10 per cent for the past two decades; the latest provisional figures (end 2016) show it at 10.4 per cent.<sup>1</sup>
6. Long-term NEET status can have serious detrimental impacts on an individual's future labour market prospects, their health and a range of other outcomes.
7. Traineeships combine a mixture of soft and essential skills training with a period of work experience. The current programme, focused on 16-19-year olds, aims to reduce the proportion of young people in Wales classified as NEET and to facilitate progression into employment or further learning.
8. As of December 2017, EDMS data shows that WWV had achieved almost two fifths (35.3%) of the 2014-2022 target of 25,698 Traineeship completions and that EW have achieved almost a quarter (24.5%) of the target of 18,418 completions.
9. Neither region is on track to meet the target of 28 per cent entering employment (17.4% in WWV and 20.7% in EW), and EW is not on track to meet the target of 56 per cent of Trainees gaining qualifications upon completion (53.7%). However, WWV has exceeded its target (60.7%) gaining qualifications upon completion and both regions are exceeding their target of 20 per cent progression into education or training (49.6% in WWV and 53.8% in EW).
10. Neither region has met the targets of 20.6 per cent of Trainees declaring themselves to have a disability and/or learning difficulty, or work-limiting health condition (19.7% in WWV and 18.6% in EW). However, both regions have exceeded the target of 1 per cent of Trainees declaring themselves as having caring responsibilities (1.4% in WWV and 1.6% in EW). For EW, BME participation is far exceeding their 2.2 per cent target (10.3%), although WWV is not currently on track to meet it (1.5%). Within both regions, female participation is over the 50 per cent target, although it is higher in EW (57.0%) than WWV (54.6%).
11. From April 2019, Welsh Government will replace the current suite of employability skills programmes including Traineeships, Jobs Growth Wales, React and the Employability Skills Programme with a new, single employability programme – Working Wales. The Working Wales programme will support individuals who are

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<sup>1</sup> 2017, Young people not in education employment or training (NEET), Gov.Wales

aged 16 and over and ensure that they receive the bespoke support required to progress towards, and enter, sustainable employment.

### **Findings from in-depth interviews with officials, stakeholders, and providers**

12. Providers, officials, and partners were generally positive about the Traineeships model, considering it effective for the cohort of young people and a useful stepping stone in progression towards employment, providing learners with a taster of a particular sector or occupation and enabling them to develop a broad platform of skills, particularly in relation to employability.
13. Providers praised the high degree of flexibility of the Traineeships programme, enabling them to utilise provision (either directly delivered or delivered by third party providers) that best meets the needs of young people.
14. Most providers interviewed described a steady fall in the number of young people being recruited on to the Traineeships programme. Typically, providers perceived that the fall in numbers reflected a lack of promotion of the programme. Some also referred to changes in the eligibility criteria.
15. Social media is increasingly seen as a key route to promotion of the programme and is actively used by all providers but particularly so by those in the private sector; 'word of mouth' was also cited by many providers.
16. The majority of providers raised concerns about the referral process. Some questioned the impartiality of Careers Wales based on the perception that there was an imbalance in the volume of referrals to each provider.
17. Most officials and partners voiced concerns about the appropriateness of referrals to different strands, with a widespread view that those most in need of the Engagement strand were not necessarily getting on to the programme due to some providers' reluctance to take on "more challenging individuals".
18. There was a general agreement amongst providers and partners that young people engaging with Traineeships display an increasingly complex set of needs and barriers, with mental health issues deemed particularly prevalent.
19. Providers vary in the extent to which they utilise the Additional Learning Support budget, with some providers not accessing it at all and others actively targeting these resources. Providers not accessing these budgets cited complexity, availability of

resources and lack of intelligence regarding Trainees' backgrounds as reasons for this.

20. With regard to cross-cutting themes, providers agreed that Traineeships help to tackle poverty by providing young people with work opportunities and by tackling barriers to employment, and that equal opportunities are an embedded element across training provision. Sustainable development was the least evidenced cross-cutting theme in interviews with providers. Most providers identified their commitment to supporting the Welsh language by aiming to have at least one Welsh speaking member of staff.
21. Officials and partners were confident that the programme would achieve its overall targets. However, there were concerns that participation was mostly at Engagement and Level 1 and that subsequent progression was often in-programme or into FE courses. Most officials and partners raised concerns about the Bridge-to-Employment strand, with an awareness that take-up of this strand was low which may limit progression opportunities into employment.

### **Interim Recommendations**

It is recommended that:

1. Welsh Government issue guidance and worked examples of the flexibility available to providers around suspension, to enable them to understand the rules and requirements for contact during a suspension period. This would prevent participants who require specialist support from having to re-start the programme unnecessarily.
2. Effective partnership models between Careers Wales and providers are shared more widely via provider meetings in order to ensure these are replicated. It is also recommended that Welsh Government review the resourcing allocated to referral processes, to secure a more efficient and stream-lined process.
3. Welsh Government develops and disseminates models and worked examples of effective multi agency partnerships, for example where local authorities are involved in the YEPF referral process, to inform partnership working in the delivery of the new Working Wales programme.
4. Welsh Government explores the wider use of positive messages, case studies and marketing material to promote Traineeships. This could be tailored to the motivations and interests of different stakeholders, such as schools, parents and young people, to promote the programme and reduce any stigma currently associated with it.



## **Next Steps**

The full evaluation report will be submitted to Welsh Government in March 2019.

The next stages of the evaluation include analysis of 'ESF Participant Survey' data, interviews with employers and learners, a counterfactual and impact assessment and a cost-benefit analysis.

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This interim report contains the findings from the first phase of research undertaken by Learning and Work Institute (L&W) and Wavehill Research to evaluate the Welsh Government's Traineeships programme.

### **Aims and objectives**

1.2 The overall evaluation aims to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the Traineeships Programme for the period of January 2015 to March 2019. It focuses on the performance and impact of the programme, with some review of the programme design and delivery processes. In particular, this evaluation explores:

- The impact the programme has had in both its hard and soft outcomes.
- The overall value the programme has added through a cost-benefit analysis.
- Lessons learned for the future delivery of similar programmes and how good practice can be replicated and benefited from.

1.3 The evaluation focuses on the second phase (2015-2019) of the Traineeships programme and will consider and present the findings for both West Wales and the Valleys and East Wales, as well as for the programme overall in line with European Social Fund (ESF) and WEFO evaluation requirements.

### **Methodology and report content**

1.4 The evaluation is being delivered between April 2017 and March 2019. During this time, it includes the following elements:

- Desk based review and secondary data analysis.
- Analysis of the Wales European Funding Office 'ESF Participant Survey' data.
- Interviews with Welsh Government Officials and key partners.
- Interviews with providers and subcontractors delivering the Traineeships programme.
- Interviews with employers and learners participating in the programme.
- A counterfactual and impact assessment.
- A cost-benefit analysis.

1.5 This report contains the findings from the initial stages of the evaluation, completed by October 2017, which include:

- Desk-based review and early secondary data analysis of the Progress Output Result Reports for the January 2017 ESF claim.

- In-depth interviews with seven Welsh Government Officials and partners.
- In-depth interviews with 17 Traineeships providers, including nine lead contractors and eight subcontractors (including private and third-sector contractors).

1.6 The report also provides interim conclusions and recommendations based on the findings to date.

### **Next Steps**

1.7 The full evaluation report will be submitted to Welsh Government in March 2019. The next stages of the evaluation include analysis of 'ESF Participant Survey' data, interviews with employers and learners, a counterfactual and impact assessment and a cost-benefit analysis.

## **2. Findings from scoping and desk review activities**

- 2.1 The proportion of 16-18-year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) in Wales has, except for a brief dip in 2005 and 2006, remained above 10 per cent for the past two decades. It has occasionally risen above 12 per cent, with latest provisional figures (end 2016) showing a level of 10.4 per cent.<sup>2</sup>
- 2.2 The proportion of 16-24-year olds who are NEET follows a similar pattern, remaining above 15 per cent in each year except 2004 and 2005, and rising above 19 per cent between 2010 and 2012. The latest provisional figures (end 2016) show it to be running at 16.1 per cent.<sup>3</sup> Whilst not directly comparable with the headline estimate, sample estimates of the proportion of 16-24-year olds who are NEET are available through the Annual Population Survey, which enables a direct comparison with the UK as a whole. Latest estimates for the year to September 2017, give Wales a higher level than the UK (12.6 per cent compared with 11.8 per cent).
- 2.3 Long-term NEET status can have serious detrimental impacts on an individual's future labour market prospects, their health and a range of other outcomes. It can also contribute to a cycle of deprivation that impacts their children's future labour market prospects and life chances. In a continuation of previous (Welsh and UK) government policy on work-based learning programmes, Traineeships, introduced by Welsh Government in 2011, were designed to reduce the proportion of 16-18-year-old young people who are NEET in Wales. Traineeships combine a mixture of soft and essential skills training with a period of work experience. The programme aims to reduce the proportion of young people classified as NEET and to facilitate progression into employment or further learning by enabling young people to overcome barriers to employment, and to increase participants' confidence and motivation.<sup>4</sup>

### **Previous Evaluation**

- 2.4 The initial stage of the Traineeships Programme ran from 2011-15. It was an All Wales programme, utilising ESF funding for Traineeships located in the Convergence Area of Wales, now West Wales & Valleys (WWV).

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<sup>2</sup> 2017, Young people not in education employment or training (NEET), Gov.Wales

<sup>3</sup> 2017, Young people not in education employment or training (NEET), Gov.Wales

<sup>4</sup> 2016, Business plan for 2014-2022 operation: Traineeships (East Wales or West Wales & Valleys), Gov.Wales

- 2.5 As part of a wider assessment of Welsh Government's Work-Based Learning Programme, an evaluation was conducted of the initial 2011-2015 phase of the Traineeships programme.<sup>5</sup> The evaluation reported approximately 24,500 individuals completed Traineeships in the period to July 2014.
- 2.6 Stakeholders were found to be in broad agreement about the effectiveness of Traineeships in supporting 16-18-year olds as part of Welsh Government's Work-Based Learning Programme aims. Both employers and trainees were positive, considering the programme to make a valuable contribution to the work-readiness of the young people involved. Overall, two-thirds of individuals had progressed into a positive destination (defined as progression into employment, self-employment, voluntary work or learning at a higher level) three months after completion of their Traineeship in both 2012/13 (67%) and 2013/14 (68%).
- 2.7 There was a mixed record for the achievement of the targets for ESF Convergence areas (WWV); they were met for number of completions (12,450 compared with the target of 12,120), female participation (45% cf. 42% target) and entry to employment (26% cf. 21% target), but not met for achievement of qualifications (36% cf. 61% target) or entry to further learning (14% cf. 18% target).
- 2.8 Despite generally positive views on Traineeships, in the initial evaluation some stakeholders expressed specific practical concerns related to issues such as provider staffing, lack of flexibility and stakeholder engagement. There were also concerns that individuals classified as Tier 2<sup>6</sup> in the five-tier model used within the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF) were not receiving sufficient one-to-one or additional learning support. There were also concerns about the proportion of young people being directed towards an Apprenticeship.
- 2.9 The evaluation made a number of recommendations for amendments to the Traineeships programme, including<sup>7</sup>:
- A focus on employer engagement to ensure adequate provision of good work placements, particularly of organisations in the third sector in order to secure opportunities for young people with additional needs.

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<sup>5</sup> 2016, York Consulting et al, Evaluation of work-based learning programme 2011-15: Traineeships

<sup>6</sup> Unemployed 16 and 17 year olds, known to Careers Wales, who are not available for education, employment or training

<sup>7</sup> 2016, York Consulting et al, Evaluation of work-based learning programme 2011-15: Traineeships

- Monitoring of the proportions of work placements in ‘real’ and ‘simulated’ workplaces, possibly through additions to the Lifelong Learning Wales (LLWR) dataset.
- An extension of lower intensity support from a period of four weeks to eight weeks.
- Facilitation of increased collaboration between Traineeships providers.
- Clarification of the role of Careers Wales.
- Review of national and local marketing approaches.
- Review of programme elements to ensure the Engagement element provides sufficient, tailored support to the entire eligible cohort, and the Level 1 element and Bridge-to-Employment strand have improved progression to Apprenticeships.
- Review of additional learner support to ensure it is accessed when needed.
- Publication and review of data as compared to ESF targets.

## **Current programme**

### *Aims and Structure*

- 2.10 The aim of the current Traineeships programme is to reduce the proportion of 16-19-year olds in Wales classified as NEET and to facilitate progression into employment or further learning, and increase participants’ confidence and motivation.
- 2.11 ESF funding has been secured under:
- Priority Axis 3: Youth Employment and Attainment, and
  - Specific objective 1: To reduce unemployment and the number of 16-24-year olds who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET).
- 2.12 The 2014 to 2022 Traineeships Business Plan sets out the following required components of a Traineeship<sup>8</sup>:
- One-to-one support for young people to access mentoring and careers guidance;
  - Short, interactive vocational courses relative to the world of work;
  - Numeracy and literacy skills;
  - Employability skills;

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<sup>8</sup> 2016, Business plan for 2014-2022 operation: Traineeships (East Wales or West Wales & Valleys), Gov.Wales

- Life skills; and
- Interaction with employers, or work experience.

2.13 The Business Plan commits Welsh Government to regularly review the operation of the Traineeships programme to ensure the findings of the previous phase evaluation (as described above) are integrated into the programme. In particular, the programme aims around increased support and flexible delivery for young people furthest from the labour market, clear and consistent messages from Welsh Government and a focus on ensuring clear progression routes into employment or further learning.

2.14 There are three strands of the Traineeships programme: Engagement, Level 1 and Bridge-to-Employment.<sup>9</sup>

- **Engagement:** The Engagement strand is aimed at young people who either have barriers to further learning and employment or who require confirmation of a chosen occupational focus or progression route. It involves the identification and assessment of barriers, work placements with an occupational focus, training in required skills and an opportunity to complete Entry Level (QCF or NQF frameworks) or Level 2 and below (Essential Skill Wales framework) qualifications.
- **Level 1:** The Level 1 strand is aimed at young people who already have an occupational focus and are assessed as able to complete a Level 1 but not a Level 2 or above qualification. It involves the identification of barriers to learning, and aims to address them by delivering a career-aims relevant Level 1 (QCF or NQF framework) or Entry Level 3 to Level 2 (Essential Skills Wales framework) qualification through the use of work placements, community and voluntary work and centre-based learning.
- **Bridge-to-Employment:** The Bridge-to-Employment strand is aimed at young people who are occupationally focused, employment-ready and have completed at least one of the other two strands. If they have completed the Engagement strand they must be above Level 1; if they have completed the Level 1 strand they must have completed required Level 1 qualifications. This strand delivers elements of Level 2 (QCF framework) qualifications to test occupational competencies, Technical Certificates (from an appropriate Apprenticeship framework) and/or Level 2 or above (Essential Skills Wales framework)

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<sup>9</sup> 2015, Work based learning programme specification and guidance, GOV.Wales

qualifications. During recruitment, there is an intention that employers will offer employment to young people after completion of the Traineeship.

### *Cross-cutting themes*

2.15 As a condition of ESF funding, the Traineeships programme has incorporated the following cross-cutting themes: equal opportunities, sustainable development and tackling poverty.

- **Equal opportunities:** Providers are required to have suitable equality and diversity policies in place to ensure that all eligible young people have equal access to Traineeships opportunities regardless of protected characteristics. Providers must review their performance annually, and aim to challenge stereotypes and tackle discrimination.
- **Sustainable development:** As a requirement for receipt of ESF funding providers must support and encourage sustainable development. They are required to have a documented strategy for Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC), which must encompass commitment and leadership, organisational management, teaching and learning and community and partnerships. The strategy must include specific objectives, targets and priorities for ESDGC, to be reviewed annually. Providers are also requested to report their method of addressing Community Benefits to the Welsh Government's Skills, Higher Education and Lifelong Learning (SHELL) Group.
- **Tackling poverty:** Traineeships can help to tackle poverty by increasing learners' skills and experience and hence increasing their labour market potential. In addition, a non-means tested allowance is provided to all learners at a level of £30 a week for those in the Engagement strand and £50 a week for those in the other two strands. Reasonable travel costs over 10 per cent of the weekly allowance are also covered.

### *Eligibility*

2.16 The current Traineeships programme is available to individuals who meet the following criteria<sup>10</sup>:

- Aged 16 to 19 at commencement of the Traineeship, or aged 15 at completion of full time education and turning 16 in the following June, July or August;
- Are not in education, employment or training (NEET);

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<sup>10</sup> 2015, Work based learning programme specification and guidance, GOV.Wales



- Are ordinarily resident in Wales; and
- Meet programme specification criteria (e.g. in assessment of need).

### *Enrolment*

- 2.17 Under the current programme, referrals to the Traineeships Programme are made via Careers Wales. In most cases, this will be a direct referral by a Careers Choices adviser after an assessment of an individual's needs. Such referrals are the only methods of enrolment for the Engagement and Bridge-to-Employment strands. However, it is possible for eligible individuals to self-refer to the Level 1 strand, although they are required to complete a vocational guidance interview with a Career Choices advisor in order to be issued with an application form.<sup>11</sup>
- 2.18 After referral, it is the responsibility of providers to conduct an initial interview, induction and initial assessment, and to develop and monitor an individualised learning plan (ILP).

### *Data Management*

- 2.19 All data is submitted electronically by providers through the LLWR system. It is used to draw down ESF funding through the European Data Management System (EDMS), to which data is downloaded from the LLWR system. Data is checked by the Welsh Government's Provider Assurance and Governance Service to ensure it matches the terms of the programme specification and provider contracts. It is also used by the Learning Provision Team to review provider practice, disseminate good practice and address poor practice. Data is also used by Welsh Government to assess participation rates by protected characteristic and to promote equality and diversity.

### *Standards*

- 2.20 To ensure the quality of the programme, providers are required to complete annual Self-Assessment Reports and Quality Development Plans, based on Estyn's Common Inspection Framework. Welsh Government conducts an annual risk-based review through its Provider Performance function, reporting progress against key benchmarks to Ministers.

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<sup>11</sup> 2015, Work based learning programme specification and guidance, GOV.Wales

2.21 It should also be noted that in 2017, Welsh Government published new professional standards for further education and work-based learning practitioners. The new standards, co-constructed with sector representatives, aim to support all practitioners to engage in professional learning.<sup>12</sup>

### **Targets**

2.22 The 2014-2022 programme has an overall target of 18,418 completed Traineeships in East Wales (EW) and 25,698 completed Traineeships in West Wales and the Valleys (WWV).

2.23 Table 1 shows predicted targets (outputs and outcomes) for the Traineeships programme, for the period 2014-2022, along with progress to date (December 2017); a breakdown of outcomes by gender is shown in Table 2.<sup>13</sup> Note that this is bespoke analysis of EDMS data, which has been undertaken specifically for this evaluation, and will not be consistent with published Welsh Government official statistics, which use a later final freeze of data and wider cohort<sup>14</sup>. Key points are:

- WWV have achieved almost two fifths (35.3%) of their Traineeships completion target, compared with almost a quarter for EW (24.5%).
- EW has not met the target of 56 per cent gaining qualifications upon leaving (53.7%), although WWV has (60.7%).
- Both regions have exceeded the target of 20 per cent in education or training upon leaving; EW have achieved 53.8 per cent and WWV 49.6 per cent.
- Neither region is on track to meet the target of 28 per cent entering employment upon leaving, although EW is closer at 20.7 per cent compared with 17.4 per cent for WWV.
- Within both regions, female participation is over the 50 per cent target, although it is higher in EW (57.0%) than WWV (54.6%).
- For EW, BME participation is far exceeding the 2.2 per cent target (10.3%), although WWV is not currently on track to meet it (1.5%).

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<sup>12</sup> <http://learning.gov.wales/resources/collections/professional-standards?lang=en#collection-3>

<sup>13</sup> Welsh Government Traineeships Progress Reports, December 2017.

<sup>14</sup> EDMS data includes only ESF-funded learners, whereas published Welsh Government official statistics also include learners funded by alternative sources.

- Neither region has met the 20.6 per cent target for the proportion of trainees declaring themselves to have a disability and/or learning difficulty, or work-limiting health condition (WLHC); WWV have achieved 19.7 per cent and EW 18.6 per cent.
- Both regions have exceeded the 1 per cent target for the proportion of trainees declaring themselves as having caring responsibilities; EW have achieved 1.6 per cent and WWV 1.4 per cent.
- For each programme outcome, the proportion of Trainees achieving it who are female is higher in EW than WWV. In total, 48.3 per cent of Trainees gaining a qualification upon leaving in EW are female, compared to 45.3 per cent in WWV; 52.5 per cent of Trainees entering employment upon leaving in EW are female compared to 44.1 per cent in WWV; 46.8 per cent of Trainees entering education or training upon leaving in EW are female compared to 43.2 per cent in WWV.

**Table 1: Traineeships programme targets and performance to December 2017 <sup>15</sup>**

Region	Area	Target		Number of trainees	Current performance	Percentage progress to overall target
		Proportion	Number			
East Wales	Completed Traineeships		18,418	4,513		24.5
	Proportion gaining qualifications upon leaving	56.0	10,314	2,426	53.8	23.5
	Proportion in education/training upon leaving	20.0	3,683	2,426	53.8	65.9
	Proportion entering employment upon leaving	28.0	5,157	936	20.7	18.2
	Proportion Female	50.0	9,209	2,572	57.0	27.9
	Proportion BME	2.2	405	463	10.3	114.3
	Proportion who declared disability, learning difficulty, or WLHC	20.6	3,794	839	18.6	22.1
	Proportion who declared caring responsibilities	1.0	184	71	1.6	38.6
West Wales & Valleys	Completed Traineeships		25,698	9,059		35.3
	Proportion gaining qualifications upon leaving	56.0	14,390	5,496	60.7	38.2
	Proportion in education/training upon leaving	20.0	5,139	4,490	49.6	87.4
	Proportion entering employment upon leaving	28.0	7,195	1,572	17.4	21.8
	Proportion Female	50.0	12,849	4,946	54.6	38.5
	Proportion BME	2.2	565	133	1.5	23.5
	Proportion who declared disability, learning difficulty, or WLHC	20.6	5,293	1,788	19.7	33.8
	Proportion who declared caring responsibilities	1.0	256	128	1.4	50.0

<sup>15</sup> Welsh Government Traineeships Progress Reports, December 2017.

**Table 2: Traineeships programme outcomes breakdown by gender to December 2017 <sup>16</sup>**

Region	Outcome	Number of trainees	Female		Male	
			Number	Proportion	Number	Proportion
East Wales	Gained qualifications upon leaving	2,426	1,172	48.3	1,254	51.7
	Entered employment upon leaving	936	491	52.5	445	47.5
	Entered education or training upon leaving	2,426	1,135	46.8	1,291	53.2
West Wales & Valleys	Gained qualifications upon leaving	5,496	2,488	45.3	3,008	54.7
	Entered employment upon leaving	1,572	694	44.1	878	55.9
	Entered education or training upon leaving	4,490	1,938	43.2	2,552	56.8

<sup>16</sup> Welsh Government Traineeships Progress Reports, December 2017.

### **3. Findings from in-depth interviews with officials, stakeholders, and providers**

The following chapter provides the findings from the in-depth interviews with seven Welsh Government officials and partners, and seven providers and subcontractors delivering the Traineeships programme.

#### **Programme design and management**

##### *Perceptions of the model*

3.1 Providers, officials, and partners were positive about the purpose and intent of the Traineeships programme, considering it an effective approach for supporting this cohort of young people. At the time of re-commissioning it was felt that more time was needed to 'bed in' the relatively new structure of the programme; as such, only minimal changes had been made in the specification for this phase of the Traineeships programme. Nevertheless, the development of Working Wales seeks to address an identified disconnect between programme design and programme delivery especially for harder to reach young people.

3.2 Respondents typically described the offer as a useful stepping stone in progression towards employment, providing learners with a taster of a particular sector or occupation whilst allowing them, following that exposure, to change their minds and follow a different route.

*I think some of these young people do need little stepping stones for them to be able to progress. (Welsh Government Official)*

3.3 Regardless of the strand in which the young person had participated, it was felt that the support typically provided through a Traineeship enabled a young person to develop a broad platform of enhanced skills, particularly in relation to employability.

3.4 They also welcomed the high degree of flexibility and autonomy to identify support they deemed most suitable and relevant to moving a young person along that journey.

*Without the funding and the flexibility, certainly that Engagement offers, we would have a large body of students who would struggle to get through a L1 qualification. (Provider)*

*If we know that learners have carer responsibilities or are struggling we can reduce their hours or number of days to make it work around them.*

*If they need additional support we'll make sure that's available.  
Sometimes we extend engagement for those who need it or  
conversely, we can fast track some onto Level 1. (Provider)*

*...it is down to the provider to do what they want to do with the  
individual, to move them forward. (Partner)*

- 3.5 As outlined earlier within the report, the Traineeships programme operates across three strands: Engagement, Level 1 and Bridge-to-Employment. All providers contracted to deliver Traineeships are actively delivering services within the Engagement and Level 1 strands (broadly operating with two thirds of participants on Engagement and one third on Level 1 provision). However, most providers are not delivering the Bridge-to-Employment strand of the Programme. In many instances providers were unfamiliar with what may be offered through the Bridge-to-Employment strand. In the minority of cases where there was familiarity, providers described the restrictive nature of the offer, the demands of the payment model and the relative financial advantages of comparable offers (primarily via the Apprenticeship and Jobs Growth Wales programme). Awareness amongst partners of the extent to which Bridge-to-Employment is offered is mixed.
- 3.6 Progressing learners from Engagement to Level One results in additional payments for the Provider. In some instances this is a risk, as it may result in individuals being placed on the Engagement Strand inappropriately (and then progressing quickly on to the next strand, leading to payment) or individuals on the Engagement Strand progressing onto Level One when a different progression, for example Further Education, would be a better fit.
- 3.7 The structure to the programme, separated into strands, is also widely welcomed. Providers identify that both Engagement and Level 1 are critical to the offer as Engagement on its own would be considered insufficient to progress many young people into employment, whilst Level 1 offers a step up in terms of qualifications and activity and introduces a need for more commitment from the participant.
- 3.8 It was noted by one partner, however, that in practice the Engagement level did not work as designed. Constraints on provider capacity due to the amount of time they are given to work with learners and the four-week period provided after completion to achieve positive progressions, meant that they were less able to tailor their offer to be individualised based on learner needs.

- 3.9 In terms of delivery approach, several providers referred to increasingly moving away from the traditional classroom approach, finding and offering experiences that were vocationally orientated (often located in a workplace) to help young people identify what they want to do and the career they wish to pursue.
- 3.10 Under the current Traineeships model, participants who have achieved the Level 2 threshold (equivalent to five GCSEs A\*-C) or above are not eligible for the Traineeships programme. Some providers raised concerns that a focus on attainment may overlook challenges around self-confidence and other character traits which may undermine a young person's preparedness for work. In these instances, Traineeships was considered a suitable model to support them.
- 3.11 Similarly, several providers suggested that widening the age group eligible for the programme would be beneficial for supporting a wider group to access training and employment. Typically, they suggested Traineeships should be available up to the age of 20. However, it should be noted that individuals are entitled to benefits from the age of 18, which means that Traineeships may not be the most attractive option in the short term.

#### *Procurement and contracting*

- 3.12 The procurement process for the Traineeships Programme formed part of the work-based learning programme for Welsh Government. Contracts are issued annually on an academic year basis, with procurement undertaken every 4-5 years.
- 3.13 For the 2016/17 academic year, seven of the providers on the work-based learning programme secured contracts to deliver the Traineeships programme (a reduction from eight providers the previous year, as a result of the loss of A4e Ltd from the programme) with a wide range in contract value per provider from £620,000 to £11.6m.<sup>17</sup>
- 3.14 A number of providers operate within consortia and all providers subcontract at least some elements of the services that they provide through the Traineeships programme; most also use third party providers to deliver elements of their programme of support.
- 3.15 There are three third sector subcontractors delivering Traineeships through three separate lead contractors, reflecting the Welsh Government's aim that the third

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<sup>17</sup> <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/161006-wbl-indicative-allocations-en.pdf>



sector be more engaged with Traineeships. Providers typically referred to the extent of commerciality surrounding the contract, and particularly the capacity for positive progression, as a disincentive for engaging both third sector providers and sub-contractors, hence the low numbers of third sector organisations engaging with the programme.

- 3.16 Conversely, Welsh Government officials felt it was important that third sector partners be engaged in the delivery as they are seen as a key partner for engaging and supporting a diverse range of learners. However, there was uncertainty about the extent to which providers had been successful in this.
- 3.17 Lead providers were asked for their perspectives on the procurement process for the Traineeships programme. The majority of providers were content with the procurement approach although several providers felt that more clarity on the key criteria for selection would be useful. This was particularly the case in circumstances in which a provider secured a contract in one area but did not secure the same contract in another.
- 3.18 There were also two known instances where providers had secured contracts to deliver in certain areas where they had no previous experience. Where this arose it typically lengthened the implementation of the programme as providers sought to extend their familiarity of the target area, establish linkages with partner organisations (particularly Careers Wales) and third-party providers and to establish their own presence within that location. Whilst this in itself does not present a reason to not award a contract to a particular provider, it's important that all stakeholders clearly understand the timing implications and the potential impact on delivery.
- 3.19 Broadly, Welsh Government officials and partners felt that the commissioning and management of the programme had gone well, however, one respondent stated that some issues in contract management still needed resolving to ensure the quality of provision. This was due to any monitoring only being at a high level to ensure adherence to the terms of the contract, rather than building relationships with providers and looking at what they are actually delivering.

*I think the failure has been in actually holding providers to account for what they said they were going to deliver, really. (Welsh Government official)*

### *Training offer*

- 3.20 As outlined earlier within this section, providers praised the high degree of flexibility of the Traineeships programme, enabling them to utilise provision (either directly delivered or delivered by third party providers) that best meet the needs of the young people.
- 3.21 In terms of the level of training available, a minority of providers proposed the reintroduction of provision up to NQF Level 2 in response to a perceived gap in service provision between the Level 1 strand and the Apprenticeships Programme. However, the majority were happy with the level of provision that is available with a minority requesting that no further changes to the model are made.

### **Recruitment to the programme and its promotion**

- 3.22 Most providers interviewed described a steady fall in the number of young people being recruited on to the Traineeships programme. Typically, providers perceived that the fall in numbers reflected a lack of promotion of the programme. Some also referred to changes in the eligibility criteria, inferring that it has led to a smaller group of young people eligible for the programme. Consequently, self-promotion of the Traineeships programme has become increasingly prominent amongst providers in response to providers' perceptions of the dwindling numbers of eligible young people. However, it should be noted that internal Careers Wales figures show that there are sufficient young people assessed as Tier 2 and Tier 3 available for Traineeships.
- 3.23 Schools represent the prime market for recruiting young people to the Traineeships programme. Private sector providers frequently cited challenges in the promotion of the Traineeships in schools. In most cases these challenges related to a perception that schools and parents considered the programme to be the least preferable destination for young people when compared to sixth form and further education provision. Consequently, providers felt that schools were often reluctant to promote Traineeships, leading to a low level of awareness amongst the target groups and people who might influence their decisions. The lack of awareness was compounded by a relative lack of underlying brand awareness when compared to other provision such as the Apprenticeships programme.

- 3.24 There is some anecdotal evidence of geographical patterns in the extent to which schools are willing to engage with Traineeships. For example, there is a perception that many schools in Caerphilly are willing to engage. However other providers suggested that willingness to engage simply varied from school to school. In one instance a provider cited the loss of Careers Officers in schools as a factor that had increased the challenge of engagement, whilst another provider has benefited from establishing a specific department with dedicated responsibility for school recruitment, which has helped to overcome some of these challenges.
- 3.25 None of the further education colleges contracted to deliver Traineeships described challenges in promoting the programme within schools; this is likely to be a reflection on the breadth of provision that they will offer as part of their promotional work with schools. This approach enables providers to promote Traineeships as part of a suite of support offered to young people.
- 3.26 Social media is increasingly seen as a key route to promotion of the programme and is actively pursued by all providers but particularly so by those in the private sector. Not all providers had measured the success of promotion through social media, however there is a perception that it's an increasingly effective tool for promotion and recruitment of young people to Traineeships. Some providers were particularly positive about its role: '*social media is the way to go these days*'. Many providers also cited 'word of mouth' as an important route to reach young people, thus emphasising the importance of providing a positive experience.

### **Referral process**

- 3.27 A clear referral process exists within the support model for participants who will participate at the Engagement strand and Level 1 strand (although participants can also self-refer for the Level 1 strand of the Traineeships Programme). They are required to attend their local Careers Wales centre, regardless of how they initially encounter the Traineeships programme (with young people who initially engage with a provider referred to Careers Wales, prior to potentially being referred back to that provider or a different provider altogether). When attending a local Careers Wales centre, young people often get the opportunity to engage directly with local providers, who are able to outline the typical support they offer through the programme. In some areas (e.g. Cardiff) young people have the opportunity to go

out and visit the providers. However, the majority of providers reported that they are not afforded these opportunities and some providers feel that the young people are not given sufficient information about the support on offer. Following a review of the different providers, the young person, typically in conjunction with a Careers Choices adviser, will then identify the most suitable provider for their needs and career aspirations. The strand of Traineeships that they participate in is initially guided by the Careers Wales referral and is influenced by an individual's attainment in school. That said, providers typically then undertake a diagnostic assessment as part of the engagement process, to determine if that strand is appropriate for the individual.

- 3.28 Officials and wider partners felt that partnership working between Welsh Government, providers, Careers Wales and other partners on the Traineeships programme to support referrals was 'patchy'. It was felt that this was a particular challenge when ensuring effective and efficient referrals between providers and Careers Wales. This was seen to be due to the available resource and capacity at Careers Wales to be able to effectively deal with referrals.
- 3.29 Partners reported that where strong partnerships are in place, things work well, for example, where local authorities are involved in the YEPF referral process they can support the engagement and referral of Young People to Careers Wales and the re-engagement of those at risk of dropping out. One official described how, when partnerships are working well, a young person may be referred to Careers Wales by a local authority and quickly referred on to a provider, who will then flag if they drop out or are at risk of it. Another official mentioned the effectiveness of providers being part of '*local authority-led discussions about progression for young people*', including youth engagement and the five-tier progression model.
- 3.30 The majority of providers, however, raised concerns about the referral process. Some questioned the impartiality of Careers Wales based on the perception that there was an imbalance in the volume of referrals to each provider. This concern specifically related to the Engagement strand where the provision on offer is largely generic, reducing the need to refer based on career aspirations. However, the extent of subsequent referrals to more specialist providers following completion of the Engagement strand is unclear. This suggests a clear need for an appropriate referral at initial engagement and for better onward referral mechanisms.

3.31 Furthermore, whilst there was an acknowledgement that the young person could have influenced the destination of their referral, providers identified instances where young people were being referred to their programme with no interest in the offer or for the nature of careers that the support would typically lead to. Whilst this may be perceived as a result of the referral process, it is also possibly influenced by the fact that some young people would have been disengaged anyway, regardless of the referral.

3.32 Similarly to officials and partners, providers also expressed concerns about a perceived lack of resources at Careers Wales, impacting on the efficacy of the referral process. The number of steps that a young person goes through as part of the referral process was a concern for many training providers with some describing it as inefficient and complex, heightening the risk of young people dropping out of the programme.

*It makes participants jump through hoops unnecessarily and some have to travel over to their nearest CW office and can't afford it. But with CW you can wait for three weeks for a guidance interview and three weeks for the referral form. Research has shown a need to engage with youngsters immediately after they leave school and if it takes too long many of them will get lost*  
(Provider)

3.33 Some providers were also frustrated that they were required to refer young people, who initially engaged with them, back to Careers Wales only for Careers Wales to potentially refer them back, or onto a different provider. Some of these people were not referred back to the same providers who had invested resource into engaging with them in the first instance.

3.34 Some providers, however, were positive about the process with many citing their good relationship with Careers Wales and others stating it would be wrong for it to be self-referral: *'I'm a big fan of the referral process, young people ought to have advice – it shouldn't be self-referral'* (Provider), highlighting the importance of strong relationships with Careers Wales advisors and of a comprehensive and detailed Traineeship Referral Form (TRF).

3.35 Most Welsh Government officials and partners voiced concerns about the appropriateness of referrals into the different strands of Traineeships, in particular those being referred to Engagement. There is a widespread view that those most in need of the Engagement strand were not necessarily the ones getting on to the

programme as providers have been reluctant to take on "more challenging individuals". This was seen as a result of some debate over the level of pre-engagement that providers were required to offer, with providers not seeing it as their role to be:

*'going to a young person's house, getting them out of bed ... some food, getting them on a bus, getting them to a provider'* (Welsh Government official).

Whilst overall, the flexibility of the programme was praised, several stakeholders suggested that greater flexibility was needed in the Traineeships model to ensure providers can be more responsive to the needs of these learners.

3.36 In terms of the referral itself, great importance was placed on the TRF by providers; however, the quality of the information contained within the form was considered variable, depending on the Careers Wales office it had originated from. This has created particular challenges where mental health issues (for example) hadn't been adequately captured within the form. In one instance, a provider reported that this impacted on their ability to claim for Additional Learning Needs/Additional Learning Support funding as they did not have the appropriate evidence in place (see 3.40 below). One provider suggested that the independent guidance interview may be more effective at around four weeks after commencement on the Engagement strand to provide clearer direction in consultation with a young person.

3.37 A self-referral pilot has been trialled in Conwy and Denbighshire that enabled the direct recruitment of participants to the Engagement strand. Providers who participated in the pilot offered mixed views on the experience. One provider felt it had provided a degree of autonomy, increased flexibility and responsiveness to the model, enabling them to deploy engagement officers within communities to actively target and engage young people and recruit them directly to the programme. Other providers had experienced less success through the pilot, suggesting that young people naturally view Careers Wales as the first step in engagement with Traineeships because of the awareness of the organisation gained through school.

### **Engagement and delivery process**

3.38 Once engaged on the programme the approach offered by providers is largely consistent and broadly involves the following steps:

- An informal interview – to initially outline the provision on offer and to explore the young person's aspirations

- Induction – a programme of initial engagement and familiarisation activity ranging from two days to two weeks
- Development of their Individual Learning Plan (ILP) – this element of the model (which is a requirement of delivering Traineeships) was of variable value to providers. Some felt it to be a useful motivational/directional tool that provided useful structure to the monthly reviews, whilst others viewed it as something of a tick box exercise.
- Participant engages in provision. This ranges from directly delivered training, to third party provider support or work placements
- Monthly Reviews - to review progress and expectations/aspirations.

3.39 As opposed to other similar employability programmes, learners receive an allowance on Traineeships. However, several providers felt that the allowance offered to young people on the Engagement strand of the programme should be increased to ensure the programme is appealing to them when compared with other options. Currently participants receive £30 per week whilst on the Engagement strand and £50 per week on the Level 1 strand. One provider felt that as the disparity between the minimum wage and the allowance increases, participants are becoming increasingly motivated to secure a minimum wage job as it will provide them with a higher wage in the immediate future, albeit with potentially less room for progression.

### **Participant backgrounds and support needs**

- 3.40 There was a general agreement amongst providers and partners that young people engaging with Traineeships display an increasingly complex set of needs and barriers.
- 3.41 Mental health issues are deemed to have become particularly prevalent amongst young people, whilst trends of increased levels of substance misuse, self-harm and homelessness are also apparent.
- 3.42 The majority of providers perceived high levels of young people with complex issues and backgrounds on Traineeships to be the result of a wider societal trend.
- 3.43 One provider, however, considered there to be a correlation between higher levels of self-referral onto the Level One Strand and the increased prevalence of participants from challenging backgrounds.

3.44 As noted previously, officials and partners believe that in some instances complex barriers and needs such as homelessness, caring responsibilities and substance abuse are preventing young people from engaging with the Traineeships programme, who would otherwise benefit from it. However, not all providers have the capacity to provide the resource-intensive support required to enable some of these young people to secure good outcomes from Traineeships.

*Adaptations to the Engagement strand*

3.45 In response to the increased level of barriers and needs faced by Traineeships participants, several providers have sought to adapt the Engagement strand. This has included splitting the offer into two and providing a pre-engagement, preparation element to help participants to overcome some of the barriers they face, followed by a more employability focused element to the strand.

3.46 The majority of providers identified a reduction in weekly hours for the Engagement strand from 30 to 21 as one of the key changes in programme design. Whilst providers acknowledged that they had the flexibility to extend these hours of delivery it was felt that this reduction impeded the momentum established with participants who typically have complex barriers and require more intensive support:

*There needs to be more time for those people who aren't ready after 21 hours. It was better for the learner to attend more, and have time in that initial stage. Having the maximum 21 hours means that if they want to do and attend more they can't. This is particularly a problem if they are in the wrong placement initially and it means they aren't able to progress to Level 1. (Provider)*

*The 21 hours of provision is typically delivered in blocks from Monday-Wednesday. That leaves greater time for them to potentially become disengaged. (Provider)*

3.47 With regards to timeframes, other providers cited the removal of a limit in the duration of time over which a participant can receive support (some will participate for a just a few weeks, others may be with the programme for up to a year) as a positive adaptation of the programme. They perceived the extension to have been introduced in recognition of the additional needs encountered by many young people.

*Additional Learning Needs and the Additional Learning Support budget*



- 3.48 The Additional Learning Support (ALS) budget is offered as a supplementary resource to support participants who have Additional Learning Needs (ALN). Providers vary in the extent to which they utilise these budgets, with some providers not accessing them at all and others actively targeting these resources. There is a tendency for small private sector providers to be less likely to use the budgets, compared to larger providers, however there are also exceptions to this pattern.
- 3.49 Officials and partners noted that changes have been made to the application process for ALS funding following early feedback that accessing this funding was bureaucratic and complex. However, they noted this had not seemed to have led to an increased take up of the funding and expressed concern that it may prevent some of the key target groups for Traineeships from engaging with the programme.
- 3.50 Providers who tend not to access these budgets, described several reasons for this:
- Whilst it was acknowledged that efforts had been made to simplify the process (although none described having experienced the process following these refinements), some providers perceived it to be a complex, bureaucratic and lengthy procedure and consequently believed that decisions on eligibility for the funding were made too late in the process of engagement.
  - Availability of other resources within their organisations (particularly colleges) to support these needs.
  - Lack of sufficient intelligence within the TRF regarding a participant's background, which acts as a constraint on accessing ALS funding. Providers have little evidence to draw on to access these budgets without information from Careers Wales on an individual's background, which can undermine the strength of their application.
  - Some providers mentioned restrictions in the type of ALS expense that could be claimed, saying that the ALS they provide could not be claimed for as it wasn't delivered by staff specifically employed for that role.
- 3.51 Providers successfully utilising the ALS budget typically benefitted from the presence of in-house counsellors although these staff bring with them a cost:
- 'one provider has employed a counsellor and they are managing through that to draw down [funds] but that's a very expensive thing to do, which is only okay for a larger provider. It's not achievable for a medium-sized provider.'* (Provider)

## *Suspension*

- 3.52 Another element of refinement identified by providers related to a perceived loss of autonomy around the suspension of participants on the Traineeships programme. Providers described no longer being able to suspend a participant who has failed to turn up for ten days, instead, providers reported these participants are required to restart the programme. Providers felt that they were engaging with young people who often had chaotic lifestyles which sometimes led to absenteeism from the programme beyond the ten allowable days. Providers reported that in some instances, where a young person was subsequently re-engaged, their absence was justified, however the restrictions were leading to those individuals having to reapply and restart their participation in the Traineeships programme. However, it is understood from the Welsh Government programme team that 'authorised absence is allowed for a range of specialist support' with an expectation that the provider retains some form of contact during the period of absence. Where there is contact during the time of programme absence in this context it is considered that there is no necessity for a young person to reapply.

## **Placements**

- 3.53 Through the Level 1 strand of support, participants regularly access work placements as part of the offer. One issue raised by several providers related to the reduction in reimbursement rates when a participant is on a placement. Providers argued that the extent of support required by young people whilst on placement did fall, but that support was still required, and that the reduced rate of reimbursement failed to fully cover the cost of 'in-placement' support delivered by providers. There is also a risk that the reduction in reimbursement may influence the model of support offered, with placements being less prominent within the offer.

*There should be way more emphasis on learning and or work experience but you don't get paid half as much so it is not seen as valuable. (Provider)*

*Currently the biggest concern is that if we put a learner out on placement, it's about 60 per cent less funding than we receive, however we have still got to give that learner a significant amount of support so that they are prepared to work, provide support for the employer and the learner is also still coming to the centre. As a provider, we still do it because that person needs to be well-balanced and be able to get a job. But it does make you think, from a financial*

*point of view, not putting them on placement is where you would make your money. (Provider)*

- 3.54 Several also described increased challenges in engaging employers to offer placements, with a minority suggesting that incentivising employers would boost levels of interest. Furthermore, providers described their keenness to target placements where employment may be an outcome, aligning with the Apprenticeship programme as a potential progression pathway from the initial placement typically helped to strengthen this offer.
- 3.55 The lack of awareness of Traineeships as a brand/programme of support and the unfamiliarity of the offer was also felt to impact negatively upon levels of employer engagement. In addition, some providers believe there is a stigma around Traineeships, with negative perceptions linked to young people who had misbehaved at school. Promoting the programme and its potential link to Apprenticeships would help facilitate an understanding of the longer term, strategic benefit of the programme.

### **Progression**

- 3.56 To qualify as a positive outcome for the programme, progression from Traineeships into mainstream education or employment needs to take place within four weeks of a young person's participation in a Traineeship. This represents a reduction from 13 weeks from the previous iteration of the Traineeships programme. This reduction creates a particular challenge where a participant completes a Traineeship in July and then wishes to engage in further education in September. As a result, some providers are managing the timing of courses to ensure that they finish within 29 days of the course that they are intending to commence. Whilst this reduction is met with some frustration by providers, it is aligned to European Social Fund eligibility requirements and it should be noted that the requirements for what constitutes a positive outcome are less rigorous than they were previously in terms of the level and duration of further learning, which has been a factor in enabling Providers to meet progression targets.

### **Sharing best practice**

- 3.57 Traineeship providers, officials and partners regularly meet as part of the National Training Federation Wales (NTfW). The vast majority of respondents welcome these meetings, describing them as a useful opportunity for sharing experiences,

successes and challenges in delivering the programme. A small minority questioned the frequency of these meetings and wondered whether they should be held less often.

### **Cross-cutting themes**

- 3.58 Providers agreed that Traineeships address the tackling poverty cross-cutting theme as it aims to provide young people with work opportunities and tackles barriers to employment by improving their employability skills. Some providers, however, highlighted that the pro-rata reduction in the training allowance for the Engagement strand from £50 to £30, reflecting the decrease in weekly hours from 30 to 21, did not resonate with the tackling poverty cross-cutting theme as it made it more difficult for some learners to travel to their work placement. Although travel costs are subsidised through the programme, it was perceived that there was insufficient budget to cover learners' travel to work before they were paid. This was particularly the case in rural areas.

*'They will not have the money to get to their placement for the first week. This is a barrier until they get into employment. There needs to be something more at the beginning to support them even just getting to the centre for the first week. We will fund them but we don't get funding for that, even things like lunches that first week are a concern for our learners.'* (Provider)

- 3.59 The equal opportunities cross-cutting theme was described by providers as a consistently embedded element across training provision. The programme seeks to reduce the numbers of young people NEET and providers operated with general awareness of its importance and applied 'open door policies' to maximise accessibility to all eligible participants. Some providers described how equal opportunities were addressed in the initial induction with young people to highlight its importance, whilst others asserted that its importance was generally known and understood.
- 3.60 Sustainable development was the least evidenced cross-cutting theme in interviews with providers. For most, sustainable development was proven through limiting the amount of printing and using web-based alternatives for hand-outs and programme progress feedback.

3.61 Most providers stated that they support the Welsh language by aiming to have at least one Welsh speaking member of staff, described in a few instances as a '*Welsh Language Champion*'. Commitment to Welsh Language was also described by providers through the encouragement to learn about Welsh culture and history, with centres providing 'Welsh day trips' that place an emphasis on Welsh heritage, Welsh words of the day and refresher lessons for young people so that they have a basic level of Welsh language. For the most part, Welsh language support was described as being reflective of need and available to young people when required by employers. It was, however, highlighted that uptake of these activities was lower than hoped for in some areas, particularly in cities such as Cardiff where the need for Welsh language was perceived as less sought after.

### **Impact of the programme**

3.62 Officials and partners were confident that the programme would achieve its overall targets, but had concerns that participation in the programme was mostly at Engagement and Level 1 level (rather than Bridge to Employment) and that subsequent progression was often in-programme or into FE courses and not on to the Bridge to Employment level or other outcomes such as employment or Apprenticeships. However, some providers also felt that the Traineeships programme did not always provide a sufficient grounding from which to progress to the Apprenticeships programme. In these instances, links to other providers are used to provide a smoother progression.

3.63 Most officials and partners raised concerns about the Bridge-to-Employment strand, and were aware that take-up of this strand was low which may limit progression opportunities. The Bridge-to-Employment strand is almost entirely absent from the services offered by providers through the Programme, and, in many instances training providers were unfamiliar with what may be offered through the strand. In the minority of cases where there was familiarity, respondent providers described the restrictive nature of the offer, the demands of the payment model and the relative financial advantages of comparable offers (primarily via the Apprenticeship and Jobs Growth Wales programme).

3.64 When providers were asked about the perceived impact of the programme, most described changes in participants' soft skills, particularly in relation to confidence, aspirations, the ability to socially interact and their maturity. Whilst these elements

were most commonly cited, various approaches to capturing the information are adopted with some providers describing them as a critical measurement tool.

*‘Soft outcomes are integral, we have had learners who couldn’t walk down the street with their head held up before joining. The confidence and support is life changing. We provide this support in baby steps, we give them tiny milestones so they feel like they are achieving something.’ (Provider)*

### **Programme alignment**

- 3.65 Officials and partners felt the Traineeships programme aligns well with Welsh Government policies and priorities and is important in helping to prevent young people falling into long term NEET status and keeping people out of poverty. It was felt that provision of this nature is needed to ensure young people further away from the labour-market can engage and have a stepping stone into learning and work.
- 3.66 Providers felt that the programme aligns well with the Apprenticeships programme in particular, and, to a lesser extent with the Employability Skills Programme and Jobs Growth Wales programmes. The extent of alignment can be undermined where a provider has secured a contact to deliver Traineeships in one geographical location but has not secured a contract to deliver the Apprenticeships programme. It was felt that the learners are keen to stay with their coaches/assessors and that transferring to another provider can affect their progress.
- 3.67 Several providers referred to a reduction in the level of training offered through Traineeships when compared to its predecessor, the Skill Build programme. It was, however, also felt that there was the potential for duplication in particular areas of skill development as, in some cases schools had already delivered ‘soft skills’ training up to Level 2 and the young person’s enrolment onto the Traineeships programme represented something of a step back in the level of ‘soft skills’ training previously received. However, these young people would not have received the employability support that the Traineeships programme offers.
- 3.68 Similarly, several officials and partners noted there is the need to identify and understand potential duplication between Traineeships and other local ESF provision which may offer support to similar target groups, particularly those on the Engagement strand.

## 4. Interim conclusions and recommendations

4.1 The following chapter includes interim conclusions and recommendations based on the findings from the research undertaken to date.

### **Effectiveness of delivery model**

4.2 Most officials, partners, and providers agree that the overall structure and approach for the Traineeships programme was the correct one. Respondents consider the split into different strands to be a positive feature of the programme, providing different levels of opportunity which can be targeted for different learner needs.

Providers also welcomed the degree of flexibility the model provided them and the autonomy to identify the support they believed to be the most suitable and relevant to supporting a young person to progress.

4.3 Most providers are using consortia or subcontracting arrangements to deliver the programme, including some use of third-sector partners to better engage and support harder to reach target groups.

4.4 However, some issues and concerns about how this model is delivered in practice are apparent, including:

- Perceived limited potential for positive progression payment by results model provides a disincentive for some providers to engage in a partnership delivery model; as such, partnerships with third-sector organisations continue to be the exception.
- There is low use of the Bridge-to-Employment strand of the programme due to the perceived restrictive nature of the offer, the demands of the payment model, and the relative financial advantages of comparable offers (such as the Apprenticeship and Jobs Growth Wales programmes).
- Whilst providers recognised the degree of flexibility provided by the model, it was noted that the Engagement level is more standardised than originally planned due to provider resource and capacity to provide more personalised support within the funding model.

## Engagement with target audiences

- 4.5 An analysis of EDMS data<sup>18</sup> shows that, as of December 2017, East Wales (EW) have met 24.5 per cent of their target for Traineeship completions during the 2014-2022 programme and West Wales and the Valleys (WWV) have met 35.3 per cent of their target. Both regions are currently meeting the 50 per cent target for female participation (57.0% in EW and 54.6% in WWV). Both regions are meeting the target of 1 per cent for the proportion of trainees with declared caring responsibilities (1.6% in EW and 1.4% in WWV). However, neither region is meeting the 20.6 per cent target for the proportion of trainees with a declared disability (including learning difficulty or work-limiting health condition) (18.6% in EW and 19.7% in WWV). The 2.2 per cent target for BME participation is currently being met by EW (10.3%) but not by WWV (1.5%).
- 4.6 Providers report that they use a range of ways to engage their target audiences including through schools, social media, and referral partners. However, they reported a fall in their recruitment numbers due to a perceived lack of promotion of the opportunity, particularly amongst schools who often see a Traineeship as an undesirable outcome when compared with sixth form and further education provision.
- 4.7 Several providers and partners noted the key role that Careers Wales plays in ensuring young people are receiving advice about their options, and had a comprehensive and detailed Traineeship Referral Form, with many preferring this to a self-referral model.
- 4.8 It was also noted by officials, partners and providers that the role of Careers Wales in the referral process can sometimes create delays, due in some cases to Careers Wales' capacity and resource, and the need in some cases for learners to be referred to Careers Wales after they are initially engaged by the provider – which could potentially lead to them being placed with another provider. Some providers also questioned the impartiality of Careers Wales based on the perception that there was an imbalance in the volume of referrals to each provider, particularly in the Engagement strand.

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<sup>18</sup> Welsh Government Traineeships Progress Reports, December 2017.



- 4.9 Providers reported that young people engaging with Traineeships display an increasingly complex set of needs and barriers, including mental health issues and wider social issues.
- 4.10 Officials and partners frequently expressed concerns that the Traineeships programme was not reaching the hardest to reach groups, as providers were not able to offer the more tailored and personalised support envisaged for the Engagement level.
- 4.11 Despite Welsh Government amendments to the process it was noted that take up of ALS funding was still low, with many providers not attempting to access the funding owing to the perceived bureaucracy of the process and feeling able to offer support within their organisational context. Some officials and partners had concerns that this may mean some young people who would benefit from Traineeships may not be engaging with the programme as a result of not having a high-quality experience.

#### **Outcomes for participants**

- 4.12 An analysis of EDMS data<sup>19</sup> shows that, as of December 2017, the Traineeships programme is significantly exceeding its target for 20 per cent progression into education and training in both EW (53.8%) and WWV (49.6%), and is exceeding its target for 56 per cent to gain qualifications in WWV (60.7%). However, it is not meeting this in East Wales (53.7%), and is some way from achieving its target for 28 per cent to progress into employment in both regions (20.7% in EW and 17.4% in WWV).
- 4.13 Interim findings indicate that a significantly higher proportion of Traineeships participants are progressing into further education and training outcomes than employment outcomes. In addition, officials and partners want to further understand the extent to which progression into further learning was 'in-programme' progression between Engagement and Level 1 compared with other courses. The next stages of this research will further explore participant outcomes, and in particular the types of further learning entered in order to understand the extent to which this offers effective progression towards work.

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<sup>19</sup> Welsh Government Traineeships Progress Reports, December 2017.

- 4.14 When asked about the perceived impact of Traineeships, most providers emphasised changes in participants' soft skills, particularly in relation to confidence, aspirations, the ability to socially interact and their maturity.

### **All age employability programme and recommendations for future delivery**

- 4.15 From April 2019, the Welsh Government will replace the current suite of employability skills programmes including Traineeships, Jobs Growth Wales, React and the Employability Skills Programme with a new, single employability programme – Working Wales. Working Wales will support delivery of the Welsh Government's Programme for Government, Taking Wales Forward commitment to reshape employability support for all individuals and forms an important part of the government's Employability Plan.
- 4.16 The Working Wales programme will support individuals who are aged 16 and over and ensure that they receive the bespoke support required to progress towards, and enter sustainable employment. Working Wales will have a greater focus on employer engagement and will provide ongoing support to individuals as they progress into education, employment or training.
- 4.17 The only referral mechanism into Working Wales will be through the Employment Advice Gateway (EAG), delivered, initially, through Careers Wales. The EAG will provide a single entry point to employability support. Individuals will have an independent and professional needs-based assessment through an advice and guidance service in order to identify both their strengths and their barriers to employment. Advisors will help the individual by identifying barriers to employment, the best route to employment, and by referring them to the most appropriate intervention/s available; including Working Wales, where appropriate.
- 4.18 Working Wales builds on the findings of substantial evaluation and research evidence of Welsh Government programmes, including findings from the evaluation of the 2011-15 phase of the Traineeships programme and evaluations of other programmes such as ReAct, Jobs Growth Wales and the Employability Skills Programme. It also draws on lessons learned from other similar activities both nationally and internationally.

## *Recommendations*

1. Some providers expressed concern about perceived loss of autonomy around the suspension of participants. Providers described no longer being able to suspend a participant who has failed to turn up for ten days, instead, providers reported these participants are required to restart the programme. However, it is understood that 'authorised absence is allowed for a range of specialist support' with an expectation that the provider retains some form of contact during the period of absence. Where there is contact during the time of programme absence in this context it is considered that there is no necessity for a young person to reapply. **It is recommended that the Welsh Government issue guidance and worked examples of the flexibility available to providers around suspension, to inform the effective delivery of the new Working Wales programme.**
2. The role of Careers Wales has been highlighted in this research as both beneficial to ensure impartial advice for the learner, but problematic in terms of an efficient referral process that, on occasions, adds a layer of bureaucracy which lengthens the time between a young person being recruited/referred and actually starting the programme. **It is recommended that effective partnership models between Careers Wales and providers are shared more widely via provider meetings in order to ensure these are replicated in the Working Wales programme. It is also recommended that Welsh Government review the resourcing allocated to referral processes, to secure a more efficient and stream-lined process in the delivery of Working Wales .**
3. In addition to the benefits of strong partnerships between Careers Wales and providers, stakeholders reported that where wider strong partnerships are in place, things work well, for example, where local authorities are involved in the YEPF referral process they can support the engagement and referral of Young People to Careers Wales and the re-engagement of those at risk of dropping out. The value of providers being part of '*local authority-led discussions about progression for young people*', including youth engagement and the five-tier progression model was also specifically mentioned. **It is recommended that effective multi agency partnership models and worked examples are developed and disseminated, to inform partnership working in the delivery of the Employment Advice Gateway and new Working Wales programme.**

4. Awareness and willingness of schools and parents to consider Traineeships as a positive outcome for young people have been found to limit promotion opportunities for the programme. **It is recommended that the Welsh Government explores the wider use of positive messages, case studies and marketing material to promote Traineeships. This could be tailored to the motivations and interests of different stakeholders, such as schools, parents and young people, to promote the programme and reduce any stigma currently associated with it. Such messages and materials should be adapted to fit with the delivery of the new Working Wales programme.**

## **Annex A: Discussion guide for Welsh Government Officials and Partner interviews**

### **Interviewer information**

#### **About the research**

Learning and Work Institute (L&W) is an independent policy and research organisation dedicated to promoting lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion. We are working in partnership with Wavehill Social and Economic Research to evaluate the ESF funded Welsh Government Traineeship programme for the period of January 2015 to March 2018.

This evaluation will assess the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the 2015-2019 Traineeships Programme. The focus of the evaluation will be on the performance and impact of the programme, with some review of the programme design and delivery processes. The evaluation will comply with WEFO evaluation guidance and requirements. In particular, this evaluation will explore:

- The impact the programme has had in both its hard and soft outcomes.
- The overall value the programme has added through a cost-benefit analysis.
- Lessons learned for the future delivery of similar programmes and how good practice can be replicated and benefited from.

#### **Introduction to the research**

- Introduce yourself and thank interviewee for agreeing to take part. Provide a recap as to the purpose of the research (as previous).
- The interview will last around 60 minutes.
- Participation is optional and they can stop the interview or decline to answer specific questions at any time, should they wish.
- It is also important to note that the team undertaking the evaluation do not work for the Welsh Government or any of the organisations that are involved in the delivery or funding of this project. This is an independent evaluation.

#### **Confidentiality and Consent**

- We are undertaking this work on behalf of the Welsh Government. The information given to us in the research will be used to inform the development of further research activities, and interim and final reports. We will not use the names of any individuals in the reporting, although given the nature of the research, organisations may be identifiable.
- Quotes from the discussion may be used in the report but these will not be attributed to participants by name.
- We would prefer to record the interview as this helps us to capture exactly what is said. Recordings will be deleted once the project has been completed.
- Ensure interviewee is comfortable with recording.
- Ask if they have any questions.
- Ask interviewee to verbally confirm that they understand the purpose and confidentiality of the research and that they are happy to take part.

This document is a guide to the principal themes and issues to be covered in the interview.

Questions can be modified and followed up in more detail where necessary. Throughout the interviews where key issues and differences appear, probe for whether this applies to West Wales and Valleys, East Wales, or across the programme.

### **Section 1: Context**

1. Please can you tell me about your role and how this relates to the Traineeships programme?
2. What has been the main rationale for designing the second phase of the Traineeships programme and how has this built on previous programmes?
3. What do you see as the key aims of the Traineeships programme? What will success look like?
4. Three levels of Traineeships are offered (Engagement, Level 1, and Bridge to Employment), what do you see as the rationale for each of these levels and why do you think it is important each is included in the Traineeship programme?

### **Section 2: Partnerships**

5. A range of partners have been involved in the delivery of the programme e.g. Welsh Government, Careers Wales, WBL providers and subcontractors, and third sector organisations. How effective do you think partnership working has been and why?
  - What were the benefits of partnership working?
  - What were the challenges? How if at all have these been resolved or could they be resolved?
6. Based on your experience, to what extent has the role of different partners been clear to employers and individuals taking part in the programme?
7. Are there any other partners you think it would have been beneficial to engage with? Why is this?

### **Section 3: Delivery**

8. How successful do you think the delivery of Traineeships programme has been in practice?
  - What has worked well/not so well?
  - How could this have been improved?
9. What has been your experience of the commissioning and administrative/monitoring processes involved in the Traineeship programme, both from the Welsh Government perspective and the EU funding perspective? What has worked well or not so well in your opinion? Which, if any, specific elements of this could have been simplified?  
*Interviewer to probe based on respondent's role in the funding application process, LLWR (or EDMS if aware), and working with providers.*
10. What delivery and payment models are you aware of that are being used by the different lead providers? How effective do you think these are?
  - Which models have you found work well/not so well?

- How could the different models be improved?
11. What has been the role of different partners in the referrals process?
  12. To what extent has the referrals process worked as envisaged? How successful do you think this has been?
    - What has worked well/not so well?
    - How could this have been improved?
  13. How effective do you think employer engagement has been and why?
    - What has worked well/not so well?
    - How could this have been improved?
  14. How effective do you think approaches to assessing learner needs have been?
    - Which approaches have you found work well/not so well?
    - How could the different approaches to assessing learner need be improved?
  15. To the best of your knowledge, how widely used are the ALN and ALS budgets to support people with additional learning needs to enter and complete Traineeships? How, if at all, has this changed over time?

#### **Section 4: Impact**

16. To what extent do you think the programme will achieve its targets in terms of participant numbers? What are the main barriers to this?
17. To what extent do you think the programme will achieve its desired impacts of learner progression to employment or learning at a higher level? What are the main barriers to this?
18. What wider skills and behaviours do you think the programme will help participants develop? How will it do this?

#### **Section 5: Wider programme impact**

19. In line with the European Union's cross-cutting themes (equal opportunities, sustainable development, and tackling poverty), how do you think the Traineeships programme can address these, how will this work in practice?
20. How does the Traineeships programme support wider Welsh Government policies and priorities?
21. What elements or learning from the Traineeships programme should continue after the current programme finishes? Why do you think this? How might it be adapted to better meet future policy requirements?
22. To the best of your knowledge, how effective has the programme been at (i) supporting learners' development and use of Welsh language skills, and (ii) supporting the Welsh language needs of employers?

#### **Section 6: Summary**

23. What do you think are the key strengths of the Traineeship programme?
24. How do you think the Traineeships programme could be improved and why?

#### **Closing the interview**

- Thank them for their time.
- Ask if they have any further questions and provide contact details for further comments/queries.
- Reiterate next steps and confidentiality.

## **Annex B: Discussion guide for Provider interviews**

### **Interviewer information**

#### **About the research**

Wavehill is an independent social and economic research organisation working in partnership with the Learning and Work Institute (L&W) to evaluate the ESF funded Welsh Government Traineeship programme for the period of January 2015 to March 2018.

This evaluation will assess the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the 2015-2019 Traineeships Programme. The focus of the evaluation will be on the performance and impact of the programme, with some review of the programme design and delivery processes. The evaluation will comply with WEFO evaluation guidance and requirements. In particular, this evaluation will explore:

- The impact the programme has had in both its hard and soft outcomes.
- The overall value the programme has added through a cost-benefit analysis.
- Lessons learned for the future delivery of similar programmes and how good practice can be replicated and benefited from.

#### **Introduction to the research**

- Introduce yourself and thank interviewee for agreeing to take part. Provide a recap as to the purpose of the research (as previous).
- The interview will last around 45-60 minutes.
- Participation is optional and they can stop the interview or decline to answer specific questions at any time, should they wish.
- It is also important to note that the team undertaking the evaluation do not work for the Welsh Government or any of the organisations that are involved in the delivery or funding of this project. This is an independent evaluation.

#### **Confidentiality and Consent**

- We are undertaking this work on behalf of the Welsh Government. The information given to us in the research will be used to inform the development of further research activities, and interim and final reports. We will not use the names of any individuals in the reporting, although given the nature of the research, organisations may be identifiable.
- Quotes from the discussion may be used in the report but these will not be attributed to participants by name.
- We would prefer to record the interview as this helps us to capture exactly what is said. Recordings will be deleted once the project has been completed.
- Ensure interviewee is comfortable with recording.
- Ask if they have any questions.
- Ask interviewee to verbally confirm that they understand the purpose and confidentiality of the research and that they are happy to take part.



This document is a guide to the principal themes and issues to be covered in the interview.

Questions can be modified and followed up in more detail where necessary. Throughout the interviews where key issues and differences appear, probe for whether this applies to West Wales and Valleys, East Wales, or across the programme.

### **Section 1: Context**

1. Please outline your role and how it relates to the Traineeships Programme
2. (Ask Training Providers) In which geographical areas do you deliver the Traineeships Programme?
3. In your view, what do you see as the rationale for funding the Traineeships Programme?
4. What do you see as the key aims of the Traineeships Programme?

### **Section 2: Programme Design and Alignment**

5. To your knowledge, what elements of the approach for the current Traineeships Programme have changed when compared to previous Traineeships Programmes
6. Three levels of Traineeships are offered (Engagement, Level 1, and Bridge to Employment), what do you see as the rationale for each of these levels and why do you think it is important each is included in the Traineeship programme?
7. How (if at all), does the Traineeship programme align to other programmes you deliver?
  - How does it align to other Welsh Government and other partner programmes?
8. What challenges (if any) were faced in aligning the Traineeships programme with other provision and how were these overcome?
9. (Lead Providers only) What delivery and payment model are you using with the subcontracted providers for the Programme?
  - How, if at all, does the payment model influence the type of subcontractors you work with?
10. (Subcontractors only) Please outline the payment and delivery model you have agreed with the lead contractor
  - Does the structure of this model influence how you approach the delivery of the Traineeships programme in any way?

### **Section 3: Procurement**

11. To your knowledge, how were providers for the Traineeships Programme procured and selected?
12. From your perspective, how well did the procurement process work?
  - (If third sector provider) did your organisation face any particular challenges with the process?

### **Section 4: Recruitment**

13. What is your understanding of how participants are identified and selected for the Traineeships programme?
  - Who do you think are the priority groups recruited to the programme?

- Are there any evident patterns or trends in recruitment?
  - Are any groups under-represented?
14. How is the programme promoted/marketed to schools/participants/parents/employers?
- How effective has this/these approach been? Why do you say that?

**Section 5: Referral process<sup>20</sup>**

15. What are the typical referral processes for identified participants to work based learning providers – specifically:
- Which organisations are typically involved?
  - How effectively in your opinion is the referral process handled?
  - How are work based learning providers selected to support participants (purely on geography?)
  - How does the referral process work in practice (step-by-step walk through)?
  - To your knowledge is the referral process consistent across all WBL providers? If not, what differences in approach are you aware of, what effect if any does this have on the service?
  - Could the referral process be improved in any way?

**Section 6: Engagement with WBLs**

16. On receipt of a referral, from your understanding, what is the approach that is then taken with the individual?
17. How is the learner’s Individual Learning Plan compiled? What key questions are asked of participants to inform the development of the ILP?
- How are the learner’s goals and aspirations identified?
18. How do training providers subsequently monitor progression towards completing the ILP – to what extent is the ILP used as a motivational/directional tool with participants?

**Section 7: Participant background**

19. What are the typical challenges/barriers/issues that participants referred onto the programme are faced with?
- Are there any specific characteristics or barriers amongst participants that you struggle to support/overcome? How (if at all) are you able to address these (prompt for specialist support etc)
20. Have you seen any trends in the prevalence of these barriers amongst participants since 2015?
21. There are three levels of Traineeships offered (Engagement, Level 1, and Bridge to Employment), what are the typical patterns in terms of numbers referred to the Engagement and Level 1 strand?

**Section 8: The training offer**

22. In your opinion, what do you see as the key elements of the training offer – which aspects do you perceive as having the greatest impact on the participants?
- Are there any limitations/deficiencies in the current training offer/approach for participants?

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<sup>20</sup> Interviewer note – participants can self-refer to L1 strand and recent pilot in Conwy and Denbighshire enabled direct recruitment to the Engagement Strand (ended 31/3/17)

- Are these limitations consistent across all three levels?
23. What flexibility is there to adapt the programme to meet participant needs?
- Is this sufficient?
  - Are there any constraints which stop providers doing this effectively?
24. Are there any specific approaches required to attract/retain engagement?
25. To the best of your knowledge, how widely used are the ALN and ALS budgets to support people with additional learning needs to enter and complete Traineeships?  
How, if at all, has this changed over time?
- How do the budgets enable support to be provided?
  - What do you consider to be the positives and negatives of the budget system in providing additional support?

### **Section 9: Soft outcomes/impacts**

26. In your opinion, how is the support offered impacting on the participants? What wider skills and behaviours do you think the programme is helping participants to develop?  
How is it doing this?
27. How is their progress currently measured? Are there any systematic ways of measuring learners' achievement of soft skills such as confidence and self-esteem?
28. Are there any areas where an adaptation to the support on offer could assist in improving participant progress?
- Are there any specific adaptations to the ALN support that would improve participant progress?

### **Section 10: Wider programme impact**

29. In line with the European Union's cross-cutting themes (equal opportunities, sustainable development, and tackling poverty), in what ways, to your knowledge, is the Traineeships programme addressing these?
30. To the best of your knowledge, how has the programme provided opportunities for participants to develop their Welsh language skills for use in the workplace/further learning
- To what extent have these opportunities been taken up?
31. How, through the programme have you been able to support the Welsh language needs of employers?

### **Section 11: Completion and placements**

32. On completing a strand of activity, how are participants supported to progress on to their next step?
- Specifically, for those completing the Level 2 strand how do you facilitate engagement on a relevant work placement with an employer?
  - In terms of organisations for placements, how are these identified? How successful has this been?
33. Are there any patterns/trends in the type of organisations involved in providing placements for the Traineeship programme (voluntary/community/private?) and/or the level of interest?
34. To what extent are participants referred on to other programmes (Apprenticeships or JGW)?
- (if to some extent) Please outline the referral approach

- How effective do you consider the approach to be?

### **Section 12: Monitoring requirements**

35. What information is captured as part of the monitoring process for the programme (above and beyond the LLWR requirements)?
36. Are data capture processes appropriate/effective or are there any improvements required?

### **Section 13: Partnerships/sharing of practice**

37. To what extent do training providers share experiences and learning from the programme?  
*Probe as to who they share this with - other training providers/Careers Wales etc.*
  - How useful has this been /could it be?

### **Section 14: Management support**

38. (Lead Contractors Only) What role does the Welsh Government play in the management of the programme?
39. (Sub-contractors only) Please outline the nature of management support you receive from the lead contractor.
40. What elements of their approach to the management of the programme are particularly effective?
41. Are there any ways in which the management of the programme could be improved?

### **Section 15: Summary**

Reflecting on the process and approach to the programme...

42. Is there anything that should/could have been done differently? What lessons from the current delivery model do you think can help inform future delivery?
43. Are there any other key challenges in delivering the programme that you would like to raise?
44. As part of the evaluation we would like to interview employers that have supported participants. Can you provide details of the employers that have support participants?
  - Would the information include a specific contact at the organisation too?
45. We would also be interested in speaking to employers who did not support the programme but engage with learning for their employees more widely e.g. through Apprenticeships – would you be able to help us facilitate these conversations?

### **Closing the interview**

- Thank them for their time.
- Ask if they have any further questions and provide contact details for further comments/queries.
- Reiterate next steps and confidentiality.