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# Formative evaluation of Jobs Growth Wales+: final report

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

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## Evaluation of Jobs Growth Wales+:

final report

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**wavehill**

Social and economic research  
Ymchwil cymdeithasol ac economaidd

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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**

### **APS**

Annual Population Survey

### **ARR**

Assessment and Referral Report

### **ARWAP**

Anti-racist Wales Action Plan

### **CAMHS**

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

### **CFW**

Communities for Work

### **CFW+**

Communities for Work Plus

### **CQFW**

Credit and Qualifications Framework

### **CWFW**

Curriculum for Wales Framework

### **DWP**

Department of Work and Pensions

### **EPC**

Engagement and Progression Coordinator

### **GCH**

Guided Contact Hours

### **JGW+**

Jobs Growth Wales+

### **ILO**

International Labour Organisation

### **ILP**

Individual Learning Plan

### **LDD**

Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

**LLWR**

Lifelong Learning Wales Record

**LU**

Learning Unit

**MI**

Management Information

**NEET**

Not in Education, Employment or Training

**PACE**

Parents, Childcare and Employment

**RAG**

Research Advisory Group

**SFR**

Statistical First Release

**SPF**

Shared Prosperity Fund

**TPAP**

Tackling Poverty Action Plan

**WEMWBS**

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale

**YEPF**

Youth Engagement and Progression Framework

**YPG**

Young Person's Guarantee



## 1. Introduction

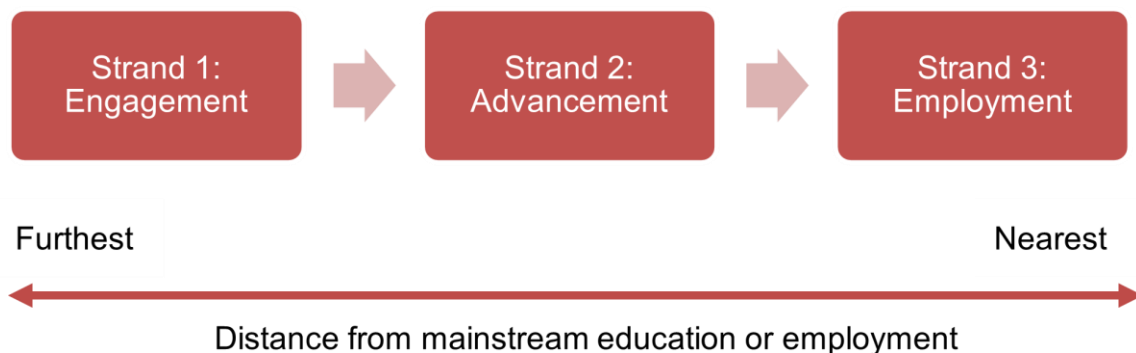
- 1.1 The Jobs Growth Wales+ (JGW+) programme seeks to deliver individualised training, development and employability support to 16 to 18-year-olds <sup>[Footnote 1]</sup> who are assessed as NEET (not in education, employment or training) prior to their enrolment on the JGW+ programme.
- 1.2 Launched in April 2022, the JGW+ programme is due to run until 31st March 2026. The programme was designed with the intention of taking forward the best elements of two previous employability programmes:
  - Traineeships, which supported young people aged 16 to 18 who were NEET to gain skills, qualifications and experience to enable them to commence learning at a higher level or to enter into employment, including an apprenticeship.
  - Jobs Growth Wales 2 (JGW 2), which supported unemployed young people aged 16 to 24 by providing them with work experience for a six-month period. The work experience placement had to be paid at or above the National Minimum Wage (NMW) between 25 and 40 hours per week (with the Welsh Government paying up to 50% of the salary for the duration of that placement).
- 1.3 Five Prime Contractors <sup>[Footnote 2]</sup> have been appointed to deliver support services through the JGW+ programme across four regional areas in Wales.
- 1.4 Following the programme launch, JGW+ initially operated with a referral system via Working Wales (delivered by Careers Wales) only. After several months, however, the delivery model was adapted to allow direct referrals from Contractors, Engagement and Progression Coordinators (EPCs) and learners themselves as well as through Working Wales.
- 1.5 Advice and guidance are provided on a face-to-face basis at Careers Wales offices, local Jobcentres, offices of Contractors, or community outreach locations as well as via the telephone and online.
- 1.6 Advisors help by identifying barriers preventing an individual from accessing employment, education or training. Based on individuals' circumstances and aspirations, trained career advisors identify the most suitable provision available to support the individual in progressing.
- 1.7 If referred to JGW+, the nature and scale of barriers identified inform to which strand (engagement, advancement or employment) of the JGW+ programme the young person is referred (Figure 1.1).
- 1.8 The three strands of JGW+ reflect differentiated levels of interventions available to meet the diverse needs of individuals associated with their distance from mainstream education or employment as assessed upon referral.

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[1] The age group for eligibility for JGW+ was extended to those aged 19 in January 2023.

[2] ACT Training, Grŵp Llandrillo Menai (GLLM), ITEC, Pembrokeshire College, Coleg Cambria.

**Figure 1.1: JGW+ three-strand model**



### **Evaluation**

- 1.9 In July 2022 the Welsh Government commissioned Wavehill to undertake a formative evaluation of JGW+, specifically to:
- Track and record the uptake of the programme between April 2022 and April 2024 (including by protected characteristics which was to be reported yearly).
  - Undertake an annual outcome assessment of the programme, comparing outcomes by protected characteristics groups and Welsh language.
  - Undertake a process evaluation of the programme.
  - To establish a framework for the impact evaluation of the programme <sup>[Footnote 3]</sup>.
- 1.10 The evaluation has been delivered over three phases:
- An initial scoping phase which ran from August to December 2022.
  - An interim phase which ran throughout 2023 and aimed to provide the Welsh Government with timely, robust information on the process and uptake of the JGW+ programme in years 1 (2022 to 2023) and 2 (2023 to 2024) to support ongoing refinement of the programme whilst it is being delivered.
  - A final phase (this phase) of the evaluation, which commenced in spring 2024, providing the opportunity to analyse the achievements and success of JGW+ over a longer timeframe. The final phase has allowed for a more comprehensive analysis of participant journeys and outcomes with an increased emphasis (compared to previous phases) on participant engagement.

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[3] The impact assessment of JGW+ will be undertaken as part of a later, separate contract.

1.11 The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** sets out the methodological approach to the evaluation and reflects on the limitations associated with the approach.
- **Chapter 3** summarises the policy and socioeconomic context for JGW+ and the previous iterations of the programme.
- **Chapter 4** provides an overview of the design of JGW+, reflects on its implementation, and details adjustments made to the delivery model in January 2023.
- **Chapter 5** reviews the progress and performance of the JGW+ programme over time.
- **Chapter 6** provides an analysis of reflections on the delivery model from JGW+ participants, from stakeholders and from employers.
- **Chapter 7** analyses the reported outcomes and impacts arising from the support amongst participants.
- **Chapter 8** summarises the findings of this phase of the evaluation and provides a series of recommendations.

## **2. Methodological approach**

- 2.1 This chapter sets out the methods and research activities undertaken in the final phase of the evaluation. Moreover, it reflects on the limitations associated with the approaches adopted.

### **Analysis of project documentation**

- 2.2 The final phase of the evaluation has involved a review of various documentation, including the programme's business case, integrated impact assessment, programme delivery costs, associated research published since publication of the interim evaluation, and the latest version of the programme specification.

### **Stakeholder interviews**

- 2.3 For the final phase of the evaluation, interviews were undertaken with three stakeholder groups:
- Welsh Government staff (n=10) involved in the design, management, and contractual monitoring of the programme as well as those associated with employability policy.
  - Representatives of Contractors and Sub-Contractors (n=31) involved in the management and delivery of the programme.
  - Local authority representatives — predominantly those operating within the Engagement and Progression Coordinator role (who typically provide operational leadership of the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework<sup>[Footnote 4]</sup> at a local authority level). In total, 29 representatives of local authorities were interviewed from 17 (of the 22) local authority areas in Wales, with invites extended to all local authorities to take part.
- 2.4 Interviews were undertaken virtually and reflected on the influence and impact of adaptations to the delivery model and on the various support offered through each strand. The interviews discussed the programme management and governance structures as well as the journeys of young people through the programme, including consideration of the patterns and trends associated with barriers that young people face and the types of outcomes that young people are achieving. Discussion guides for all interviews can be found in Annexe 2C to I.

### **Participant fieldwork**

- 2.5 Two surveys were undertaken with participants as part of the final phase of the evaluation, using participant contact details obtained (in line with GDPR protocols) from four of the five Prime Contractors.

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[4] The Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF) is a systematic mechanism to identify and respond to young people who are at risk of becoming NEET, who are NEET and/or who are at risk of becoming homeless. The EPC coordinates a local partnership that assists them in considering the overall picture of provision and how they can successfully work together to meet the needs of young people in their local authority area.

2.6 A ‘**core**’ survey with existing participants and recent completers/‘exiters’ from JGW+ who enrolled on JGW+ between 1st October 2023 and 31st July 2024 and remained on the programme until at least 1st May 2024(n=158).

2.7 A ‘**post-six-months**’ survey with participants who enrolled on JGW+ between 1st October 2023 and 1st April 2024 and who had exited the programme over six months prior to survey engagement (exiting prior to 1st May 2024) (n=62).

#### Core survey

2.8 Applying the parameters outlined above resulted in a total eligible sample composed of 2,419 contacts. A further 17 participants whose LLWR records indicated that they had “profound and multiple learning difficulties” or “severe learning difficulties” were removed from the sample, leaving a total eligible sample of 2,402 contacts.

2.9 The decision to remove the 17 young people with MI data indicating ‘profound and multiple learning difficulties’ involved carefully weighting ethical considerations, issues related to validity and practicalities against the desire for inclusive research practices to ensure all voice are reflected. For those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, it was felt to be inappropriate to engage them in the research for several reasons. Mainly, there were concerns associated with the provision of adequate safeguards and support and the effectiveness of engaging these individuals via telephone. Coupled with the fact that fieldwork was constrained by a tight timeframe, it was felt that, on balance, it would be best to remove them from the sample.

2.10 The core survey was undertaken via telephone during October and November 2024. In the original methodological design for the evaluation, it was proposed that 150 participants would be engaged throughout the entire evaluation (the interim and final phase fieldwork combined). Through the scoping exercise for the fieldwork, it was determined that doubling the sample size would be useful in generating a larger and, therefore, more robust body of evidence with which to analyse responses by Prime Contractor <sup>[Footnote 5]</sup>. Moreover, with a desire for analysis of participants’ responses against several thematic areas (including accessibility and inclusivity), it was agreed that a further boost to the target sample would be necessary. Consequently, 150 participants were targeted as part of the interim evaluation with a further 180 participants targeted in this final phase of the evaluation.

2.11 The eligible sample frame was then constructed in the following manner:

- Stratified by Prime Contractor — with participants of four of the five Contractors engaged proportionate to current profiles (Coleg Cambria were unable to provide a sample for the survey (see methodological limitations below)). Applying a quota (see Table 2.1 overleaf) to each stratification to ensure that there are at least five

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[5] These were main Contractors in each of the five regions who oversaw or led delivery through a range of sub-contracted partners but were responsible for reporting on JGW+ delivery to the Welsh Government.

respondents from each Prime Contractor. Obtaining no more than 68% of active (as of 31st July 2024) participants (no exit date recorded), with the remainder considered to be completer participants (an end date recorded for them after 1st May 2024, meaning that as of October 2024 it had been less than six months since they exited the programme).

- For completers, to pursue approximately 40% of participants where the outcome recorded is either neutral<sup>[Footnote 6]</sup> or negative<sup>[Footnote 7]</sup> to reflect the proportional distribution of neutral and negative outcomes amongst completers over that delivery period.

2.12 Survey responses were then monitored to ensure that responses were representative of the general profile of participants, specifically in relation to:

- The proportion of participants declaring that they have a “disability and/or learning difficulty.”
- The proportion of participants who described their ethnicity as anything other than “white.”

2.13 Once these parameters had been applied to the participant population, the total eligible sample comprised 2,402 contacts. Our researchers contacted 1,222 individuals from the sample from 1,604 calls made. Ultimately, participant engagement via telephone proved to be successful, with 158 participants interviewed (7% of the eligible sample), which is in line with targets. The shortfall against the target of 180 was influenced by two important factors:

- The inability to secure contact details for those supported by Coleg Cambria (for whom an allocation of 14 participants had been made).
- The need to reassign fieldwork resources to the post-six-months survey to help boost rates of response to that survey activity (further details below).

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[6] A neutral outcome is obtained where a participant has exited into voluntary work, further learning at the same level as or at a lower level than they have already achieved, employment of less than 16 hours per week or where their destination is classified as “other”.

[7] A negative outcome is recorded where an individual is recorded as seeking work/unemployed after exiting the programme or where the destination within four weeks of exiting remains unknown.

- 2.14 Table 2.1 below presents the distribution of responses by Contractor and against other important characteristics that informed the sample frame. It shows that distribution largely mirrored contractual targets. The main variation against targets related to the balance of participants recorded as completing JGW+ in comparison to those who remained active at the time of engagement. This shift partly reflected the need to prioritise the post-six-months survey in the latter stages of the fieldwork as this was subsequently seen as the primary route through which to explore outcomes and impacts arising from the support.
- 2.15 The variation against status on the JGW+ programme targets primarily related to it being a difficult indicator against which to monitor performance, as until a survey respondent had been engaged it was not possible to know their status. This was similar for the positive outcome rate target, as aside from those who had exited the programme between 1st May and 31st July, it was impossible to predict prior to engagement the nature of outcomes that those participants had achieved.

**Table 2.1: Target and completed responses against sample frame variables (core survey)**

| Category                                     | Overall target | Completed  |
|--|----------------|------------|
| <b>Contractor</b>                            |                |            |
| <b>ACT Training</b>                          | 85             | 80         |
| <b>GLLM</b>                                  | 14             | 13         |
| <b>ITEC</b>                                  | 53             | 50         |
| <b>Pembrokeshire College</b>                 | 14             | 15         |
| <b>Coleg Cambria</b>                         | 14             | 0          |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>180</b>     | <b>158</b> |
| <b>Status (on 31st July 2024)</b>            |                |            |
| <b>Completed JGW+</b>                        | 63             | 37         |
| <b>Active on JGW+</b>                        | 117            | 121        |
| <b>Outcomes</b>                              |                |            |
| <b>Positive outcome</b>                      | 60             | 43         |
| <b>Participant profile</b>                   |                |            |
| <b>Non-white</b>                             | 25             | 13         |
| <b>Disability and/or learning difficulty</b> | 43             | 34         |

Source: Six-month post-exit survey

- 2.16 The post-six-months survey is a concise survey solely capturing quantitative, closed-answer responses aimed at understanding participant situations at least six months after they have exited the JGW+ programme.
- 2.17 Prime Cymru, our contracted partners on the evaluation, recruited a Research Advisory Group (RAG) of young people reflective of the participant cohort to advise on the research. The RAG group recommended that post-programme engagement should be online, distributed to mobile phones via text message (rather than via email) to aid rates of response. Consequently, the survey was distributed to all 597 participant contacts who had enrolled on JGW+ between 1st October 2023 and 1st April 2024 and had exited the programme over six months prior to engagement (exiting prior to 1st May 2024), with 590 reminders sent via text<sup>[Footnote 8]</sup>. With limited success, we also trialled its distribution via email. The combination of these methods resulted in six responses (1% response rate).
- 2.18 To help boost response numbers we reached out to participants via telephone. Of the 583 contacts available, our researchers contacted 414 (71%). The team conducted 441 calls and were able to secure an additional 56 responses (8% response rate). The total number of surveys completed (combining those undertaken via telephone with those undertaken online) was 62 (10% of the total sample).

### **Management information**

- 2.19 Management information for the evaluation was obtained from two sources: from the Welsh Government via the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) dataset and from Prime Contractors.

#### **LLWR dataset**

- 2.20 The LLWR dataset provided details of 11,972 starts, relating to 10,008 unique participants, who had enrolled on the programme between April 2022 and July 2024. The data were provided within four different datasets: Learner (LN), Learning Programme (LP), Learning Activity (LA) and Award (AW)<sup>[Footnote 9]</sup>.

#### **Management information from Prime Contractors**

- 2.21 In October 2024, management information (MI) on participants of the programme was also supplied by each of the Contractors to Wavehill in relation to participants engaged on the programme between April 2022 (programme launch) and July 2024. The data provided were for all participants who had enrolled in the

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[8] Phone numbers were unavailable for seven of the participants.

[9] The Learner (LN) dataset includes information on the learner such as name, date of birth, ethnic origin, and gender, the Learning Programme (LP) dataset gives information on the programme of learning being undertaken by the learner and any characteristics which may change over time, the Learning Activity (LA) dataset collects data on the individual activities or courses undertaken by the learner on their programme of learning, and the Award (AW) dataset provides information on the awards for which the learner is entered and those achieved.



programme since it launched in April 2022 and were typically provided as two datasets.

- 2.22 One dataset largely complemented that offered by the LLWR with detail on demographic background, protected characteristics, and participant journeys and outcomes.
- 2.23 A second dataset sought to capture evidence associated with an individual's learning plan (ILP), providing detailed insight into the types of learning activity being undertaken and participant barriers identified.
- 2.24 The analysis of monitoring information undertaken for this report provides additional detail to that presented in published performance data. It offers additional granularity in relation to geographical patterns of engagement as well as performance over time and uses more recent data than the latest statistical release (published performance data) available at the time of writing (through to July 2024 in comparison to the end of March 2024). For the majority of reporting, percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number. The nature of data captured through management information has also informed the design of the draft impact framework for JGW+<sup>[Footnote10]</sup>.

### **Methodological limitations**

#### Research Advisory Group

- 2.25 In the interim phase of the evaluation the RAG participated in multiple workshops that covered the following issues:
- Comments on the relevance and appropriateness of Welsh Government marketing of the JGW+ programme, including website and video content.
  - A review of the participant interview schedules to advise on revised wording and aims of questions, leading to refined surveys used in fieldwork.
  - Commentary on young people's experience of the labour market and the job opportunities available.
  - A review and commentary on the emerging findings of the participant interviews to support analysis and interpretation of findings.
- 2.26 These led to some changes made to the research tools used for the evaluation following comments on question wording or the relevance of response options to young people likely to be engaged with the programme. Insights gained on the marketing of the programme were directed to Welsh Government staff, highlighting positive feedback on content as well as suggestions regarding the use of alternative video options for the distribution of future marketing.

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[10] Wavehill (2025) Impact framework- Formative evaluation of Jobs Growth Wales Plus, Welsh Government (accessed: 17 June 2025) .

- 2.27 For the final phase of the evaluation, it was proposed that the RAG would take part in peer research activity as part of the evaluation. In doing so this would build their skills and understanding of research whilst working with their peers. On reflection, it was felt that this approach presented too many risks for the evaluation due to:
- The vulnerability of the participant group, based on both their needs and their age.
  - Safeguarding concerns, given the sensitive nature of the questions being asked and the risk that the disclosure of certain information may require follow-up action for safeguarding purposes as well as signposting to post-participation support.
  - The training and requirements of RAG members in a short space of time on top of conducting the research itself may risk overburdening the RAG, who did not sign up to this level of involvement.
  - Legal and ethical issues surrounding data-sharing agreements, contractual arrangements, and confidentiality.
  - Risks surrounding data validity, as the standard of interviews is unlikely to meet the standards of qualified interviewers and, therefore, could be limited in its utility.
- 2.28 Reflecting on these risks, and on the limited additional value that could be gained from the RAG in the final phase (no further marketing had been planned, research tools were already largely designed, and whilst the RAG reflected the demography of JGW+ participants, they did not reflect the situation of JGW+ participants in relation to journeys through EET), it was ultimately agreed that no further work would be taken forward with the RAG for the final phase of the evaluation.

#### Participant profiles

- 2.29 Four of the five Prime Contractors shared all contact details for participants on the programme (within the eligible enrolment timeframes outlined earlier). One Contractor (Coleg Cambria), however, was unable to share contact details, leaving a lower representation of participant feedback from those residing in the North East and no representation from those supported by Coleg Cambria.

#### Local authority engagement

- 2.30 Not all local authorities have engaged with the evaluation, resulting in geographical gaps in local authority perspectives on the programme in the following areas: Bridgend, Cardiff, Newport, Powys, and Rhondda Cynon Taf. It should be noted that, apart from Rhondda Cynon Taf, these local authorities have failed to engage in either phase of the JGW+ evaluation, resulting in failure to gain external perspectives in certain geographical areas of Wales for the entirety of the evaluation.

## Management information

- 2.31 Management information associated with individual learning plans is not held in a consistent manner by contracted providers and is gathered in various ways using Contractor-specific terminology. For some Contractors the information is captured in a qualitative, narrative form and is held outside of their JGW+ MI system. Three of the five Contractors were able to share comprehensive information relating to these, informing our assessment of the complexity of needs amongst JGW+ participants. It should be acknowledged, however, that this assessment is limited in its comprehensiveness (representing 30%) of JGW+ participants.

## Survey bias

- 2.32 As outlined earlier within this section in relation to the core survey and demonstrated in Table 2.2 below, participants who responded to the core survey were less likely to have secured a positive outcome than reported in the national performance data for the eligible cohort. Analysis presented in sections 6 and 7 of the report illustrates a similar pattern amongst those who responded to the post-six-months survey. This may lead to negative bias in the feedback obtained from participants, particularly regarding the perceived additionality of the support.

**Table 2.2: Positive outcome rates by data source**

| Source  | Positive outcome rate |
|---|-----------------------|
| JGW+ performance (Apr. 2023 to Mar. 2024)     | 60.1%                 |
| Evaluation core survey respondents            | 42.4%                 |
| Evaluation post-six-months survey respondents | 47.2%                 |

### 3. Policy context

#### Introduction

- 3.1 This chapter summarises the policy and socioeconomic context for JGW+ and the previous iterations of the programme.

#### Policy context

#### **Tackling Poverty Action Plan (TPAP) and Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF)**

- 3.2 In the lead-up to the first Jobs Growth Wales programme, the Welsh Government's Tackling Poverty Action Plan (TPAP, 2012–16) identified three main objectives: preventing poverty, helping people to improve their skills and qualifications, and mitigating the impact of poverty. An important part of that plan was a commitment to reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Shortly after the launch of the TPAP the Welsh Government published the implementation plan for the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF). The framework set out a new approach to supporting young people (aged 11–18) who are NEET or are at risk of becoming NEET and sought to respond to widespread concerns that services for this target group suffered from failing to join up or to place the needs of young people first. The framework had six elements:

- identifying young people most at risk of disengagement
- better brokerage and coordination of support
- stronger tracking and transitions of young people through the system
- ensuring that provision meets the needs of young people
- strengthening employability skills and opportunities for employment
- greater accountability for better outcomes for young people.

- 3.3 The TPAP and the YEPF were important foundational elements that underpinned the delivery of the Traineeships Programmes and two previous iterations of Jobs Growth Wales (from which JGW+ has drawn extensively). The design of the original JGW programme was also influenced by the backdrop of the 2008–2009 UK recession, where evidence identified disproportionate exposure to the recession (and the associated impacts) amongst young people in comparison to other age groups, and by 2012 almost one quarter of those aged 16 to 24 were unemployed

[Footnote 11].

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[11] Ipsos MORI, Wavehill & Wiserd (2016) Evaluation of Jobs Growth Wales – Final Report, Welsh Government (accessed: 1 December 2024).

- 3.4 In 2017 the national strategy Prosperity for All set out the aim of building a prosperous & secure, healthy & active, ambitious & learning, united & connected Wales. The 'Prosperity for All' strategy set out a series of actions that underpin the Ambitious and Learning theme, including the "development of a new employability plan for Wales focusing on the diverse needs of individuals, and responsive to the particular skills needs of each part of the country".
- 3.5 The 2018 Employability Plan outlined how the Welsh Government planned to deliver employability support in a smart and joined-up way with:
- An individualised approach.
  - Underlining the responsibility of employers to upskill workers, support staff, and provide fair work.
  - Responding to current/projected skills gaps.
  - Preparing for a radical shift in the world of work.

### **COVID-19**

- 3.6 On 23rd March 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the British public were instructed by the Prime Minister to stay at home other than for a limited set of specific purposes. Over the subsequent 15-month period, lockdowns and social distancing requirements were implemented, although the regulations varied in different periods and across devolved nations.
- 3.7 Evidence of the negative impacts of the pandemic was published by Public Health Wales in their report Public Health Wales (2022) 'Protecting the mental wellbeing of our future generations: learning from COVID-19 for the long term: A Mental Wellbeing Impact Assessment Approach'. This highlighted the recognition that the negative physical and mental health effects of COVID-19 will have a more lasting effect, particularly for young people and those in insecure and low-paid employment.
- 3.8 The Renew And Reform Post-16 And Transitions Plan (2023) sets out the way in which the WG intends to work with providers of post-16 education to support learners beyond the COVID-19 pandemic as part of the Renew and Reform programme: supporting learners' wellbeing and progression. This plan outlines the approach that the WG will use over the subsequent three years (through to 2026) to shape and implement support. Working with the Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Learners project, the transition plan sought to help those already disadvantaged groups that have further been disproportionately affected by the disruption to post-16 education and training due to COVID-19. The plan led to adaptations to the JGW+ delivery model which are explored further in section 4.

## Young Person's Guarantee

- 3.9 In the Employability Plan in March 2022 the Welsh Government identified JGW+ as an important mechanism through which the delivery of a Young Person's Guarantee (YPG) as well as attainment of the relevant National Milestone<sup>[Footnote 12]</sup> will be achieved.
- 3.10 The YPG is the Welsh Government's commitment to everyone aged 16–24, and living in Wales, to gain a place in education or training and help to get into work or become self-employed. It aims to ease the difficult labour market transitions that young people may face in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted on the education, skills and health & well-being of young people.
- 3.11 Furthermore, it seeks to create a clear, simple and sustainable employability model and pathway for young people in Wales in the years ahead to deliver a fairer and more inclusive economy for all. Employability support approaches alongside JGW+ include:
- resources on the Careers Wales website
  - an impartial entry point via Working Wales
  - tracking/reporting for those accessing the YPG via Working Wales
  - help in finding an apprenticeship
  - community employability programmes (including Communities for Work Plus)
  - self-employment support — Business Wales/Big Ideas Wales
  - partner programmes, including those delivered by the DWP and local authorities
  - Regional Skills Partnership delivery of specific activity supporting young people's skills as well as access to education and employment<sup>[Footnote 13]</sup>.
- 3.12 A refreshed and strengthened YEPF was published in September 2022 with the aim of ensuring that:
- More young people move on to a destination that is right for them when they leave school, whether that is EET.
  - Young people are prevented from becoming homeless.
  - Young people experience positive emotional mental health and well-being as a result of their being engaged in activity that is meaningful to them and where they feel that they are on the right path.

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[12] This refers to National Milestone 22, where at least 90% of 16 to 24-year-olds will be in education, employment or training by 2050. See National indicators and national milestones for Wales [HTML] | GOV.WALES for more details on the milestones and their context.

[13] This includes creating Young People Specific Employment and Skills Plans; developing Skills Roadmaps/Learner Pathways guides; Careers Information, Advice and Guidance finders; Work Experience databases; running young-people-focused summits; and linking schools and colleges and running various engagement sessions with young people on their lived experiences.

## Strategic context

- 3.13 Further strategic context for the evaluation is provided by the Programme for Government 2021 to 2026 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- 3.14 The Programme for Government 2021–2026 update (PfG) includes the commitment to providing decent jobs, relevant skills, and new training opportunities. The update sets out three employability milestones <sup>[Footnote 14]</sup> to be achieved by 2050:
- At least 90% of 16 to 24-year-olds will be in education, employment or training.
  - To eliminate the employment rate gap between Wales and the UK, particularly fair work and raising labour market participation of underrepresented groups.
  - To remove the pay gap for gender, ethnicity and disability.
- 3.15 The programme also aligns with the seven shared national well-being goals enacted by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015). The goals include A Prosperous Wales (which aims to develop a skilled and well-educated population in an economy that generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work). Therefore, it will be important for the evaluation to assess this strategic alignment and the contributions that the programme is making to these aims.
- 3.16 Cymru Can sets out the 2023 to 2030 strategy and the long-term vision, namely that Cymru is a better place in which to live and has a bright and optimistic future — thriving, inclusive and green. In achieving this vision there are five visions including the creation of a well-being economy that puts people and the planet first.
- 3.17 It is expected that JGW+ will create conditions for promoting the Welsh language and, therefore, align with the WG’s Welsh language strategy, i.e. Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers. A core aim of the strategy is to “develop post-compulsory education provision which increases rates of progression and supports everyone, whatever their command of the language, to develop Welsh language skills for use socially and in the workplace” (Cymraeg 2050: 32).
- 3.18 It identifies three strategic themes with which to achieve the vision set out in the strategy:
- Increasing the number of Welsh speakers.
  - Increasing the use of Welsh (including in the workplace).
  - Creating favourable conditions — infrastructure and context (including community and economy).
- 3.19 The Race Equality Action Plan (REAP) for Wales outlined a number of employability aims to be completed by April 2023 in relation to improved accessibility, better

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[14] See National indicators and national milestones for Wales [HTML] | GOV.WALES for more details on the milestones and their context.

outcomes for ethnic minority groups, and to offer a safe, positive and inclusive environment for all staff and students, where racial harassment and discrimination are addressed.

- 3.20 The Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ARWAP), which sets out the vision of “A Wales which is anti-racist” by 2030, builds on the REAP and aims to make a measurable change to the lives of ethnic minority people by tackling racism. The plan details six areas in which people from ethnic minority communities experience racism, namely everyday life, service delivery, workplace, jobs & opportunities, lack of visible role models in positions of power, and being a refugee or asylum seeker. On employability and skills, the plan recognises the need to take further action to tackle structural and systemic racism that prevents people from accessing the skills, training and employment prospects that exist in Wales.
- 3.21 These efforts towards equality and inclusion are further reinforced by the Welsh Government’s continued commitment to the Social Model of Disability across policy and service delivery by addressing the barriers for disabled people to access and participate in its employability programmes.
- 3.22 Disability in social model terms looks more widely on the inequality, disadvantage or discrimination that people with impairments may experience because of barriers to access and inclusion but is separate from their impairment. If the barriers are removed, then the disability is removed.
- 3.23 In July 2021 the Welsh Government published Locked out: liberating disabled people’s lives and rights in Wales beyond COVID-19, which investigates the impact of COVID-19 on disabled people in Wales and calls for immediate action to reaffirm the commitment to the Social Model of Disability.
- 3.24 In May 2022 the Welsh Government published Learning Disability Strategic Action Plan 2022 to 2026, outlining a strategic agenda to develop and implement learning disability policy for the term of government to 2026. It includes specific commitments regarding education, employment and skills<sup>[Footnote 15]</sup>, which seek to ensure access to services and support for young people with additional learning needs, including the advent of supported apprenticeships as part of a mechanism with which to increase employment opportunities for people with a learning disability.

### **Trends in the number of young people who are NEET**

- 3.25 There are three main data sources that are used for understanding the number of young people NEET in Wales. These are:
- Statistical First Release (SFR) series.
  - Annual Population Survey (APS) series

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[15] See Key Themes 5 and 6 in [Learning Disability Strategic Action Plan 2022 to 2026 \[HTML\]](#) | [GOV.WALES](#).



- Pupil destinations from schools in Wales.

3.26 The Welsh Government consider the SFR series to provide the most robust estimates of young people who are NEET<sup>[Footnote 16]</sup>. The estimates published in the SFR are a measure of the proportion of young people who are NEET as at the end of the calendar year and are derived by combining a range of sources:

- Education enrolments account for:
  - schools and sixth forms from the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) (Welsh Government).
  - further education colleges and work-based learning from the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) (Welsh Government).
  - higher education from the Higher Education Statistics Agency and the Open University<sup>[Footnote 17]</sup>.
- Population estimates as at the end of the calendar year (Office for National Statistics and the Welsh Government).
- Annual Population Survey, which is used to estimate the labour market status of those in full-time education, the labour market status of those in part-time education, full-time and part-time employment of those in work-based learning who are employed, and employer-sponsored 'off-the-job' training for those in employment.

### **SFR series data**

3.27 Figure 3.1 below presents an analysis of the SFR data over time (since 2010) and shows that, despite a spike (an outlier) in 2021, the proportion of males aged 16 to 18 who are NEET steadily decreased over time from 14.4% in 2011 to 10.8% in 2022 (albeit with a subsequent increase back to 13.6%, based on provisional data in 2023).

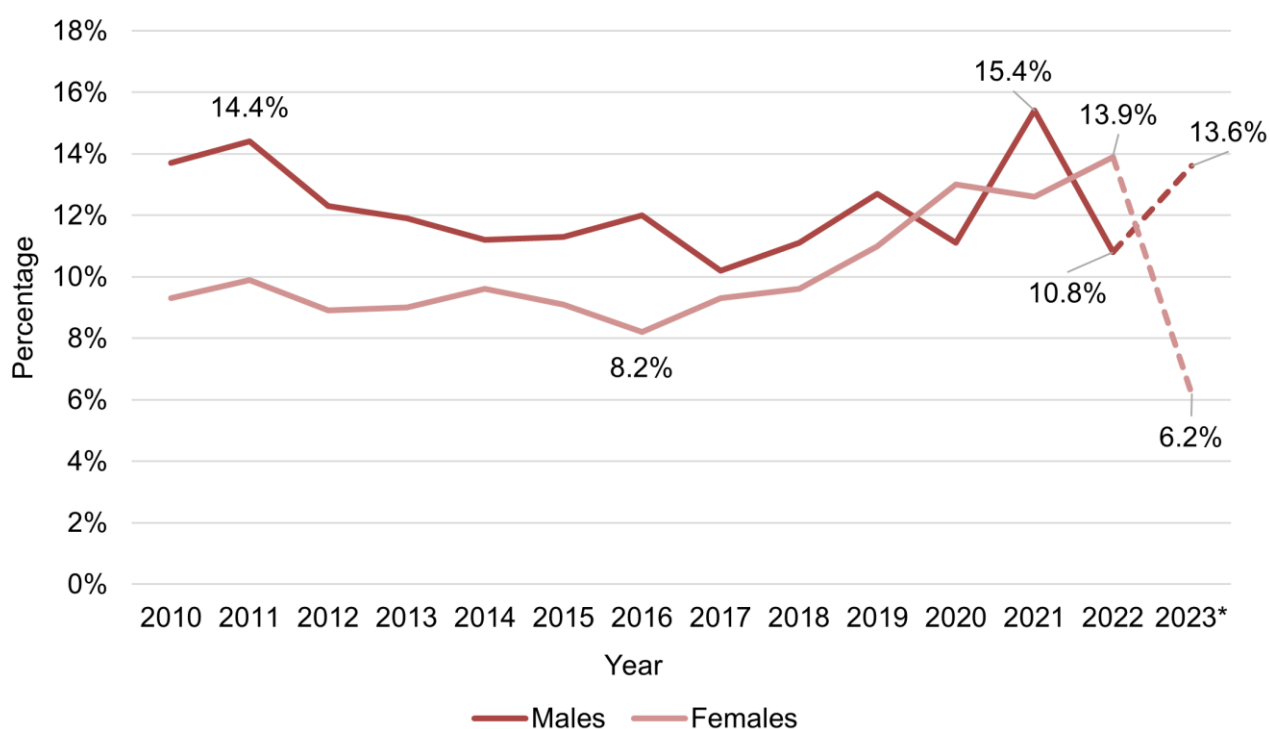
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[16] See Understanding the different sources of statistics on young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) in Wales for further details.

[17] Ibid.

3.28 Amongst females the rates of 16 to 18-year-olds NEET followed the same trend as males between 2011 and 2016 but increased between 2016 and 2022 from 8.2% to 13.9%. There was then a considerable drop based on provisional data for 2023 to 6.2%. In terms of numerical change this equates to an estimated 7,200 females aged 16 to 18 who were NEET in Wales in 2022 in comparison to 4,200 in 2016 (an increase of 3,000). The provisional data for 2023, however, suggest 3,300 females aged 16 to 18 who were NEET. This suggests a provisional decrease of 3,900 16 to 18-year-old females NEET in just one year (between 2022 and 2023). Across both genders an estimated 11,000 (based on provisional data) 16 to 18-year-olds were NEET in 2023, marginally higher than the low of 10,600 achieved in 2017.

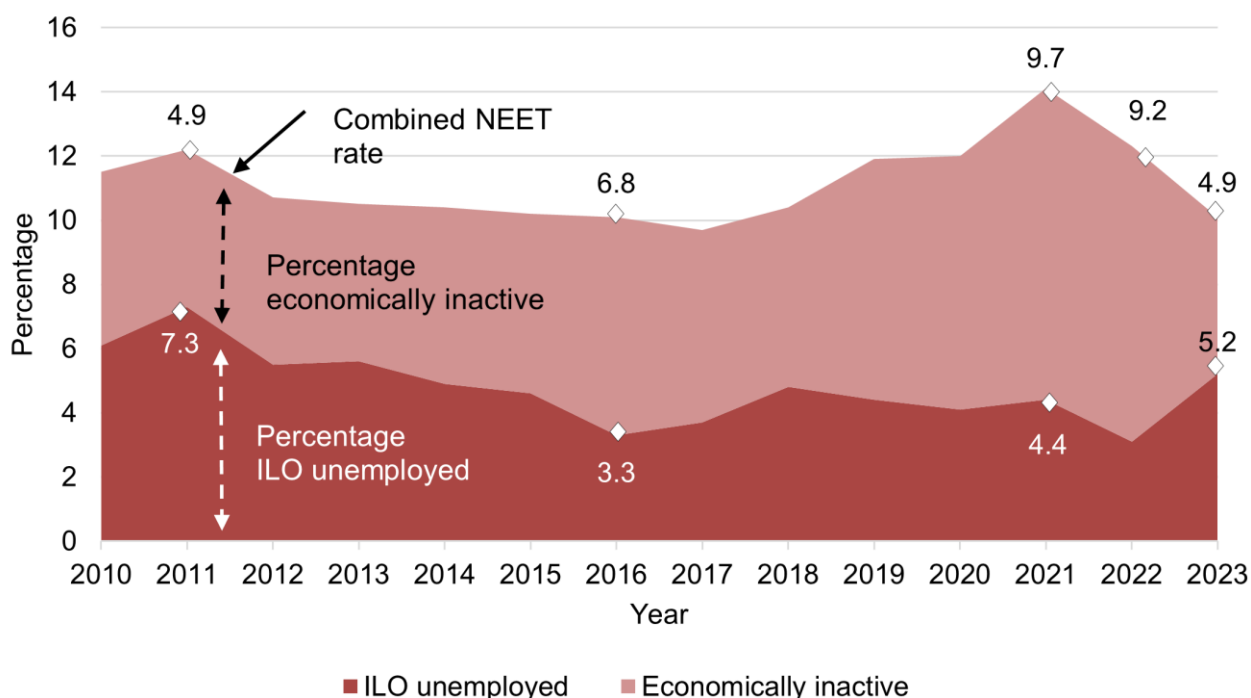
**Figure 3.1: Estimated percentage of 16 to 18-year-olds in Wales not in education, training or employment by gender, 2010 to 2023**



Source: SFR data derived from ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates and Annual Population Survey (APS), Welsh Government analysis of Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) and Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) data

3.29 Figure 3.2 below presents analysis trends amongst the 16 to 18-year-old young people NEET, broken down by whether they are unemployed or economically inactive (excluding those who are economically inactive due to being students). This analysis illustrates that combined NEET rates fell from more than one in seven (14.1%) of all young people aged 16 to 18 being NEET in 2021 to one in 10 (10.1%) being NEET in 2023. A reduction in rates of economic inactivity (from 9.7% to 4.9%) over that period drove this overall reduction in rates of NEET, with ILO unemployment rates fluctuating, but presented no clear trends over that same timeframe.

**Figure 3.2: NEET rates broken down by unemployment and economic inactivity (excluding students) amongst 16 to 18-year-olds in Wales, 2010 to 2023**

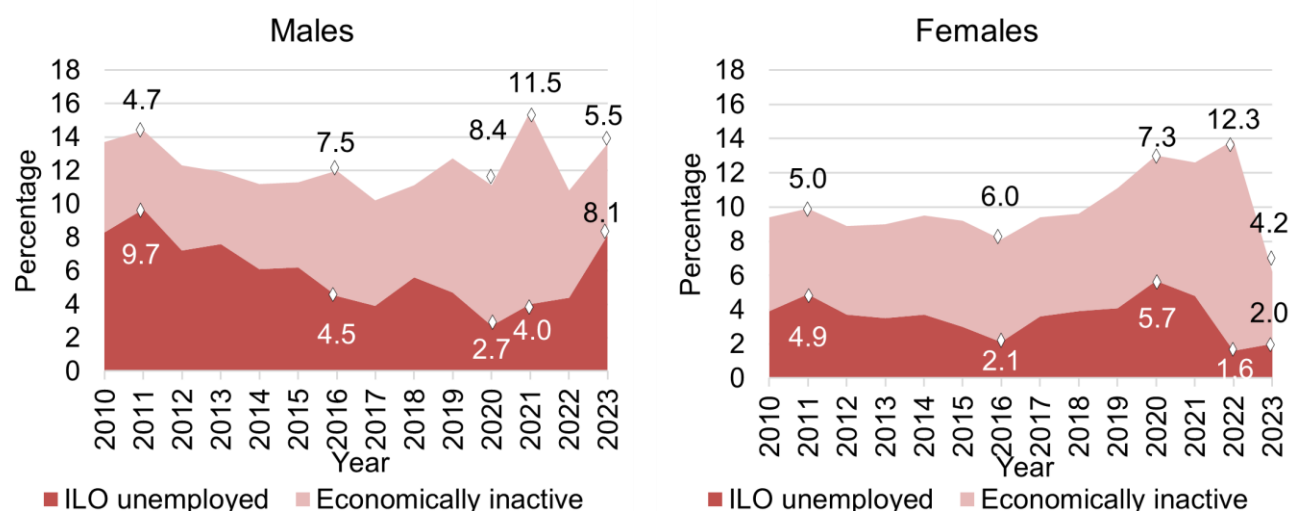


Source: SFR-estimated 16 to 18-year-olds not in education, training or employment by economic activity and age groups

- 3.30 Figures 3.3a and 3.3b below present those profiles by gender. They illustrate how amongst males there was a steady decrease in the proportion of males unemployed from almost 9.7% in 2011 to 2.7% in 2020. Since then, rates of ILO unemployment increased to 8.1% in 2023. Conversely, economic inactivity (excluding students) steadily increased from 4.7% in 2011 to 8.4% in 2020 before falling to 5.5% in 2023. Amongst females, whilst NEET rates fell overall between 2011 and 2016, there was a steady rate of increase in NEET rates from 8.1% in 2016 to 13.0% in 2020. That increase was primarily influenced (in a similar manner to that of males over that period) by economic inactivity. A marked fall in economic inactivity is evident in 2023 data, with rates falling by almost two thirds from 12.3% in 2022 to 4.2%, based on provisional data, for 2023.
- 3.31 Collectively, these charts show that economic inactivity (excluding those who are students) has become increasingly prevalent amongst males and females aged 16 to 18 since 2011. Long-term health conditions including poor mental health are an increasing cause of this inactivity amongst this age group<sup>[Footnote 18]</sup>. Provisional data, however, suggest marked falls in economic inactivity across both genders in 2023.

[18] See work undertaken by the Resolution Foundation highlighting increasing levels of poor mental health amongst 16–24-year-olds ([We've only just begun • Resolution Foundation](#)) as well as labour market updates by the Institute for Employment Studies ([Labour Market Briefing March 2024](#)).

**Figure 3.3a and b: NEET rates broken down by unemployment and economic inactivity (excluding students) amongst 16 to 18-year-olds in Wales by gender, 2010 to 2023**



Source: SFR-estimated 16 to 18-year-olds not in education, training or employment by economic activity and age groups

### Annual Population Survey

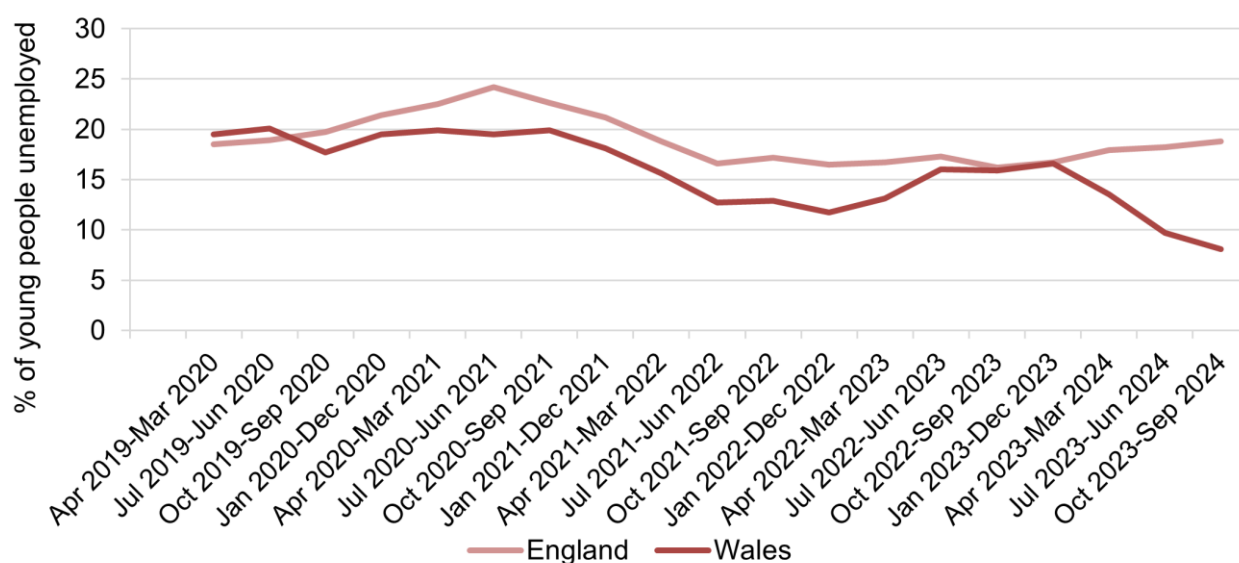
- 3.32 The Annual Population Survey (APS) is a UK-wide continuous household survey and, therefore, allows for the comparison of rates of unemployment/economic inactivity against other home nations. There have been challenges with response rates associated with the Annual Population Survey (and, more specifically, the Labour Force Survey). Over recent years, there has been a fall in response rates to the APS and the survey has not been reweighted to the latest population estimates [Footnote 19]. As a result, in October 2024 the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) temporarily suspended the APS' status as an 'accredited official statistic' and re-designated it as an 'official statistic'. Whilst these statistics are still appropriate to use, there is increased uncertainty surrounding estimates derived from this survey, particularly when considering smaller geographies or population sub-groups [Footnote 20].

[19] APS responses were originally weighted to 2018-based population projections, reflecting pre-pandemic trends. To account for pandemic-related changes, the ONS reweighted APS data on 9th September 2021 using HMRC RTI growth rates. This adjustment, applied from the year ending March 2020 onwards, improves estimates of both rates and levels while reducing bias in high-level aggregations.

[20] Further information can be found in [OSR's statement on the Labour Force Survey-derived estimates and Annual Population Survey-derived estimates](#).

3.33 Figure 3.4 below compares the unemployment rate for 16 to 19-year-olds in England and Wales over time. Unemployment relates to those who are not in work but are looking for work. Both countries presented similar, steadily falling trends in rates of unemployment amongst the target age group up until December 2023. In the most recent data, however, there are clear indications of a more considerable fall in the unemployment rate in Wales, whilst England has witnessed an increase. Whilst the APS data must be treated with caution, there is an emerging divergence from trends for the same cohort in England.

**Figure 3.4: Comparison of rates of unemployment amongst 16 to 19-year-olds in Wales and England, April 2019 to September 2024**



Source: Annual Population Survey

- 3.34 Economic inactivity rates are available for the 16 to 18 age cohort (specifically where it excludes those who are economically inactive because they are students) up until 2022. Economic inactivity relates to those who are not in work but are not looking for work (it can include students, but they are excluded from this analysis because those in education at the point of enrolment are not eligible for JGW+) [Footnote 21]. JGW+ participants may be categorised as either economically inactive or unemployed dependent on the JGW+ strand and the job-seeking status.
- 3.35 As noted above, falling rates of response to the APS have meant that more recent estimates (from quarter 1, 2022) should be treated with caution. Figure 3.5 below shows a relatively stable picture; however, similar to the SFR analysis, there are indications of a sustained fall amongst those aged 16 to 18 who are NEET.

[21] Commons Library (2024) [Understanding statistics on employment, unemployment and earnings](#) (accessed: 24 November 2024).

**Figure 3.5: Percentage of young people aged 16 to 18 NEET in Wales, 2010 to 2024**



Source: Annual Population Survey. \*Noted as limited-quality data because they are based on between 25 and 40 responses.

### Pupil destinations from schools in Wales

3.36 The Year 11 destination survey provides insight into the destination of young people over time from maintained schools in Wales. The yearly survey is conducted at the end of October and provides an understanding of the initial destination of young people in the October after they have left Year 11. Table 3.1 below presents patterns of destinations over time. Most are relatively static; however, it is notable that in 2022 the NEET figure had increased by 0.5 percentage points from 1.6% to 2.1% with only a marginal reduction in this figure in 2023.

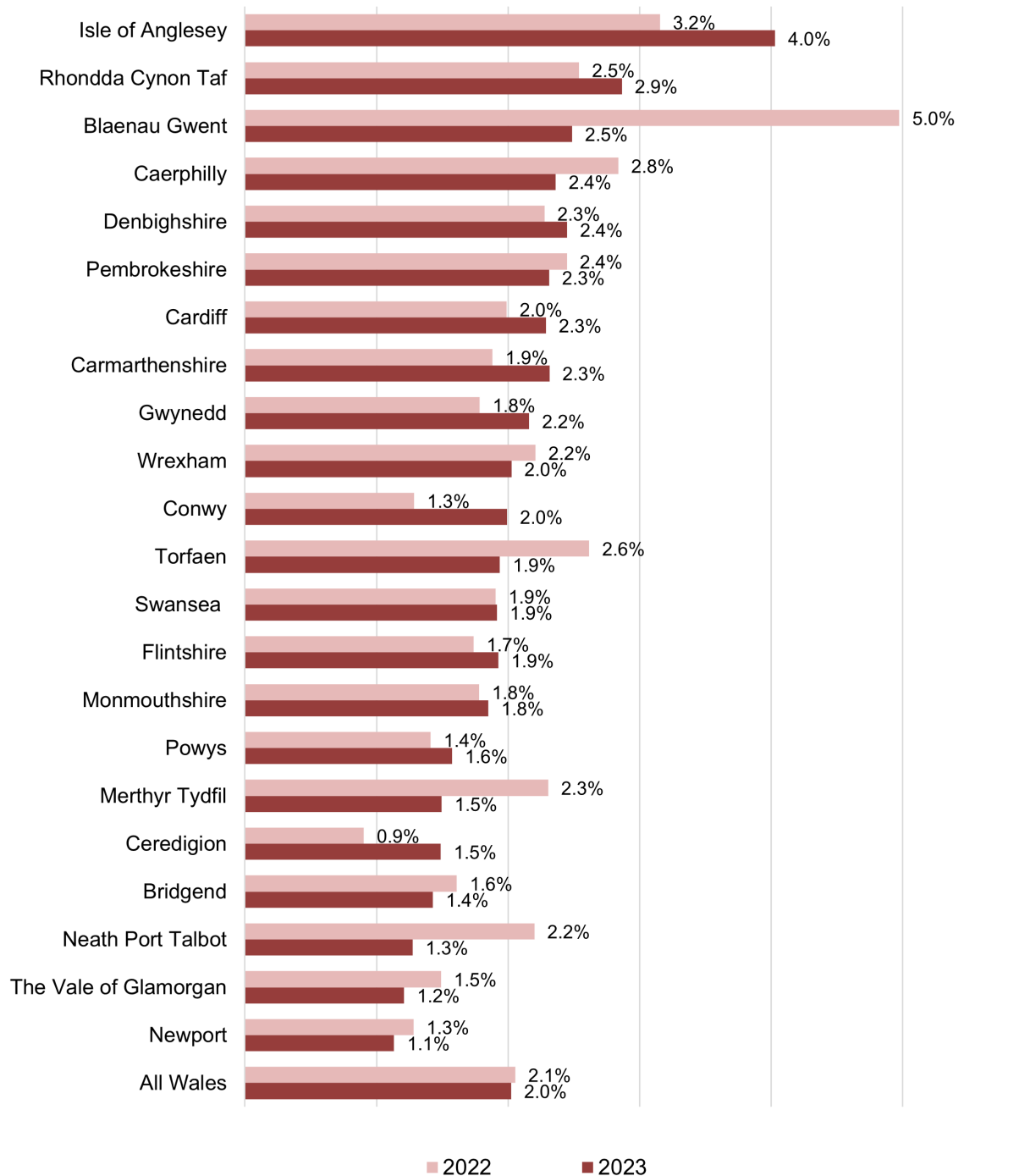
**Table 3.1: Year 11 destinations data over time, 2017 to 2023**

| Year | Continuing in education (FT & PT) | Work-based training – employed & non-employed status | Employed – other | Known NEET | No response to survey | Left the area |
|------|-----------------------------------|--|------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| 2023 | 87.2%                             | 5.8%   | 3.2%             | 2.0%       | 1.2%                  | 0.5%          |
| 2022 | 88.4%                             | 4.4%   | 3.4%             | 2.1%       | 1.0%                  | 0.7%          |
| 2021 | 88.9%                             | 5.0%   | 2.8%             | 1.6%       | 1.1%                  | 0.5%          |
| 2020 | 90.5%                             | 4.4%   | 2.0%             | 1.7%       | 0.9%                  | 0.5%          |
| 2019 | 88.4%                             | 5.7%   | 2.5%             | 1.8%       | 1.1%                  | 0.6%          |
| 2018 | 86.6%                             | 5.5%   | 2.3%             | 1.6%       | 3.5%                  | 0.5%          |
| 2017 | 88.5%                             | 6.4%   | 2.3%             | 1.6%       | 0.5%                  | 0.7%          |

Source: Careers Wales (2017 to 2023) [Pupil Destinations](#) (accessed: 26 November 2024). Please note that Work-based training in the table includes apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning.

3.37 Analysis of the Year 11 destination survey at the local authority level is presented in Figure 3.6 below. It shows that rates of respondents known to be NEET were highest in Isle of Anglesey, Rhondda Cynon Taf, and Blaenau Gwent local authority areas in 2023. While some areas, such as Isle of Anglesey and Conwy, experienced notable increases in rates in comparison to 2022, others, like Blaenau Gwent and Neath Port Talbot, witnessed considerable decreases.

**Figure 3.6: Percentage of respondents to the Year 11 destination survey known to be NEET by local authority (2022 and 2023)**



## **Section summary**

- There is a clear and consistent aim within Welsh Government policy associated with addressing the prevalence of young people who are NEET in Wales.
- Data associated with young people NEET present something of a mixed picture, with rates of young people NEET in the Year 11 destination survey presenting something of a static picture, whilst APS and provision SFR data suggest that rates of NEET amongst young people in Wales may have begun to fall.
- Indeed, whilst there is a degree of volatility associated with the data, unemployment rates for 16 to 19-year-olds and SFR data for 16 to 18 years have shown marked falls in Wales recently. APS data also suggest an emerging divergence when compared to trends for the same age cohort in England.



## **4. Design and implementation**

### **Introduction**

- 4.1 This section reviews the design and implementation of JGW+ and explores the adaptations made to the programme since its launch in April 2022.

### **JGW+**

- 4.2 JGW+ sought to take the best elements of Traineeships and Jobs Growth Wales to provide every young person with whom it works an offer of employment, training, voluntary work, or self-employment as well as a concurrent holistic, tailored package of support for young people who are NEET. It seeks to provide an employability offer for young people in Wales in line with the YPG and the YEPF.
- 4.3 The JGW+ programme came into operation for new starts on 1st April 2022. The programme initially benefitted from a transfer of existing participants from the Traineeships Programme to JGW+, and an analysis of management information suggests that around 1,800 young people transferred to the programme from Traineeships <sup>[Footnote 22]</sup>.
- 4.4 For service delivery the programme was procured through Regional Lots (see Table 4.1 below). Across those four Regional Lots the programme is delivered by five service providers (Prime Contractors) who were appointed on a basis of four years and one month, from 1st March 2022 to 31st March 2026. Annual Programme Commissions are then awarded under each agreement pro-rated according to the participant proportion in the region. Prime Contractors have, to varying degrees, subcontracted various elements of the programme; most commonly, this has aided geographical targeting, recruitment, engagement, induction, and specialist support.

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[22] Based on the number of participants who enrolled in the programme on 1st April 2022 across all Contractors.

**Table 4.1: Regional lots**

| Regional Lot | Region                   | Local authority areas covered   | Main delivery Contractors            | Target participant proportion | Proportion of total 16 to 19-year-old population |
|--------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Lot 1        | North Wales              | Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Isle of Anglesey, Wrexham           | ACT, GLLM, and Coleg Cambria         | 12%                           | 20%  |
| Lot 2        | South West and Mid Wales | Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Swansea, Ceredigion, Powys | Pembrokeshire College, ACT, and ITEC | 25%                           | 29%  |
| Lot 3        | South Central Wales      | Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Vale of Glamorgan       | ACT and ITEC                         | 38%                           | 33%  |
| Lot 4        | South East Wales         | Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport, Torfaen                    | ACT and ITEC                         | 25%                           | 17%  |

Source: JGW Programme Specification Version 1.4

4.5 Contractors are expected to secure minimum performance thresholds for each strand of the programme:

- **Engagement and Advancement Strand** — 60% or above achieving Progression to learning at a higher level; or Progression into employment, full- and part-time (including self-employment); or an Apprenticeship (including self-employed Apprenticeship)
- **Employment Strand** — 75% or above achieving Progression into employment (full- or part-time), including self-employment; or an Apprenticeship (including self-employed Apprenticeship)

## Delivery model

### Referral to JGW+

- 4.6 When originally launched in April 2022, JGW+ operated with a referral system via Working Wales (delivered by Careers Wales), who operate to provide a single all-Wales entry point to employability support. At the time, no other referral routes to the programme were possible. The rationale behind the referral model was that it enabled potential participants to talk to trained career advisors about employment and skills, their aims and aspirations, and any challenges that they face in obtaining and maintaining work, education or training.
- 4.7 Advice and guidance are provided on a face-to-face basis at Careers Wales offices, local Jobcentres, or community outreach locations as well as via the telephone and online<sup>[Footnote 23]</sup>.
- 4.8 Advisors help by identifying barriers preventing an individual from accessing employment, education or training. Based on individuals' circumstances and aspirations, trained career advisors identify the most suitable provision available to support the individual.
- 4.9 The identification of barriers and needs of the young people is captured within an Assessment and Referral Report (ARR) which uses an advice- and guidance-led 'categorisation assessment' of an individual's circumstances, along with their barriers, to illustrate the relevance of a referral to JGW+ (rather than other employability routes).
- 4.10 Furthermore, the assessment measures an individual's distance from the labour market and the likely support needed to enable a transition to work. These indicators (e.g. length of unemployment, caring responsibilities, housing status) are informed by academic research<sup>[Footnote 24]</sup>. If referred to JGW+, this assessment will inform to which strand (engagement, advancement or employment) the young person is referred.
- 4.11 The three strands of JGW+ reflect differentiated levels of interventions available to meet the diverse needs of individuals associated with their distance from mainstream education or employment as assessed upon referral.
- 4.12 In May 2022 a pilot for Contractor direct referrals meant that eligible 16 to 18-year-olds (expanded to 19-year-olds from January 2023) have been able to be referred directly to the programme without engaging with Working Wales to be assessed for entry to the programme (direct referrals). This was done to improve access to JGW+ for those young people who were the 'hardest to reach' and were not engaging through the Working Wales service. These direct referrals are then assessed by Contractors using their own needs assessment tools drafted using

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[23] As noted above, advice does not merely come from Careers Wales/Working Wales.

[24] See Brown, C., Rueda, P., Batlle, I. & Sallán, J. (2021) Introduction to the special issue: a conceptual framework for researching the risks to early leaving, Journal of Education and Work, 34:7–8, 723–739 for a useful summary.

guidance from the Welsh Government to ensure consistent and effective assessment. This change was retained within the model and formalised in early 2023 after an evidenced increase in referrals.

- 4.13 The ARR is used across all Contractors and Working Wales as part of the referral process for JGW+ and is expected to identify:
- The learning and/or developmental needs of the young person.
  - Any barrier(s) preventing the young person from participating in further learning and/or entering into employment to be addressed as part of the Individual Learning Plan (ILP).
  - Important evidence of need that JGW+ Contractors must take into account when creating the young person's ILP and subsequent progress reviews.
- 4.14 For the engagement and advancement strands of the programme (the strands through which the vast majority of participants engage) a notification is required from a Contractor offering (if eligible) proposed dates of a pre-start meeting and a start date.
- 4.15 Within 15 working days of the pre-start meeting, the Contractor must start the young person on the programme (start date) and within 20 working days a completed Individual Learning Plan (ILP) must be agreed and signed and a Wales Essential Skills Toolkit (WEST) assessment completed.
- 4.16 Some form of learning and developmental activity must commence within 20 working days of the start date, whilst at least one qualification (where these form part of the ILP) must have been secured within eight weeks of the start date.
- 4.17 A similar approach is taken in the employment strand in terms of timings for engagement with the expectation that a supporting employer has been found within 10 weeks of the start. Across all strands, progress reviews are expected to take place (as a minimum) every eight weeks.
- 4.18 Where a young person leaves the programme, the Contractor must notify Working Wales within five working days.
- 4.19 An overview of the delivery model for each strand of JGW+ is set out within Table 4.2 below.

**Table 4.2: JGW+ delivery model by strand**

|   | Engagement  | Advancement   | Employment   |
|---|---|---|--|
| <b>Suitable for young people who:</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to confirm/contextualise an occupational focus to support entry to further learning or employment (including an apprenticeship); and/or</li> <li>• Have barriers preventing them from engaging in Level 1 study</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are occupationally focused; and</li> <li>• Able to follow a programme of study leading to a Level 1 or Level 2 qualification but assessed as being unable to study at Level 3 or above</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are occupationally focused; and</li> <li>• Job-ready</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Lead worker support provides:</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tailored support to look at barriers identified in the ARR</li> <li>• Learning and developmental support activities as listed in the ILP, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Centre-based learning opportunities with the JGW+ provider</li> <li>○ Short work trials</li> <li>○ Local work placements (up to four weeks)</li> <li>○ Community projects</li> <li>○ Voluntary work</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Delivery of qualifications relevant to the engagement strand</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tailored support to look at barriers identified in the ARR</li> <li>• Learning and developmental support activities as listed in the ILP, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Centre-based learning opportunities with the JGW+ provider</li> <li>○ Local work trials/placements</li> <li>○ Community projects</li> <li>○ Voluntary work</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Delivery of qualifications (CQFW Levels 1 and 2 with Essential Skills Wales Qualifications up to Level 3) relevant to the advancement strand</li> <li>• Participants will be assessed to enable continuation through to the employment strand</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tailored support to look at barriers identified in the ARR</li> <li>• Learning and developmental support in work-related activities to progress to sustainable employment</li> <li>• Wage-subsidised employment opportunities</li> </ul> <p>Participants will have found a supporting employer within 10 weeks of joining this strand</p> |
| <b>Attendance (min. hours per week)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No minimum hours of attendance per week</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 16 hours' minimum attendance per week</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 16 hours' minimum attendance per week over a four-week rolling period</li> </ul>  |

## **Governance**

- 4.20 Each Contractor is allocated a Contract Manager from within the Welsh Government to act as a dedicated point of contact. The Contract Manager's role is to review Contractor performance and provide appropriate challenge and support to enable effective delivery of support in the JGW+ programme. Contract Review Meetings take place on a quarterly basis.
- 4.21 Whilst the contract management model was designed to ensure compliance, it also underpinned partnership working between Contractors across regional delivery. The Welsh Government sought to avoid any issues of competition by designing contracts around allocations of funding to meet their respective targets. This was supported by the introduction of collaboration agreements, drafted between each regional grouping of Contractors to support positive collective partnership working within each region (Lot).
- 4.22 Contractor network meetings are held regularly, typically every 4–6 weeks, where good practice and challenges are shared. The removal of the competitive nature of contracts intentionally sought to encourage this partnership and collective activity amongst the Contractors.

## **Funding model**

- 4.23 The initial costs (and therefore the funding allocation) estimated for delivering the JGW+ programme were derived from historic data for the uptake of Traineeships and Jobs Growth Wales provision across the regions of Wales for 2017 to 2018 and 2018 to 2019.
- 4.24 At the start of each contract year each Contractor is notified of their financial allocation, and they are required to profile that allocation into categories for Delivery, Wage Subsidies, and Support Costs over the year.
- 4.25 Payments to Contractors are primarily based on Guided Contact Hours (GCHs), essentially the number of teaching, instructional or assessment contact hours for a particular learning activity (a fee is also associated with the induction of a participant). A Learning Unit (LU) is a measurement used within the payment funding model for calculating payment based on the volume of GCHs. The original funding model for the programme is set out in Table 4.3 below. Additional funding (a 25% uplift in the LU value) is made available for delivery in the Welsh medium.

**Table 4.3: JGW+ payment funding model in April 2022 (programme launch)**

| Strand      | Participant induction | Monthly delivery              |  |
|-------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|--|
|             |                       | Centre-based                  | Work-based   |
| Engagement  | 3 LUs                 | 1 LU for every 3 hours of GCH | 1 LU for every 8 hours of GCH  |
| Advancement | 3 LUs                 | 1 LU for every 4 hours of GCH | 1 LU for employment — wage-subsidised employment every 13 hours of GCH |
| Employment  |                       |                               |  |

Source: Jobs Growth Wales Plus Programme Specification Version 1.2 (April 2022)

### **Employment wage subsidy**

- 4.26 Where a participant has secured employment through the employment strand of JGW+, employers will be reimbursed a wage subsidy for JGW+ participants that is equivalent to six months (26 weeks) at 50% of the National Minimum Wage.

### **Adjustments to the JGW+ delivery model due to complexity of needs**

#### **Direct referral**

- 4.27 In the initial months of the programme, Contractors reported fewer referrals than expected from Working Wales to JGW+. It was noted that many of the young people with the highest levels of need would not necessarily approach Working Wales directly themselves and more active outreach and intervention are often needed to make the first connection with support. Consequently, since May 2022, Contractors have been able to engage participants, assess their eligibility, and then refer directly to the programme.
- 4.28 There is evidence within management information that provides an indication of referral routes; however, this is typically sourced from participants and, therefore, relies on the recollection of JGW+ participants regarding their referral routes at the point of enrolment. Anecdotal evidence suggests that direct referrals have become increasingly prevalent amongst the routes into the programme. It is now believed that they represent the most common route of engagement, albeit with considerable reported variation in the prevalence of direct referral from one Prime Contractor to the next.

## Renew and reform

4.29 Further adaptations to the JGW+ delivery model were made in January 2023 under an expansion of support associated with the Renew and Reform plan which sought to help those already disadvantaged groups that have further been disproportionately affected by the disruption to post-16 education and training due to COVID-19. The expansion was in response to Contractor feedback following programme implementation. This included concerns surrounding higher-than-anticipated levels of need that Contractors were seeing amongst young people during the programme design.

4.30 Candidates for support were deemed to have much more complex needs and barriers than had been anticipated, which Contractors and EPC staff concurred were a direct result of the detrimental effects on young people arising from COVID-19 lockdowns as well as their limited access to formal educational settings during this time.

### A broadening of 'enrichment activities'

4.31 Adaptations to the delivery model were made with the intention of providing greater flexibility to Contractors to support young people already engaged on the JGW+ programme specifically in relation to the provision of well-being and mental health support. This could include (but not be limited to) the provision of funding to support team building, mental health and well-being resilience, physical activities, and fun activities such as outdoor pursuits and problem solving.

4.32 The intention of the enhancement in this support was to support well-being and to help engage and encourage young people to remain on the programme or progress with their programme of learning where they may be at risk of disengaging or dropping out.

### 'Get Ready'

4.33 A further adaptation led to the expansion of pre-programme engagement activity 'Get Ready' beyond the summer months (where it was initially trialled) to being made available throughout the year. Get Ready is offered to young people whom the Contractor has assessed as:

- Requiring a less formal introduction to learning, and
- In need of support to advance to more formal learning.

4.34 Get Ready activity must last no longer than 12 weeks and could include (but not be limited to) team building, mental health and well-being resilience, physical activities, and fun activities such as outdoor pursuits and problem solving.



Extending the eligible age to 19

- 4.35 The extension involved expanding eligibility from 1st December 2022 so that those aged 19 are eligible to enrol on the programme and may continue on the programme until the day before their 20th birthday.

Extending permissible qualifications

- 4.36 The level of qualifications permissible for the JGW+ advancement strand was extended so that Curriculum for Wales Framework (CWWF) Level 2 qualifications were permissible (in addition to Credit and Qualifications Framework (CQFW) Level 1 qualifications). It is understood that the extension reflected the fact that Level 2 qualifications were the entry requirements for certain training/learning destinations.

### **Cost-of-living crisis**

- 4.37 There were also concerns amongst Contractors regarding the economic climate coupled with the cost-of-living crisis and the impact that this may have on participants. Contractors were concerned that these factors would place additional pressures on eligible participants to find paid employment (or other, sometimes illegal routes to earning income) more immediately because of the financial pressures faced by their own household.
- 4.38 In response to this issue, the following adjustments were made to the rate of the Training Allowance, and requirements to pay a contribution towards travel costs were suspended:
- For engagement, advancement and employment (where they are yet to commence wage-subsidised employment) strands to be paid a full £60 training allowance where participants have attended for at least 30 hours in any seven-day period (any attendance for less than 30 hours will be pro-rated). This represented a doubling of the training allowance for those in the engagement strand and an increase of five pounds per week for those in the other strands.
  - The provision of a free meal per day or part-day of attendance up to a maximum of £3 per day.

### **Contractor reimbursement**

- 4.39 The additional, unforeseen complexities and barriers amongst the target group for JGW+, combined with the emergence of the cost-of-living crisis, prompted the revisit of Contractor compensation for service delivery. As outlined earlier within this section, Contractors are paid against activity based on Learner Units. An adaptation to the contract was made to increase the rate of LUs payable for the Induction Fee for the engagement strand.

- 4.40 As a result of the adaptation, Contractors would be entitled to 12 LUs per participant per induction for the engagement strand. Prior to this proposal (but following the publication of the original JGW+ specification) the rate for enrolments to all strands had increased from three LUs to six LUs per participant induction. Therefore, when compared to the original specification, this represented a quadrupling of the cost per induction as set out in the April 2022 specification (from three LUs to 12 LUs) with payments backdated to April 2022.

### **Section summary**

- The design of the programme predated the COVID-19 pandemic, and a series of adaptations to the service offer were made in light of the changing needs of the client group.
- The partnership structure between the Contractor and the Welsh Government provided open discussion and helped to shape the nature of those adjustments.
- The adjustments have led to considerable increases (quadrupling) in expenditure associated with the induction payment for the enrolment of participants in the engagement strand of the programme.

## 5. JGW+ progress and performance

### Introduction

- 5.1 This section presents the achievements and performance of the JGW+ programme from its launch in April 2022 through to July 2024. When reporting on the profile of learners on the JGW+ programme this report distinguishes between ‘programme starts’ and ‘unique participants’. ‘Programme starts’ refer to all enrolments onto any strand of the JGW+ programme, and ‘unique participants’ refer to the number of unique individuals to which these starts relate.
- 5.2 The number of programme starts through to July 2024 was 11,972, whilst the number of ‘unique participants’ on the programme over the same timeframe was 10,008.
- 5.3 While the majority of individual JGW+ participants (82%, 8,207/10,008) only engaged in one learning programme, 18% enrolled on multiple learning programmes, accounting for 31% (3,765/11,972) of all programme starts.

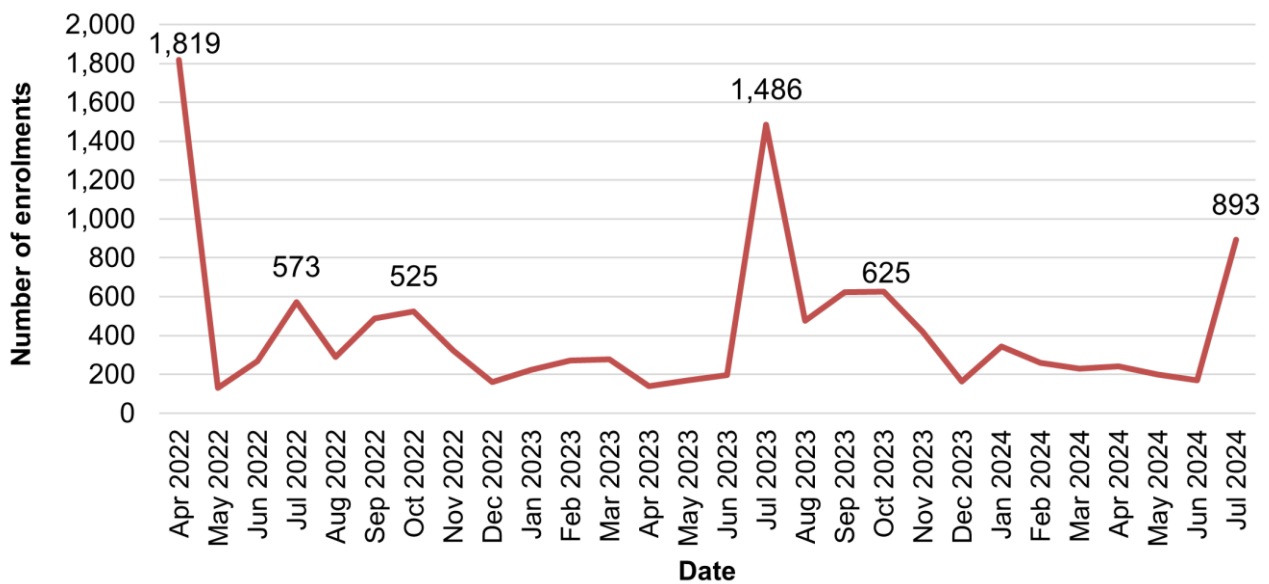
### Performance over time

- 5.4 Figure 5.1 below provides an overview of programme starts on the JGW+ programme over time using LLWR MI data. The chart illustrates peaks in programme starts in July of each year (aligned with the completion of an academic year). The peak in July 2022, whilst considerable at the time, is less pronounced than that encountered in July 2023 when almost seven times the number of JGW+ participants were enrolled in comparison to the previous month (and more than 2.5 times those enrolled in July 2022). This is likely to be associated with JGW+ becoming more established as a programme and with the adjustments to the programme offer, specifically enhancements in the provision offered through Get Ready, onto which approximately 50% of enrolments in July 2023 were enrolled in comparison to 20% in July 2024 and approximately 10% of enrolments in other operational months. Get Ready supports students in need of additional support all year round and was used by some Contractors as a replacement for the old Summer Sorted programme, hence its heightened prevalence during the summer<sup>[Footnote 25]</sup>.
- 5.5 There also appears to be a less pronounced spike in engagement in October of both academic years, potentially linked to post-16 students dropping out of EET during the October half-term (a widely recognised point in the academic year at which dropping-out takes place) and transitioning to the JGW+ programme. Aside from the peak months, there is little evidence of a general uptick in rates of enrolment in the programme until July 2023 (when three of the four months secured the highest number of monthly programme starts in the programme since the programme launch).

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[25] A programme targeted at Tier 4 learners that operated in some areas over the summer period when young people were not in school.

**Figure 5.1: Number of JGW+ programme starts per month – April 2022 to July 2024**



Source: LLWR MI data (N=11,973) Please note that these figures do not account for participants on waiting lists and that that totals for April 2022 include participants who transferred partway through their journey from the Traineeships Programme.

5.6 When the age and the timing of enrolment of 16 to 18-year-olds<sup>[Footnote 26]</sup> are analysed against the estimated numbers of 16 to 18-year-olds who are NEET (as set out in section 3), it is estimated that JGW+ is engaging with around one third of young people (aged 16 to 18) who were NEET at the end of the 2022 and 2023 calendar years in Wales (when compared to the number of JGW+ participants who started in April 2022 to March 2023 (4,394/13,200) and those who started between January and December 2023 (3,850/11,000<sup>[Footnote 27]</sup>)).

**Table 5.1: SFR data NEET estimates – 2022 and 2023**

|                           | SFR series estimate of number of 16 to 18 YPs NEET | Number of individuals who started JGW+ aged 16 to 18 |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| <b>2022</b>               | 13,200   | 4,394  |
| <b>2023 (provisional)</b> | 11,000   | 3,850  |

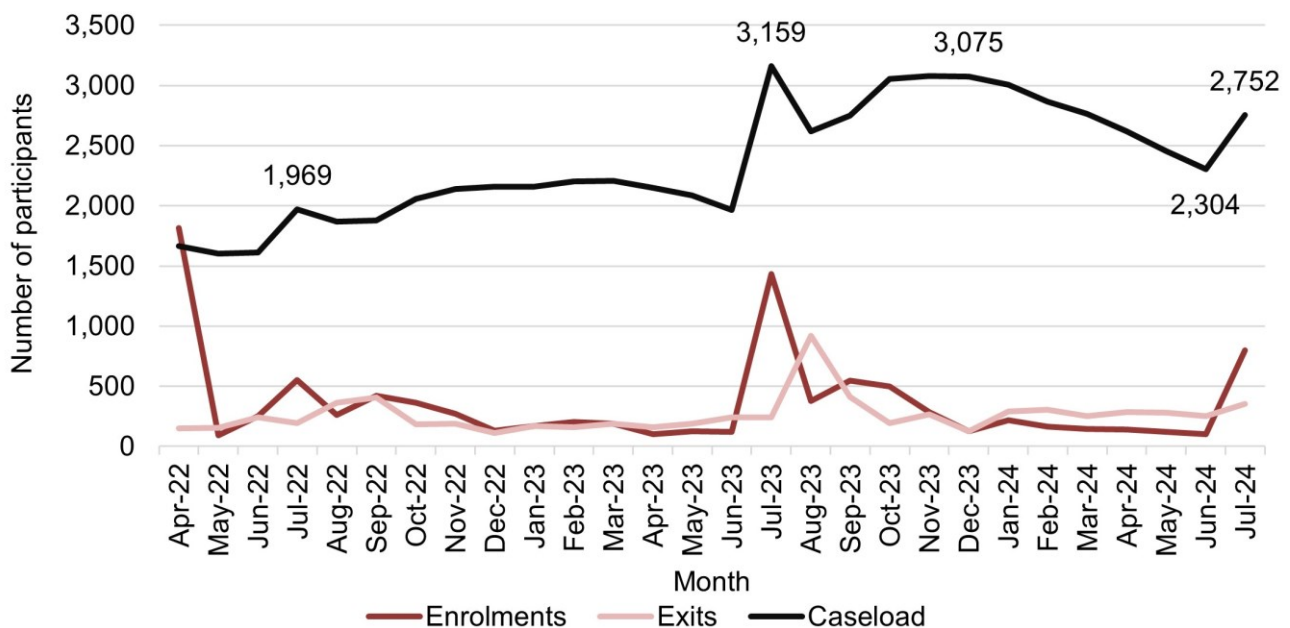
[26] SFR data are only available for the combined age groups of 16 to 18 and 19–24. The lower age cohort of 16 to 18 has been used because it is the closer representation of the JGW+ cohort.

[27] Please note that this figure is a provisional estimate.

## Caseloads

- 5.7 Figure 5.2 below analyses enrolments in and exits from JGW+ over time using data on individuals engaged on the programme, and shows that caseloads remained largely static through to July 2023 before the large intake in that month boosted the numbers participating in JGW+. Caseloads remained inflated throughout the remainder of 2023, and whilst there was a steady fall in 2024, rates remained inflated in comparison to early 2023; furthermore, an increase in caseload in July 2024 reverted much of the fall in earlier months that year.
- 5.8 The reduction in caseload during 2024 is likely to have been influenced by the introduction of waiting lists during the year. Waiting lists were introduced in certain areas because the caseloads had been operating at a level for Contractors that was unsustainable and would have led (were they to continue at this rate) to annual funding allocations running out partway through the year. Whilst the specific timings of formal introductions of waiting lists are unclear, the Welsh Government indicated an introduction of waiting lists in both September 2023 and September 2024. It is likely that the spikes in engagement in the preceding months triggered the need for the introduction of waiting lists, compounded by the likelihood of budgetary constraints becoming more prevalent later in the financial year.

**Figure 5.2: JGW+ enrolments, exits and caseloads over time by unique participants- April 2022 to July 2024**



Source: LLWR MI data (N=10,008)

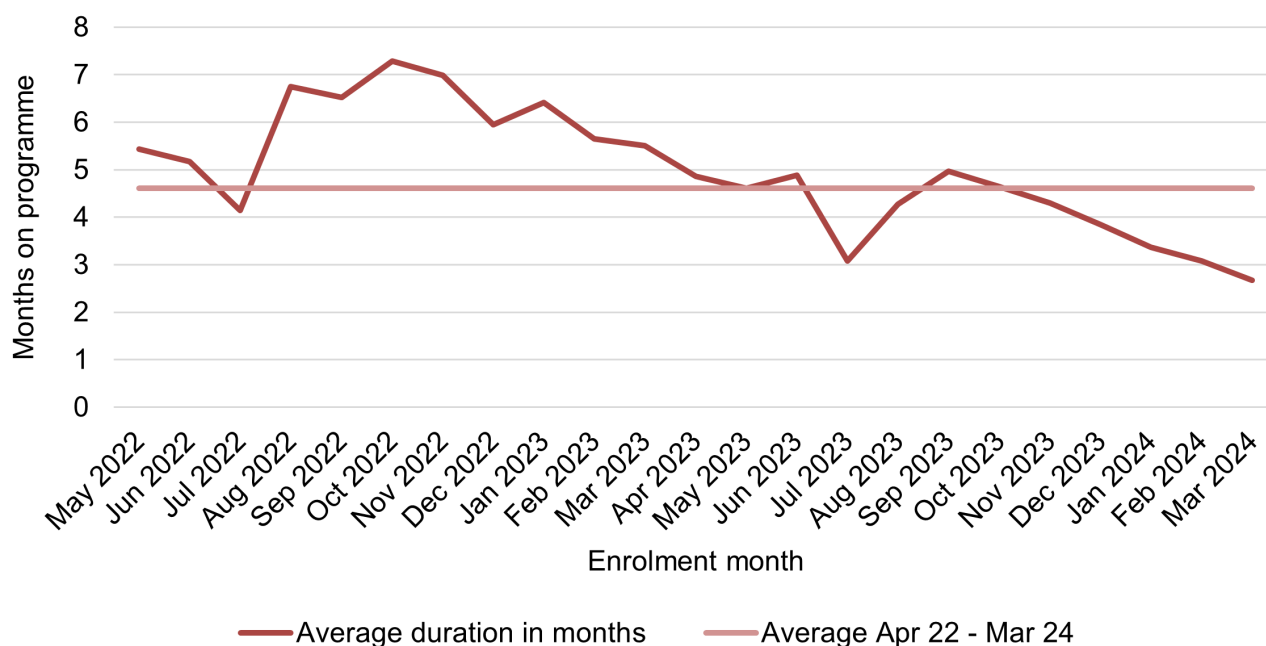
## **Referrals**

- 5.9 JGW+ monitoring data provide an indication of the proportion of direct referrals to the programme. For 2022 to 2023, JGW+ MI indicated that 28% of enrolments (1,485/5,330) were direct referrals. For 2023 to 2024, the proportion of direct referrals had risen to 47.9% (2,464/5,125). Between April and July 2024 the proportion of direct referrals stood at 39.7% (596/1,501).
- 5.10 JGW+ MI also indicates a sharp increase in the proportion of Working Wales referrals, rising from 1.1% in 2023 to 2024 (55) to 22.9% (343) over the April to July 2024 period. It is important to note that there is a degree of uncertainty associated with these figures, as they are reliant on participant recollection. The evidence does, however, illustrate the increasing prevalence of direct referrals as a route to engagement onto JGW+ whilst also illustrating, in the most recent months, an increased prevalence of Working Wales referrals.

## **Duration on programme**

- 5.11 There has been a gradual fall in the average duration for which participants are enrolled on JGW+ (see Figure 5.3). The dips in average duration of support in the July–September period of each year are likely to be illustrative of the role that the programme is playing in retaining engagement with individuals in the summer months after the end of Year 11 until they move on to post-16 education/training in September. The overall drop-in time spent on the programme is also reflected in the average number of hours spent in centre- and work-based learning. On average, completed starts between April 2022 and March 2023 enrolled in 549 centre-based and 212 work-based hours in comparison to 402 centre-based and 119 work-based hours between April 2023 and March 2024. This is likely to have been influenced by the constraints on funding associated with a higher caseload driving the need to accelerate the pace at which participants move through the programme.

**Figure 5.3: Average enrolment duration on the programme by programme starts and enrolment month - May 2022 to March 2024**



Source: LLWR MI data (N=10,471)

## Participant profile

### Gender

- 5.12 Of those who enrolled in the programme between April 2022 and July 2024, 51.9% identified as male, 47.3% as female, and 0.8% recorded as 'Other'. The gender distribution has remained consistent over the course of the programme. Where LLWR MI has been analysed, there is some variation in the gender profile by Contractor, with the proportion of female participants ranging from 44.6% of ACT Training participants to 52.3% of participants engaged in the programme through Pembrokeshire College.

### Disability

- 5.13 From April 2022 to July 2024, almost one quarter (24.7%, 2,474/10,008) of unique JGW+ participants declared a form of impairment in comparison to Census data which suggest a figure of 14% for this age group. Other research from NHS Mental Health of Children and Young People Surveys suggests that more than one in five young people aged 16 to 24 are likely to have a mental health disorder<sup>[Footnote 28]</sup>, whilst around 16% of all young people have been identified as having an ALN<sup>[Footnote 29]</sup>.

[28] NHS Digital (2023) Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2023: Wave 4 Follow-Up to the 2017 Survey (accessed: 26 November 2025).

[29] Senedd Research (2022) Identifying Additional Learning Needs: Has the Bar Been Raised or Was It Previously Too Low? (accessed: 12 October 2024).

- 5.14 Of those JGW+ participants declaring an impairment, more than half (51.5%, 1,274/2,474) were related to learning difficulties, most commonly dyslexia (23.7% of impairments, 586/2,474). Across all unique participants on the programme the most common impairments were:
- Dyslexia (23.7% of unique participants who declared a form of impairment)
  - Autistic spectrum disorders (20.6%)
  - Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (16.5%)
  - Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (14.7%)

#### Ethnicity

- 5.15 Amongst the participants who enrolled during the April 2022 to July 2024 period, excluding where ethnicity was not provided or was not known (n=94, 0.9%), 93.7% described themselves as White. The distribution of participants by ethnicity is presented in Table 5.2 below (compared with the Welsh population aged between 16 and 19) and suggests that those participating in JGW+ are less ethnically diverse than the general 16 to 19-year-old population of Wales. However, research conducted by Medr looking at progression from Year 11 into tertiary education between August 2017 and January 2025 notes a difference in progression rates by ethnicity. Learners from Asian and Asian British / Asian Welsh ethnic groups witnessed the highest rate of progression, and learners from Gypsy, Traveller or Irish Traveller backgrounds the lowest. This may indicate that the ethnic make-up of the NEET population in Wales differs from that of the wider 16 to 19 population.



**Table 5.2: Unique JGW+ participants by ethnicity – April 2022 to July 2024**

| <b>All ethnic groups</b>                                       | <b>JGW+ MI data unique participants</b> | <b>JGW+ MI data programme starts</b> | <b>Welsh population 16 to 19</b> |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| White<br>(Welsh/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/British/Other) | 93.7%                                   | 93.0%                                | 90.3%                            |
| Black  | 1.4%                                    | 1.4%                                 | 1.4%                             |
| Asian  | 1.3%                                    | 1.3%                                 | 4.3%                             |
| Mixed  | 2.0%                                    | 1.9%                                 | 2.8%                             |
| Other  | 1.6%                                    | 1.5%                                 | 1.3%                             |
| N  | 10,008                                  | 11,972                               |                                  |

Source: LLWR MI data, population data from 2021 Census. Census data have been used to compare against the population for this table because ethnicity data are not published in ONS mid-year population estimates. Please note that these exclude those who refused information (0.9% and 1% respectively)

#### Welsh ability

- 5.16 Amongst all unique participants in the LLWR MI data, 19.1% (1,911/10,008) enrolled since April 2022 were recorded as Welsh speakers, whilst 8.0% (801/10,008) described themselves as fluent Welsh speakers. An analysis of the LLWR MI shows that there was an increase in the proportion of Welsh speakers enrolling on the programme from 16.3% of those first engaging with the programme in 2022 to 21.4% and 20.2% in 2023 and 2024 respectively.

#### Age

- 5.17 Over three quarters (78.0%, 9,341/11,972) of JGW+ programme starts were by participants aged 16 or 17 at the point of enrolment in the programme. A small number of participants were 19 years old when they enrolled (4%). This figure remains relatively stable between 3.3% and 4.8% for each year of the programme's lifetime. Whilst this might initially suggest ineligible enrolments in 2022 (when those aged 19 were unable to enrol in JGW+), it is actually influenced by the transition of Traineeships participants to the programme who turned 19 years of age during the engagement with Traineeships and, therefore, transitioned (rather than enrolled) to JGW+ at the age of 19.

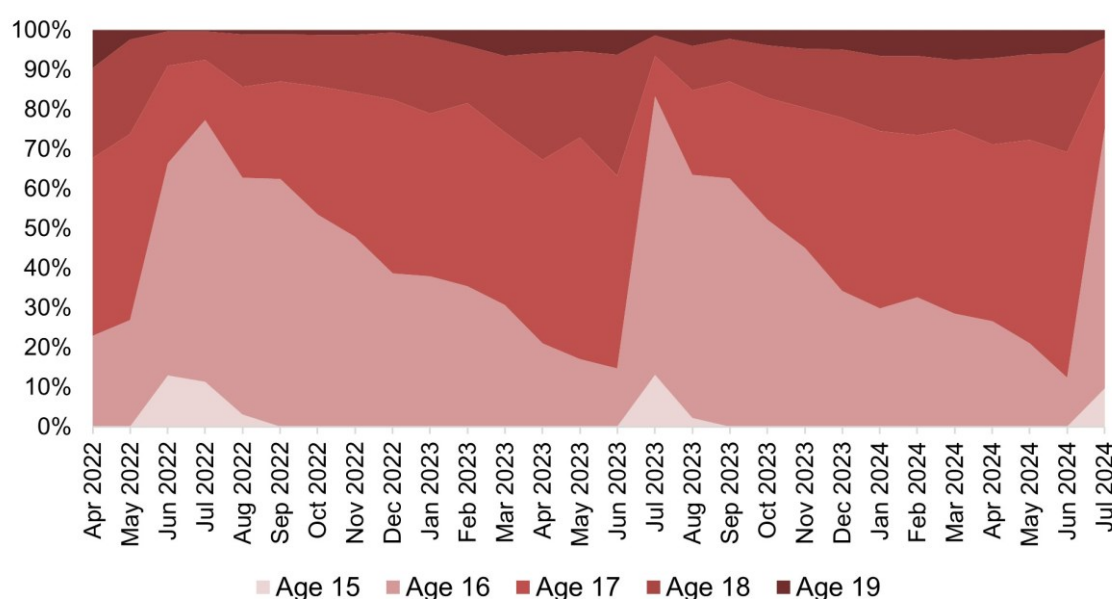
**Table 5.3: Age at point of enrolment to JGW+ – April 2022 to July 2024**

| Age at enrolment | Programme starts (N) | %   | Unique participants (N) | %   |
|------------------|----------------------|-----|-------------------------|-----|
| 19               | 479                  | 4%  | 347                     | 3%  |
| 18               | 1,749                | 15% | 1,310                   | 13% |
| 17               | 3,778                | 32% | 2,967                   | 30% |
| 16               | 5,563                | 46% | 4,982                   | 50% |
| 15               | 402                  | 3%  | 401                     | 4%  |

Source: LLWR MI data

- 5.18 Figure 5.4 below shows the distribution in the age of the young people enrolling on JGW+ over time. It illustrates spikes in the engagement of 16-year-olds in July each year, where they typically constitute 70% of enrolments (with 15-year-olds constituting a further 10%). The proportion of enrolments at 16 then steadily falls throughout the year before spiking again the following July.

**Figure 5.4: Number of JGW+ programme starts per month by age – April 2022 to July 2024**



Source: LLWR MI data (N=11,971)

#### Length of time NEET

- 5.19 The LLWR MI dataset requires capture of the length of unemployment at the point of enrolment in the JGW+ programme. Just over half of unique participants (53.0%, 5,305/10,008) have been recorded as short-term unemployed (NEET for less than six months), with 47.0% (4,703/10,008) recorded as long-term unemployed (NEET for more than six months). Older participants tend to be NEET for longer, with 57.2% of 18- and 19-year-olds having been NEET for more than six months when

first engaging with JGW+ in comparison to only 40.3% of 15- and 16-year-olds. The share of those recorded as long-term unemployed when first enrolling on JGW+ increased over time from 43.7% in 2022 to 51.3% in 2024.

- 5.20 There is considerable variation among the NEET profile across providers. Coleg Cambria and Pembrokeshire College recorded the lowest proportion of long-term-unemployed learners (20.9% and 25.1%) in comparison to 60.6% at ITEC. While Pembrokeshire College and Coleg Cambria have the lowest share of 18- and 19-year-olds, differences in the age profile between providers are not substantial enough to fully explain the differences in the NEET profile of learners (with the NEET profile presented in Table 5.4 below).

**Table 5.4: Unemployment status at first enrolment by provider**

| Status                | GLLM  | ACT   | Pembrokeshire College | ITEC  | Coleg Cambria |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|-----------------------|-------|---------------|
| Short-term unemployed | 46.9% | 55.2% | 74.9%                 | 39.4% | 79.1%         |
| Long-term unemployed  | 53.1% | 44.8% | 25.1%                 | 60.6% | 20.9%         |

Source: LLWR MI data

Geographical location

- 5.21 The number of learner programmes started between April 2022 and July 2024 by region is presented in Table 5.5 below. The figures suggest that the programme has thus broadly met target populations in North Wales and South East Wales, whilst far exceeding targets in South Wales and Mid Wales, which makes up for a shortfall of delivery in South Central Wales (when compared to target proportions).

**Table 5.5: Number of starts by region – April 2022 to July 2024**

| Region of domicile       | Starts (learner programmes) |     | Target proportion | 16 to 19 population |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----|-------------------|---------------------|
|                          | N                           | %   | %                 | %                   |
| North Wales              | 1,457                       | 12% | 12%               | 20%                 |
| South Central Wales      | 3,679                       | 31% | 38%               | 33%                 |
| South East Wales         | 3,138                       | 26% | 25%               | 17%                 |
| South West and Mid Wales | 3,669                       | 31% | 25%               | 29%                 |

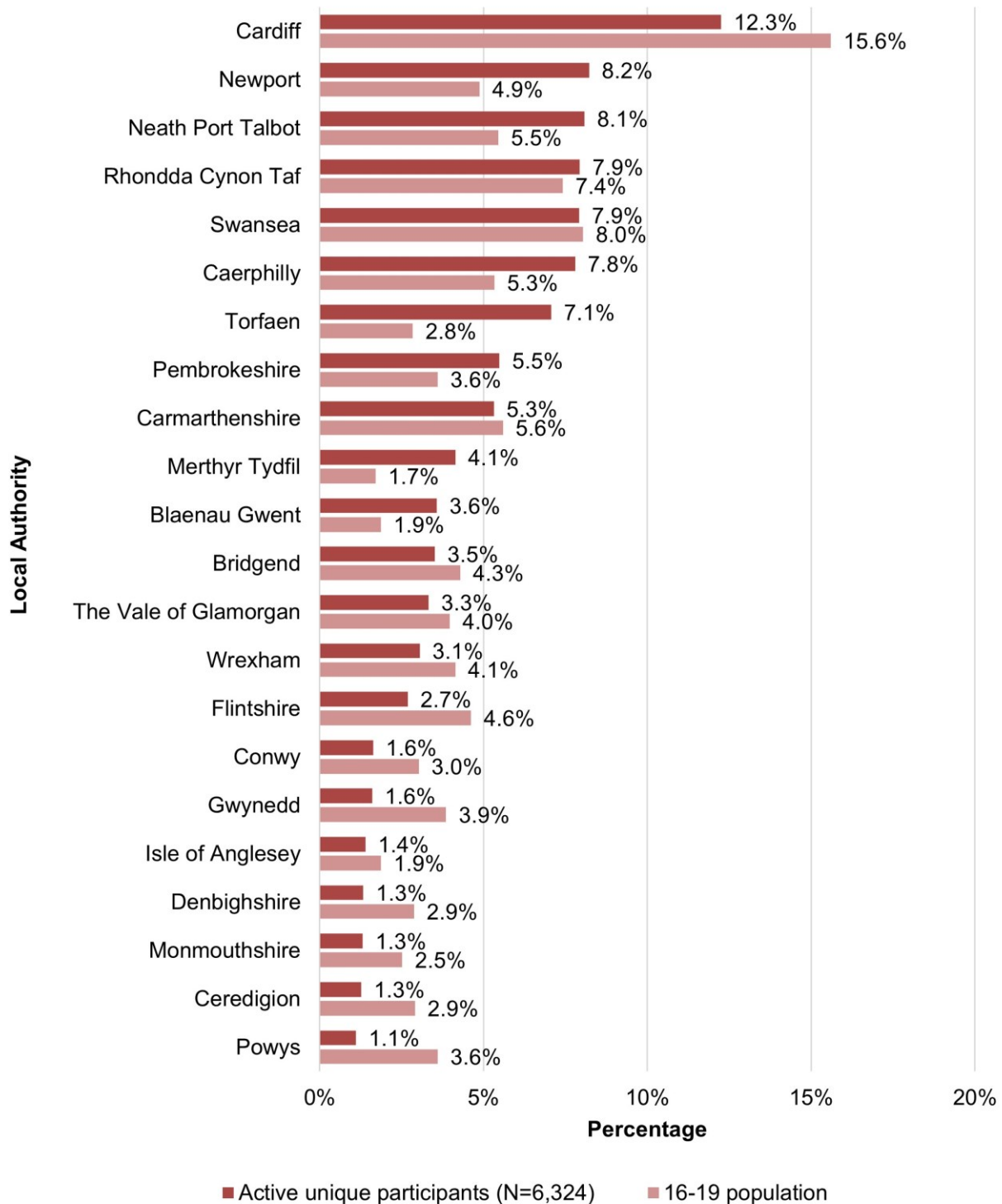
Source: LLWR MI data, Welsh Government; ONS population estimates for Wales (2023). Target proportions sourced from JGW+ Programme Specification Document Section A9.

- 5.22 The geographical location of JGW+ participants by local authority based on LLWR MI is presented in Figure 5.5 below as a proportion of the total participants across Wales by unique participants. The unique participant data are then compared to the proportional number of all young people aged 16 to 19 in Wales.
- 5.23 The analysis shows that young people in Cardiff constitute the largest share of JGW+ programme starts (Figure 5.5). Both Cardiff and Swansea were areas that were most exposed to waiting lists. The potential impacts of those have been modelled and result in Swansea theoretically having the second-largest representation on the programme were it not for enrolments being constrained by waiting lists<sup>[Footnote 30]</sup>.
- 5.24 This analysis reveals a wide variation in the likelihood of 16 to 19-year-olds engaging in the programme: indeed, those aged 16 to 19 residing in Torfaen in 2023 were eight times more likely to be enrolled on JGW+ than those aged 16 to 19 residing in Powys (and six times more likely than those residing in Gwynedd). The scale of variation in engagement is considerable and raises the question of the degree to which the programme is deemed to be an accessible offer for young people NEET throughout Wales. Additional structural factors, such as differences in the level of deprivation across local authorities, may also influence regional variation in the engagement with JGW+.

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[30] In Swansea it is estimated that had there been no waiting lists. The proportion of JGW+ participants would have risen to 8.9% whilst in Cardiff they would have risen to 13.7% against a proportional 16 to 19 population of 8.0% and 15.6% respectively.

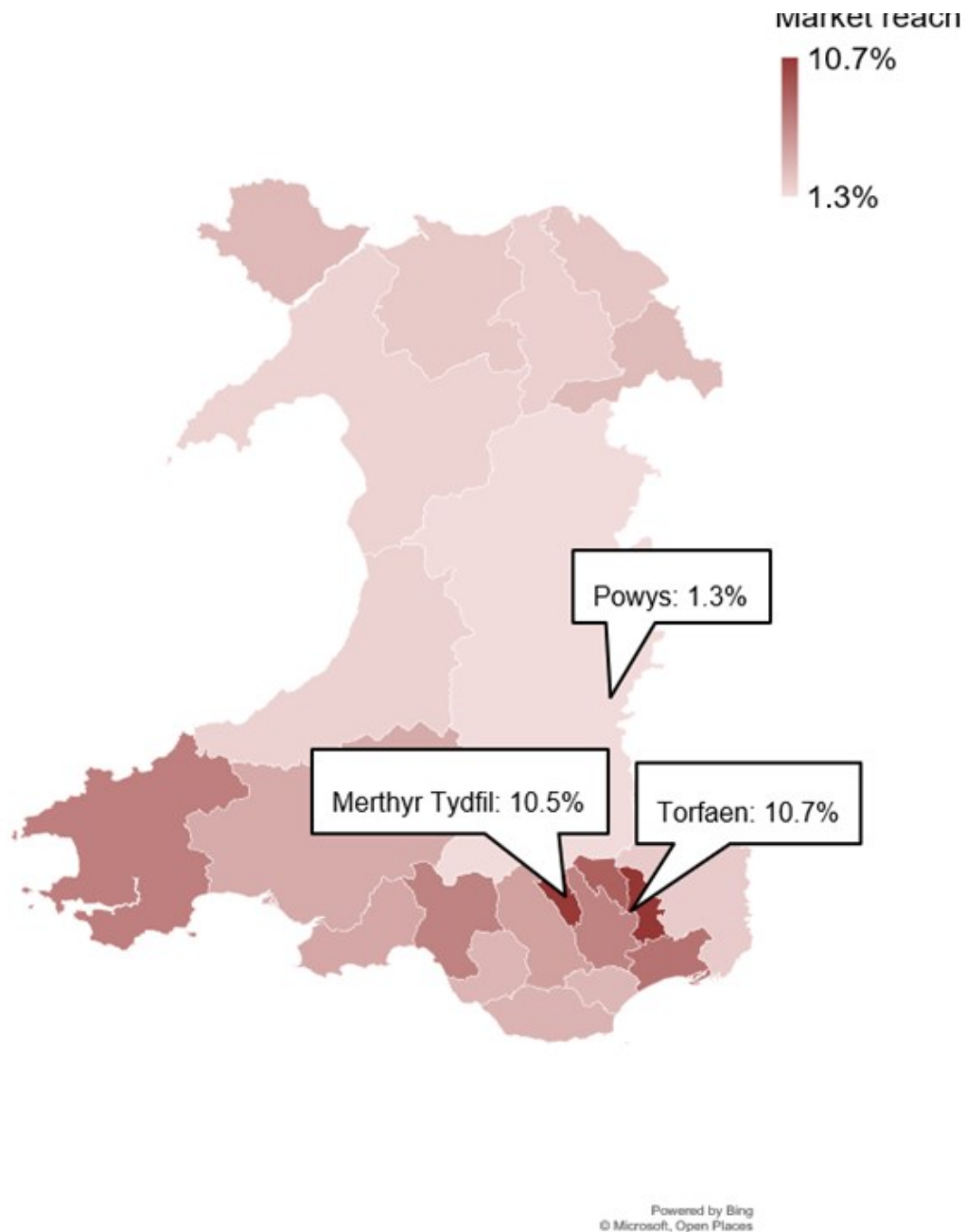
**Figure 5.5: Proportion of active unique participants and 16 to 19 population – 2023**



Source: LLWR MI data, ONS population estimates for Wales (2023)

5.25 The reach of the JGW+ programme relative to local authority demographics is further illustrated in Figure 5.6. Market penetration was particularly high in the Valleys regions of Torfaen (10.7%), Merthyr Tydfil (10.5%) and Blaenau Gwent (8.3%) and lowest in Ceredigion (1.9%), Gwynedd (1.8%) and Powys (1.3%).

**Figure 5.6: Market reach by local authority – April 2022 to July 2024**



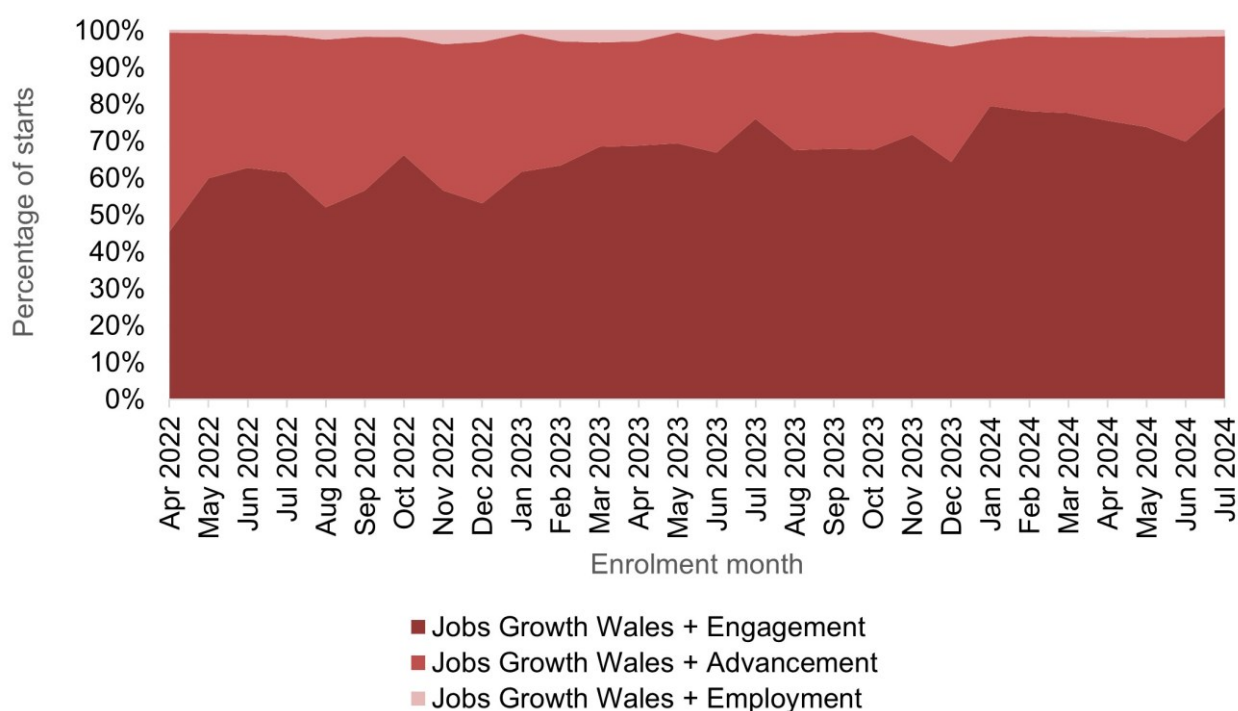
Source: LLWR MI data (N=6,324), ONS population estimates for Wales (2023). The full data table for this graph can be found in Annexe 1, Table A.1.

### **JGW+ engagement by support strand**

- 5.26 Amongst participants, between April 2022 and July 2024, 7,822 enrolled in the engagement strand of the programme, representing 65.3% of all starts. One third (33.2%, 3,974/11,972) enrolled on the advancement strand and only 1.5% of participants (176) were enrolled on the employment strand of the JGW+.
- 5.27 Analysing the proportion of enrolments by strand and month reaffirms findings from the interim report, highlighting a growing trend of participants enrolling in the engagement strand over time. In the first six months of the programme, 51.9% of

starts enrolled on the engagement strand. In the six months to July 2024, this share was 77.2%. For the same time periods the shares of enrolments on the advancement strand dropped from 47.0% to 21.2%.

**Figure 5.7: Proportion of programme starts by month and strand – April 2022 to July 2024**



Source: LLWR MI data (N=11,972)

- 5.28 The profile of strand enrolment by Contractor varied considerably, with 57.5% of those enrolled by ACT enrolled in the engagement strand in comparison to 75.3% of those enrolled by ITEC. Those variations were reflected in the proportion enrolled in the advancement strand, with very little variation in the prevalence of participants enrolled in the employment strand of the programme by Contractor.

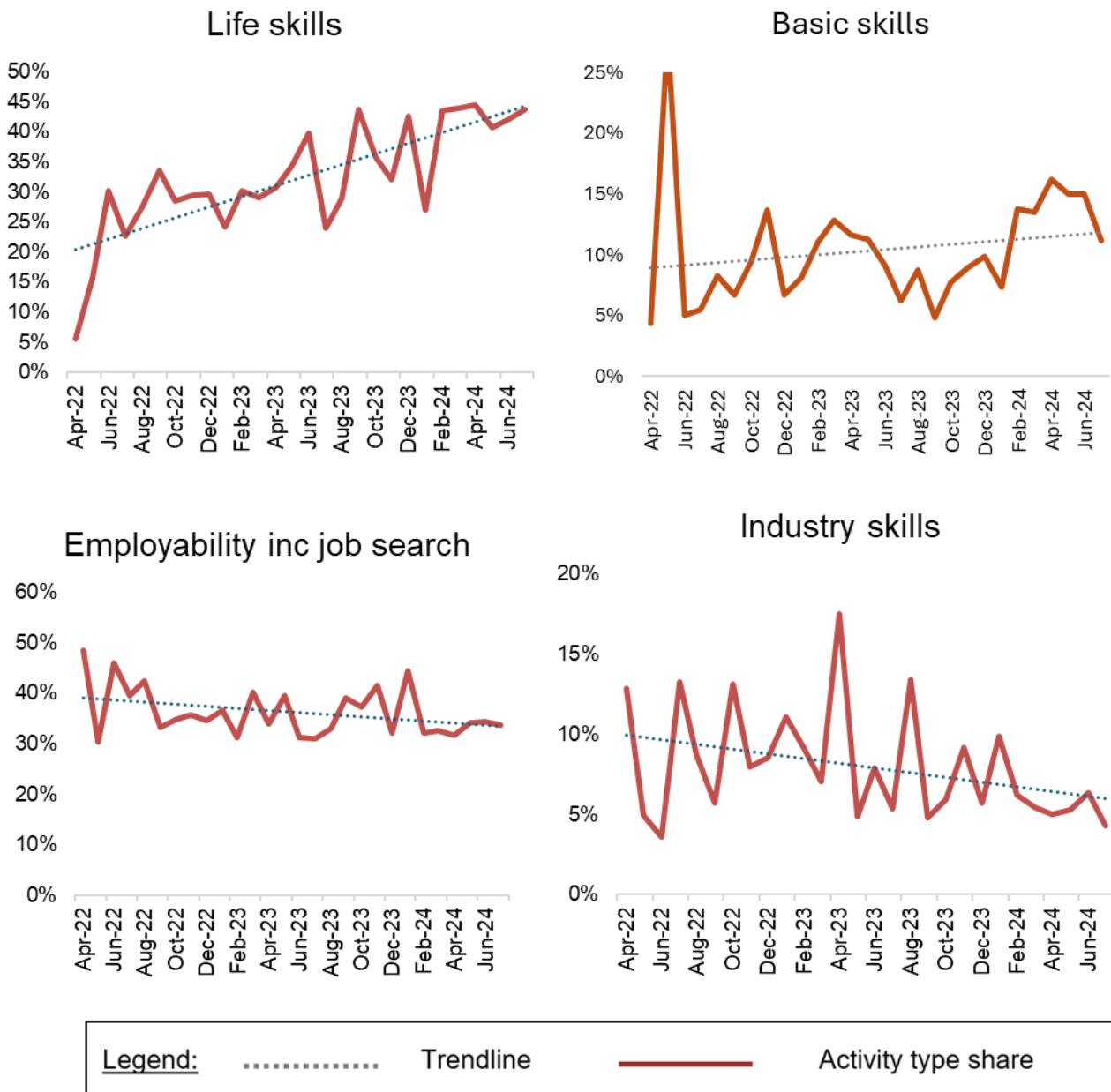
### Learning activities

- 5.29 The majority of individual JGW+ participants (82.0%, 8,207/10,008) only engaged in one learning programme on one strand. Among participants engaged in multiple learning programmes (including different strands or repeating strands), nearly three quarters (73.5%, 1,324/1,801) concluded their learning on a higher strand than they initially started. Over one fifth (22.6%, 407/1,801) finished on the same strand, while only 3.9% (70/1,810) ended on a lower strand than where they began. This suggests that the assignment of JGW+ participants to strands was broadly accurate, with strand transitions primarily associated with progressions to higher strands.
- 5.30 An analysis of programme-wide monitoring information on activities undertaken by participants shows that on average between April 2022 and July 2024, each learner was enrolled in just over three activities. Excluding learners continuing learning

activities, 72.1% (19,010/26,377) of activities were completed, while 27.1% (7,151/26,377) of learners withdrew. A small proportion of learners (0.8%, 215/26,377) ended activities early due to transferring to a new learning activity.

- 5.31 Activities concentrating on employability skills, e.g. job searches, were the most commonly undertaken, accounting for 36.5% of all activities. This was followed by activities aimed at developing broader life skills, such as communication, personal health, and well-being. However, as shown in Figure 5.8, activities concentrating on life skills have gained greater prevalence over the course of the programme, while employability and industry-specific skill development became less common. This could be linked to more recent participants presenting with increasingly complex needs, as noted above/below.

**Figure 5.8: Activity type share of all activities – April 2022 to July 2024**



Source: LLWR MI data (N=31,849)



5.32 Of the 30,059 learning activities recorded between April 2022 and July 2024, 7,539 (25.1%) were associated with regulated qualifications listed in the Qualifications in Wales database. The top five qualifications were:

- City & Guilds Entry Level Introductory Award in Employability Skills (Entry 3)
- ETCAL Level 1 Certificate of Introduction to Preparation for Military Service
- City & Guilds Level 1 NVQ Certificate in Hairdressing and Barbering
- City & Guilds Level 1 Award in Employability Skills
- City & Guilds Entry Level Essential Skills Wales in Application of Number (Entry 3).

### **Outcomes and destinations**

5.33 Learner outcomes are classified as positive, neutral or negative. The definition of a positive or negative outcome varies depending on the JGW+ strand and the learner's disability status, as detailed below. The positive outcome rate is calculated as the ratio of positive outcomes to the total positive and negative outcomes.

Positive outcomes:

Engagement & Advancement Strands:

- Progression to learning at a higher level (including progression from the JGW+ engagement strand to the JGW+ advancement strand)
- Progression into employment (full-time, part-time or self-employment)
- Progression to an Apprenticeship
- For disabled learners, employment of less than 16 hours per week is also classed as a positive outcome.

Employment Strand:

- Progression into employment (full-time, part-time (16 or more hours per week) or self-employment)
- Progression to an Apprenticeship.

Negative outcomes:

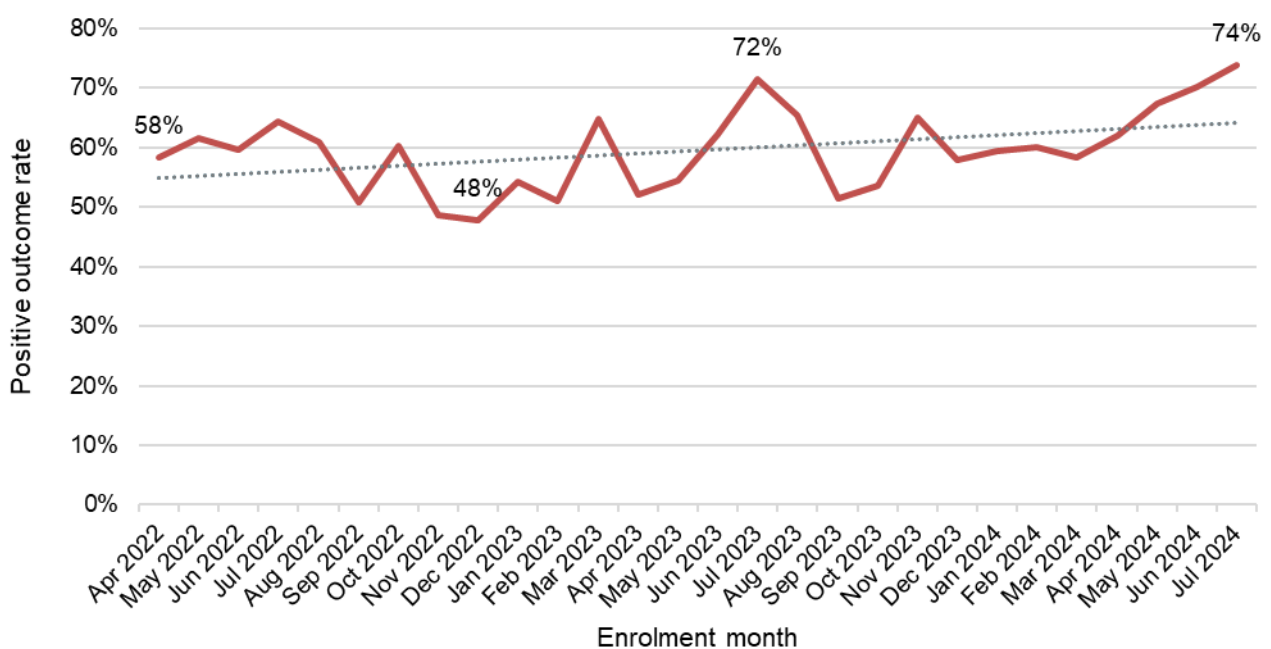
- Seeking work/unemployed
- Instances in which the destination within four weeks is not known.

Neutral outcomes:

- Voluntary work
- Further learning at the same or a lower level
- Employment of less than 16 hours per week
- 'Other' destinations category.

5.34 According to the latest published JGW+ statistics, by March 2024 there had been a total of 10,045 programme starts since its launch in April 2022. The statistical release recorded an uptick in the proportion of programmes that had ended where the participant had secured a positive outcome, from 58% in April 2022 to March 2023 to 60% over the April 2023 to March 2024 period. The LLWR MI data indicate that for the extended period from the programme launch through to July 2024 the proportion of programme starts resulting in a positive outcome was 60.4%. The rate of positive outcomes has risen gradually over the course of the programme, with noticeable peaks in late spring/early summer each year (see Figure 5.9 below).

**Figure 5.9: Percentage of positive outcomes by enrolment month and programme starts – April 2022 to July 2024**



Source: LLWR MI (N=9,121)

5.35 Table 5.6 below presents performance by programme starts and unique participants between April 2022 and July 2024.

**Table 5.6: Positive outcomes by starts and unique participants by programme strand (April 2022 to July 2024)**

| Strand      | Programme starts              |                 | Unique participants           |                 |
|-------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
|             | % securing a positive outcome | Population size | % securing a positive outcome | Population size |
| Employment  | 76%                           | 115             | 72%                           | 86              |
| Advancement | 61%                           | 2,874           | 60%                           | 1,984           |
| Engagement  | 60%                           | 6,132           | 52%                           | 5,211           |

Source: LLWR MI. Population sizes are the total number that have secured a positive or negative outcome for each category and exclude those securing a neutral outcome.

5.36 It is important to note that JGW+ strand progression (the transition of a participant from one strand to another, higher strand) is included in the totals associated with programme starts. Where an individual progresses (transitions) from engagement to advancement this is classed as a positive outcome, as the learner has progressed to learning at a higher level. LLWR monitoring information indicates that 18.0% (1,801/10,008) of unique participants who engaged with JGW+ enrolled on more than one programme and their participation accounts for 31.4% (3,765/11,972) of programme starts in the period of April 2022 to July 2024.

5.37 Across the whole programme, analysis of repeat engagements indicates that an estimated 20% of all positive outcomes may have been influenced by strand moves. Table 5.7 breaks this down further by provider. The positive outcome rate by unique participants for the programme's lifetime is 54.3% (3,953/7,281).

**Table 5.7: Estimates of positive outcomes influenced by strand moves by provider – April 2022 to July 2024**

| Provider                    | All positive outcomes (starts) | Estimated positive outcomes from strand move | Prevalence |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|--|------------|
| ACT Ltd                     | 2,684                          | 669  | 24.9%      |
| Pembrokeshire College       | 681                            | 131  | 19.2%      |
| Grŵp Llandrillo Menai       | 255                            | 43   | 16.8%      |
| ITEC Training Solutions Ltd | 1,637                          | 264  | 16.1%      |
| Coleg Cambria WBL           | 254                            | 20   | 7.8%       |

Performance by Contractor and location

- 5.38 Contractor and region were main influences on the likelihood of learners securing a positive outcome, as is illustrated in Table 5.8 below. Learners at Pembrokeshire College in particular were more likely to secure a positive outcome in comparison to other Contractors. ITEC and GLLM had a higher proportion of programme starts by learners who had been NEET for six months or longer (ITEC: 62.7%; 2,216/3,535, GLLM: 56.4%; 351/622) in comparison to 24.3% (295/1,210) for Pembrokeshire College and 22.5% (112/498) of Coleg Cambria starts.
- 5.39 The average number of barriers<sup>[Footnote 31]</sup> faced by unique learners who enrolled on the programme with GLLM (1.26) was also higher than for other providers (0.42–0.82). GLLM also has the highest proportion of unique learners with multiple barriers (34.3%) in comparison to other providers (7.3–18.4%). However, these factors are not sufficient to explain the differences in outcomes achieved by Contractor, as the distribution of barriers among learners does not align with the variations in positive outcome rates across Contractors. It should also be acknowledged that each individual barrier may differ in the extent to which it may impact on a learner's ability to achieve a positive outcome.

**Table 5.8: Positive outcomes by starts and unique participants by programme data (April 2022 to July 2024)**

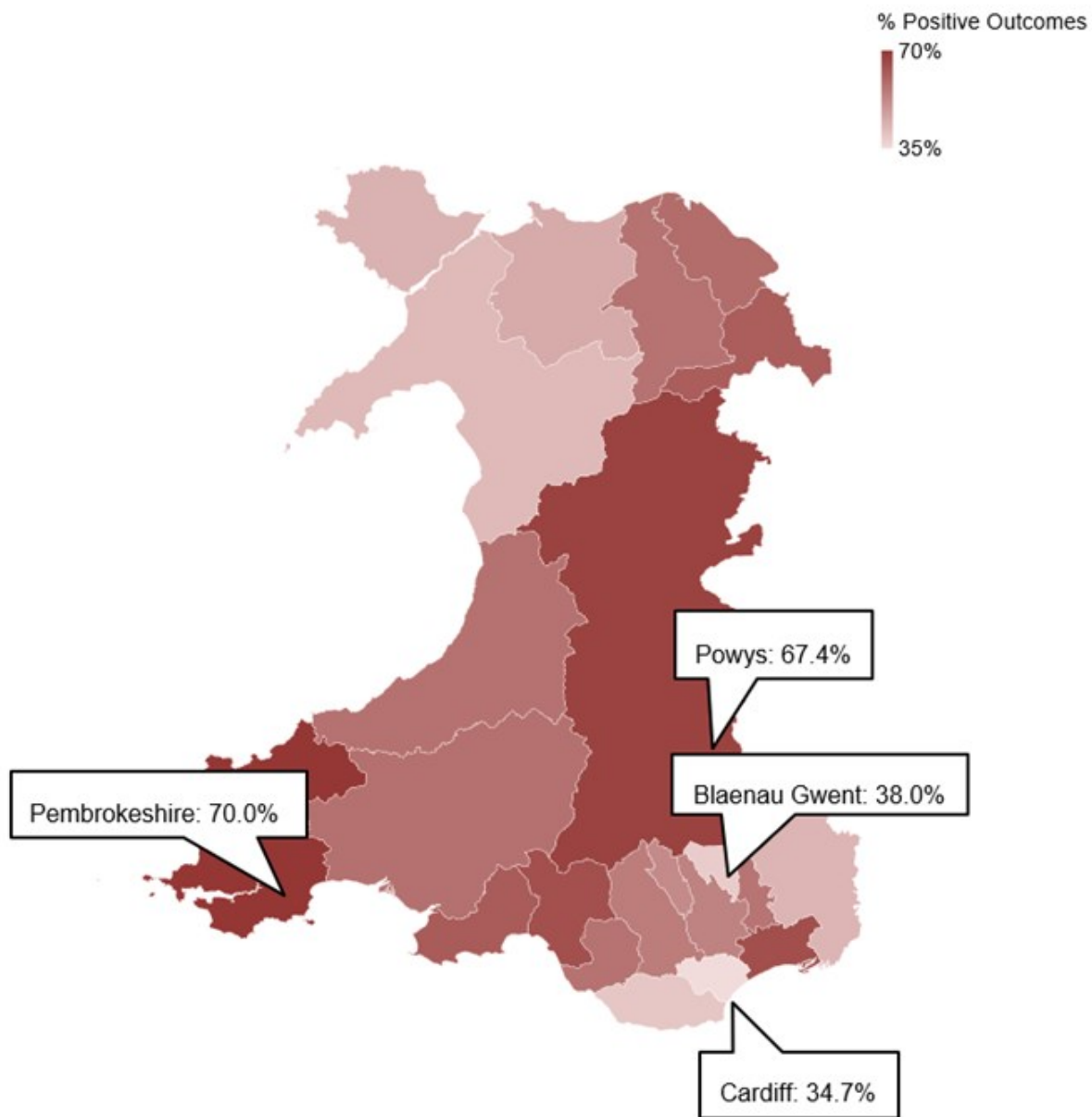
|                                 | Starts                        |                 | Individuals                   |                 |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Category/characteristic         | % securing a positive outcome | Population size | % securing a positive outcome | Population size |
| <b>Region</b>                   |                               |                 |                               |                 |
| <b>South West and Mid Wales</b> | 69%                           | 2,788           | 63%                           | 2,185           |
| <b>South East Wales</b>         | 62%                           | 2,320           | 56%                           | 1,836           |
| <b>North Wales</b>              | 58%                           | 1,165           | 56%                           | 980             |
| <b>South Central Wales</b>      | 52%                           | 2,821           | 45%                           | 2,273           |
| <b>Contractor</b>               |                               |                 |                               |                 |
| <b>Pembrokeshire College</b>    | 75%                           | 906             | 70%                           | 714             |
| <b>Coleg Cambria</b>            | 64%                           | 396             | 62%                           | 350             |
| <b>ITEC</b>                     | 64%                           | 2,542           | 59%                           | 2,072           |
| <b>ACT</b>                      | 56%                           | 4,778           | 49%                           | 3,723           |
| <b>GLLM</b>                     | 51%                           | 499             | 46%                           | 422             |

[31] Barriers were classed as a learner having a disability or work-limiting health condition, being a migrant or refugee, having caring responsibilities or any of the following household situations: living in a single adult household with dependent children, living in a jobless household, living in a single adult household, living in a jobless household with dependent children, or homeless or affected by housing exclusion.

Source: LLWR MI. Population sizes are the total number that have secured a positive or negative outcome for each category.

- 5.40 Differences by region are likely to some extent to be influenced by Contractor but are also pronounced at a local authority level. Figure 5.10 below shows the rate of positive outcomes for unique participants who completed the programme by local authority. 70.0 % of those residing in Pembrokeshire secured a positive outcome in comparison to 34.7% of those in Cardiff.

**Figure 5.10: Proportion of unique participants completing the JGW+ programme who secured positive outcomes by local authority area – April 2022 to July 2024**

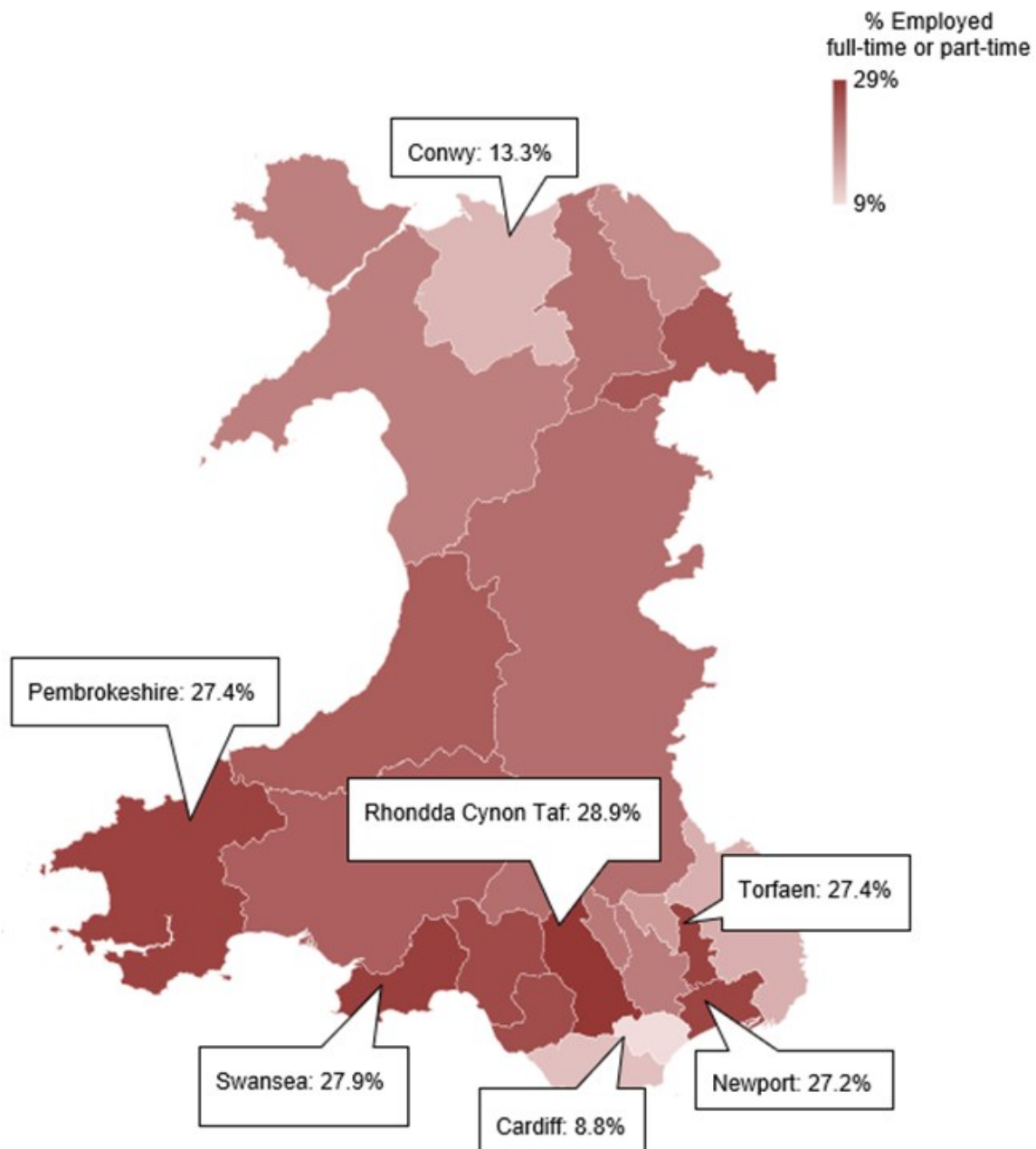


Source: LLWR MI data (N=7,274). Full data table available in Annexe 1, Table A3

- 5.41 The proportion of individuals transitioning to employment does not align precisely with the overall distribution of positive outcomes. Figure 5.11 illustrates that while local authorities like Pembrokeshire, which have high rates of positive outcomes, also witness a considerable proportion of participants transitioning into employment (27.4%), positive outcomes in other areas are more strongly influenced by employment transitions. In Rhondda Cynon Taf, for instance, 28.9% of participants transition into employment, accounting for over half of all positive outcomes in comparison to only 8.8% in Cardiff (one quarter of all positive outcomes).

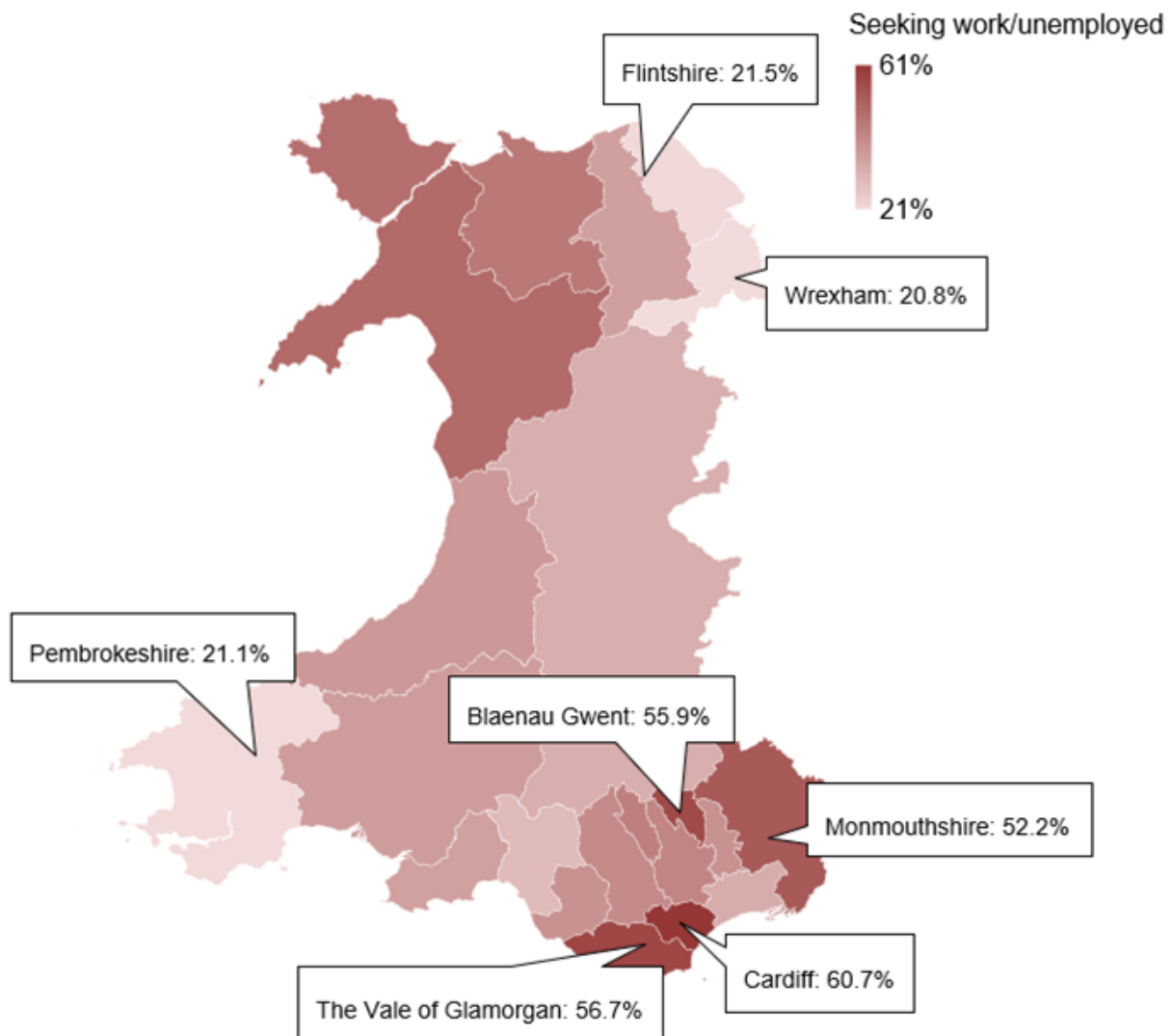
5.42 Patterns of geographical variation also carry over into negative outcomes, with Figure 5.12 illustrating how those residing in Cardiff are almost three times more likely to secure a negative outcome than are those residing in Wrexham or Flintshire.

**Figure 5.11: Proportion of unique participants completing the JGW+ programme who have secured full-time or part-time employment by local authority area – April 2022 to July 2024**



Source: LLWR MI data (N=8,053). Full reference table available in Annexe 1.

**Figure 5.12: Proportion of unique participants completing the JGW+ programme who are seeking work or unemployed (defined as a negative outcome) by local authority area – April 2022 to July 2024**



Source: LLWR MI data (N=8,053). Full reference table available in Annexe 1.

#### Outcomes by personal characteristics

- 5.43 To explore the relationship between individuals' characteristics and the likelihood of having a positive outcome, a logistic regression model was run using the characteristics listed in the table below as well as the year of engagement. The testing was performed on all programme starts and also for unique participants based on the final outcome achieved from all of their programme or strand starts. Statistically significant differences were found by age at enrolment, ethnicity, Welsh-speaking ability, highest qualification, disability, and housing status. Gender, NEET duration, caring responsibilities, and migrant worker or refugee status were also tested, but no statistically significant relationships were found.
- 5.44 Table 5.9 below outlines regression analysis results based on learners' personal characteristics. This explores whether, and to what extent, different personal



characteristics influence the odds of achieving a positive outcome while controlling for all of the other personal characteristics.

- 5.45 The table reports odds ratios, which indicate the relative change in the odds of achieving a positive outcome (as opposed to a negative outcome) for a given characteristic (such as female) in comparison to a modal characteristic (denoted as MC, such as male), while holding other categories constant. The modal characteristic (MC) represents the category with the most observations, serving as a reference point against which statistical comparisons are made. An odds ratio greater than 1 suggests higher odds of learners achieving a positive outcome relative to the modal characteristic, while an odds ratio lower than 1 suggests lower odds.
- 5.46 Since all variables in this regression are treated as categorical variables, odds ratios can be interpreted as follows: an odds ratio of 1.01 means that the odds of a learner achieving a positive outcome are 1% higher for this characteristic in comparison to the modal characteristic, while holding all other characteristics constant. Similarly, an odds ratio of 0.99 would indicate that the odds of achieving a positive outcome are 1% lower relative to the modal characteristic.
- 5.47 The statistical significance of the odds ratios is denoted by asterisks (\*) beside them, with the degree of statistical significance tested at the 5%, 1% and 0.1% levels. Discussion on these statistically significant relationships can be found below the table.

**Table 5.9: Positive outcomes by unique participants' personal characteristics (April 2022 to July 2024)**

| Category/ characteristic | Odds    | % securing a positive outcome | Population size |
|--------------------------|---------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Gender</b>            |         |                               |                 |
| Female                   | 1.02    | 55%                           | 3,332           |
| Male (MC)                | 1       | 54%                           | 3,890           |
| Other                    | 1.01    | 53%                           | 59              |
| <b>Age</b>               |         |                               |                 |
| 15                       | ***1.03 | 69%                           | 257             |
| 16 (MC)                  | 1       | 56%                           | 3,487           |
| 17                       | ***0.99 | 49%                           | 2,238           |
| 18                       | 1       | 54%                           | 1,017           |
| 19                       | 1.01    | 56%                           | 281             |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>         |         |                               |                 |
| Black                    | *1.02   | 63%                           | 115             |
| Mixed                    | *1.01   | 60%                           | 143             |

| Category/ characteristic                                      | Odds    | % securing a positive outcome | Population size |
|---|---------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| White (MC)  | 1       | 54%                           | 6,731           |
| Asian   | 1       | 52%                           | 100             |
| Other   | 0.98    | 41%                           | 115             |
| <b>Welsh speaking capability</b>                              |         |                               |                 |
| Fluent Welsh speaker  | *1.01   | 58%                           | 605             |
| Welsh speaker (not fluent)                                    | ***1.03 | 66%                           | 811             |
| Not Welsh speaker (MC)  | 1       | 52%                           | 5,865           |
| <b>Highest qualification</b>                                  |         |                               |                 |
| Pre-entry level   | ***0.98 | 53%                           | 2,358           |
| Entry level   | **0.98  | 50%                           | 317             |
| Level 1   | ***0.98 | 48%                           | 1,704           |
| Level 2 (MC)  | 1       | 59%                           | 2,777           |
| Level 3   | 1.02    | 66%                           | 122             |
| <b>Disability</b>   |         |                               |                 |
| Learners with a disability and/or learning difficulty         | **0.99  | 50%                           | 1,689           |
| Learners without a disability and/or learning difficulty (MC) | 1       | 56%                           | 5,378           |
| <b>Housing status</b>   |         |                               |                 |
| Living in a jobless household                                 | *0.99   | 49%                           | 754             |
| Homeless or affected by housing exclusion                     | **0.97  | 38%                           | 87              |
| Any other household (MC)                                      | 1       | 55%                           | 5,455           |

Source: LLWR MI. The symbols in brackets in the table denote statistical significance, with increasing strength of the relationship as follows: \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

- 5.48 Population sizes are the total number that have secured a positive or negative outcome for each category.
- 5.49 The regression analysis indicated that those with Level 1 qualifications or below as their highest qualification on entering JGW+ were statistically less likely to achieve a positive outcome than were those whose highest qualification was Level 2. Welsh speakers, particularly non-fluent speakers, were significantly more likely to achieve positive outcomes than were non-Welsh speakers.
- 5.50 Statistically, learners who engaged at 17 years of age had the lowest positive outcome rate in comparison to both older and young participants. Those aged 15

and 16 were most likely to transition back into learning with a higher-level learning aim, suggesting the programme's success at engaging those who join soon after leaving education.

- 5.51 In comparison to learners whose ethnicity was White, participants of Black or mixed ethnicity were statistically more likely to achieve a positive outcome. Learners with lower qualification levels upon starting or learners with a disability or learning difficulty are less likely to achieve positive outcomes. Living in a jobless household and being homeless or affected by housing exclusion are associated with worse outcomes than the baseline.

### Value for money

- 5.52 As a formative evaluation there has been limited emphasis on assessing the value for money of JGW+, which would be better suited to a summative evaluation in which there will be greater emphasis on assessing impact and return on investment [Footnote 32].
- 5.53 To place the level of expenditure in context, however, a relatively crude cost-efficiency assessment (cost per engagement) has been undertaken, benchmarked against other employability support interventions in Wales.
- 5.54 Programme expenditure (both direct costs and programme support costs) provided by the Welsh Government over the 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024 financial years equates to £61.9 million. A broad breakdown of this is presented in Table 5.10 below. Over that timeframe, based on analysis of management information, there were 10,471<sup>[Footnote 33]</sup> programme starts for 8,849 unique individuals.

**Table 5.10: Programme costs**

| Programme delivery cost        | Financial year     |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| 2022 to 2023                   | £23,841,488        |
| 2023 to 2024                   | £22,026,687        |
| <b>Total delivery costs</b>    | <b>£45,868,176</b> |
| <b>Programme support costs</b> |                    |
| 2022 to 2023                   | £5,126,569         |
| 2023 to 2024                   | £10,867,821        |
| <b>Total support costs</b>     | <b>£15,994,390</b> |
| <b>Total programme costs</b>   | <b>£61,862,566</b> |

- 5.55 Based on these figures, the cost per engagement for JGW+ equates to £6,991 per unique participant and £5,908 per unique engagement. The cost per engagement

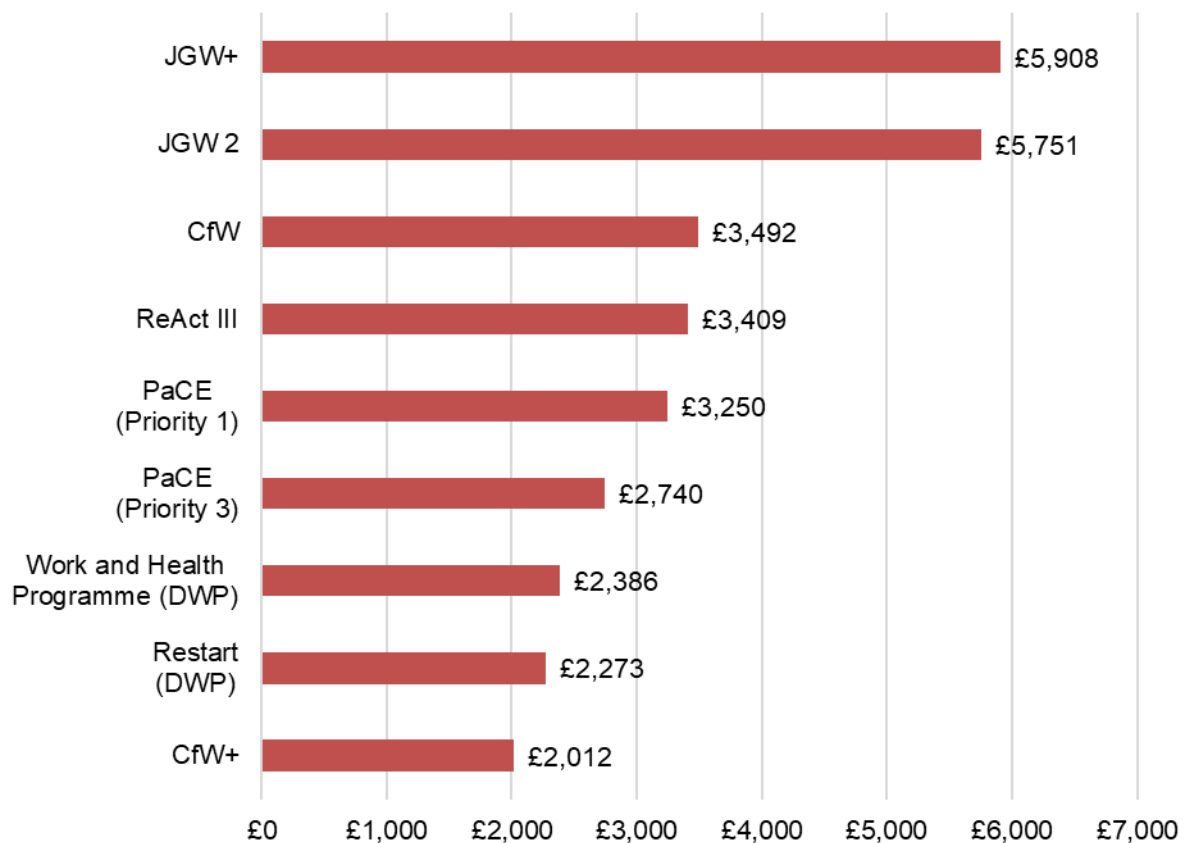
[32] An overview of a potential approach to this can be found in the [impact framework for JGW+](#).

[33] Published figures suggest a marginally different figure of 10,465.

can be benchmarked against a series of comparator programmes in Figure 5.13 below (which includes the JGW2 programme, which ran from 2015 to 2019). Based on this measure alone, JGW+ is more expensive per engagement than is other support; where inflationary effects are added to JGW2; however, it equates to £5,751 per engagement and represents a marginal inflation in the cost per engagement when compared to JGW+.

- 5.56 Care should be taken in making direct comparisons, given the variation in programme type, e.g. in terms of the groups whom they targeted, the programme design, the context in which they operated, and the scale and intensity of the support on offer. For example, the increased complexity of need presented amongst young people has required increased resource, following the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Figure 5.13: Cost per engagement of comparator programmes (2023 to 2024 prices)**



Source: JGW (Welsh Government, 2020), CfW/CfW+ (Communities for Work/Communities for Work+, Welsh Government, 2024), PaCE (Parents, Childcare and Employment, Welsh Government, 2023), Work and Health Programme and Restart (National Audit Office, 2021), ReAct III (Welsh Government, 2021). Please note that for PaCE and CfW/CfW+ an average inflation index for the project duration was used.

## Section summary

- Between April 2022 and July 2024 there were 11,972 programme starts and 10,008 unique participants enrolled on JGW+.
- There were clear peaks in enrolment in July each year (likely linked to school finishers, as July enrolments are dominated by those aged 16) with less pronounced peaks in October each year (likely linked to those leaving education or training during the October half-term).
- It is estimated that JGW+ was supporting 30–40% of all young people NEET in Wales in 2022 and 2023.
- Spikes in enrolments led to increased caseloads from summer 2023, with these largely sustained for six months prior to a marginal fall (likely linked to funding constraints).
- Almost one quarter of participants declared some form of impairment, with more than half of these relating to learning difficulties.
- There is geographical variation in the propensity to engage in the programme, with those aged 16 to 19 residing in Torfaen eight times more likely to be enrolled on JGW+ than those residing in Powys.
- The engagement strand has become increasingly popular during the programme and now accounts for over three quarters of all enrolments. The employment strand accounts for only 1% of all enrolments.
- There has been a general trend towards the provision of life skills and basic skills through JGW+ and away from activities synonymous with those close to securing employment (e.g. job searches).
- Rates of positive outcomes have steadily improved throughout the programme; however, considerable Contractor and geographical variations exist.
- Certain participant characteristics influence the likelihood of securing a positive outcome, including age, Welsh language capabilities, qualifications, ethnicity, learning difficulties.

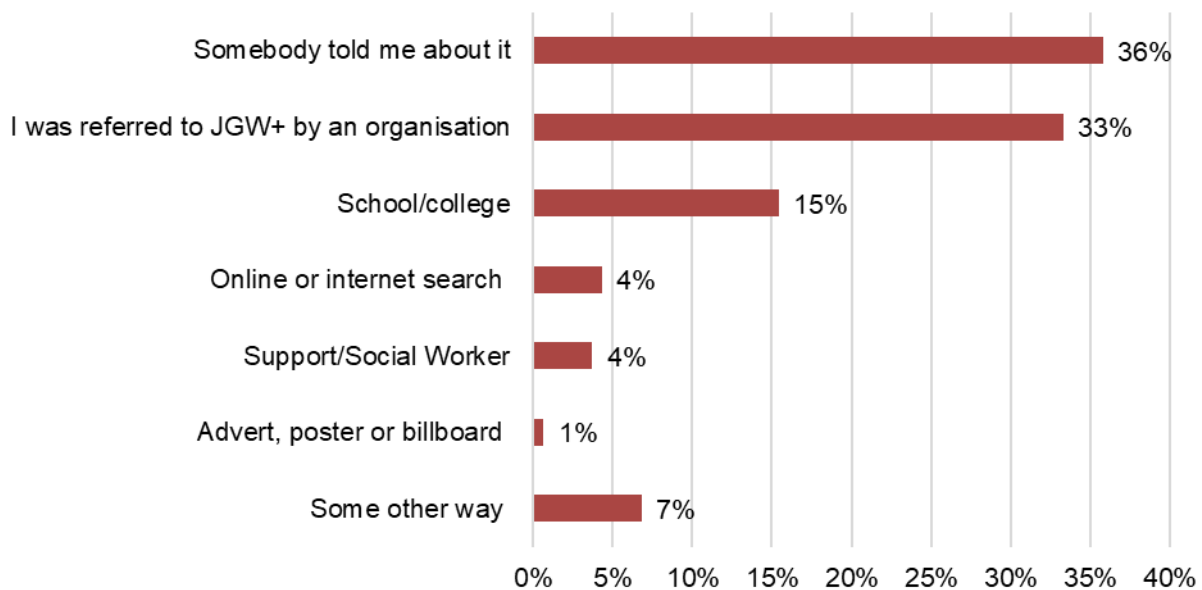
## **6. Reflections on the delivery model**

- 6.1 This chapter explores operational practice at each stage of JGW+, including referral, pre-engagement, assessment, and service delivery. We discuss the perspectives of each stakeholder group, identifying strengths, challenges, and potential areas for improvement.

### **Promotion and engagement**

- 6.2 Promotional campaigns for JGW+ aimed to increase public and professional awareness of the programme, with the majority aimed at young people and delivered in the earlier stages of the programme. Examples of marketing material include leaflets, advertising on buses, and delivering in-person sessions in schools. Brand testing with campaign agency Golley Slater evidenced that there were higher-than-average interaction and engagement levels with JGW+ branding.
- 6.3 Increasing participant numbers and an associated increased risk of oversubscription of participants on the programme led to the cessation of national promotional campaigns for JGW+. Furthermore, concerns surrounding contract values and the number of funded places available made some Contractors reluctant to continue recruitment, over fears that funded places would run out prior to the end of the contract. At the local level (where opportunities to enrol on JGW+ remained available), local authority staff reported promoting JGW+ to young people, with some promoting it within school activities that they are delivering.
- 6.4 Consistent with findings at the interim phase, word of mouth was seen to be a powerful factor in encouraging young people to participate in JGW+, as evidenced by 36% (58/162) of participants responding to the survey finding out about the programme in this way. This shows that JGW+ is a well-established brand amongst learners, linking to earlier findings regarding higher-than-average interactions with the brand. The Welsh Government's Young Person's Guarantee found that awareness of support available with regards to employment, education and training was low amongst 16 to 24-year-olds, underlining the importance of sustaining a recognised JGW+ brand.
- 6.5 A further 33% (54/162) of respondents to the core survey were referred through an organisation (with examples given as part of that response including Jobcentre Plus, Working Wales, and Careers Wales), suggesting that external organisations continue to play an important role in engaging participants. There has been an increase in engagement through schools and colleges since the interim phase from less than 5% to 15%, suggesting greater involvement with education (as recommended by Contractors). Five Contractors commented on effective promotion within schools and colleges, particularly through the engagement officers of Contractors.

**Figure 6.1: How did you first hear about the JGW+ programme?**



Source: Core learner survey (n=162)

### **Referrals**

- 6.6 JGW+ has two primary referral routes: referral via Working Wales and direct referral through Contractors, EPCs and learners themselves. Overall, Contractors and Welsh Government staff observed an ongoing trend away from Working Wales referrals towards wider direct referral through EPCs, youth services, and Contractors, which aligns with survey responses discussed above, along with findings from monitoring data.
- 6.7 It was suggested that direct referral methods are more attractive to those who may be reluctant to engage with career advisors and can encourage more peer engagement because participants are able to bring (introduce) friends to the programme. Typically, it is also a swifter route to engagement with the programme, as there are fewer steps (and organisations involved) when compared to referral through external organisations and Working Wales, lessening the potential of disengagement prior to enrolment.
- 6.8 Two Contractors, however, reported that direct referrals provide less background information than do those from Working Wales, who have sight of school information, for example, so they are able to reflect on available background information within their referral. That being said, representatives of three Contractors reported a lack of information within Working Wales referrals, e.g. relating to their needs and managing the expectation of participants regarding their aspirations and abilities. In some instances, this has caused delays with referrals whilst more accurate information has been sought from Working Wales.

- 6.9 The role of EPCs in referrals has remained varied across Wales, as identified in the interim phase. Five EPCs noted a lack of transparency of the support on offer within the JGW+ model. This created a reluctance to refer certain individuals through uncertainty surrounding the appropriateness and availability of support specific to their needs. For local authorities in North Wales, a perceived lack of suitable premises for the programme as well as minimal capacity (with some operating with waiting lists) influenced that reluctance. Contractors in turn reported how some EPCs would partake in regular operational meetings, whilst others would have minimal engagement. It was thought that this was likely owing to capacity constraints, but there was concern that this may have impacted referral numbers, with those less engaged more likely to refer elsewhere (if at all).
- 6.10 Moreover, several EPCs noted that whilst regular meetings take place with Working Wales, specific concerns relating to referrals are not always raised. More consistent information sharing between Contractors and EPCs would support a more consistent approach across Wales.

### **Assessment process**

- 6.11 Regarding the assessment process, almost all Contractors relied on a combination of content from the ARR, previously shared information, and individual discussions with learners to assess need. Commonly, the full extent of needs and barriers faced by participants became more apparent once a rapport had been established between the participant and the staff member. Participants were often less forthcoming with articulating the barriers faced when parents or guardians were present at assessment meetings, and where this was not the case, there was sometimes uncertainty amongst young people with regard to what qualified as a barrier and subsequently should be shared.
- 6.12 One Contractor and their Sub-Contractors commented on the effectiveness of the Red Dot assessment tool measuring the wellbeing of participants initially, and felt that it was effective. This tool asks a series of well-being-related questions and offers a score out of 10. A lower score indicates lower well-being, with contractors explaining that those scoring below 5 would often be offered individualised support. Amongst all Contractors, however, there was no evidence of a standardised process for measuring well-being either at the assessment phase or throughout delivery. Without such tools, there is no baseline position, thus limiting the ability to measure changes in well-being across the programme. More broadly, well-being assessment was often delivered conversationally on a case-by-case basis and may be subject to interpretation.
- 6.13 Where additional needs regarding health and well-being were identified through assessment, Contractors would typically refer the participant's situation to a panel to discuss appropriate support pathways. They would also (where appropriate) refer participants to their ALN teams or to the safeguarding representative(s) to further assess associated needs and risks.



- 6.14 Contractors explained the importance of a bespoke and conversational approach to assessment, as the needs of participants and their willingness to engage are so varied. Considering the complex needs of participants, some Contractors explained that the assessment process oversimplified some needs by fitting them into predefined categories, leading to vague or incorrect information.
- 6.15 Similar to sentiments raised in the interim phase, the legal restrictions on data sharing created further challenges in obtaining all relevant information for the assessment of needs, including school data, and ILPs. Providing access to the necessary background information through the use of Data Sharing Agreements would improve the accuracy of assessment and subsequently ensure that appropriate support is provided.

### **Pre-engagement ('Get Ready')**

- 6.16 Both Contractors and local authority staff discussed the benefits of the additional pre-engagement (Get Ready) enrichment activities made more widely available after January 2023 to support programme engagement and well-being. Activities included team building, outdoor trips, and practical guidance regarding well-being and resilience, with the aim of encouraging social interaction. This was seen to be especially important when considering the increasing complexity of needs presented, which Contractors felt meant that participants were further from the labour market than in previous years of JGW+ delivery. Four Contractors explained that these activities provided participants with a positive experience of support and an idea of what to expect prior to fully committing to the programme.
- 6.17 The Get Ready provision was also considered to be a great success by stakeholders. Seven EPCs also explained that these activities provided broader opportunities than those centred on education, thus encouraging engagement. It was seen as setting a baseline for more formal engagement, giving time to concentrate on soft skills and engagement (rather than on employment):
- “[Enrichment activities give them] that consistency, structure and support that allows them to develop and hopefully come out with a positive outcome. JGW+ is helping us to extend the different routes and options for young people. These young people aren’t ready for work or college. They need that help and support first and JGW+ gives them that.” **(Local authority)**
- 6.18 Some Contractors reported that they had recently reduced the scale of Get Ready (enrichment) activities owing to provider budgetary and capacity restraints. Broadly, Contractors felt that pre-engagement ‘trial’ activity was important, especially for those who would struggle to engage in classroom activities, and that this should be a more universal offer within the programme. EPCs also suggested that pre-engagement had a strong emphasis on health and well-being:

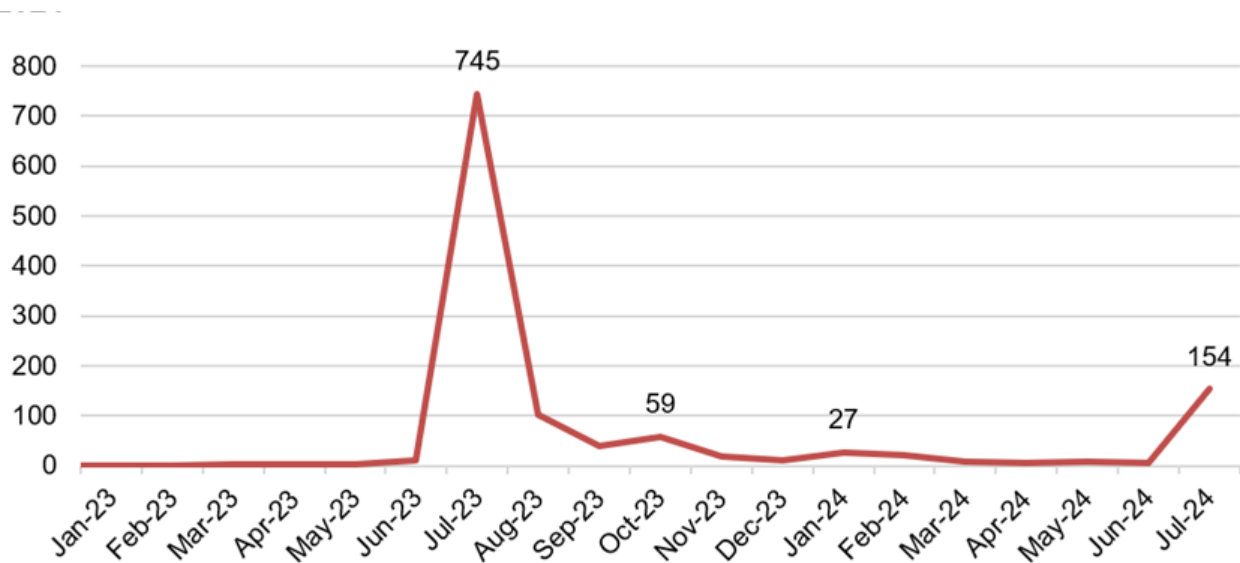
“The training providers are struggling with funding and in many cases, they have cut the enrichment opportunities. More and more activities are being done in centre due to cost savings and staff shortages.”

**(Local authority)**

- 6.19 Management information in Figure 6.2 below illustrates that Get Ready activities constituted 3.8% of all JGW+ activities; however, their prevalence has varied over time, with Get Ready activities featuring 50.5% of all programmes starts in July 2023 and then a subsequent tailing-off (reflecting the comments of EPCs), albeit with a smaller seasonal peak of 18.6% of all starts in July 2024.

Get Ready

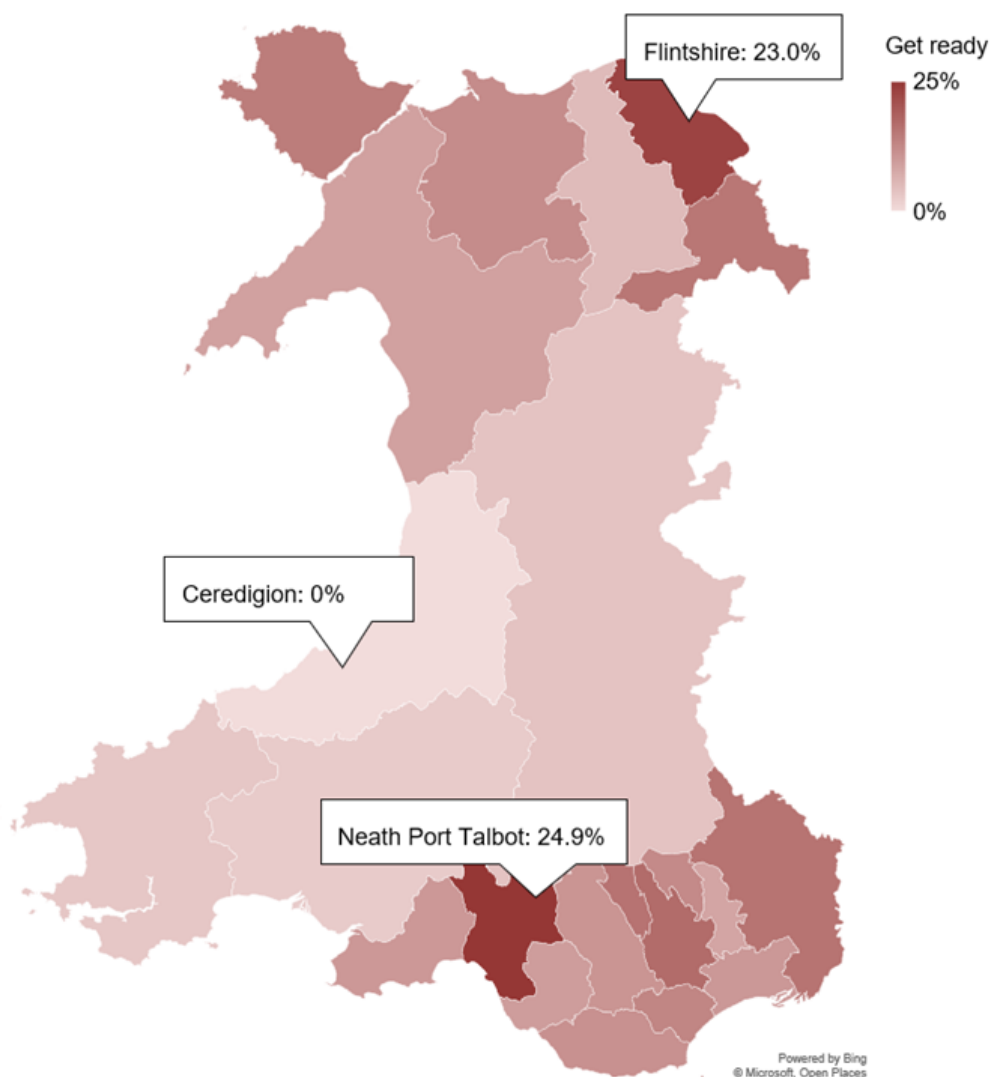
**Figure 6.2: Number of Get Ready activity starts per month – January 2023 to July 2024**



Source: LLWR management information

- 6.20 Figure 6.3 below shows the distribution of individual JGW+ participants by local authority area. This shows that Get Ready activities were particularly concentrated in Neath Port Talbot (24.9%) and Flintshire (23.0%). No participants enrolled on Get Ready activities in Ceredigion, whilst less than 5% of participants enrolled on Get Ready in the more rural authority areas of Mid and South West Wales.

**Figure 6.3: Proportion of individuals who have been enrolled in Get Ready activities by local authority – April 2022 to July 2024**



Source: LLWR MI (N=9,990). The full table of results can be found in Annexe 1.

- 6.21 Contractors also discussed difficulties with the length of Get Ready delivery, as many learners were not ready to move to the engagement strand at the end of 12 weeks. Contractors felt that transitioning to the engagement strand too soon may heighten the risk that participants exit with a negative outcome prior to securing positive progression.

#### **JGW+ strand placement**

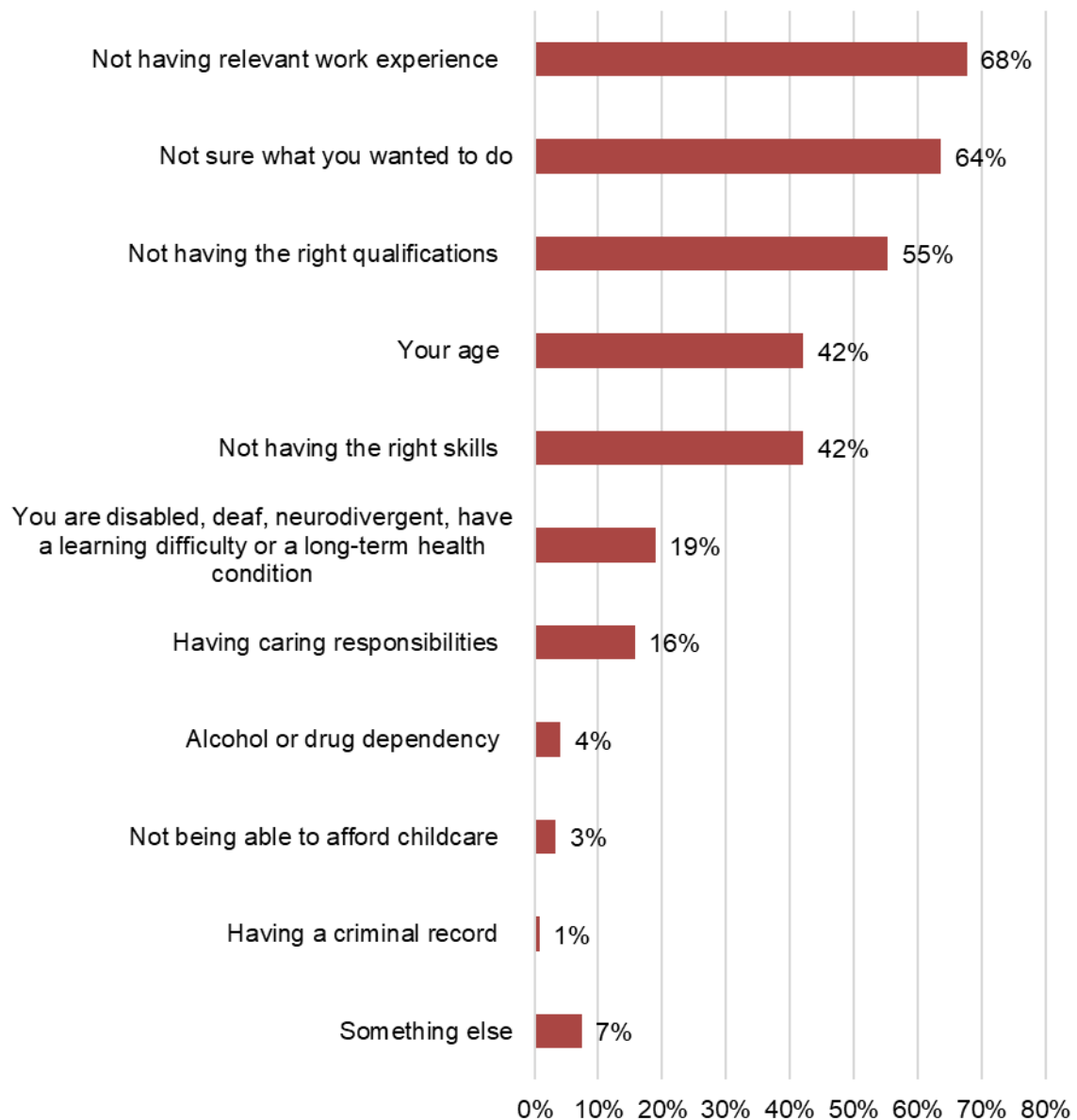
- 6.22 Consistent with responses in the interim phase, when referred through Working Wales, service providers mentioned issues regarding strand placement. This was largely owing to a minimal-depth diagnosis of need within the ARR, with Contractors feeling that the Working Wales referral methods were not flexible enough to allow for further exploration of participant barriers. However, monitoring data suggest that these incidences were rare, with only 73 (less than 1%) participants being moved down a strand, whilst 395 programme engagements witnessed a unique participant repeating a strand.

- 6.23 There appears to be an ongoing misconception, as identified in the interim phase, that Contractors are unable to override the strand selection. Contractors commented on the resources required to contact Working Wales, for example, to understand the decision-making process whilst managing the expectations of the participant. Consequently, there remains a need for further guidance regarding how professional judgement can be used to ensure that participants are placed on the appropriate strand of support.

#### **Initial support**

- 6.24 Whilst waiting lists were in operation in some areas (particularly Cardiff and Swansea), 76% (121/160) of participants surveyed were able to access JGW+ support straight away. Around half of the participants who had to wait (52%, 15/29) reported waiting two weeks or less. Contractors explained that those with more complex support needs may have experienced some delays to enrolment to ensure that effective support plans could be in place. Furthermore, some felt that the aforementioned insufficient evidence within ARR assessments, namely from Working Wales, led to delays in support access whilst accurate information was being sought.
- 6.25 At the time of joining JGW+, 25% (41/162) of participants reported that nothing was making it difficult for them to find work, education or training. This may reflect a lack of awareness or understanding of the requirements for securing some form of employment, education or training, or it may also be a reflection on their situations prior to engaging with the project. Indeed, over half (25/41) of that cohort had just left education or reported enrolling prior to leaving school (with the majority engaging with JGW+ in July). It is assumed that they were promptly enrolled because they were deemed to be at risk of disengaging from all forms of EET over the summer break.
- 6.26 The remaining learners reported an average of three barriers, largely centred on employability skills, such as not having relevant work experience (68%, 82/121). The fact that 64% (77/121) reported not being sure what they wanted to do underlines the importance of sharing information regarding a broad spectrum of careers, as well as flexibility to engage with varied activities whilst on the programme.

**Figure 6.4: When you first joined JGW+, were any of these things making it difficult for you to gain employment, education or training?**



Source: Core learner survey (n=121)

- 6.27 Whilst only 19% (23/121) reported that being disabled, deaf, neurodivergent, having learning needs or long-term health conditions were making it difficult to access education, employment or training, 72% (80/111) reported discussing access to mental health support when they initially spoke to JGW+ staff, and 63% (69/110) noted discussing things with which they were struggling in their personal life. Similarly, Contractors indicated evidence of mental health barriers to accessing support, suggesting that such needs are less formally diagnosed within the learner cohort and subsequently less self-identified, but still experienced.

## Complexity of need

- 6.28 To further understand the complexity of the needs and barriers experienced by learners, an analysis of 2,351 unique participants' Individual Learning Plan Records from Copa Training, Pembrokeshire College, and ITEC was undertaken in which needs and barriers referenced in qualitative commentary were extracted and coded. Over half (58%) of the learning records specified a support need, and nearly one quarter (22.8%) of records evidenced multiple support needs. However, learners' support needs are often much wider, with issues going beyond disabilities and learning impairments, ranging from mental health conditions (including severe anxiety) to severe trauma and struggles in the home. The quotes below further illustrate the severity and complexity of support needs of JGW+ participants:
- “[Learner] suffers with very high anxiety and, therefore, she was changed from advancement to engagement. They will also see internal services.”
- “Struggles with [academic skills], been referred for mental health. Been exploited previously, can't sleep at night due to trauma [...] and was [engaging in substance use]. Contacted social services due to everything that's gone on.”
- “[Learner] has a medical need, but this is managed with medication. Sometimes stress is managed via self-harming, smoking. Home situation is unstable.”
- 6.29 Some ILPs also recognise the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on young people's academic achievements and social skills. Several learners, particularly those who have spent extended periods of time outside of education, reported struggles with maintaining a routine, managing their time, and keeping early appointments:
- “[Learner's] confidence is at an all-time low due to previous bullying experiences in school. Due to this and the national lockdown, [learner] has not been in any form of education or around others their age in quite some time. Home schooling didn't go great, and they missed the cut off for their exams and, therefore, have very little knowledge of things academically.”
- 6.30 Nearly one fifth (18.7%) of learners reported mental health issues. The most prevalent among those were Anxiety (56.9%) and Depression (12.5%). In a small number of cases in which barriers were reported (2.6%) it was indicated that young people were receiving CAMHS support. A considerable number of learners (7.6%) noted struggles in social settings. The severity of this issue varied from discomfort in large groups to severe anxiety episodes. These types of barriers were generally not recorded in LLWR MI.
- 6.31 In addition, almost one eighth (11.4%) of learners were identified as having a neurodevelopmental condition such as Dyslexia, Dyspraxia or Dyscalculia (4.6%), ADHD/ADD (4.3%) or Autism/ASD (3.8%).

6.32 When reviewing the evolution of ILPs for unique participants it became evident that support needs changed over time for learners. In some cases, more severe needs were identified only after the learner had been engaged on the programme for an extended period of time. In other cases, learners' conditions improved over the course of the programme as prior barriers were overcome. The analysis also showed that some needs may not have been disclosed or diagnosed by the learner but were evident to assessors, parents or teaching staff. A total of 4% of learners were assessed for support needs and were awaiting diagnosis, while 5% had a suspected but not formally diagnosed condition. Whilst not every learner would have completed an ILP, the narrative captured in these demonstrates that the multitude of barriers that young people on the JGW+ programme face are not fully captured by LLWR MI data<sup>[Footnote 34]</sup>.

### Reasons for joining

6.33 Broadly, aspects of the support offer influenced participants' decision to take part in JGW+. Similar to barriers identified above, the most common reason as to why learners decided to take part in JGW+ was the chance of work experience or a work placement (81%, 131/162). The common factors impacting the decisions to take part (as depicted in the figure below) highlight an understanding amongst learners that JGW+ was providing opportunities to break down the barriers that they faced in accessing employment, education or training.

**Figure 6.5: What was it about JGW+ that made you decide to take part?**



Source: JGW+ learner survey (n=162)

[34] The LLWR captures one primary and one secondary disability type, work-limiting health condition, migrant worker indicator, caring responsibilities, unemployment length, highest qualification, household status.

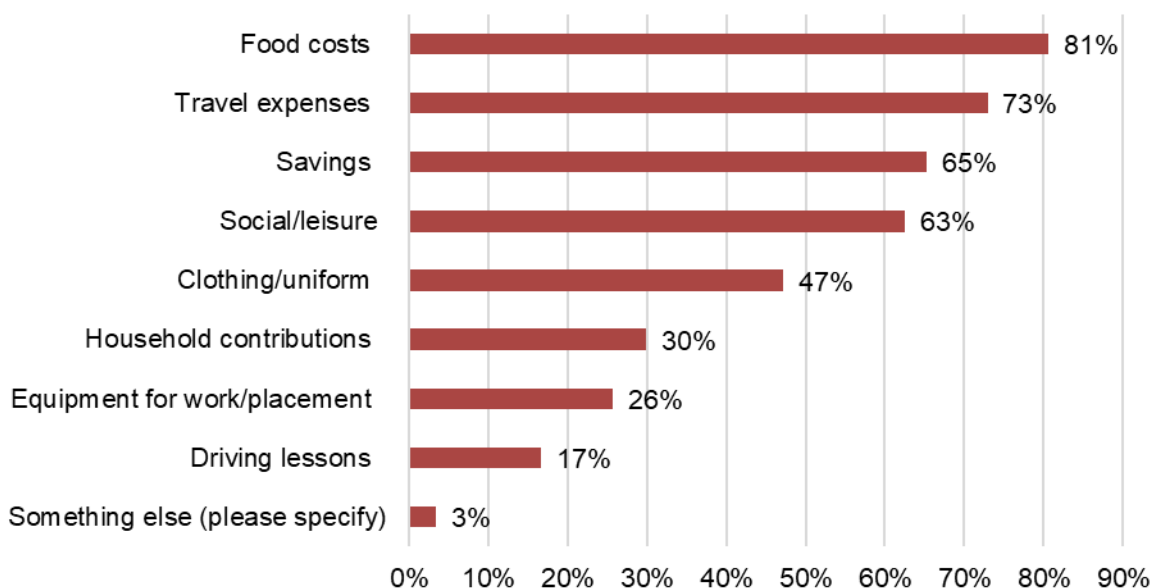
- 6.34 The skills of staff were consistently identified as an important strength of the JGW+ offer. Learners were positive about their experiences, with 79% (92/116) rating their initial discussions with JGW+ staff as useful. They described staff as supportive, understanding and informative, noting that they felt listened to and respected:
- “They reassured me, they listened to me, so they were up to date on how I felt. If they hadn’t asked me about how I was feeling I probably wouldn’t have said anything.” **(Learner)**
- 6.35 Those who were less positive about delivery staff typically reflected perceptions of the capacity to support them, with participants commenting that staff appeared to be spread thinly across participants, allowing less time to support their individual needs. Positive perceptions of staff varied across Contractors. Whilst this might suggest variability in the strengths of staff teams, it could also simply relate to individual relationships. A greater volume of evidence would be required to explore this further.
- 6.36 Discussion topics at the initial assessment further align with identified barriers faced and reasons for attending JGW+. The majority of learners discussed what would happen on JGW+ (87%, 96/110), work experience opportunities (87%, 97/111), along with their personal goals and ideas for the future (81%, 89/110) and where they needed to develop (83%, 91/110).

### **Financial support**

- 6.37 In terms of financial support, 91% (144/158) of learners recalled receiving the training allowance. Though it influenced decisions to take part, it was not the main factor for most, with 28% (45/162) reporting that it influenced their decision to take part to a great extent, and 44% (71/162) to some extent.
- 6.38 The figure below shows that participants used the training allowance in a number of ways. Most commonly, it was spent on food costs (81%, 116/144) and travel expenses (73%, 105/144). Contractors, meanwhile, reported that the allowance supported attendance both through practical means and as an incentive to continue engaging:
- “What we’ve seen is perhaps young people are sustaining placement for longer because they’re having that support, whether it’s the training allowance or the meal, for example, whereas perhaps they would have had to have dropped and looked at other options because they couldn’t afford to sustain it.” **(Contractor)**



**Figure 6.6: What did you use the allowance for?**



Source: Core learner survey (n=143)

- 6.39 Amongst surveyed participants, the majority felt that the allowance had made some contribution to alleviating financial pressures (36% (52/143) to a great extent and 45% (64/143) to some extent). Contractors felt that it provided some financial independence for participants, and further indicated that it has improved engagement:

“I think it makes it more attractive and gives them something to be responsible for and feel more like an adult.” **(Contractor)**

“[Financial support] has had a positive impact, as many of the young people are living in poverty and this could be their only meal of the day. This reduces pressure on them and makes them better able to learn.” **(Local authority staff)**

- 6.40 Four Contractors noted that the allowance may provide incentive to engage without full interest in the programme or employment. Similarly, some noted that participants would engage to alleviate financial pressures at home, as it would not impact any other benefit claims. It is possible that such motivations impact positive outcomes, with Contractors noting that these individuals were typically less interested in securing employment goals as a result of programme participation.
- 6.41 A number of Contractors and local authority staff discussed the allowance being lower whilst on a placement, discouraging engagement in a placement when there is greater financial gain remaining in the learning facility. This may have influenced participants’ propensity to engage with a placement, and the behavioural dynamic shaped by the funding model may warrant further investigation.

## Inclusivity

- 6.42 JGW+ is intended to incorporate an intersectional approach to service delivery. Intersectionality describes how personal characteristics such as ethnicity, social class, and gender overlap with one another, creating particular experiences of discrimination and/or privilege. In frontline practice, an intersectional approach must adopt this way of thinking in individualised practice. Furthermore, it must ensure that approaches to the engagement and support of minority groups recognise and actively address the societal barriers faced by these groups.
- 6.43 Broadly, participants felt that the programme was inclusive, which is consistent with findings in the interim phase. Almost all of the participants surveyed agreed (61% (94/153) strongly agreed, 32% (49/153) agreed) that everyone was treated equally, regardless of their background or characteristics, and only 5% (7/153) felt that JGW+ could be improved in terms of inclusion and equality. Furthermore, almost all agreed (51% (79/154) strongly agreeing, 43% (66/154) agreeing) that JGW+ staff represented those whom they were supporting (with half of learners strongly agreeing with this sentiment). Nine Contractors explained that discussions regarding inclusivity, equality and identity are incorporated into their programme curriculum, suggesting that such topics are encouraged in discussions, which may contribute to feelings of inclusivity.
- 6.44 Participants who were comfortable to respond were asked if they had experienced or witnessed any discriminatory behaviour, of whom the majority (89%, 137/154) had not. Of the 17 participants who had, 4/17 had experienced this themselves and 13/17 had witnessed this behaviour. Around half of those responding (10/17) felt able to tell someone about this experience (both those who had directly experienced discriminatory behaviour and those who had witnessed it), and eight out of the 10 felt that it was subsequently managed in the way that they would have liked. Furthermore, of those reporting discriminatory behaviour, the majority (13/17) still agreed that everyone was treated equally.
- 6.45 To safeguard learners, open questions regarding these experiences were not asked. Some who openly provided examples identified being treated differently as a female or a lack of female tutors. The latter was briefly mentioned by Contractors, denoting that recruitment difficulties made this more difficult to rectify. Other examples included reference to peer-to-peer bullying and arguments which could have been handled differently or more equally by staff:
- “I think it was a case of the tutors not calling out certain pupils on their behaviour when they were acting up — sometimes the tutors would let it slide.” **(Learner)**
- “I think there’s favouritism with some people there a bit and sometimes girls get treated differently to the boys.” **(Learner)**

- 6.46 Seven Contractors discussed worsening behavioural issues in recent months, with some subsequently employing security guards to respond where situations arose. Furthermore, with minimal alternative provision for those with more complex needs, challenging behaviour is sometimes more difficult to action, as whilst the Contractor may remove that participant from provision, a lack of an available alternative offer means that the young person will often return to that Contractor in future or removal of the young person may increase the risk of them becoming NEET, without alternative provision to which they can refer.

### **Support for certain (including protected) groups**

- 6.47 Stakeholders were asked their experiences of engaging with and supporting those from certain (including protected) groups, such as people in whom English is not their first language, those who are Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic, people with disabilities, and participants who identify as LGBTQIA+. On the whole, Contractors felt able and equipped to support such groups, reiterating the need for a holistic and adaptable approach which respects the individual needs of participants. While there was evidence that staff sought to specifically target certain marginalised groups, there was no clear indication of an intersectional approach to practice. Embedding intersectional approaches would encourage an equity-led approach to JGW+ in recognition that participants have differing needs, rather than an approach that treats all participants as equal.
- 6.48 Most Contractors had access to dedicated ALN teams, as well as other well-being support staff and safeguarding provisions. It was noted, however, that whilst expected, this did pose a resource need upon the individual Contractors, namely regarding capacity and funding. Within this, the importance of a multidisciplinary approach was reiterated, to proactively engage with external support such as youth and community services, to ensure that participants have access to all support available in their area. Welsh Government staff further echoed the barriers of available external training resources and capacity constraints.
- 6.49 Stakeholders further mentioned accessing funds to support learners with ALN, e.g. to purchase equipment. There seemed to be some discrepancies regarding the parameters of use of this funding, e.g. whether or not the participant needed an existing individual learner plan or formal diagnosis to access funds. The latter poses a barrier, as Contractors reported that many participants have needs that have not yet been diagnosed, such as neurodiversity and dyslexia. However, changes to provision by the Welsh Government mid-2024 meant that a formal diagnosis was not required for ALN funding. Providing guidance that would offer greater clarity as to this would potentially support the aforementioned funding constraints.
- 6.50 Looking at physical access to the JGW+ programme, there were a number of barriers identified. Both learners and Contractors explained that a small number of centres (namely in South Wales) are not wheelchair-accessible, which limits engagement possibilities for some individuals. Proximity to further education colleges and centres was also seen by some Contractors to impact engagement, with the length of travel to centres (and the relative proximity to their previous place

of attendance) seen as a potential barrier. Welsh Government staff noted how this particularly impacted those in rural areas, with evidence in the previous section illustrating how the predominantly rural authority areas of Powys, Gwynedd, and Ceredigion typically experience lower-than-anticipated representation on the programme. Feedback from Contractors, however, suggested it to be more nuanced than this and was, for example, linked to public transport availability and routes, even in urban areas.

- 6.51 Contractors identified that when young carers are engaging with the programme, there is a need for flexibility surrounding their commitments, meaning that physical attendance can sometimes be more difficult. Whilst more possible on the engagement strand, this was sometimes more difficult, with strands requiring greater engagement, as well as impacting engagement with placements. Reviewing access, including, for example, levels of engagement online, would support achieving equitable access to JGW+ across Wales.
- 6.52 Stakeholders discussed the variation in demographics between geographies, again underlining the importance of a holistic, learner-led approach. More diverse groups have often been seen in more urban areas such as Cardiff and Newport, amongst both participants and staff. In such areas, some explained having access to translators, with one considering employing an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) tutor.
- 6.53 Targeted engagement was reported to have taken place in some areas to reach specific communities, with varying levels of success. Whilst some of this targeting included reaching certain groups through the provision of materials in different languages or with the provision of ESOL support, others have been harder to reach. For many communities, it was felt that there was a need for staff to be better embedded within the wider community first, before individuals will engage with the programme. Linked to the need for equity-led approaches, there would be value in identifying intersectional approaches to engaging harder-to-reach communities that can be implemented across Wales. In particular, methods could be shared with all areas, regardless of their current need in their area, as communities may move throughout the lifetime of the programme.
- 6.54 As identified at the interim phase of reporting, support for LGBTQIA+ communities appeared to be well embedded in the programme offer. Several Contractors explained that they asked learners for their preferred name and pronouns in initial sessions, and supported any subsequent changes needed on paperwork, for example. One Contractor also had a dedicated LGBTQIA+ lead. Whilst embedded, one learner suggested that staff could benefit from more formal training with respect to gender identity when asked how the programme could improve regarding inclusivity.

- 6.55 Overall, 89% (140/157) of participants reported that they were able to obtain all of the support that they needed from JGW+. This only dropped slightly to 82% (27/33) when accounting only for those identifying with a disability, suggesting that disability did not impact learners' ability to obtain all of the support that they needed on the whole. It should be noted, however, that this is only a sample of all learners who responded to the survey. It does not account for those who may not have been able to engage with the programme because their needs could not be supported, or for those on the programme with more complex learning disabilities who subsequently were not included in the research sample.

### **Welsh language**

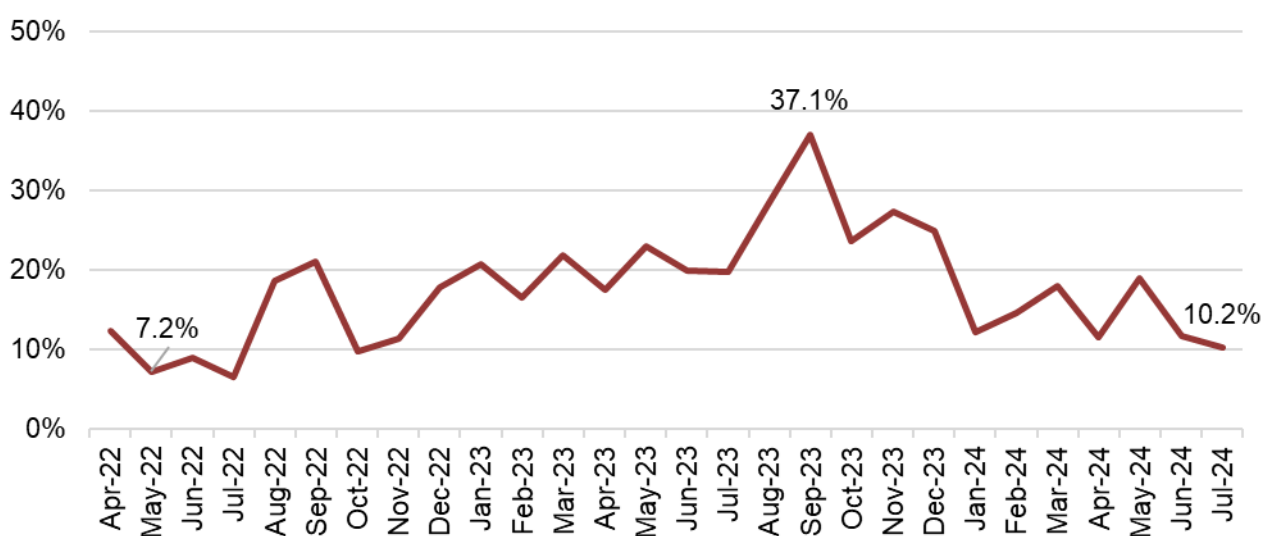
- 6.56 A core aim of JGW+ is to encourage the use of Welsh language and increase the number of Welsh speakers, supporting Cymraeg 2050. As part of contracting procedures, all Contractors must evidence that they have some level of Welsh provision in place. There is evidence of Welsh provision amongst providers, and encouragement to engage through the medium of Welsh. For example, some Contractors deliver competitions through the Duolingo app.
- 6.57 Consistent with interim findings, stakeholders reported little demand for Welsh language provision from participants. Such findings were evidenced through the survey, wherein 81% (131/162) of respondents were not Welsh speakers, and all but one participant preferred to access their JGW+ support in English. Similarly, Contractors reported that whilst some participants spoke or understood Welsh, they would still prefer to engage in English. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there has been variation in engagement in Welsh throughout the lifetime of the programme:
- “It is difficult, as sometimes it takes a while to find out a learner is Welsh speaking, as they tend to hide it and lack confidence, but when we know we try to encourage them to use their Welsh as much as possible.” **(Contractor)**
- 6.58 Table 6.1 below shows that just over 18% of learning activities incorporated Welsh language provision. As shown in Figure 6.7 below, however, the share of learning activities that included any Welsh language provision witnessed considerable changes over the programme's lifetime. Learning activities featuring Welsh language provision increased from 7.2% in May 2022 to 37.1% in September 2023, to then fall again to 10.2% by July 2024. The peak in September 2023 was mainly influenced by an uptick in activities provided in Welsh by Pembrokeshire College and specifically related to Employer-Focused Development, Communication Skills, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, as well as Personal Health & Wellbeing Development activities.

**Table 6.1: Medium (language) of delivery of JGW+ learning activities – April 2022 to July 2024**

| Medium of delivery                          | No. of learning activities –<br>April 2022 to July 2024 | % of learning activities –<br>April 2022 to July 2024 |
|---|---|---|
| English only                                | 26,529  | 81.8%   |
| Small amount of Welsh-medium learning       | 4,934   | 15.2%   |
| Significant amount of Welsh-medium learning | 102   | 0.3%  |
| Bilingual                                   | 878   | 2.7%  |
| Welsh only                                  | 1   | 0.003%  |
| Total (n)                                   | 32,444  |   |

Source: LLWR MI

**Figure 6.7: Proportion of learning activities including Welsh provision by month – April 2022 to July 2024**



### Support strands

- 6.59 The time that learners spent in each strand varied greatly, dependent on the extent of their needs and their readiness to secure a positive outcome through the programme. Contractors noted that the majority of participants were enrolled on the engagement strand and this distribution was reflected in survey responses, wherein the largest proportions of participants responding were enrolled in the engagement strand (60% (97/162) of core learners and 68% (42/62) of post-six-months learners.

### Engagement strand

- 6.60 The engagement strand was praised for its flexibility to accommodate the diverse needs of participants, especially with Contractors finding that, owing to the

increasing complexity of needs, participants require more intensive, specific support alongside academic support and are displaying fewer essential skills. There are participants, for example, who initially are unable to leave their homes or interact in a group setting. This underscores evidence discussed from LLWR data in the previous chapter, wherein life skills have gained greater prevalence across the course of the programme, with employability-specific skills becoming less prevalent as they are a lower priority. Given the success of the engagement strand, several Contractor representatives suggested that all learners should begin on engagement to ensure readiness for transition to higher strands or for securing other positive outcomes<sup>[Footnote 35]</sup>.

“The engagement strand gives learners the problem-solving skills or the communication skills that they might not necessarily have when they’ve gone straight to advancement strand.” **(Contractor)**

“The engagement strand works very well due to the flexibility of it — not every day is the same and it accommodates all different types of learners. It accommodates everybody from all different angles and different needs.” **(Contractor)**

- 6.61 Both Contractors and local authority staff commonly discussed the varying levels of readiness for learning and employment, and subsequently suggested that the engagement strand be broken down further to accommodate this variance:

“There almost needs to be strands coming off the engagement strand because you’ve got a cohort of learners who are a bit more advanced, feel a bit more job-ready and ready to get out there, but not quite advancement stage. And then you’ve got another cohort of learners who have got severe barriers and need that intensive support.” **(Contractor)**

“We’ve got a lot of young people that would benefit from staggered, phased engagement into the programme because they’re not ready to be in a classroom full of lots of other people. For those that haven’t been at school for a significant period of time [because of COVID-19], that’s something that would be really beneficial for them to have a varied route and more phased in for them.” **(Local authority)**

- 6.62 An issue raised regarding the engagement strand by both participants and Contractors was the broad nature (in terms of the topic area) of sessions. Therefore, learners had to engage with topics in which sometimes they were less interested. Contractors discussed the need to manage learner expectation within this, as some were keen to learn specifics regarding their career of choice but did

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[35] Positive outcomes typically include progression into employment or apprenticeships, and for those on the engagement and advancement strands, also progression to learning at a higher level. For more details see Section 5.34.

not yet have the level of basic skills required, thus, had to engage in broader skills as part of their engagement:

“[Some career paths] don’t have different tutors, so it’s hard to deliver the sessions to a specific career path with a full group doing different things, so then people don’t want to engage when we’re discussing about customer service if they want to be in care.” **(Contractor)**

### **Advancement strand**

- 6.63 Broadly, the advancement strand was seen to be appropriate for those who had a sense of the career direction that they wished to pursue. It provided exposure to the participants’ preferred sector whilst still providing support to enable them to transition fully into the labour market.
- 6.64 The change made to the programme by the Welsh Government that enabled learners to complete Level 2 qualifications on the advancement strand was welcomed by Contractors. They felt that only being able to complete Level 1 qualifications was restrictive, as it limited progression from the programme, especially into college courses requiring Level 2. Now, staff are able to support learners on the programme into these courses, supporting their ability to learn skills that will support them onto their career path.
- 6.65 Contractors further identified potential misalignment between participant readiness and strand selection on the advancement strand. Whilst having a more refined career pathway, it was felt that many were not ready for the level of independence expected. This aligns with earlier comments in which participants will be placed on advancement through Careers Wales/Working Wales without full consideration for their readiness, leading to a further need to manage participant expectation. Within this, they commented that the home learning element of the strand required more structure, as it was not suitable for all learners. This further underscores the importance of a flexible offer regarding engagement to ensure equitable access to the programme.

### **Employment strand**

- 6.66 There was a general perception that the employment strand was less successful and rarely utilised. Accounting for evidence of complex need, this indicates a greater emphasis through the programme on addressing immediate barriers to nearing the labour market through the utilisation of earlier strands. Welsh Government staff reported that employment was the least successful strand, and suggested that the right drivers were not in place, such as consistent delivery networks to develop employment opportunities. Contractors felt that 10 weeks was not a sufficient timeline for finding employment, compounded by the limited availability of employers in some areas. Some Contractors therefore suggested adjusting this strand to concentrate on getting ready for work, rather than directly securing employment:

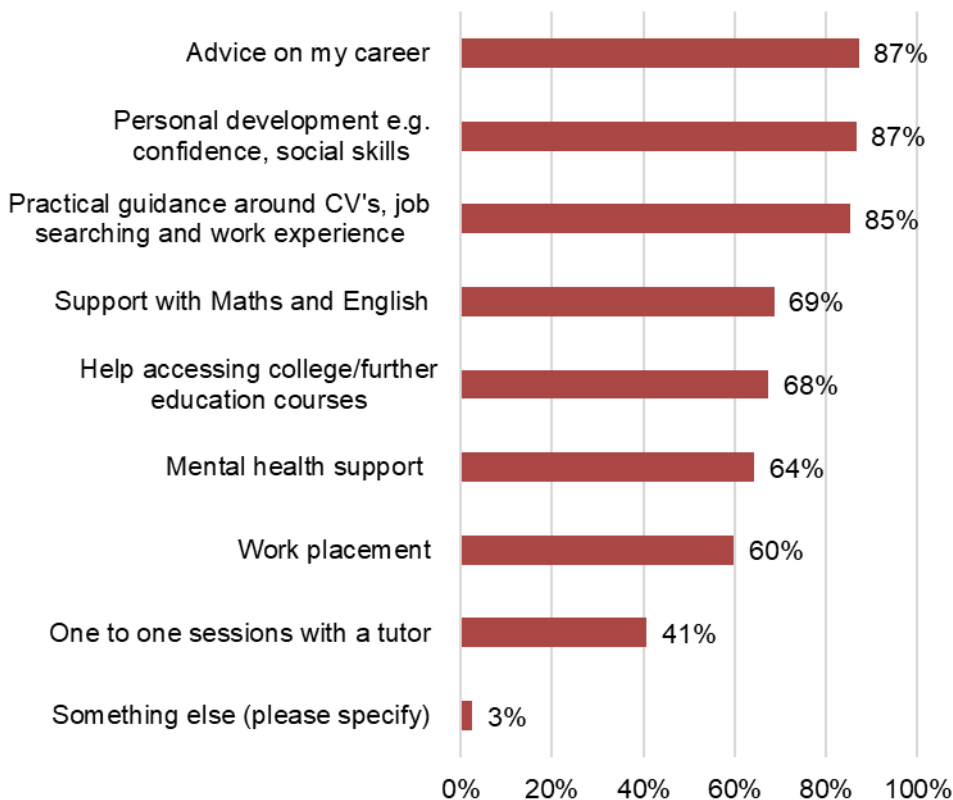


“As people are so far removed from labour market, finding employment in 10 weeks on the employment strand is hard, compounded by availability of employers in certain places.” **(Contractor)**

### Support received

6.67 The figure below shows that amongst survey respondents, the support received on the programme centred on employability and personal development, which aligns with the aforementioned needs and barriers identified. When broken down by strand, the commonalities of support received largely followed the same pattern.

**Figure 6.8: What kind of support did you receive from JGW+?**



Source: Core learner survey (n=162)

6.68 Survey responses broadly aligned with wider analysis of management information in Figure 6.9 below present the type of activity undertaken by JGW+ participants based on the number of learning activities delivered over the programme's lifetime. Job search activity was the most commonly delivered learning provision, closely followed by learning activities regarding personal health and well-being and employability skills.

**Figure 6.9: JGW+ percentage of learning activities active by descriptor - March 2022 to July 2024**



Source: LLWR MI; N=29,952. 'Other' includes all activities that constituted less than 1% of all activities. It should be noted that for 8% (2,464/32,416) of learning activities, no descriptor had been recorded.

### **Employer engagement and work placements**

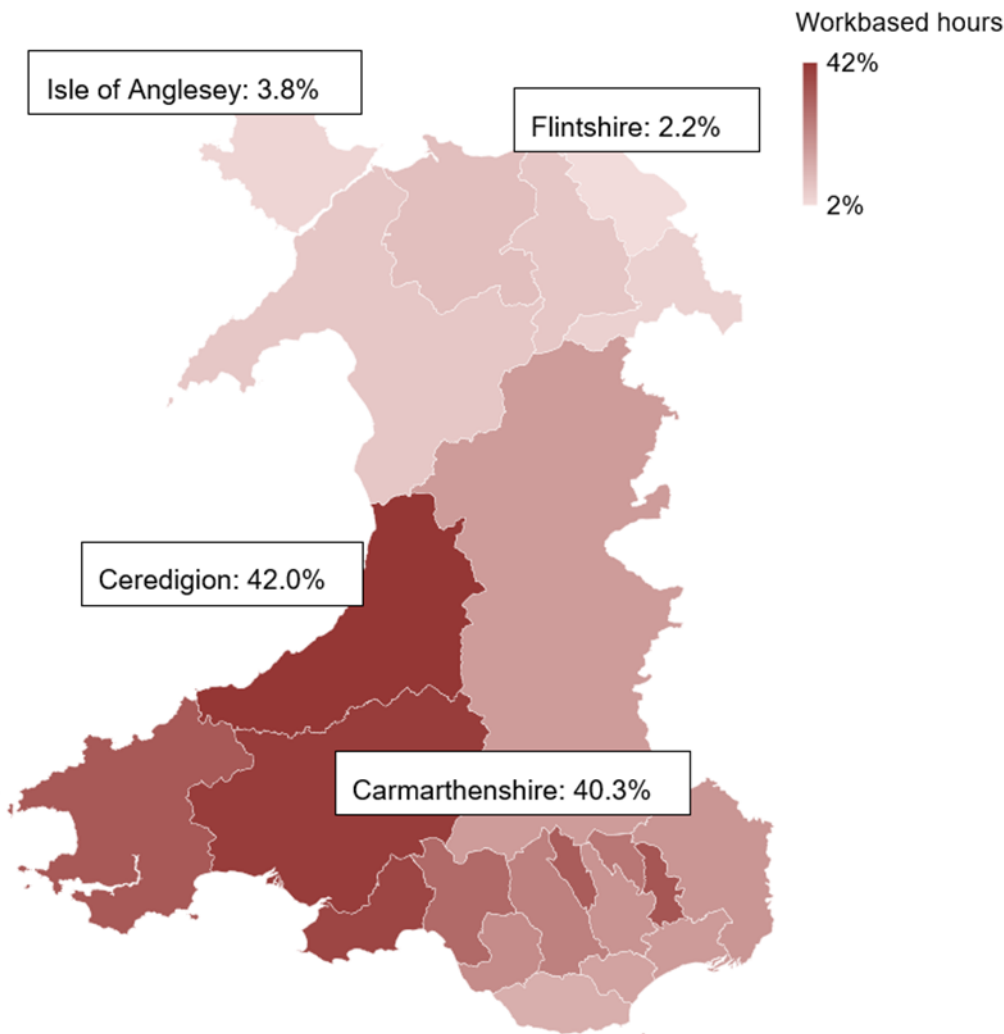
- 6.69 Learners participating in the advancement and employment strands are offered opportunities to take on work placements and to secure employment (with the first six months of that employment subsidised by JGW+). As well as placements, employers can offer taster sessions and visits to centres. There was variance of this offer amongst Contractors, and many Contractors noted that activities outside of a direct placement offer have reduced.
- 6.70 Participants responding to the survey who engaged with work placements valued them and felt that they were aligned with their needs. A number of participants responding to the core survey cited the placement aspect as having the biggest impact upon them:

“It gave me work experience and the chance to do a placement [in a desired role] which I probably wouldn’t have done without JGW.”

- 6.71 Contractors commented on the value of providing access to placements that were linked to learner interests and enabled hands-on experience in relevant sectors. Both learners and Contractors were confident that this aspect of support would contribute to building the necessary skills to secure job roles in the future. Some Contractor staff felt that access to placements was especially important for those with additional learning needs, as it connected them with real-world employers who would provide insight into available support.
- 6.72 Eight of the interviewed Contractors discussed how they have employability teams that seek to engage employers with the programme. Contractors stressed the importance of these teams in sustaining relationships with employers and supporting administrative tasks as well as in-work support for the learner. For some Contractors, employer engagement is learner-led, and employers are approached based on participant interest, which supports the delivery of a tailored approach to placements. Others have a bank of employers that are willing to deliver placements, which aids efficient engagement with placements. It was discussed, however, that this can sometimes result in a mismatch of skills, as the participant is placed based on employer availability (rather than interest).
- 6.73 There were a number of challenges identified with regard to employer engagement. Where employers are smaller, bureaucracy requirements posed a barrier, as it would impact capacity, whilst others did not have insurance to employ young people. After COVID-19, a number of employers shifted to hybrid or online working, providing less in-person or on-site opportunities to support work placements. Furthermore, rurality and geographical disparity hinder opportunities, with greater availability of employers in more urban areas. Namely, North Wales was noted as lacking national companies.
- 6.74 One Contractor identified a potential gender-based issue with learners wanting to transition into employment within the construction sector, wherein companies have appeared to be less willing to take female learners on placements than male learners. They noted how this impacted the resilience of learners, as there is a barrier to their progression in that field, which they cannot control.
- 6.75 A number of local authority and Welsh Government staff discussed a need for more focused engagement with employers, with a perception that awareness of JGW+ was low amongst employers. It was suggested by Contractors that a national campaign for employer engagement would be of benefit, rather than reliance at a local level, to conduct outreach and maintain engagement. This would also support a more consistent offer to employers and support the capacity of Contractors.
- 6.76 Whilst there is no management information on the number of employers, the number of work-based hours per participant is captured and these have been mapped by geographical location in Figure 6.10 below. The map illustrates a high degree of geographical variability in the proportion of participants undertaking work-based hours as part of their engagement with JGW+, with those in Ceredigion almost 20 times more likely to do so than those in Flintshire.

6.77 Typically, it is assumed that participants who engage with JGW+ and reside in urban areas with more, often larger employers in the local area would be more likely to engage in a work-based placement. The pattern of engagement, however, is broadly counterintuitive to this assumption and there would appear to be a stronger correlation with the Regional Lots and Contractor delivery areas than with the population density of an area.

**Figure 6.10: Proportion of unique participants completing the JGW+ programme who undertook work-based hours by local authority area – April 2022 to July 2024**



Source: LLWR MI (N=9,999) Full reference table available in Annexe 1, table A6

## Addressing skills gaps in the local workforce

- 6.78 Contractors highlighted that the current aim of the JGW+ programme prioritises learners' aspirations (rather than addressing local skills shortages). They observed that many young people lack qualifications or interest in sectors facing skills gaps:
- “If a learner says they are interested in a certain sector or type of work, then we try to cater to what they need.” **(Contractor)**
- “A lot of people aren't aware of skills gaps and often we just support them to get to where they want to go (rather than adapt in line with skills gaps). A lot of them don't want to do specific training etc., so have to go along their path, not the ones needed to address skills.” **(Contractor)**
- 6.79 In addition to this learner-led approach, Contractors discussed structural barriers that hinder their ability to address local skills gaps through JGW+ provision. For example, age restrictions in certain sectors, such as care work, prevent young people below 18 years of age from accessing opportunities, while financial constraints make it difficult to fund necessary training, such as CSCS cards for construction jobs. Furthermore, they noted the geographical disparities of employment opportunities, as discussed in the previous chapter. Insurance restrictions further limit the ability of smaller organisations to engage with young people. Contractors pointed out that these barriers mean that sectors like care work remain underserved, while high-skilled jobs are often out of reach for the programme's participants. Moreover, given their position as a training provider (rather than an employer), one Contractor reported difficulties in delivering at employability events, thus losing a pathway to connecting participants with recruiting employers:
- “For construction, if they don't have their CSCS card they can't get employed and we can't put them through that.” **(Contractor)**
- “There's not a massive industry. It's a small town, so there's retail, things like that. Factory jobs are few and far between for our age category because they can't get in for 6:00 starts.” **(Contractor)**
- “External organisations, Jobcentre, Communities for Work, etc. held a jobs fair last week, or recruitment fair, and I requested to attend, and they turned me down because we haven't got live vacancies. We're a training provider, not an employer.” **(Contractor)**
- 6.80 Despite these challenges, a small number of Contractors have aimed to guide learners towards sectors with skills shortages through awareness-building activities. Examples include inviting guest speakers to speak to learners, career website exploration, and employer feedback. Two Contractors discussed further employability provision that they have available in house which they use to support JGW+ learners:
- “We've got an entire range of modules which we call FEP, future employability programme [...] where we get them to go onto the

Careers Wales website and see what kind of jobs are coming up next, look into the labour market.” **(Contractor)**

“We’ve got another project running here which is an employability project [...] so with us running other projects, we’re plugged into everything really within the community.” **(Contractor)**

- 6.81 Contractors expressed concerns surrounding the absence of a coordinated strategy within the JGW+ programme to address local skills gaps. They suggested that the Welsh Government could play a more active role in building connections between participants and industries with shortages, which ties in to the earlier suggestion of a more formalised approach to employer engagement.

### **Addressing skills needs for Net Zero or green skills in the local workforce**

- 6.82 Discussions with Contractors did not identify a consistent commitment to addressing skills needs for Net Zero or green skills in the local workforce. Net Zero skills are the skills required to build a Net Zero future, such as digital literacy and sustainability skills<sup>[Footnote 36]</sup>. Green skills include practical and comprehension skills that are needed to develop a sustainable and resource-efficient society. These often include vocational training in sectors such as power and waste, and skills such as environmental literacy, science, and marketing<sup>[Footnote 37]</sup>. However, it should be noted that not all respondents commented on this topic. Three Contractors highlighted that they have incorporated green skills into their curriculum, including discussions with green employers to encourage placements, whilst others were less sure as to how their curriculum incorporated these topics.
- 6.83 Four Contractors discussed their internal environmental procedures, namely recycling processes. For some, these extended to participant delivery through teaching basic sustainability habits such as turning off lights and recycling. Localised initiatives, including the creation of well-being gardens, bee-friendly spaces, and the use of recycling bins, further encourage environmental consciousness among learners.

### **Suggested improvements to delivery**

- 6.84 The majority of learners (77%, 120/156) reported that there were no improvements needed for JGW+. Of those who did, some suggested improvements regarding staffing, such as better communication with them and participants, or having more staff involved in delivering the programme. Within this, when asked about aspects of inclusivity, a small number reported feeling unable to approach staff with personal issues that they were facing.
- 6.85 As briefly mentioned, when discussing pre-engagement, Contractors discussed the value of enrichment activities outside of the classroom; however, they lacked the

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[36] Welsh Government (2024) [Net zero sector skills](#) (accessed: 11 December 2024).

[37] UK Parliament (2024) [Green skills in education and employment](#) (accessed: 21 February 2024).

resources and capacity to offer them more consistently. Thus, it would be of value to identify resources or funding that may be available in order to support a consistent offer which Contractors feel would sustain engagement.

### **Section summary**

- Word of mouth was a powerful factor in encouraging young people to participate in JGW+.
- Direct referrals have become increasingly prevalent and the most common route to engagement on the programme.
- Whilst the ARR worked effectively, a full account of the needs of young people emerged once trust and rapport had been built with a support provider. There is no evidence of a standardised process for measuring well-being either at the assessment phase or throughout delivery. This was often delivered conversationally and may be subjective to interpretation. Contractors spoke of the need for a pre-engagement strand; however, Get Ready remains primarily a summer offer with geographical variation in its usage. Funding constraints are understood to have restricted its wider mobilisation.
- Multiple barriers were encountered amongst young people, with many of these particularly complex, limiting their ability to secure some form of EET.
- Four fifths of participants engaged with JGW+ in order to secure work experience or a work placement.
- Amongst survey respondents, over 90% recall receiving a training allowance, whilst just over one quarter (28%) felt that it influenced their decision to enrol on the programme.
- Young people broadly felt the programme to be inclusive in nature, and 89% of participants felt that they were able to obtain all of the support that they needed from the programme.
- Whilst there was little demand for provision in the Welsh language, just over 18% of learning activities incorporated some form of Welsh language provision.
- Contractors were happy with the support offer but felt that a further breakdown of the engagement strand might ensure that the programme responded more effectively to the varying level of readiness for learning and employment amongst participants. There was a general perception that the employment strand was less successful and rarely utilised.
- Participants recall receiving support regarding employability and personal development, undertaking job search activity and personal health and well-being development. Those in Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire were almost 20 times more likely to record some form of work-based hours than were those based in Flintshire.
- There was considerable geographical variation in the recording of work-based hours (through a placement or similar) by geographical location.

- Contractors reported challenges with regard to employer engagement, such as geographical disparities with availability, and bureaucratic requirements that particularly impacted smaller employers.



## **7. Outcomes/impacts of support**

- 7.1 This chapter describes the outcomes and impacts of the JGW+ programme, as reported by participants responding to the core survey (hereafter referred to as core learners) as well as those, who at the time of engagement, had left the programme at least six months ago. Findings are also informed by insights from Contractors and local authority staff.

### **Perceptions of the benefits and impacts of support**

- 7.2 Consistent with findings from the interim report, learners reported a wide range of positive outcomes and benefits as a result of their participation in the JGW+ programme. Learners experienced impacts relating to employability and their career, as well as softer impacts in relation to mental health and personal well-being.
- 7.3 Accessing the structured support available was valuable in helping learners to understand job pathways and establish a routine, particularly those furthest away from the job market. This was seen as especially impactful for learners dealing with specific and complex barriers such as mental health needs or social anxiety:

“It was really useful to have that support to help me focus and keep me motivated to carry on looking for placements [...]. I have a lot of social anxiety and can get overwhelmed easily and I felt comfortable talking about this.” **(Learner)**

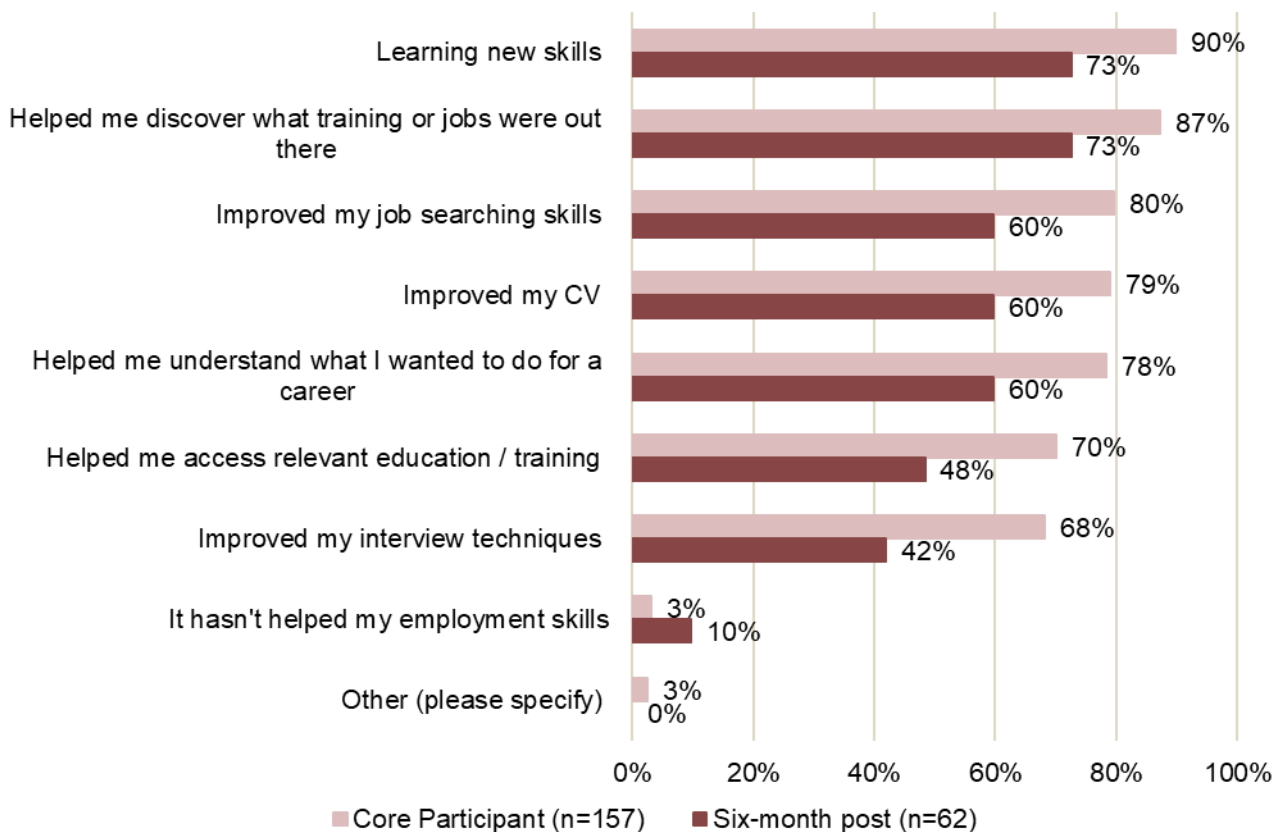
“It helped me more, knowing what I have to do, how to deal with some stuff, and get support.” **(Learner)**

- 7.4 Broadly, learners reported gaining vital personal skills that enabled them to better manage challenges in both their personal and their professional lives.

### **Employment and career development**

- 7.5 Both core learners and post-six-months learners reported positive impacts of the JGW+ programme on their employability skills in their closed-question responses. The most commonly cited impact was the opportunity to learn new skills, as highlighted by 90% (141/157) of core learners and 73% (45/62) of post-six-months learners.

**Figure 7.1: Which of these employment skills, if any, has JGW+ helped you with?**



Source: Core and post-six-months learner survey

7.6 Figure 7.1 also highlights a trend when comparing the responses from core learners and post-six-months learners. The perceived impact of the programme on employability skills decreases across all aspects six months after completion. This suggests that the immediate benefits felt by participants may diminish over time, potentially indicating a gap between short-term training and long-term career outcomes. With that said, it should be considered that those responding six months after completion may not recall distinct impacts as easily, and may be drawing on more recent experiences also.

7.7 The positive impact of JGW+ on employability was further evidenced through learners' responses when asked about the programme's biggest impact on their lives. Aligned with Figure 7.1, support for career exploration and development was frequently cited as an important benefit. Among post-six-months learners, this was the most commonly cited biggest impact, with 44% (25/57) mentioning it. For core learners, it was the second most common, as noted by 38% (60/156), following improvements in social skills and confidence.

7.8 Learners directly credited JGW+ as substantially supporting their career development through exposing them to new opportunities:

"JGW+ has given me the chance to do the job that I really want to do. In the next few weeks, I hope to get a placement as a youth worker. Without JGW+, I either would have been on the dole or got a job that I hated at Tesco." (**Learner**)

“I went not knowing what course I wanted to go on. They let me have a taster of three courses and gave me a variety of what I could do, which gave me a sense of what I really liked and could achieve, which I may not have done by myself.” **(Learner)**

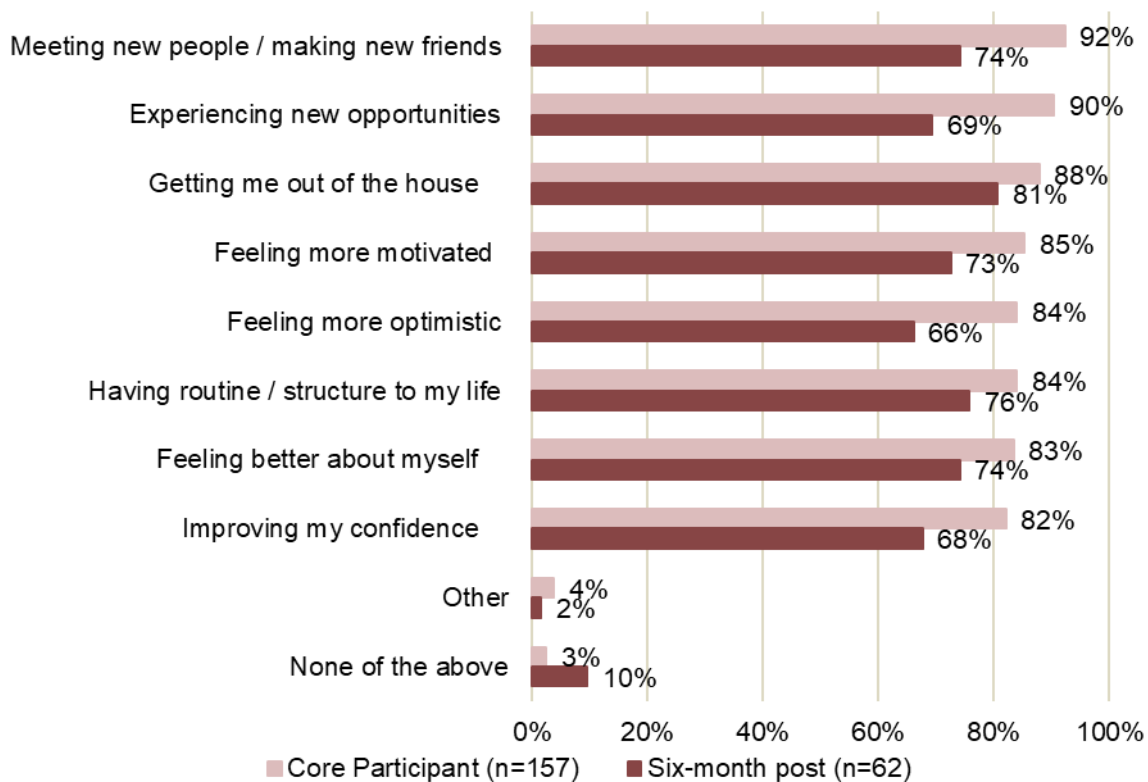
“I think it helped me declutter my CV and have targeted job searches (instead of just hoping for the best).” **(Learner)**

- 7.9 Learners particularly commended the guidance of tutors and staff for their supportive and understanding approach, with 44% (25/57) of post-six-months learners emphasising this as the aspect of support that had the biggest impact on their life. They explained that the programme provided excellent support for their educational and career aspirations, equipping them with the skills needed to succeed in the workplace.
- 7.10 A minority of learners reported no impact on their employability skills, with 3% (5/157) of core learners and 10% of post-six-months learners (6/62). However, within these groups, four of the ‘no impact’ learners from the post-six-months programme survey reported improvements in their social skills, while two reported no perceived changes in any areas. One of these two learners referenced a challenging altercation with another learner, which may have shaped their perception. Despite these experiences, both learners were now engaged in education or training.
- 7.11 Among the learners who reported no impact, three noted improvements in social skills despite not perceiving direct employability benefits, while two reported no impact in any area. One of these two learners left the programme early, limiting their exposure to its benefits. Another learner, whose feedback came via their parent, expressed frustration regarding not yet securing a placement, though they acknowledged receiving support in CV writing and career guidance.

### **Personal and soft skill development**

- 7.12 The impact of JGW+ on personal development was found to be substantial, particularly in encouraging social engagement, routine building, and improved confidence.
- 7.13 One of the most consistent outcomes noted on the closed question regarding soft skill development was the social aspect, as shown in Figure 7.2, with a majority of learners — 92% of core learners (145/157) and 74% of post-six-months learners (46/62) — reporting that they met new people or made new friends during the programme. Additionally, 90% of core learners (142/157) and 69% of post-six-months learners (43/62) found new opportunities through the programme, highlighting its role in enhancing both personal and professional opportunities.

**Figure 7.2: Which of these ways, if any, did JGW+ help you with?**



Source: Learner and post-six-months survey

- 7.14 A core theme expressed by learners was the programme's role in getting them out of the house. This reflected the extensive initial challenges that many learners faced before engaging with programme, and the foundational support required in terms of their personal development to prepare them for future employment. These early steps in building confidence and routines were important in helping learners to transition to the working environment.
- 7.15 While most learners reported positive changes, a small number of post-six-months learners (10%, 6/62) felt that the programme had not met their needs. These learners expressed dissatisfaction with the learning content or lack of support in finding appropriate placements:
- “It didn't have any impact on my life. I wanted to do something in IT, but they didn't help with that. We were just writing essays on things that really weren't relevant to me.” **(Learner)**
- 7.16 These findings underscore the diverse range of support required by learners. While some needed foundational assistance, such as establishing routines, others required more advanced, specialised support tailored to their career goals or specific interests.

- 7.17 Whilst Figure 7.2 shows the overall impact, further insight regarding soft skills can be gleaned from responses to learners being asked which aspects of JGW+ had the biggest impact on their life. For 32% (18/57) of post-six-months learners and 47% of learners responding to the core survey, the biggest impacts were seen in aspects regarding their confidence and social skills. Additionally, 14% (22/156) mentioned the positive influence of routine and structure as having the biggest impact on their life, while 13% (20/156) felt that the programme had contributed to better mental health and well-being. Only 6% (10/156) of core participants reported no impact from the programme:

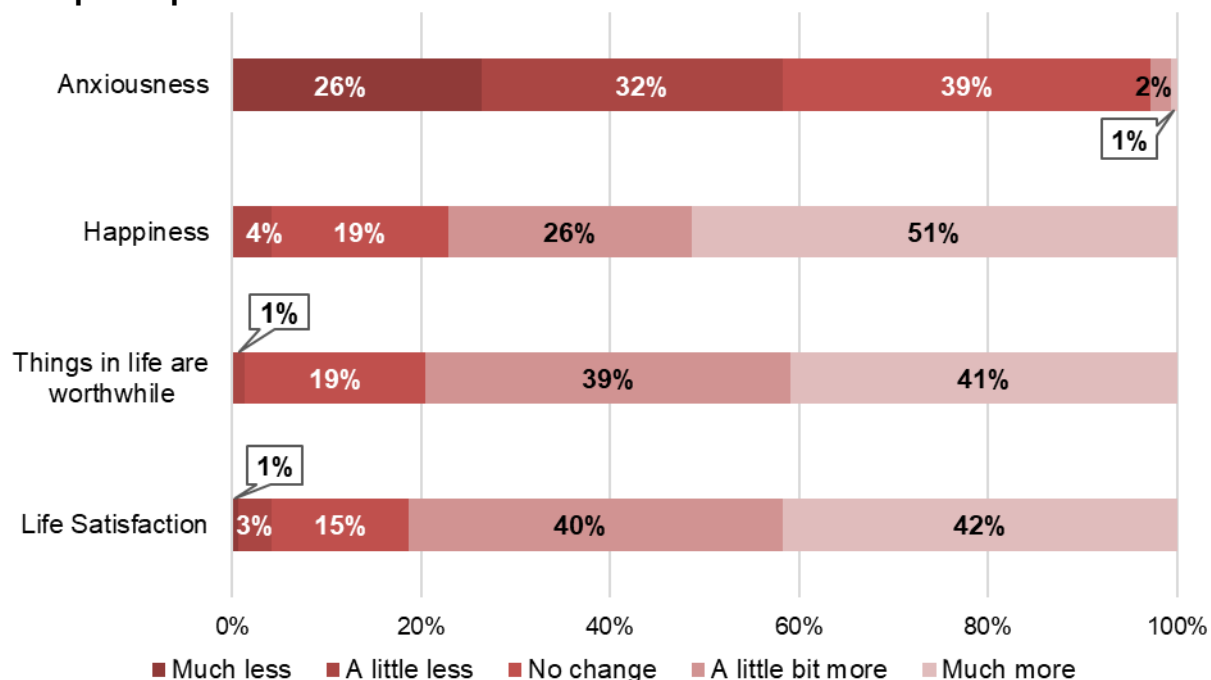
“Just giving me the confidence to understand that I am capable of finding work, my biggest issue is experience and they’ve shown me how to prepare for interviews. This has helped in giving me the confidence to do interviews and prepare and do job searches — I’m definitely a lot more confident and in a much better place than I was before.” **(Learner)**

- 7.18 These findings illustrate the programme’s role in addressing a range of learner needs, from building confidence to promoting mental health, demonstrating its multifaceted benefits.

### **Mental health and well-being**

- 7.19 Consistent with findings in the interim phase, core learners reported improvements in mental health and well-being as a result of their engagement with JGW+. The figure below evidences that when asked about how their mental health and well-being had changed throughout JGW+ support, a high proportion of core learners reported increased happiness (77% (111/144) reporting ‘a little bit more’ or ‘much more’) and greater life satisfaction (82% (117/144) reporting ‘a little bit more’ or ‘much more’), while 80% felt that their lives were more worthwhile (113/142 reporting ‘a little bit more’ or ‘much more’). Such improvements reflect the broader benefits of the programme for learners’ mental and emotional well-being.

**Figure 7.3: Change in mental health and well-being of core learners before and after JGW+ participation**



Source: Core learner survey (n=144)

- 7.20 Anxiety levels showed less of a dramatic improvement, with 58% (84/144) of core learners reporting reduced anxiety (reporting ‘much less’ or ‘a little less’) and 39% (56/144) noting no change. This smaller change likely reflects the complexities of anxiety experiences and the limitations of addressing such issues in a short timeframe. Nevertheless, the programme still demonstrated effectiveness in improving learners’ overall well-being.

### Foundational and soft skill development

- 7.21 Contractors and local authority staff emphasised the importance of developing learners’ foundational skills, observing that many initially struggled with basic routines such as getting out of the house. Establishing regular habits, such as waking up early, was often identified as a crucial first step in developing broader engagement and preparing learners for the demands of the workplace.
- 7.22 The prolonged effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were frequently cited as a contributing factor to these challenges. The disruption of routines, social interactions, and mental well-being left many young people isolated and disengaged. Overcoming social isolation emerged as an important aim, with the programme providing an essential foundation for learners to rebuild their social networks and establish new, healthier routines:

“It gets me out the house and I’ve now got a big friendship group and go to the gym now, as I have friends to go with. It’s helped me set up a routine and gets me out the house. When I left school, I was just

staying in bed and not getting up till 2 p.m. — now I'm up at 8 a.m.”

**(Learner)**

“It helped me to get out the house and know what I want to do in the future.” **(Learner)**

“Definitely improving on those little skills (like communication, teamwork, leadership skills) you need in the workplace and showing me different career paths I could go into.” **(Learner)**

- 7.23 Contractors and local authority staff consistently described JGW+ as being instrumental in supporting a wide range of essential life skills. These foundational changes not only support personal growth, but also lay the groundwork for future employability:

“99% of people leave as better people — regardless of the employability side. The programme like this brings out the best in people and we are very successful in making them good human beings.” **(Contractor)**

- 7.24 Personalised support, including wellness sessions, counselling, and one-to-one mentoring, was identified as being important in the realisation of these outcomes by Contractors. These services enabled learners to develop essential soft skills, clarify career goals, and identify opportunities beyond their immediate challenges. This tailored approach also encouraged a strong sense of trust between learners and staff, which was particularly vital for those facing complex mental health challenges:

“We’ve got enough staff, mentors to deliver one-to-ones, so we can pretty much deal with everybody.” **(Contractor)**

“We do offer one-to-one support to individuals that require it because, obviously, a group environment isn’t suited to their needs. Like today, it’s been really busy in centre, so the difficulty then is a lot of the quieter learners won’t express how they are feeling, so we do have quite a few learners on one-to-one.” **(Contractor)**

- 7.25 Some Contractors acknowledged that a wholly individualised support structure is not always feasible due to resource and capacity constraints. One Contractor noted that Shared Prosperity Funding (SPF) has helped to offset costs for a dedicated well-being staff member, with others noting that they have to refer learners to external providers for this level of additional support:

“SPF has funded a member of staff who is a wellness officer and provides additional mental health support to the young people who are on JGW+. This has been the biggest positive thing that’s happened. She’s been absolutely brilliant with the learners. She’s got a different approach that works very well with the young people who have anxiety and mental health issues.” **(Contractor)**

“We’re finding a lot of learners have got lots of support needs [...] so it’s about signposting to additional partners. We have got some learners having one-to-one interventions, so it’s ensuring those links are in place and those connections are there.” **(Contractor)**

“But if people want individualised support, I haven’t got capacity to allow staff to take someone on a walk for an hour because, obviously, if we’ve got 10 of them, that’s 10 hours of the working week gone.” **(Contractor)**

- 7.26 Contractors emphasised that while employability skills are essential, the most profound impacts stem from developing soft skills and broadening career awareness. A holistic approach, extending beyond traditional training, equips learners to address mental health challenges, build self-confidence, and explore diverse career pathways, enhancing their ability to engage with the labour market.
- 7.27 Improvements in soft skills, mental health, and confidence were seen as being more important to Contractors than were immediate employment outcomes. For many learners, this preparatory phase is transformative, prioritising personal growth as the foundation for sustainable careers and future opportunities.
- 7.28 Contractors stressed the importance of balancing “hard outcomes”, such as securing employment, with the intrinsic value of personal development. Enhancing soft skills equips learners to overcome challenges, gain confidence, and pursue meaningful career pathways, ultimately contributing more effectively to the labour market.

### **Perceived likelihood of achieving outcomes**

- 7.29 When core learners were asked whether they would have achieved similar outcomes without participating in the JGW+ programme, the majority responded ‘no’, attributing substantial personal and professional growth to their involvement. This question was posed to 52 of the 144 core learner survey participants — specifically those who had reported a positive outcome — so it does not represent the entire cohort. Among these respondents, 46% (24/52) believed that their achievements would not have been possible without the programme. Of these, 42% (10/24) indicated that they would have been inactive if not for JGW+, while 29% (7/24) said that they would have likely remained in education.
- 7.30 Conversely, 38% (20/52) believed that they would have achieved similar outcomes without JGW+, suggesting a perceived “deadweight”, while 15% (8/52) were unsure. However, this does not fully account for the broader benefits of the programme. All 20 “deadweight” learners still reported meaningful improvements in employability and soft skills, such as gaining practical experience, improving confidence, and overcoming personal barriers — impacts that extend beyond traditional measures like securing employment or education.



## **Analysis of perceived “deadweight”**

- 7.31 Learners who perceived their outcomes as being self-achieved often shared common characteristics. Many faced fewer complex barriers, had limited time out of education or training, and viewed JGW+ as a natural next step in their learner journey. This was particularly evident for those transitioning directly from education to the programme or those with clear career aspirations before joining. These learners had not experienced prolonged time away from education or employment, such as being NEET or struggling with job searches, and just below half had enrolled in July promptly following, or even at the point of leaving, school.
- 7.32 Within this group: six were unemployed or had a negative outcome at exit, and four felt that JGW+ had not meaningfully helped them. Such responses may reflect an underestimation of the programme’s contribution to their progress, especially in areas like building confidence and readiness for the labour market.
- 7.33 Furthermore, despite these perceptions, many (14 out of the 20) “deadweight” learners identified tangible benefits in response to being asked about the programme’s biggest impact. They cited hands-on experience and greater career clarity, in addition to improvements in confidence and reduced anxiety.
- “It’s given me hands-on experience in the subject I chose — plumbing.” **(Learner)**
- “Helping me understand that health and social care and childcare is what I want to do. I’m doing Level 1 in college now.” **(Learner)**
- “I now feel less anxious talking to people. It’s improved my confidence, as it threw me straight into the workplace on a placement, and I now know what it’s like.” **(Learner)**
- “It gave me work experience and the chance to do a placement looking after dogs, which I probably wouldn’t have done without JGW, and also a chance to meet friends.” **(Learner)**

## **Programme additionality**

- 7.34 While some learners believed that they would have achieved similar outcomes without the programme, their experiences of reduced social isolation, improved confidence, and strengthened social connections were consistent with the benefits reported by the wider cohort. This illustrates that JGW+ had a broader impact on learners’ personal and professional growth, addressing challenges such as mental health, a lack of routine, and limited workplace experience.
- 7.35 Although some learners may have underestimated the role of JGW+ in supporting them, looking narrowly on tangible achievements like jobs or apprenticeships, the broader personal and professional growth that they described highlights the programme’s importance and similarity in outcomes across the wider cohort.
- 7.36 Contractors and local authority staff echoed this sentiment, noting that most learners would not have achieved the same outcomes without the programme.

Many participants were at risk of becoming NEET, and JGW+ played a critical role in mitigating barriers such as low motivation and mental health challenges while providing valuable workplace exposure. Stakeholders emphasised that these outcomes extended beyond immediate employment, supporting personal growth and confidence as essential precursors to long-term success.

### **Destinations**

- 7.37 Survey responses and Contractor insights indicate that JGW+ has been effective in bringing learners closer to the labour market. This aligns with findings from the interim report and highlights a range of positive outcomes, including transitions into employment, education, and further training.
- 7.38 A comparison of the outcomes reported in survey responses of core learners with those six months after exiting the programme offers varied insights.

### **Placement outcomes**

- 7.39 The data suggest that job offers and apprenticeships resulting from placements are generally secure, long-term, or lead to further positive outcomes. Among learners six months after the programme, 22 reported completing placements, with nine receiving job (3/9) or apprenticeship (6/9) offers upon completion. Of those offered roles, five remain with the same employer, while two have transitioned into education, training, or employment elsewhere.
- 7.40 Among the surveyed learners who engaged with a placement, 35% (23/65) of core learners and 36% (8/22) of those responding to the post-six-month survey reported that their placements ended prematurely for various reasons. The most commonly cited reasons for this were workplace-related issues (35%, 8/23) amongst core learners, including dismissal, poor support, and an unpleasant environment. For post-six-months learners, the most commonly cited reason was that learners found other employment (25%, 2/8) or it was informed by external changes (25%, 2/8):

“The ladies that I worked with weren’t very nice.” **(Learner)**

“I was let go because I wasn’t the right fit for the job.” **(Learner)**

“Had to leave as the business was moving premises and for mental health reasons.” **(Learner)**

- 7.41 For core learners, programme-related concerns were another substantial factor, as cited by 26% (6/23) of respondents, such as pay issues, misaligned pathways, or perceptions of exploitation. Personal circumstances, including mental health challenges or travel difficulties, accounted for 22% (5/23). Less common reasons included a lack of interest in the placement (17%, 4/23), with one learner leaving to pursue college:

“My mental health — I was feeling anxious working in a charity shop.” **(Learner)**

“The trains kept getting cancelled and this made me late.” **(Learner)**

7.42 Payment issues emerged as a prominent reason for early exits, with four core and one post-six-months learner citing the decision to leave placements for higher wages elsewhere. The respondent learners also highlighted that remaining in the JGW+ centre offered better financial benefits than did participating in a placement. As signposted in Section 6, Contractors and local authority staff had expressed concerns that disparities between allowance on placements and in the centre could discourage participation, which is reflected in these learner experiences and perceptions:

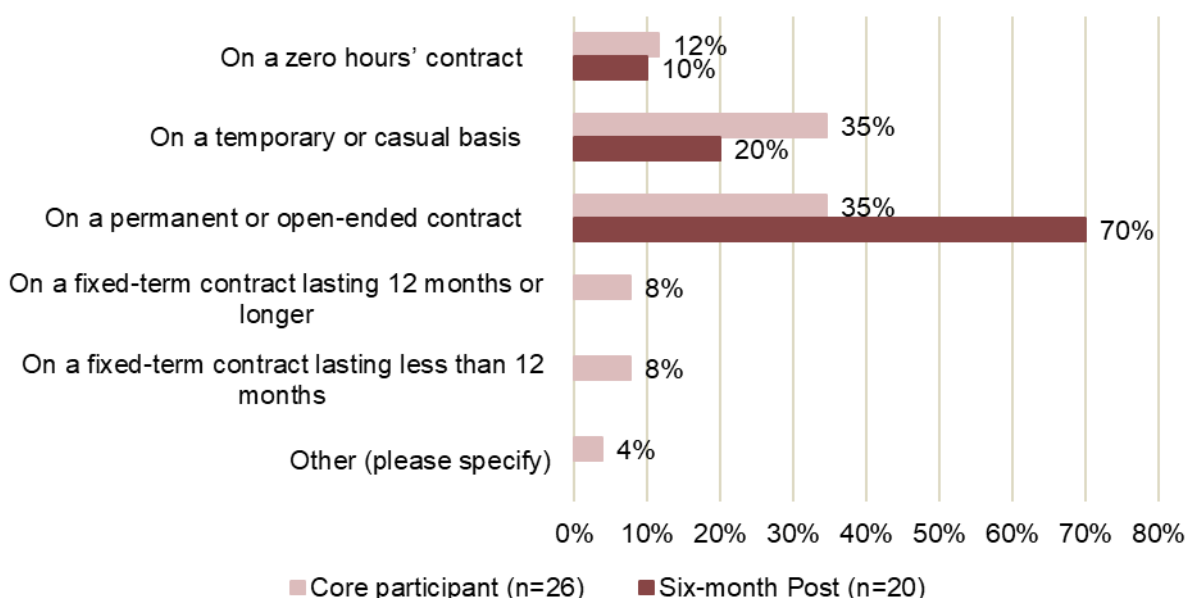
“Because of the payment issues, where I was getting paid less if I did the placement compared to being in centre. It would be pouring with rain, and I thought I could be getting paid more for just sitting in a warm classroom.”  
(Learner)

“It didn’t feel worth it for the money, paid less than the training allowance through JGW.” (Learner)

### Sustainability of employment

7.43 Although only a small proportion of the overall surveyed cohort of learners obtained employment, Figure 7.4 suggests a transition towards more stable employment six months after leaving the programme. A larger proportion of learners responding to the post-six-months survey reported being in permanent or open-ended contracts (70%, 14/20) in comparison to core learners at the point of exit (35%, 9/26). This indicates a potential shift towards greater job stability over time.

**Figure 7.4: Contract type of learners employed after leaving the JGW+ programme**



Source: Learner and post-six-months survey

7.44 Survey insights highlight that core learners exiting onto temporary, fixed-term, or zero-hour contracts expressed a desire for more permanent roles, with 75% (12/16) of those employed in these arrangements seeking more stable employment.

Additionally, post-six-months survey respondents showed higher proportions working over 30 hours per week (70%, 14/20) in comparison to core learners, where 73% (16/22) were working 30 hours or less.

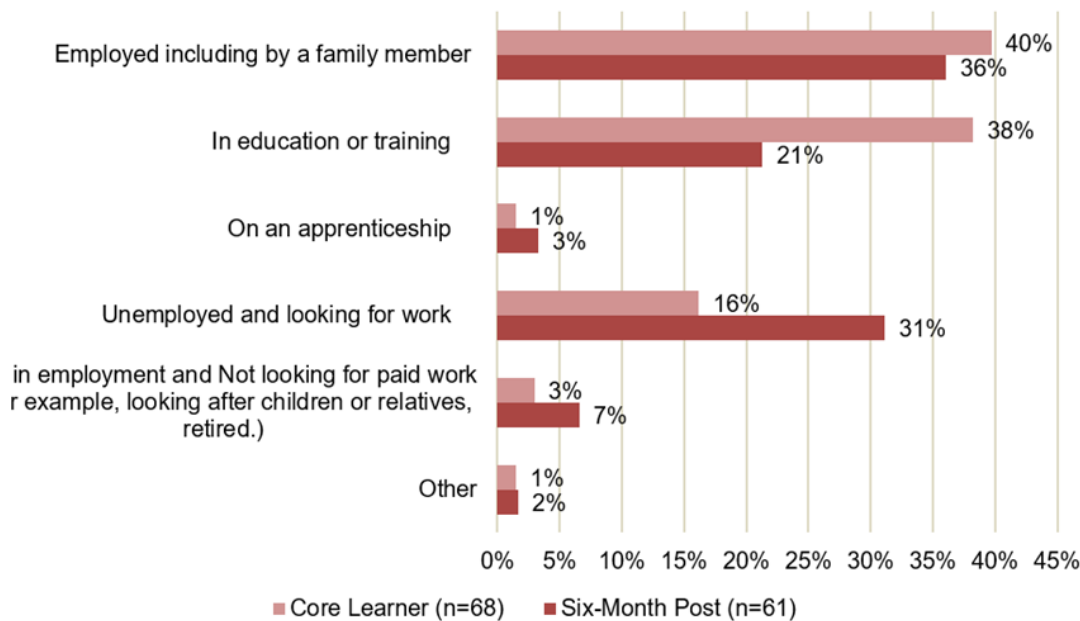
### Employment sectors

- 7.45 The survey data highlight a diverse distribution of employment across both cohorts of learners after their participation in JGW+. The hospitality sector (Accommodation and Food Service Activities) dominates employment for both groups, accounting for 37% (10/27) of core learners and 32% (7/22) of post-six-months learners. This prevalence likely contributes to the high proportion of learners on casual or zero-hour contracts, reflecting the nature of employment in these industries.

### Post-programme journeys

- 7.46 Among the core learners who have exited the programme, 16% (13/68) are currently unemployed or not actively seeking work, while 79% (54/68) are engaged in some form of employment, education, training or apprenticeships. In contrast, the post-six-months outcomes show that a larger proportion of learners are unemployed (38%, 23/60) with 61% (37/61) having secured positive outcomes.

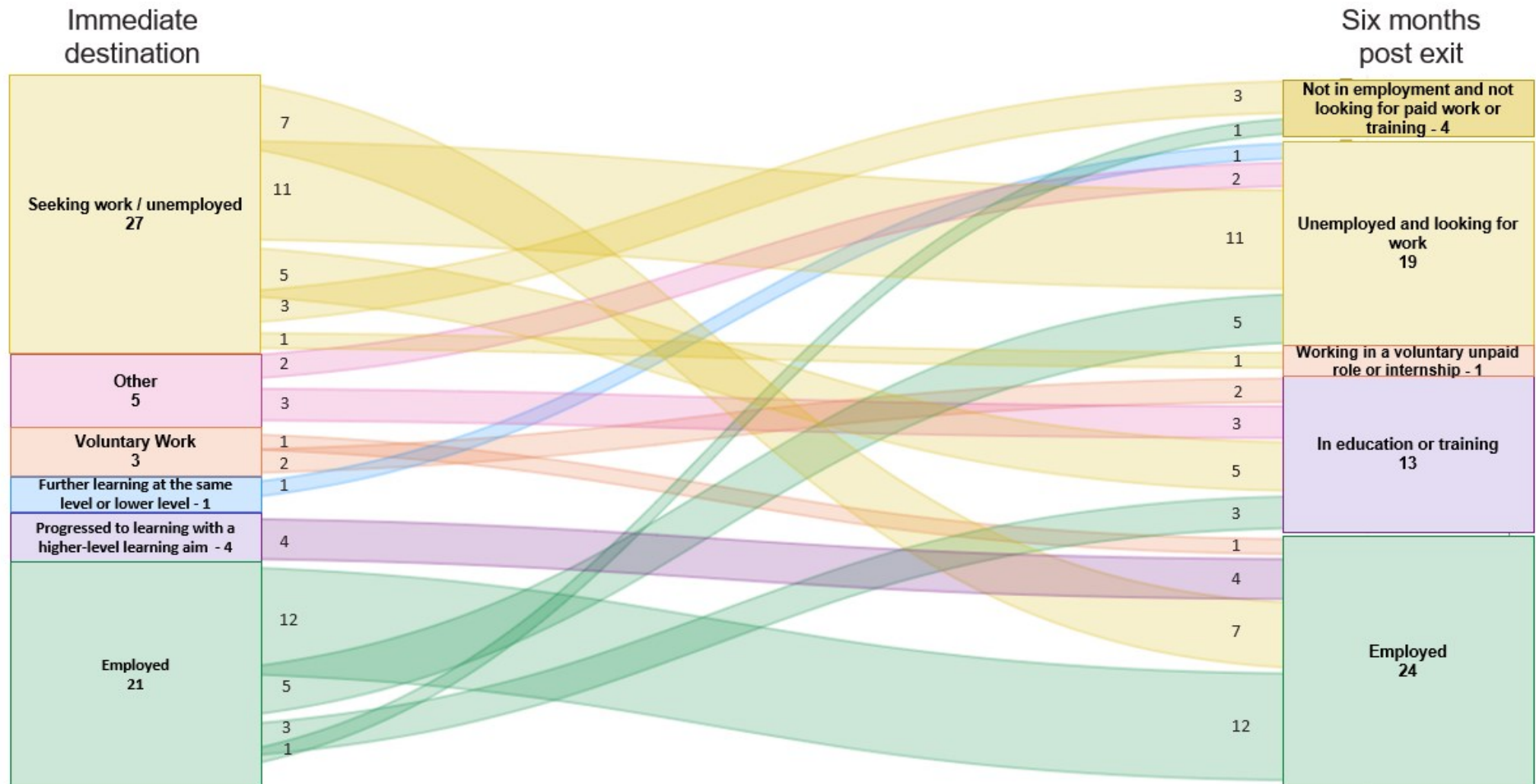
**Figure 7.5 Self-reported status of learners who are no longer enrolled in JGW+**



Source: Learner and post-six-months survey

7.47 Notably, a higher proportion of post-six-months learners are unemployed and actively seeking work, with 11 out of 68 core learners (16%) reporting unemployment and job search activities, compared to 19 out of 61 (31%) post-six-months learners. This disparity suggests that, over time, some participants may encounter more difficulties in securing employment after completing the programme. This is further supported by the fact that a larger proportion of core participants are employed or engaged in education and training, indicating that positive outcomes of the programme may be more favourable for those still connected to its resources and support.

**Figure 7.6: Sankey chart showing post-six-months assessment journeys comparing learners' immediate destination and then destination six months post-exit (n=61)**



Source= six-month post survey

- 7.48 The Sankey chart detailed on the previous page (Figure 7.6) compares learners' immediate destinations upon exiting the programme (left-hand side of the chart with the number of learners specified for each immediate destination) with their self-reported outcomes six months later, based on the six-month post-programme survey (right-hand side). This comparison helps to highlight the learners' journeys post-programme, and provides insight into the longer-term impacts which could not be fully captured at the time of exit.
- 7.49 Overall, the data suggest that a higher proportion of learners are in employment or engaged in education and training six months after leaving the programme, with fewer reporting unemployment in comparison to their immediate exit. Specifically, 39% of respondents now report being in employment, up from 31% at the point of exit. Similarly, the percentage of learners reporting unemployment and seeking work has decreased from 45% upon leaving to 31% six months later.
- 7.50 A notable trend is the increase in learners pursuing education and training. Of those responding to the six-month post programme survey, 21% reported being in education or training, compared to only 8% upon exiting the programme.
- 7.51 On an individual level, there is evidence of improvements in the employment status among learners who were unemployed upon exiting the programme. Of those initially unemployed, 30% have since secured employment, while 13% have transitioned into education or training. These figures suggest meaningful advancement for a portion of this group.
- 7.52 Despite these improvements, a small proportion of learners (23%) have not sustained positive outcomes in employment or education/training and are now either unemployed or not actively seeking work.
- 7.53 There is some variation when examining individual-level transitions (rather than overall trends). This variation may be influenced by factors such as demographics and qualifications.

### **Post-programme education and training provision**

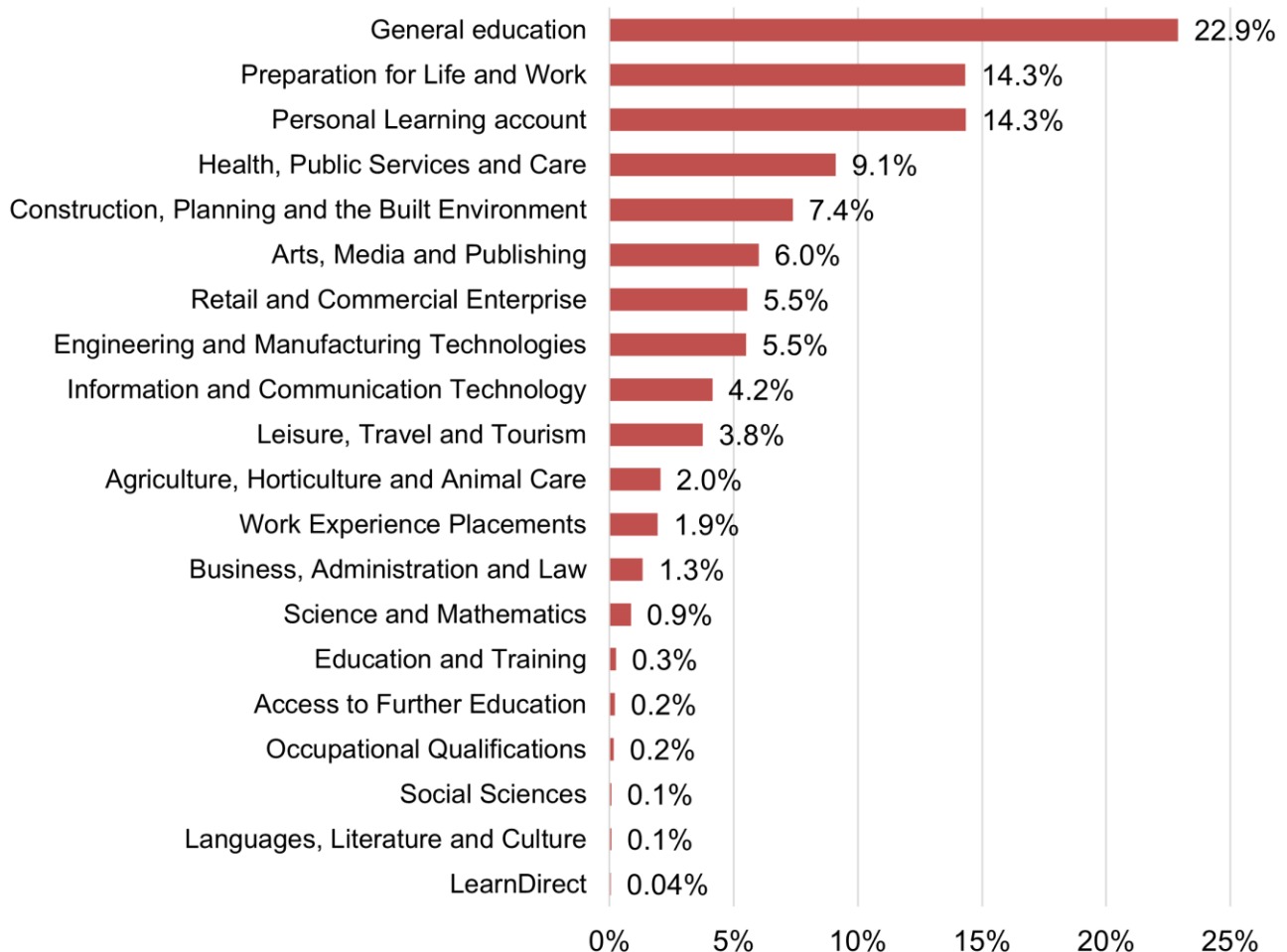
- 7.54 Analysis of Welsh Government LLWR data provides some insight into the nature of education or training that JGW+ participants enter into following completion of the programme. Figure 7.7 below provides analysis of the courses undertaken by those who enter education or training on leaving JGW+. Almost one quarter of the courses that participants enter into (22.9%, 1,098/4,795) are described as general education courses (learning associated with the core educational curriculum, such as A Levels). A further 14.3% (687/4,795) of courses are described as "preparation for life and work", with a similar proportion of courses associated with the Personal Learning Accounts Programme<sup>[Footnote 38]</sup>. Courses in health (9.1%; 437/4,975), construction (7.4%; 354/4,975) and arts, media and publishing (6.0%; 288/4,975)

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[38] The PLA Programme provides support across Wales for eligible individuals to gain higher level skills to enable them to access a wider range of job opportunities and/or gain employment at a higher level within priority sectors.

are also prevalent sector subject areas that participants enter into. It should be noted that these figures exclude training courses which did not include a sector subject area (apprenticeships, community learning, other FE, work-based learning).

**Figure 7.7: Education and training destinations of JGW+ leavers as a percentage of total courses undertaken - April 2022 to July 2024**

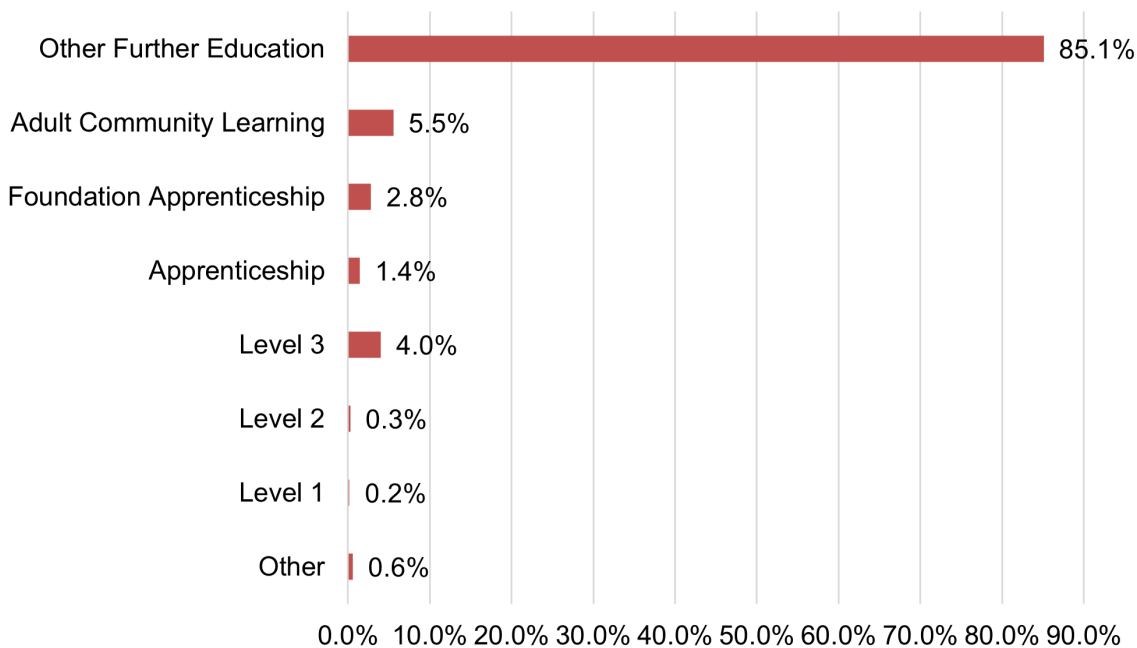


Source: LLWR MI data, n=4,975

- 7.55 The majority of learning entered into by JGW+ leavers was classed as 'Other Further Education' (85.1%, 4,325/5,083). This along with Adult Community Learning (282, 5.5%) and Apprenticeships or Foundation Apprenticeships (217, 4.3%) accounted for 95% of further learning types. A small number of learners, (230, 4.5%) entered learning designated at NQF levels 1 to 3.



**Figure 7.8: Education and training types started by JGW+ leavers - April 2022 to July 2024**



Source: LLWR MI data, n=5,083

7.56 Overall, excluding those who were still continuing this learning, 70.1% of JGW+ leavers completed their further learning (3,218/4,592) whilst nearly a third (1,374/4,592) did not. This compares to published analysis on completion rates nationally which show a completion rate of 75% for all post-16 learners in general education and 86% for post-16 learners in vocational training across all LLWR records between August 2022 and July 2023. It is important to note that amongst JGW+ participants, no reason for the learning being terminated is captured and a percentage of these may account for learners who moved from education into other positive destinations such as employment.

### Measuring soft skills

7.57 Contractors have highlighted that the current success metrics for measuring positive outcomes and destinations fail to capture the complex, individualised outcomes detailed in the section on personal development. The current definition of a positive outcome — transitioning into ‘employability, education, training or apprenticeships’ — does not account for the significant improvements made by learners who initially struggled with basic social interactions or leaving their homes:

“Often a YP [young person] might be with us for 32 weeks and improve their confidence then not get a job with us, but then further down the line they do have a job. But we can’t measure that. People are absolutely having positive outcomes on the whole, with their mental health, confidence, etc. The change in them from their first day to six months can’t always be measured, but it’s so worthwhile.” **(Contractor)**

- 7.58 The current monitoring procedures do not adequately capture substantial developments in soft skills or improvements in mental health and well-being that our surveys have evidenced. A single, universal approach to recording monitoring data is insufficient to encapsulate these nuanced findings:

“We are graded on progression data, but to me, progression isn’t just about ‘did they go on to further training?’, ‘did they get a job?’. It’s ‘has their confidence grown?’, ‘can they speak out?’. We are great for soft skills, but they are the hardest to capture.” **(Contractor)**

### **Data sharing and collective working**

- 7.59 Local authority staff particularly flagged that they have little insight into the outcomes and impacts of the JGW+ programme. Some suggested that the Welsh Government could act as a centralised point for information sharing, given that multiple Contractors operate competitively within the same areas:

“We don’t get a full picture.” **(Local authority staff)**

“We don’t get data on outcomes from any of them.” **(Local authority staff)**

“I never see the data. But maybe this is something that I should ask the provider for. Maybe this is a role for Welsh Government. Maybe they should make that data available, because the school’s data is published, so why not JGW?” **(Local authority staff<sup>[Footnote 39]</sup>)**

- 7.60 When asked about the important learnings from the programme, stakeholders emphasised the need for a more cohesive, centralised approach:

“I think it’s highlighting the need to be joined up, to have those open lines of communication to buy into the importance of partnership for it to be a success.” **(Local authority staff)**

“More cooperation between JGW+ and other agencies and more information sharing. JGW+ needs to allow more input from local authorities about the programme and how to develop the curriculum to work better with the young people.” **(Local authority staff)**

- 7.61 These insights underscore the importance of developing a more integrated approach to data sharing and outcome measurement in the JGW+ programme, with partners working together.

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[39] JGW data are published and accessible, but awareness of where to find them seems to be an issue.

## **Section summary**

- Learners reported a wider range of positive outcomes and benefits as a result of JGW+ participation in relation to employability and their career and to their mental health and personal well-being.
- Learners particularly commended the guidance of tutors and staff for their supportive and understanding approach.
- The impact on personal development has been substantial, particularly in encouraging social engagement, routine building, and improved confidence.
- Contractors and EPCs emphasised the importance of development foundational skills amongst learners, with many initially struggling with basic routines.
- Whilst rates of employment fell between those engaged soon after exiting and those six months following exiting, amongst those who are employed, the stability of that employment had increased. Moreover, when the destination reported by the six-month post survey group was matched with their immediate destination upon exit of the programme, rates of employment had increased and the proportion unemployed or looking for work had fallen.

## 8. Summary of findings and recommendations

### Programme design and context

- 8.1 JGW+ launched in April 2022 for young people who are NEET in Wales. Whilst the programme launched in 2022, it was designed in 2019 to 2020 and, crucially, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. It sought to provide every young person with whom it works an offer of employment, training, voluntary work, or self-employment as well as a tailored package of support.
- 8.2 A series of in-programme adaptations were made to the programme design and delivery, primarily in response to young people presenting more severe and more complex needs than expected at the point of design. Contractors and EPCs indicated that many potential participants are initially struggling with basic routines. The willingness to adjust the delivery model reflected what Contractors described as a shift in approach from the Welsh Government when compared to previous programmes, towards a partnership model in which Contractors work together, and a 'can do' attitude towards addressing identified programme challenges.
- 8.3 Those adaptations have been universally welcomed by Contractors and external stakeholders (primarily local authorities and EPCs). They also illustrate the importance and value of post-implementation adjustments to a policy intervention to reflect changing circumstances and emerging evidence. Despite these adjustments, JGW+'s design and approach remain closely aligned with and supportive of governmental policy, particularly that associated with the Young Person's Guarantee and the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework.
- 8.4 The model itself and the guidance surrounding it are, however, relatively complex and there remain instances in which Contractor (or Sub-Contractor) representatives are unaware of or have misunderstood the latest guidance. There are also concerns amongst EPCs that little information is shared on participants once they have enrolled (and particularly whether an individual has secured an outcome on exiting the programme).

**Recommendation 1:** Clear communication regarding adjustments to the service offer is necessary from the Welsh Government to Contractors, to be disseminated to all frontline staff, Sub-Contractors, and EPCs to ensure that consistency of the offer is retained.

**Recommendation 2:** Further engagement with EPCs should be undertaken to explore the extent to which they are receiving communication in relation to the achievements and outcomes of JGW+ participants from their local area.

## Engagement

- 8.5 The JGW+ programme benefits from a good level of existing awareness amongst the target group (a challenge for provision of this nature noted in a recent rapid evidence review), with levels of demand for support outstripping the level of resources available. Between April 2022 and July 2024 there were 11,972 programme starts as well as 10,008 unique participants enrolled on JGW+.
- 8.6 Evidence suggests that 30–40% of the eligible cohort in Wales may be engaging with JGW+. Furthermore, one quarter of the participants on the programme are presenting with additional needs. The evidence therefore indicates a service offer that may be better suited to engaging and enrolling the target group of young people than previous policy interventions.
- 8.7 Word of mouth and promotional outreach activities within secondary schools have emerged as being effective in raising awareness of the JGW+ programme (particularly given that nationwide marketing and promotional activities for the programme ceased in 2023). Several factors are likely to have influenced engagement rates, including the quality and range of support on offer and the rates of compensation (training allowances, free meals and transport for participants, and the induction fee for Contractors) that were secured.
- 8.8 There was concern identified within the interim evaluation that the increased training allowance may also influence engagement due to the higher rate of allowance that they would obtain by enrolling on JGW+ than that for which they would otherwise be eligible elsewhere, such as benefits or Education Maintenance Allowance. Survey respondents, however, highlighted that whilst the financial support was a factor, it was not the main factor in engaging with the programme. Contractors, meanwhile, felt that the increased training allowance also aided participant retention on the programme.
- 8.9 The levels of demand for the programme have led to Contractors having to carefully manage their annual profile of enrolments to avoid running out of funding. Waiting lists have at times been established to help manage volumes, particularly in urban conurbations. Contractors suggested that this considerably heighten the risk of potential participants disengaging.
- 8.10 The management of annualised budgets by Contractors is further complicated by considerable fluctuations in demand for the programme during a calendar year. There are consistent spikes in enrolment each July and, to a lesser extent, each October. Those in July appear to be associated with a transition from secondary education to JGW+, and for many they are NEET for a very short time or not at all, with some reporting enrolment to JGW+ whilst still in school. The programme appears to be effective at engaging during the summer months; however, the additionality of support to this specific cohort (when compared to enrolments at other points during the year) is less clear. It should also be acknowledged that the process of transitioning from secondary school at 16 years of age into some other form of EET is beset by the risk of disengagement, and JGW+ (and specifically the

pre-engagement offer through 'Get Ready') provides a useful mechanism for retaining some form of engagement over the summer period.

- 8.11 Whilst the programme enjoys a good level of awareness amongst young people, there is a high degree of geographical variability in the likelihood of an individual engaging with the programme. For example, a young person aged 16 to 19 in Torfaen is eight times more likely to enrol on JGW+ than is one in the more rural locations of Powys, Gwynedd, and Ceredigion. <sup>[Footnote 40]</sup>
- 8.12 There is some evidence that the general population of young people NEET in Wales varies by geography<sup>[Footnote 41]</sup> however where there is variation, there is limited correlation with rates of engagement on JGW+. This suggests that other factors are influencing the propensity to engage in the support. Such factors may include levels of deprivation, issues of rurality, and challenges of accessing a physical location for JGW+ advice and guidance. Contractors also identified the need for flexibility when young carers engage with the programme, and physical attendance can sometimes be difficult.

**Recommendation 3:** Review access to support, including the level and the extent to which individuals can engage online, to support achieving equitable access to JGW+ across Wales.

- 8.13 Prospective JGW+ participants are most commonly directly referred to the programme, either through the Contractor or EPCs. The two-pronged approach, to referral and engagement (either via Working Wales or through direct referral) appears to be working well, enabling engagement routes to be largely learner-led. The ARR form provides a useful mechanism for capturing insight into a participant, where that information is provided in a comprehensive manner. Restrictions with regard to sharing school-related data (including ILPs) often lead to delays in understanding participant needs until they choose to share this information (typically after trust is established with a staff member) or until it can be identified through a needs assessment. In this regard the importance of the conversational approach as part of the initial engagement of young people cannot be understated. Building a rapport and a sense of trust at an early stage in their engagement is critical to understanding participant needs, sustaining their engagement, and securing positive outcomes.

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[40] This is calculated by comparing the number of people engaged by JGW+ in a LA, expressed as a proportion of the 16 to 19-year-old population in that LA.

[41] Due to the small sample size, from the APS, data at the regional level are analysed across a three-year period, with the rate of NEET for those aged 16 to 24 varying from 10.7% in South East Wales to 14.2% in Mid and South West Wales. See [here](#) for further information. Moreover, those recorded as being NEET amongst Year 11 leavers in October (after leaving school earlier that year in June/July) range from 1.1% in Newport to 4.0% in Anglesey ([Year 11 Destination Survey](#)).

- 8.14 A challenge identified as part of the enrolment process is the management of participant expectations. Young people are sometimes enrolling with unrealistic expectations of a career that does not reflect their existing qualifications, or are unfamiliar with the challenges that they may have faced had they looked to secure employment. This is not typically addressed in the process of referral and is a factor that is typically looked at post-engagement.
- 8.15 The nature of challenges faced by participants means that over three quarters of participants are engaged in the engagement strand of the support. For some participants, it is felt that this is too advanced, with a view that more widespread usage of the (or another) pre-engagement offer (currently 'Get Ready') is necessary.
- 8.16 Patterns of mobilisation of Get Ready as an offer appear to be influenced by available resources, provider interest, and seasonality, with limited evidence to suggest that its current delivery is influenced by learner needs. Of those residing in Neath Port Talbot and Flintshire, almost one quarter of participants engaged in the Get Ready offer, whereas none of the participants residing in Ceredigion have accessed Get Ready. It is believed that available funding is likely to be a factor in the variation in its usage. It is unclear as to whether there are other factors that are influencing geographical variation.

**Recommendation 4:** Explore with Contractors what factors are influencing the extent of their usage of the pre-engagement 'Get Ready' strand of support to support more equal access across the programme.

- 8.17 Reportedly, the number and severity of complexities and barriers faced by participants continue to increase. This is leading to an increased prevalence of challenging (disruptive and sometimes violent) behaviour and safeguarding issues for Contractors to manage.

### **Support provision**

- 8.18 The service offer through the mainstream elements of the programme (primarily the engagement and advancement strands) is seen to be flexible, responsive, and learner led. There is widespread praise for the nature of support offered through the programme, which has been refined over time, with the design largely reflective of evidence of what works<sup>[Footnote 42]</sup> with this target group.
- 8.19 Participants' duration on the programme has steadily fallen over time, from an average of six months in winter 2022 to 2023 to 3.5 months in winter 2023 to 2024. This is likely a reflection of programme demand, funding constraints, and waiting lists all encouraging Contractors to accelerate the pace at which participants move through the programme.

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[42] Welsh Government (2024) Rapid Evidence Review: supporting young people who are not in employment, education, or training.

- 8.20 The programme and its related support are widely considered to be accessible and impactful, particularly in relation to addressing mental health and well-being and supporting young people in the development of 'soft skills'. The data capture and monitoring requirements for the programme, however, are largely shaped by the LLWR, which fails to capture the severity and complexity of barriers or any insight into the personal well-being of a participant. Analysis of ILPs (where this information is available), for example, shows nearly one quarter of records evidencing multiple support needs for each participant, with the associated narrative illustrating the complex situations that some participants face.

**Recommendation 5:** Monitoring evidence that complements the requirements of the LLWR should be gathered as part of the engagement process with a young person (once trust is established) and could form part of the ILP. This should include capturing well-being indicators in a quantitative or categorised manner to allow them to be monitored and analysed.

**Recommendation 6:** A consistent approach should be established across the programme for the capture of soft outcomes and distance travelled. To ensure that this has the support of Contractors it is recommended that they work together to lead on the system's design and development.

**Recommendation 7:** A consistent approach should be adopted across all Contractors for the recording of important information held in the ILP. This would enable a more comprehensive qualitative analysis of learner barriers, aspirations and activities.

- 8.21 Support provision delivered through JGW+ has slowly and steadily shifted towards wider life skills and basic skills and away from provision typically associated with individuals close to employment. This is likely to be a reflection on the circumstances of participants who engage. Moreover, the employment strand of the programme is little used, with only 1% of programme starts on that strand. Contractors reported that many of the young people supported faced additional barriers and situations where typically they were not ready for work.
- 8.22 More generally regarding employer engagement, Contractors flagged a limited willingness from employers to take on young people (given the supervisory costs involved), a concern that participants seemed to be immature or non-committal, and a more general lack of these opportunities in certain locations.
- 8.23 Participants referenced delays in securing placements, whilst Contractors highlighted that the allowance offered to participants was lower on placements, meaning that there was greater financial gain in remaining in the learning facility.
- Recommendation 8:** Investigate the disparities in provision of allowance on placement compared to in learning facilities, and the impact this has on motivations for completing placements.

- 8.24 Despite these challenges surrounding exposure to employment opportunities, management information shows that across Wales, over one fifth (21.6%, 1,785/8,270) of unique individuals secured either part- or full-time employment upon



exiting JGW+. Again, there is geographical variation in these destinations, with over one quarter of participants in Pembrokeshire, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea, and Torfaen securing employment in comparison to less than 10% of those in Cardiff.

8.25 Moreover, amongst the post-six-months participant group there is an increase in the prevalence of positive destinations in comparison to the point of exiting, with those in employment typically transitioning to more secure contracts or a greater number of hours per week.

8.26 Exposure to employment opportunities more generally (primarily through work placements) is a further area of geographical variability, with, according to management information, JGW+ participants in Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire being almost 20 times more likely to undertake some form of work-based hours as part of their engagement than those residing in Flintshire.

**Recommendation 9:** Engage Contractors to explore factors surrounding the variation in participant journeys on the JGW+ programme to identify what support can be offered to aid the provision of a more universally consistent offer.

### **Outcomes and impacts of support**

8.27 Positive outcome rates on the programme have steadily improved over time, with the programme surpassing targets against the number of programme starts. Within published data, however, there is little distinction between progression outcomes (where an individual transitions from one JGW+ strand to another) and final outcomes (their outcome at the point of exiting the programme). Whilst positive movement between programme strands is an important milestone to acknowledge, this may be inadvertently misleading perceptions of the scale of engagement and destinations upon exiting the programme.

**Recommendation 10:** Capture positive movements between strands, and final outcomes for unique individuals as separate indicators in the reporting of programme performance.

8.28 Considerable geographical variation is further observed in the prevalence of positive outcomes amongst participants, with those in Powys and Pembrokeshire three times more likely to secure a positive outcome than those in Torfaen. Similarly, those residing in Cardiff are almost three times more likely to leave with a negative outcome than those residing in Wrexham or Flintshire.

8.29 The programme has been instrumental in helping learners to overcome barriers and develop essential soft and employment skills. They further credited the programme with providing valuable clarity and guidance regarding their career options.

8.30 Outside of employability, the programme had a significant effect on learners' well-being and mental health, and learners particularly commended the guidance of tutors and staff for their supportive and understanding approach.

8.31 Learners highlighted increased confidence and enhanced overall well-being as the most transformative outcomes of their experience. They also frequently reported improvements in their ability to manage personal challenges such as social anxiety.

For those who faced mental health challenges before joining JGW+, these improvements underscored the importance of addressing personal development and well-being as foundational elements before pursuing employment-specific goals.

- 8.32 An initial and relatively crude assessment of cost-efficiency (assessing the cost per engagement) has been undertaken. When inflationary effects are taken into account it is estimated that JGW+ represents a 10% increase on the cost per engagement when compared to JGW2.

**Recommendation 11:** That a comprehensive social cost–benefit analysis of JGW+ be undertaken to fully capture both the societal and the economic costs and benefits arising from the programme in order to help assess the programme’s return on investment.

- 8.33 The programme’s ability to adapt and respond to participant needs is illustrated by the relatively limited variation in positive outcomes achieved by characteristic. Among those with an additional learning need, 57% secured a positive outcome, compared to 62% without, whilst 55% of those with lower (Level 1 or below) qualifications secured a positive outcome in comparison to 65% of those qualified to Level 2.
- 8.34 In a similar pattern to that found in the interim evaluation, those with some form of Welsh language capability are statistically more likely to secure a positive outcome than are those without.
- 8.35 The scale of the programme and the extent to which it appears to be engaging with the eligible cohort mean that it is possible that JGW+ is having an influence on socioeconomic indicators of performance in Wales. Recent data on unemployment rates amongst the 16 to 19-year-old cohort illustrate a marked fall and divergence (where comparative data are available) from trends in England. Further exploration of these data (as part of a summative evaluation) is necessary. Furthermore, details on economically inactive numbers are required alongside those who are unemployed to more clearly understand the effect that the programme may be having.
- 8.36 Amongst Year 11 leavers, impact or added value is unclear, with rates of NEET or unknowns remaining static following increases from 2021 to 2022. These indications alongside various other trends (as highlighted earlier within this section) suggest lower levels of additionality arising from those enrolled on JGW+ in July (specifically those transitioning out of Year 11) than those enrolling on JGW+ in other months of the year.

**Recommendation 12:** That further exploration of the specific characteristics and situations of those enrolling on the programme in July of each year be undertaken with Contractors and EPCs.

**Recommendation 13:** That future fieldwork with participants of JGW+ engage with a cohort who have enrolled on the programme across the calendar year to mitigate any potential influence of monthly trends.

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## Annexe 1: Map-Related data

**Table A.1: Market reach by local authority April 2022 to July 2024**

|                       | JGW<br>population | 16 to 19<br>population<br>(ONS mid-<br>year<br>estimate) | Market<br>reach |
|-----------------------|-------------------|--|-----------------|
| Torfaen               | 447               | 4,176  | 10.7%           |
| Merthyr Tydfil        | 262               | 2,499  | 10.5%           |
| Blaenau Gwent         | 226               | 2,738  | 8.3%            |
| Newport               | 520               | 7,167  | 7.3%            |
| Neath Port Talbot     | 511               | 8,008  | 6.4%            |
| Caerphilly            | 493               | 7,834  | 6.3%            |
| Bridgend              | 222               | 6,299  | 3.5%            |
| Pembrokeshire         | 347               | 5,289  | 6.6%            |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf     | 502               | 10,900   | 4.6%            |
| Wrexham               | 193               | 6,078  | 3.2%            |
| Carmarthenshire       | 336               | 8,214  | 4.1%            |
| Swansea               | 501               | 11,811   | 4.2%            |
| Cardiff               | 775               | 22,919   | 3.4%            |
| Conwy                 | 103               | 4,440  | 2.3%            |
| Flintshire            | 170               | 6,786  | 2.5%            |
| Isle of Anglesey      | 88                | 2,742  | 3.2%            |
| Denbighshire          | 84                | 4,229  | 2.0%            |
| The Vale of Glamorgan | 210               | 5,833  | 3.6%            |
| Monmouthshire         | 83                | 3,703  | 2.2%            |
| Ceredigion            | 80                | 4,268  | 1.9%            |
| Gwynedd               | 101               | 5,667  | 1.8%            |
| Powys                 | 70                | 5,289  | 1.3%            |

**Table A.2: Proportion of individuals who have been enrolled in Get Ready activities by local authority April 2022 to July 2024**

| <b>Local authority</b> | <b>Get Ready</b> | <b>Not Get Ready</b> | <b>% Get Ready</b> |
|------------------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Neath Port Talbot      | 216              | 651                  | 24.9%              |
| Flintshire             | 73               | 245                  | 23.0%              |
| Caerphilly             | 119              | 585                  | 16.9%              |
| Monmouthshire          | 19               | 102                  | 15.7%              |
| Merthyr Tydfil         | 63               | 338                  | 15.7%              |
| Wrexham                | 51               | 284                  | 15.2%              |
| Isle of Anglesey       | 19               | 114                  | 14.3%              |
| Cardiff                | 156              | 1,047                | 13.0%              |
| Blaenau Gwent          | 38               | 272                  | 12.3%              |
| Conwy                  | 20               | 147                  | 12.0%              |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf      | 82               | 686                  | 10.7%              |
| Swansea                | 85               | 750                  | 10.2%              |
| Newport                | 83               | 731                  | 10.2%              |
| The Vale of Glamorgan  | 37               | 294                  | 11.2%              |
| Bridgend               | 37               | 356                  | 9.4%               |
| Gwynedd                | 15               | 155                  | 8.8%               |
| Torfaen                | 55               | 613                  | 8.2%               |
| Denbighshire           | 7                | 135                  | 4.9%               |
| Powys                  | 4                | 104                  | 3.7%               |
| Pembrokeshire          | 15               | 478                  | 3.0%               |
| Carmarthenshire        | 14               | 564                  | 2.4%               |
| Ceredigion             | 0                | 131                  | 0.0%               |

**Table A.3: Proportion of unique participants completing the JGW+ programme who secured positive outcomes by local authority area April 2022 to July 2024**

| <b>Local authority</b> | <b>Positive</b> | <b>Negative</b> | <b>% positive outcomes</b> |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Pembrokeshire          | 259             | 111             | 70.0%                      |
| Powys                  | 62              | 30              | 67.4%                      |
| Newport                | 367             | 199             | 64.8%                      |
| Neath Port Talbot      | 383             | 211             | 64.5%                      |
| Swansea                | 401             | 246             | 62.0%                      |
| Wrexham                | 152             | 95              | 61.5%                      |
| Flintshire             | 146             | 104             | 58.4%                      |
| Carmarthenshire        | 226             | 167             | 57.5%                      |
| Ceredigion             | 51              | 38              | 57.3%                      |
| Denbighshire           | 60              | 45              | 57.1%                      |
| Bridgend               | 166             | 125             | 57.0%                      |
| Torfaen                | 263             | 202             | 56.6%                      |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf      | 303             | 248             | 55.0%                      |
| Caerphilly             | 271             | 234             | 53.7%                      |
| Merthyr Tydfil         | 153             | 142             | 51.9%                      |
| Conwy                  | 59              | 72              | 45.0%                      |
| Isle of Anglesey       | 47              | 61              | 43.5%                      |
| Monmouthshire          | 36              | 48              | 42.9%                      |
| Gwynedd                | 58              | 81              | 41.7%                      |
| The Vale of Glamorgan  | 90              | 140             | 39.1%                      |
| Blaenau Gwent          | 82              | 134             | 38.0%                      |
| Cardiff                | 314             | 592             | 34.7%                      |

**Table A.4: Proportion of unique participants completing the JGW+ programme who have secured full-time or part-time employment by local authority area April 2022 to July 2024**

| <b>Local authority</b> | <b>Employed full-time or part-time</b> | <b>All outcomes</b> | <b>% employed full-time or part-time</b> |
|------------------------|--|---------------------|--|
| Rhondda Cynon Taf      | 177                                    | 612                 | 28.9%                                    |
| Swansea                | 193                                    | 691                 | 27.9%                                    |
| Pembrokeshire          | 118                                    | 431                 | 27.4%                                    |
| Torfaen                | 142                                    | 518                 | 27.4%                                    |
| Newport                | 169                                    | 621                 | 27.2%                                    |
| Neath Port Talbot      | 178                                    | 675                 | 26.4%                                    |
| Bridgend               | 84                                     | 321                 | 26.2%                                    |
| Wrexham                | 72                                     | 288                 | 25.0%                                    |
| Ceredigion             | 25                                     | 103                 | 24.3%                                    |
| Carmarthenshire        | 107                                    | 447                 | 23.9%                                    |
| Powys                  | 21                                     | 95                  | 22.1%                                    |
| Denbighshire           | 26                                     | 119                 | 21.8%                                    |
| Merthyr Tydfil         | 69                                     | 331                 | 20.8%                                    |
| Caerphilly             | 115                                    | 563                 | 20.4%                                    |
| Isle of Anglesey       | 23                                     | 115                 | 20.0%                                    |
| Gwynedd                | 30                                     | 150                 | 20.0%                                    |
| Flintshire             | 53                                     | 288                 | 18.4%                                    |
| Blaenau Gwent          | 40                                     | 238                 | 16.8%                                    |
| Monmouthshire          | 13                                     | 92                  | 14.1%                                    |
| Conwy                  | 19                                     | 143                 | 13.3%                                    |
| The Vale of Glamorgan  | 30                                     | 247                 | 12.1%                                    |
| Cardiff                | 85                                     | 965                 | 8.8%                                     |



**Table A.5: Proportion of unique participants completing the JGW+ programme who are seeking work or unemployed by local authority area April 2022 to July 2024**

| <b>Local authority</b> | <b>Seeking work/unemployed</b> | <b>All outcomes</b> | <b>% seeking work/unemployed</b> |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Cardiff                | 586                            | 965                 | 60.7%                            |
| The Vale of Glamorgan  | 140                            | 247                 | 56.7%                            |
| Blaenau Gwent          | 133                            | 238                 | 55.9%                            |
| Monmouthshire          | 48                             | 92                  | 52.2%                            |
| Gwynedd                | 72                             | 150                 | 48.0%                            |
| Isle of Anglesey       | 54                             | 115                 | 47.0%                            |
| Conwy                  | 64                             | 143                 | 44.8%                            |
| Merthyr Tydfil         | 142                            | 331                 | 42.9%                            |
| Caerphilly             | 234                            | 563                 | 41.6%                            |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf      | 247                            | 612                 | 40.4%                            |
| Torfaen                | 200                            | 518                 | 38.6%                            |
| Bridgend               | 124                            | 321                 | 38.6%                            |
| Ceredigion             | 38                             | 103                 | 36.9%                            |
| Carmarthenshire        | 161                            | 447                 | 36.0%                            |
| Denbighshire           | 42                             | 119                 | 35.3%                            |
| Swansea                | 242                            | 691                 | 35.0%                            |
| Newport                | 199                            | 621                 | 32.0%                            |
| Powys                  | 30                             | 95                  | 31.6%                            |
| Neath Port Talbot      | 194                            | 675                 | 28.7%                            |
| Flintshire             | 62                             | 288                 | 21.5%                            |
| Pembrokeshire          | 91                             | 431                 | 21.1%                            |
| Wrexham                | 60                             | 288                 | 20.8%                            |

**Table A.6: Proportion of unique participants completing the JGW+ programme who undertook work-based hours by local authority area April 2022 to July 2024**

| <b>Local authority</b> | <b>Work-based hours</b> | <b>No work-based hours</b> | <b>% work-based hours</b> |
|------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Ceredigion             | 55                      | 76                         | 42.0%                     |
| Carmarthenshire        | 233                     | 345                        | 40.3%                     |
| Swansea                | 320                     | 515                        | 38.3%                     |
| Torfaen                | 230                     | 438                        | 34.4%                     |
| Pembrokeshire          | 166                     | 327                        | 33.7%                     |
| Merthyr Tydfil         | 131                     | 270                        | 32.7%                     |
| Neath Port Talbot      | 258                     | 613                        | 29.6%                     |
| Blaenau Gwent          | 82                      | 228                        | 26.5%                     |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf      | 185                     | 584                        | 24.1%                     |
| Bridgend               | 84                      | 309                        | 21.4%                     |
| Caerphilly             | 138                     | 569                        | 19.5%                     |
| Monmouthshire          | 23                      | 98                         | 19.0%                     |
| Newport                | 145                     | 669                        | 17.8%                     |
| Powys                  | 19                      | 89                         | 17.6%                     |
| Cardiff                | 191                     | 1,013                      | 15.9%                     |
| The Vale of Glamorgan  | 43                      | 288                        | 13.0%                     |
| Conwy                  | 15                      | 152                        | 9.0%                      |
| Gwynedd                | 12                      | 158                        | 7.1%                      |
| Denbighshire           | 10                      | 132                        | 7.0%                      |
| Wrexham                | 16                      | 319                        | 4.8%                      |
| Isle of Anglesey       | 5                       | 128                        | 3.8%                      |
| Flintshire             | 7                       | 311                        | 2.2%                      |

## **Annexe 2: Research tools**

### **Annexe 2a: Participant (Core) Survey telephone interview survey**

1. Would you like to conduct the interview in English or in Welsh?
  - a. English
  - b. Welsh
2. Do you have any additional access requirements you'd like us to be aware of?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

2a. Could you provide details please?

### **Engagement**

Here we're going to ask you some questions about how and why you got involved with JGW+.

3. How did you first hear about the JGW+ programme?
  - a. Somebody told me about it (friends or family)
  - b. Online or internet search
  - c. I was referred to JGW+ by an organisation, e.g. Jobcentre / Careers Wales / Working Wales, etc.
  - d. Advert, poster or billboard
  - e. Radio or TV ad
  - f. Some other way – please specify
4. Are you aware of any other support that's available in your area, similar to JGW+?
5. Can you tell me a little about what you were doing at the time you found out about JGW+? [Note: young people were NEET at the time of joining so this is an opportunity to understand their specific situation]
  - a. Just left school
  - b. Just left college
  - c. Just left a job
  - d. Made redundant
  - e. Unemployed looking for work
  - f. Unemployed not looking for work
  - g. Something else (please specify)

6. When you first joined JGW+, were any of these things making it difficult for you to gain employment, education or training? Tick all that apply

- a. Not having the right qualifications
- b. Not having the right skills
- c. Not having relevant work experience
- d. Not being able to afford childcare
- e. Having caring responsibilities
- f. You are disabled, deaf, neurodivergent, have a learning difficulty or a long-term health condition
- g. Your age
- h. Alcohol or drug dependency
- i. Having a criminal record
- j. Not sure what you wanted to do
- k. Something else (please specify)
- l. Don't know
- m. Nothing specific was making it difficult

7. What was it about JGW+ that made you decide to take part? Tick all that apply

- a. Chance of a paid job
- b. Chance of work experience or work placement
- c. Training allowance on offer when on the programme
- d. Free meals that were provided when attending training
- e. The kind of support that the programme provided
- f. Access to free education and training
- g. Something else (please specify)

8. To what extent did the training allowance influence your decision to join JGW+?

- a. To a great extent
- b. To some extent
- c. To no extent
- d. Don't know

### **Entry to JGW – Initial Diagnostic**

Here we're going to ask some questions about your experience of getting signed up to JGW+.

9. Do you remember speaking to a staff member (at Contractor) at the start of the programme to discuss what support you needed and how they might be able to help you?

- a. Yes
- b. No

10. When you initially spoke to the staff member (at Contractor) about your needs or wishes from JGW+ what kinds of things did you talk about? (Tick all that apply)

- a. Things in my personal life that I was struggling with
- b. What would happen on Jobs Growth Wales and what I needed to do
- c. My goals and future career ideas
- d. Helping to understand where I needed to develop
- e. Something else (please specify)
- f. [do not read out] Can't remember

11. What kind of support did you talk about? (Tick all that apply)

- a. Work experience or finding a placement
- b. Help with finding a job, such as CV writing or job searches
- c. Mental health
- d. Educational support, e.g. help with reading and writing
- e. Accessing qualifications
- f. ongoing check-ins and changes to my support if i needed it
- g. something else (please specify)
- h. [do not read out] can't remember

12. on a scale of 1–5, where 1 means not useful at all and 5 means extremely useful, how useful were these chats with jgw+ staff?

- a. 1 – not useful at all
- b. 2
- c. 3
- d. 4
- e. 5 – extremely useful

13. why did you give that score? [probe: we want to understand why they felt this conversation was useful or not useful, so, for example, whether participants felt comfortable sharing or if they felt that the support explained to them was right for them. avoid them just saying "it was good/bad"]

14. What language did you prefer to use when accessing JGW+ support?

- a. Welsh
- b. English
- c. Other

15. What was your preferred language?

16. Did you access any support from JGW+ in your preferred language?

- a. Yes
- b. No

17. What support did you access in your preferred language? (Tick all that apply)

- a. Training
- b. Reading materials
- c. JGW+ website
- d. Other (please specify)

18. How easy or difficult was it to access support in your preferred language and why?

19. Why did you not access the service in your preferred language? (Tick all that apply)

- a. Support was not offered in my preferred language
- b. Didn't feel confident enough in using my preferred language
- c. No staff who spoke my preferred language were available
- d. Didn't know the support was available in my preferred language
- e. Other (please specify)

### **Accessing JGW+**

We are keen to understand how inclusive JGW+ has been and how it has met your needs. Here we will discuss topics such as meeting your individual needs, discrimination, and equality.

20. Are you comfortable to answer these questions?

- a. Yes
- b. No

21. To what extent do you agree that everyone is treated equally on JGW+, regardless of their background or characteristics?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Not sure

22. Are there any ways that JGW+ could be improved in terms of inclusion and equality? Here we mean ways in which people could be treated more equally or included regardless of their needs or background.

23. Have you experienced or witnessed any discriminatory behaviour throughout your time with JGW+?
- a. Yes, I have experienced this behaviour myself
  - b. Yes, I have witnessed this behaviour myself
  - c. No
  - d. Prefer not to say
24. Were you able to tell someone at JGW+ about what you experienced or witnessed?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
25. Was it managed in the way that you would have liked?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
26. How could this be improved on the JGW+ programme?
27. To what extent do you agree that you have been listened to during your JGW+ sessions by JGW+ staff?
- a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neither agree nor disagree
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree
  - f. Not sure
28. Are there any ways in which JGW+ could be improved to make sure that participants feel listened to?
29. To what extent do you agree that you have been respected during your JGW+ sessions by JGW+ staff?
- a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neither agree nor disagree
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree
  - f. Not sure
30. Are there any ways in which JGW+ could be improved to make sure that participants feel respected?

31. To what extent do you agree that the JGW+ staff represented those being supported? For example, their gender, ethnicity, experiences, etc.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Not sure

32. What makes you feel that the JGW+ staff didn't represent those being supported?

### **Support Received**

We want to ask you a little bit about the support that you had from JGW+.

33. Were you able to access JGW+ support straight away or was there a delay?

- a. Straight away
- b. No, I had to wait
- c. I can't remember

34. How long did you have to wait?

35. Did you take part in a part of the JGW+ programme called Get Ready? This would have taken place at school, usually in the school holiday, providing a range of activities to support you into education or employment.

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

36. Roughly when did you start doing the Get Ready programme?

- a. Month:
- b. Year:

37. What activities did you do on the Get Ready programme?

38. Can you tell me what you did after you completed the Get Ready programme?

- a. Continued with the JGW+ programme
- b. Moved into a job
- c. Moved onto education and training
- d. Other (please specify)

39. Do you remember receiving a training allowance from Jobs Growth Wales+? This is a weekly payment that you received for attending JGW+.

- a. Yes
- b. No



c. Don't know

40. What did you use the allowance for? (Tick all that apply)

- a. Travel expenses
- b. Food costs
- c. Savings
- d. Clothing/uniform
- e. Household contributions
- f. Equipment for work/placement
- g. Driving lessons
- h. Social/leisure
- i. Something else (please specify)
- j. Can't remember

41. To what extent, if any, did receiving the allowance reduce any financial pressure for you?

- a. To a great extent
- b. To some extent
- c. To no extent
- d. Don't know

42. What kind of support did you receive from JGW+? (Tick all that apply)

- a. Advice on my career
- b. Helped accessing college/further education courses
- c. Work placement
- d. Personal development, e.g. confidence, social skills
- e. Practical guidance around CVs, job searching, and work experience
- f. Mental health support
- g. Support with Maths and English
- h. One-to-one sessions with a tutor
- i. Something else (please specify)
- j. Unsure

43. How often would you meet with your tutor?

44. Did you get all of the support that you needed?

- a. Yes
- b. No

45. What other support do you feel that you needed?

46. Were you offered any support through JGW+ that you decided not to take up?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Can't remember

47. What was this support?

48. Why didn't you take up the support?

## **Destinations and outcomes**

Here we'd like to ask you about work placements and what you've done since finishing the programme. If you are still with JGW+ you will skip out questions that are related to this topic.

49. Did you do a work placement as part of your time on the JGW+ programme?

- a. Yes – I completed a placement
- b. Yes – I am currently doing a placement
- c. Yes – I did a placement but it ended early
- d. No

50. What happened at the end of this placement?

- a. I was offered a job with that employer
- b. I was offered an apprenticeship with that employer
- c. I wasn't offered a job with that employer

51. Are you still working for that employer?

- a. Yes
- b. No

52. Have you changed job roles since working for that employer?

- a. Yes
- b. No

53. To what extent did the Get Ready programme prepare you for this?

- a. Completely
- b. To some extent
- c. Not at all
- d. Don't know

54. Do you feel comfortable telling me why your placement ended early?

55. Which of these is the main thing you are doing now? [Interviewer note: please read out codes and single codes. If the interviewee is on maternity or paternity leave or waiting to start a new job, then please code as 'Employed including by a family member, or on an apprenticeship'. If the interviewee is waiting for a training course, to start code as 'In education or training']

- a. I'm still on the JGW+ programme
- b. Employed including by a family member
- c. On an apprenticeship
- d. Unemployed and looking for work
- e. In education or training

- f. Working in a voluntary, unpaid role or internship
- g. not in employment and not looking for paid work (for example, looking after children or relatives, retired) or training
- h. do not read out: other (please specify)
- i. do not read out: don't know

56. What is your job title? [Include sector detail if a generic job title]

57. What are your main duties or responsibilities?

58. When did your current job start?

- a. Month:
- b. Year:

59. Is the job ...?

- a. On a permanent or open-ended contract
- b. On a fixed-term contract lasting 12 months or longer
- c. On a fixed-term contract lasting less than 12 months
- d. On a temporary or casual basis
- e. On a zero hours' contract
- f. Other (please specify)
- g. Don't know

60. Would you like to be on a more permanent contract?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

61. On average, how many hours per week do you usually work, including any paid overtime?

- a. Less than 16 hours
- b. 16 to 30 hours
- c. 31 to 39 hours
- d. 40 or more hours
- e. Don't know

62. You said that you are working part-time. Would you like to be working on a full-time basis?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

63. Please can you tell me which of the following bandings your annual pay would fall into?  
[Interviewer note: including any overtime, bonuses, commissions or tips but BEFORE any deductions for tax, national insurance, pension contributions, etc.]

- a. Less than £2,000
- b. £2,000 – £9,999
- c. £10,000 – £17,999
- d. £18,000 – £26,999
- e. £27,000 – £29,999
- f. £30,000+
- g. Don't know

64. Are there opportunities for promotion or further progression in your current job?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

65. Did you access this education and training through JGW+?

- a. Yes
- b. No

66. Which of the following types of education or training are you currently doing? Tick **all** that apply

- a. In school
- b. In college full-time – 16 hours or more per week
- c. In college part-time – less than 16 hours per week
- d. On a course whilst in work – on-the-job training
- e. In university
- f. do not read out: other (please specify)
- g. do not read out: don't know

67. except for the activity that we have already mentioned, since you left jgw+ have you had periods doing other things?

- a. no – just (that choice) the whole time
- b. yes – had period doing other things
- c. do not read out: can't remember

68. Were you doing any of the following activities? Tick **all** that apply

- a. Employed including by a family member
- b. On an apprenticeship
- c. In education or training
- d. Working in a voluntary, unpaid role or internship
- e. None of these

69. [If had a period doing other things] Please can you tell us when these activities started and ended?

|   | Start date |      | End date |      |
|---|------------|------|----------|------|
|   | Month      | Year | Month    | Year |
| Employed including by a family member             |            |      |          |      |
| On an apprenticeship                              |            |      |          |      |
| In education or training                          |            |      |          |      |
| Working in a voluntary, unpaid role or internship |            |      |          |      |
| None of these                                     |            |      |          |      |

70. For which of the following reasons are you not currently looking for work? Tick **all** that apply

- a. You are disabled, deaf, neurodivergent, have a learning difficulty or a long-term health condition
- b. Caring responsibilities including childcare
- c. No jobs available
- d. I don't need or want employment
- e. Don't know
- f. Or are there some other reasons you are not looking for a job? (Please specify)

71. Which, if any, of the following things make it difficult currently for you to find work? (Tick all that apply)

- a. Not having the right qualifications
- b. Not having the right skills
- c. Not having relevant work experience
- d. Not being able to afford childcare
- e. Having caring responsibilities
- f. You are disabled, deaf, neurodivergent, have a learning difficulty or a long-term health condition
- g. Your age
- h. Alcohol or drug dependency
- i. Having a criminal record
- j. Not sure what I want to do
- k. Something else (please specify)
- l. Don't know
- m. Nothing specific is making it difficult

72. If you hadn't had support from JGW+, would you still have achieved the same outcome?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Not sure
- d. Yes, through another programme

73. What would you be doing now if you hadn't joined JGW+?

**Reflections of JGW+ support**

74. Which of these employment skills, if any, has JGW+ helped you with? (Tick all that apply)

- a. Improved my CV
- b. Improved my job-searching skills
- c. Improved my interview techniques
- d. Helped me access relevant education/training
- e. Helped me understand what I wanted to do for a career
- f. Helped me discover what training or jobs were out there
- g. Learning new skills
- h. Other (please specify)
- i. It hasn't helped my employment skills
- j. Too early to say

75. Which of these ways, if any, did JGW+ help you with? (Tick all that apply)

- a. Feeling more optimistic
- b. Having routine/structure to my life
- c. Getting me out of the house
- d. Improving my confidence
- e. Meeting new people / making new friends
- f. Experiencing new opportunities
- g. Feeling better about myself
- h. Feeling more motivated
- i. Other (please specify)
- j. None of the above
- k. Too early to say

These next few questions are about how your feelings on aspects of your life have changed since engaging with JGW+. There are no right or wrong answers. For each of these questions I'd like you to give an answer on how these things have changed for you, but you are welcome to skip any questions that you don't feel comfortable answering.

76. Are you happy for me to ask these questions?

- a. Yes
- b. No

77. How satisfied are you with your life now compared to before you took part in JGW+?

- a. I am much more satisfied with my life now
- b. I am a little bit more satisfied with my life now
- c. It's stayed the same
- d. I am a little less satisfied with my life now
- e. I am much less satisfied with my life now

78. How worthwhile do you feel that the things you do in your life are now compared to before you took part in JGW+?

- a. They are much more worthwhile now
- b. Are a little more worthwhile now
- c. It's stayed the same
- d. Are a little less worthwhile now
- e. Are much less worthwhile now

79. How happy do you feel now compared to before you took part in JGW+?

- a. Much happier now
- b. A little bit happier now
- c. It's stayed the same
- d. A little less happy now
- e. Much less happy now

80. Overall, how anxious do you feel now compared to before you took part in JGW+?

- a. Much less anxious now
- b. A little less anxious now
- c. It's stayed the same
- d. A little more anxious now
- e. Much more anxious now

interviewer note: if the interviewee chooses option 'e' in any of the above questions, please say: I can see you've mentioned that a number of things have got worse recently, so I'd recommend that you contact [provider name] to discuss how they can support you.

81. If you feel that it's helpful, I can provide you with some contact details for organisations that could provide some support? Would you like me to do this?

- a. Yes
- b. No

The C.A.L.L Helpline, a dedicated mental health helpline for Wales. Call 0800 132 737 or text 'help' to 81066 or visit [www.callhelpline.org.uk](http://www.callhelpline.org.uk).

The MEIC Helpline Support for children and young people up to 25 years of age, open 8 a.m. to midnight, 7 days a week. You can contact them for free by phone on 080880 23456, by texting 84001, and via instant messaging on their website at: [www.meiccymru.org/get-help/](http://www.meiccymru.org/get-help/).

The following services are available 24/7:

NHS Direct on 111, to get immediate medical advice

Samaritans on 116 123 (Welsh language: 0808 164 0123), offering a safe space to talk to a trusted volunteer about what you're experiencing

Childline on 0800 1111, to speak to a counsellor who will be able to support you and listen

82. Would you like to stop the interview or are you happy to continue?

- a. Yes – continue
- b. No – stop the interview

83. What is the biggest impact, if anything, that JGW+ has had on your life?

84. Are there any ways in which you feel that JGW+ could be improved?

85. Is there anything further that you would like to add about your experience of JGW+?

86. Would you like to be entered into the prize draw to win Love 2 Shop vouchers?

- a. Yes
- b. No

87. To be entered into this prize draw, please enter your details:

- a. Name:
- b. Email address:

88. One last question: as part of the evaluation we may wish to speak to participants in JGW+ again in more detail to help us understand how the programme is working for young people and their experiences. Would you be happy for us to contact you again as part of any further research? [Interviewer note: please inform them that they will be free to refuse to take part in further research even if they consent to being contacted]

- a. Yes
- b. No



## **Annexe 2b: Destination (post-Six-months) survey telephone survey template**

A. Are you happy to continue with the survey?

Please note that you can stop at any time.

- a. Yes
- b. No [end survey]

B. Would you like to conduct the interview in English or in Welsh?

- a. English
- b. Welsh

1. Our records show that you worked with [provider name], who supported you through the JGW+ programme. Do you remember taking part in the JGW+ programme?

- a. Yes
- b. No [end survey]

### **Your journey after JGW+**

Here we'd like to ask you about work placements and what you've done since finishing the programme.

2. Did you do a work placement as part of your time on the JGW+ programme?

- a. Yes, I did a placement
- b. Yes, I did a placement, but it ended early
- c. No

3. [If yes] What happened at the end of this placement?

- a. I was offered a job with that employer
- b. I wasn't offered a job with that employer

4. Are you still working for that employer?

- a. Yes
- b. No

5. Have you changed job roles since working for that employer?

- a. Yes
- b. No

6. Do you feel comfortable telling me why your placement ended early?

7. Which of these is the main thing that you are doing now?

- a. On the JGW+ programme
- b. Employed including by a family member
- c. On an apprenticeship

- d. Unemployed and looking for work
- e. In education or training
- f. Working in a voluntary, unpaid role or internship
- g. Not in employment and not looking for paid work or training (for example, looking after children or relatives, retired)
- h. Other (please specify)
- i. Don't know

8. What is your job title?

9. What are your main duties or responsibilities?

10. When did your current job start?

a. Month:

b. Year:

11. Is the job ...?

- a. On a permanent or open-ended contract
- b. On a fixed-term contract lasting 12 months or longer
- c. On a fixed-term contract lasting less than 12 months
- d. On a temporary or casual basis
- e. On a zero hours' contract
- f. Other

12. On average, how many hours per week do you usually work, including any paid overtime?

- a. Less than 16 hours
- b. 16 to 30 hours
- c. 31 to 39 hours
- d. 40 or more hours
- e. Don't know

13. Did you access this education and training through JGW+?

- a. Yes
- b. No

14. Which of the following types of education or training are you currently doing? Tick **all** that apply

- a. In school
- b. In college full-time – 16 hours or more per week
- c. In college part-time – less than 16 hours per week
- d. On a course whilst in work – on-the-job training
- e. Experience ahead of taking up regular employment
- f. In university
- g. Other (please specify)

h. Don't know

15. For which of the following reasons are you not currently looking for work? Tick **all** that apply

- a. You are disabled, deaf, neurodivergent, have a learning difficulty or a long-term health condition
- b. Caring responsibilities including childcare
- c. No jobs available
- d. I don't need or want employment
- e. Other (please specify)
- f. Don't know

### **Reflections of JGW+ Support**

16. Which of these employment skills, if any, has JGW+ helped you with? Tick **all** that apply

- a. Improved my CV
- b. Improved my job-searching skills
- c. Improved my interview techniques
- d. Helped me access relevant education or training
- e. Helped me understand what I wanted to do for a career
- f. Helped me discover what training or jobs were out there
- g. None of the above
- h. It hasn't helped my employment skills
- i. Too early to say

17. Which of these did JGW+ help you with? Tick **all** that apply

- a. Feeling more optimistic
- b. Having routine or structure to my life
- c. Getting me out of the house
- d. Improving my confidence
- e. Meeting new people or making new friends
- f. Experiencing new opportunities
- g. Feeling better about myself
- h. Other (please specify)
- i. None of the above
- j. Too early to say

18. What is the biggest impact, if anything, that JGW+ has had on your life?

19. Are there any ways in which you feel that JGW+ could be improved?

20. Would you like to be entered into the prize draw to win Love 2 Shop vouchers?

- a. Yes
- b. No

21. To be entered into this prize draw, please enter your details:

a. Name:

b. Email address:

## **Annexe 2c: Discussion guide for interviews with internal stakeholders (contractor and sub-contractor, and Welsh Government staff)**

### **Introduction**

1. Please can you introduce yourself and your role within JGW+ at your organisation?

### **Engagement and provision of support**

2. Generally, how effective has the referral approach been in the last 12 months in attracting and engaging young people in JGW+? Please consider this in terms of (a) the referral of customers to the service by Working Wales, (b) other third parties such as local authority EPC contacts, and (c) direct referral
  - a. Is this approach consistent across Wales?
3. Are individuals who are referred for support able to access/engage with the support?
  - a. Are individuals able to take up the support immediately or is there a waiting period?
  - b. Do all referrals arrive with a completed ARR or other assessment tool indicating circumstances? (Please confirm what type of referral tool is used)
    - i. How effective are these tools in providing information?

Once recruited by the programme an assessment process is then conducted to ensure that young people are given appropriate support/allocated to an appropriate support strand.

4. In your opinion, how well has the JGW+ assessment process worked over the last 12 months to ensure that young people can be successfully and effectively supported?
  - a. Are the advice and guidance provided whilst undertaking the assessment accurate?
  - b. What are the main needs that this assessment is highlighting amongst young people?
  - c. To your knowledge, do participants declare all barriers at the assessment stage? Or are these/some declared later?
    - i. Are participants able to access the service in the language of their choice?
  - d. What, if anything, is being done to identify those who want to engage through the medium of Welsh? Is this sufficient?
5. How are the young person's well-being and additional learning needs assessed?
  - a. What are the main needs that this assessment is highlighting? To what extent would you say that the JGW+ funding is sufficient to meet these needs?
  - b. How are any safeguarding concerns managed? Are staff equipped to manage these throughout delivery?

**ask contractors only – otherwise go to q8**

6. How well do you think that your/your organisation's needs assessment approach enables you to accurately allocate a young person to a JGW+ support strand?

7. Is 'dropout' by young people, at any stage in JGW+ provision, an issue? Is there any variance in this by different support strand and/or local authority area?

- a. If so, what improvements or changes could be implemented to reduce those leaving JGW+ support?

**Support for protected groups**

8. How easy has your organisation/JGW+ found it to engage with the following groups?

- a. Welsh language or other non-English/ESOL-speaking service users
- b. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups
- c. LGBTQ+ service users
- d. Disabled people or those with additional learning needs
- e. Are there any other groups similar to these that you feel should be identified?

9. Have you felt able to respond to the needs of each of these groups? Do they differ at all from the needs of other groups?

10. Does any support requested involve additional learning need or neurodiversity diagnosis? Or other accessibility requirements such as access to work provision?

11. Have there been any specific challenges in supporting these needs?

**ask contractors only – otherwise go to q13**

12. How do your JGW+ staff engage directly with employers?

- a. How does this engagement feed into your JGW+ provision?
- b. Could this be improved/enhanced in any way?

**ask all**

13. In what ways (if at all) does the support that you deliver seek to address skills gaps in the local workforce?

14. How has your organisation/JGW+ ensured that its delivery addresses skills needs for Net Zero or green skills in the local workforce?

- a. How effective do you think that this has been?
- b. How could this be improved at all?

## **Support strands**

15. Do you have any comments on your experiences of JGW+ delivery by each of the support strands in the last 12 months?
- a. Are any more difficult/challenging than others?
  - b. Are there any ways in which these strands could be refined or developed?
16. Are there any particular types of support that tend to bring the largest gains (in terms of 'distance travelled') for individuals?

## **Outcomes**

17. How would you summarise the outcomes seen in the last 12 months that JGW+ is generating for young people?
- a. How do these differ by support strand?
  - b. How do the outcomes differ by region or local authority?
18. Thinking of these outcomes, how much of these can be attributed to the work of JGW+?
19. How well do you think that JGW+ is helping young people to reach their employment goals?
- a. Why do you say that?
  - b. Where could JGW+ be improved to achieve more success?
20. In what ways has the programme brought additionality to the provision of employability support for 16 to 19-year-olds in Wales?

## **Partnership and networking**

### **ask contractors only**

21. How would you describe the way in which the Welsh Government have managed JGW+ in the last 12 months?
22. We're aware of some of the changes that the Welsh Government have made to the way in which JGW+ operates. Of those changes which do you think have been the most important in the last 12 months?
- a. Can you explain why you say that?
  - b. Are there any changes that have not been effective?
23. What impact, if any, has the increase in JGW+ allowance for learners had on uptake and retention in the last 12 months?
24. How useful have the Contractor networking opportunities been in the last 12 months?
- a. Can you give any examples of these at all?
  - b. Is there any way in which this could be enhanced or improved at all?

**ask contractors only**

25. How have you managed relationships with your Sub-Contractors in the last 12 months?
- a. Can you give any examples of these at all?
  - b. Is there any way in which these relationships could be enhanced or improved? Is there a role for the Welsh Government in this at all? If so, what could that role involve?

**ask all**

26. In what ways, if at all, have local authority Engagement and Progression Coordinators (EPCs), or equivalent staff, engaged with JGW+ in the last 12 months?

27. Have there been any links between JGW+ and Shared Prosperity Fund projects in the last 12 months? (If yes, with which SPF projects?)

28. How has this impacted JGW+ delivery in the last 12 months?

**Final reflections**

29. What would you say has been the key learning from JGW+ delivery in the last 12 months?

30. Is there anything further that you would like to add, or feel is important, to the evaluation?



## **Annexe 2d: Discussion guide for interviews with external stakeholders local authority (EPCs) and Working Wales**

### **local authority/epc staff/Working Wales**

#### **Introduction**

1. Please can you introduce yourself and your role within your organisation?

#### **Links/connection to JGW+**

2. How is the JGW+ programme linked to your work?
  - a. Have you been in contact with the JGW+ team in your local area in the last 12 months?
    - i. If yes, what does/did that involve? Could it be improved in any way?
    - ii. If not, is there any reason for this? Could it be improved in any way?
  - b. How does your link/connection with JGW+ impact on the delivery of employability support for young people in your local area?
  - c. Has this changed at all in the last 12 months?
    - i. If so, how has it changed?
  - d. Is there any way in which this link or impact could be improved or enhanced?
    - i. How might this best be facilitated? And by whom?
  - e. What benefits to the delivery of employability support in your local area could come from such enhancements/improvements?
3. How have the employability needs of young people in your local area changed over the last 12 months?
4. Why do you think that is the case?
5. How has support for young people in the local area sought to respond to these needs?

#### **JGW+ delivery**

6. Is JGW+ reaching the appropriate individuals? Are these processes effective?
7. Have any of these changes impacted other support for young people in your local area?
  - a. If so, what has been the impact?
  - b. If not, why do you think that is?

#### **JGW+ outcomes**

8. How would you summarise the outcomes that JGW+ is generating for young people in your local area?
  - a. How do these differ by different protected group?
    - i. Do you think that there is any explanation for this?
9. How well do you think that JGW+ is helping young people to reach their employment goals?

- a. What are your reasons for this?
- b. How does this compare to your project/delivery?
  - i. Why do you think that is the case?
- c. Where could JGW+ be improved to achieve more success?

**Final reflections**

10. What would you say has been the key learning from JGW+ delivery?

Is there anything further that you would like to add, or feel is important, to the evaluation?