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# Evaluation of Working Wales in prisons

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

## Evaluation of Working Wales in prisons

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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**

### **CIAG**

Career Information, Advice and Guidance

### **DWP**

Department for Work and Pensions

### **HMPPS**

His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service

### **KAS**

Knowledge and Analytical Services

### **KPI**

Key Performance Indicator

### **P2E**

Pathways to Employment

### **PLA**

Personal Learning Accounts

### **PSI**

Prison Service Information

### **ReAct**

This includes ReAct III, Access and ReAct Plus

### **RTA**

Reflexive Thematic Analysis

### **SLA**

Service Level Agreement

### **VPU**

Vulnerable Prisoner Unit

### **WW**

Working Wales

# 1. Introduction/background

## Background

- 1.1 People in the criminal justice system are often some of the most disadvantaged in society. Reoffending by those released from custody costs society around £15 billion per year in the UK <sup>[footnote1]</sup>. The [Wales Reducing Reoffending Plan 2022-25](#) states prison leavers who get a job are up to nine percentage points less likely to reoffend, helping them gain independence and contribute to the wider society. Investing in education and training in prisons can increase an individual's opportunities of finding sustainable employment on release, aiding safer communities, reducing the cost burden associated with reoffending and reducing the number of future victims of crime.
- 1.2 The Welsh Government's [Plan for Employability and Skills](#) sets out the vision for employment in Wales as well as its commitment to supporting prisoner learning by exploring the development of intensive targeted support for those who are due to leave the prison estate in Wales and are identified as having the most need. It also sets out to make the Young Persons Guarantee <sup>[footnote 2]</sup> accessible to those in prisons.
- 1.3 Whereas education, employability and skills are devolved powers, justice is not. Thus, Welsh Government funds the delivery of education, employability and skills provided in the Welsh prison estate through a joint Memorandum of Understanding with His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).
- 1.4 The Welsh Government has worked in partnership with HMPPS Wales, prisoners and prison leavers, education providers and third sector organisations to co-design 'Better Learning, Better Chances: prison learning and skills provision in Wales' <sup>[footnote 3]</sup>. This policy sets out the vision to 'deliver a safe and inclusive learning environment in prisons that engages and inspires individuals, helping them to become job ready and gain and retain sustainable employment' <sup>[footnote 3]</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Welsh Government (2018) [Commission on Justice in Wales- Education and Employment](#)

<sup>2</sup> [The Young Persons Guarantee](#) provides everyone aged 16 to 24, living in Wales, with support to gain a place in education, training or employment.

<sup>3</sup> Welsh Government (2024) [Better Learning, Better Chances: prison learning and skills provision](#)

- 1.5 Working Wales (WW) is Wales' national impartial, professional, careers and employability support service, available for all those aged 16 and over, and living in Wales. Through the service, careers advisors are available to support young people and adults with free advice, guidance and access to training to help them into work or further their career. To support people in prisons, WW advisors engage with prisoners 12 weeks prior to release and are based within the Employability Hubs. Employability Hubs <sup>[footnote 4]</sup> are a "one stop shop" for prisoners, where different agencies are housed in one place such as WW, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), housing, etc. The Hubs enable employment partners to collaborate to provide tailored advice and services, such as career advice and CVs, to support prisoners on their employment journey.
- 1.6 The total number of Welsh people in prison (based on home address) was 5,034 in 2023 – an increase of eight % compared to the previous year. Most Welsh people in the Welsh prison estate in 2023 were held at HMP Parc (38%), followed by HMP Berwyn (20%), HMP Cardiff (20%), HMP Swansea (10%), HMP Usk (7%) and HMP Prescoed (5%). Other prisoners from Wales (28%) were held in English prisons <sup>[footnote 5]</sup>.
- 1.7 There are no women's prisons in Wales, therefore Welsh female prisoners are imprisoned in England. In 2023, there were 244 Welsh women in prison. The majority (72%) of Welsh female prisoners were placed at HMP Eastwood Park in Gloucestershire (141) and HMP Styal in Cheshire (35).

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<sup>4</sup> [Employment Hubs- New Futures Network](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Jones, R. \(2024\) 2023 Factfile: Prisons and sentencing in Wales](#)



**Table 1.1: Prisons – category, operational capacity and population**

<b>Prison</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Operational Capacity (March 2024)</b>	<b>Total population (March 2024)<sup>6</sup></b>
HMP Cardiff	Category B: local resettlement prison that holds adult males (remanded, unsentenced, sentenced and recalled) served by courts in the local area.	775	717
HMP and YOI Parc	Category B: local prison (privately run) that holds convicted adult men, young adults (18 to 20), and young people (16 to 17) remanded and convicted.	1,825	1,791
HMP Swansea	Category B and C: local resettlement prison for adult males (remanded, unsentenced, sentenced and recalled) and serves local courts in south Wales.	452	406
HMP Berwyn	Sentenced category C: adult males and category B adult males on remand.	2,000	1,995
HMP Usk	Small category C: training prison which largely deals with offenders	536	526

<sup>6</sup> This column refers to the total prisoner population of each prison – includes Welsh and non-Welsh. This compares to paras 1.6 and 1.7 which refer to the number of Welsh people in each prison (based on home address).

	convicted under the Sex Offenders Act 1997.		
HMP Prescoed	Adult male open prison that manages category D prisoners.		
HMP Eastwood Park	Closed category prison and young offender institution for women.	376	352
HMP Styal	Closed category women's prison.	454	419

Sources: Cardiff University<sup>5</sup> & Ministry of Justice<sup>7</sup>

HMP Usk and HMP Prescoed are two separate prisons located on different sites that are managed as a 'single entity' by HMPPS.

- 1.8 WW deliver careers and employability advice, guidance and coaching within each of the secure prisons in Wales, as well as HMP Eastwood Park in Gloucestershire and HMP Styal in Cheshire to Welsh female prisoners. The service reports performance data accurately in line with the agreed format to the relevant prisons, HMPPS and the Welsh Government. This information is analysed and used to inform on the demand for WW at each prison. This is to help ensure that all prisoners, who are approaching release from prison, fully benefit from the careers and employability support provided to them.
- 1.9 There have been instances of changes in the deployment of WW resource in prisons. An increase in resource was implemented at some of the prisons in December 2023. For example, the number of days available per week increased from 2.50 to 5.50 at HMP Cardiff and from 2.00 to 3.00 at HMP Swansea. Also, the introduction of an allocated careers advisor <sup>[footnote 8]</sup> at HMP Styal for 0.25 days per week was implemented in March 2023.

<sup>7</sup> [Prison population statistics - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>8</sup> Careers advisors are Level 6 qualified in Careers, Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG). Their role is to provide professional guidance services to improve clients' skills, knowledge and understanding for career planning and management.

**Table 1.2: Prisons - Working Wales staff resource**

Prison	Number of days available per week		
	April 2021 to March 2022 <sup>9</sup>	April 2022 to March 2023	April 2023 –to March 2024
HMP Cardiff	2.50	2.50	2.50 (Apr to Nov) 5.50 (Dec to Mar)
HMP and YOI Parc	3.00	3.00	3.00
HMP Prescoed	2.00	2.00	2.00 (Apr to Nov) 3.00 (Dec to Mar)
HMP Swansea	2.00	2.00	2.00 (Apr to Nov) 3.00 (Dec to Mar)
HMP Berwyn	2.00	2.00	2.00
HMP Usk	1.00	1.00	1.00

<sup>9</sup> Number of days per week by prison was unavailable between April 2021 and December 2021. Therefore, the figures displayed are based upon the period of January 2022 to March 2022

HMP Eastwood Park	0.25	0.25	0.25
HMP Styal	0.00	0.00 (Apr to Feb)  0.25 (Mar)	0.25

Source: Working Wales KPI report

- 1.10 The WW objectives for 2023 to 24 are outlined in the Grant Award Letter issued by Welsh Government and include the following:

**Table 1.3: Working Wales Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**

Work within the Adult Prisons Service		
Indicator	Target	Achieved
Customers in prisons to be offered a one-to-one service	Minimum of 1,000 customers.	1,363 customers.
Customer Satisfaction Surveys to be completed with customers in prisons in Wales	Minimum of 300 Customer Satisfaction Surveys to be completed across prisons in general <sup>10</sup> .	368 Customer Satisfaction Surveys were completed.
Customers in prisons surveyed indicating that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the service they receive	Minimum of 90% of those surveyed to indicate that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the service they receive.	100% of those surveyed were satisfied or very satisfied.

Source: Careers Wales Grant Award letter & Working Wales KPI report

1.11 Other WW objectives include:

- Agreed service level agreement (SLAs) with probation services across Wales which are renewed annually.

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<sup>10</sup> Each prison operates differently therefore Careers Wales work with each prison to tailor the right level of support.

- Increased resource to prisons during 2023 to 24 and plan to increase further during 2024 to 25 due to growing demand for WW support in prisons.
- Review and adapt the provision of advice and guidance to meet customer needs and to work with all relevant partners to support prisoners to make successful transitions. To this end, working strategically and in partnership with existing support networks including prison and probation services and resettlement agencies.

1.12 WW is aligned with the seven shared national well-being goals enacted by the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) <sup>[footnote 11]</sup>. The goal particularly relevant to this research is 'A More Equal Wales' (which aims to develop a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances). This is reflected in the WW service being available in prisons because it aims to give prisoners a more equal opportunity in getting into the labour market once released back into the community. Another key goal is 'A Prosperous Wales; (which aims to develop a skilled and well-educated population in an economy that generates wealth and provides employment opportunities).

### **The research**

1.13 This research aimed to better understand how effective the WW service is in prisons, with focus on how the service differs between prisons and any challenges in service delivery.

### **Report structure**

1.14 Interviewees referred to individuals receiving support in prisons as either 'prisoners', 'offenders' or 'customers'. Out of choice, the report will use the term 'prisoners' so there is a clear difference between the individuals WW advisors help in the community and those in prisons.

1.15 The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

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<sup>11</sup> Welsh Government (2015) [Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015](#)

- Chapter 2 outlines the methodology for the research undertaken for this report.
- Chapter 3 provides a short literature review to offer insight into employment opportunities in prison settings.
- Chapter 4 explores the findings from the quantitative analysis of the service monitoring information.
- Chapter 5 explores the themes drawn out from the findings of the qualitative data collection.
- Chapters 6 and 7 summarise the research and consider the future of WW in prisons and the opportunities and constraints associated with the programme.

## **2. Methodology**

2.1 A range of research methods was undertaken in the delivery of this evaluation (as briefly introduced below). The research focused its attention on answering five research questions:

- To what extent is the service delivered as outlined in WW objectives?
- What, if any, challenges are faced by the service?
- Do these challenges differ by prison?
- How do referrals and outcomes differ between prisons? What are the trends?
- What, if any, contact does the service have with third party organisations?

### **Literature review**

2.2 To understand the impact employability information, advice and guidance in prisons has on an individual's subsequent ability to enter/re-enter employment, a rapid evidence assessment of relevant literature was conducted. This was the most appropriate form of review in the timescale.

2.3 To identify relevant literature, search terms were used to systematically filter search engines and research portals. The research terms included: Working Wales, Working Wales evaluation/ guidance/ in prisons, and employability services/ services in prisons/ guidance for offenders/ guidance for ex-offenders upon release. Filters were used to narrow down results to publications written in English and published after 2010.

2.4 Documents included were either academic or governmental. Documents were screened against the inclusion criteria in the literature review protocol (Appendix A). These documents were not assessed for quality systematically; instead, the researcher used their own judgement on robustness and relevance of the literature. After the researcher assessed the literature, this was narrowed down to a total of 20 publications that were deemed useful for inclusion.



## **Analysis of monitoring information**

- 2.5 A quantitative analysis was conducted of WW service monitoring information. The data supplied by Careers Wales in Microsoft Excel, in July 2024, included:
1. episodes of support: WW staff often work with an individual on multiple occasions; each occasion is recorded as an 'episode of support'. An episode of support can be a single day (e.g. where only one interaction is needed) or may extend to several months (e.g. where more than one interaction is needed). Episodes of support were categorised as either 'prison episodes of support', where they had at least one interaction with a venue of a prison, or 'subsequent episodes of support', where they had taken place in the community since a prison episode of support had ended.
  2. interactions: each individual communication between WW staff and an individual as part of an episode of support is recorded as an 'interaction'. An interaction can be via a mix of channels, including email, in-person, telephone, text or email.

A full list of variables for each can be found at Appendix B.

- 2.6 The main focus of the analysis was the prison episodes of support and the individual interactions from these. Prison episodes of support were delivered by the WW service to prisoners. However, as an episode of support is categorised as a prison episode of support if it contains at least one interaction with a venue of a prison, it means that some prison episodes of support included interactions that took place in both prisons and in the community.
- 2.7 Analysis was conducted on episodes of support which began between 2021 to 22 and 2023 to 24 (i.e. between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024) and on interactions which took place between 2022 to 23 and 2023 to 24 (i.e. between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024). Interactions in 2021 to 22 (i.e. between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022) were not included as these were impacted by Careers Wales' data retention policy. Careers Wales automatically delete interaction data once it becomes more than two business years old, as long as there has been no interaction in the interim (if a customer had had a recent interaction, then the clock is reset for their interaction data).

- 2.8 The analysis of the monitoring information data was undertaken in Microsoft Excel.

## **Interviews**

- 2.9 Semi-structured interviews were conducted in February to March 2024 with WW advisors, who work specifically in prisons. The semi-structured interviews engaged five participants whose details were provided by Careers Wales.
- 2.10 Semi-structured interviews with WW advisors were conducted online via Microsoft Teams. There were five interviews conducted overall, each consisting of one advisor and two researchers from Knowledge and Analytical Services (KAS) in the Welsh Government. The interviews lasted between forty-five minutes to an hour.
- 2.11 WW advisors were recruited through a bilingual email that detailed the rationale for the research, the interviewer details and a privacy notice. At the request of the participants, all the interviews were undertaken in English.
- 2.12 An interview discussion guide was developed by KAS researchers, with input from Welsh Government policy officials. The same interview discussion guide was used for each participant. Participants were asked questions about; (a), delivery of the service, (b), interactions with the prisoners, (c), any challenges or barriers associated with the service and (d) contact with third party organisations, both internally and externally. The full discussion guide is provided in Appendix C.
- 2.13 Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed using the automatic transcription function through Microsoft Teams. Two researchers then independently reviewed the transcripts to correct any errors.
- 2.14 Reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) was used by the researcher on the data collected. RTA is used as a 'method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data' ([‘Using thematic analysis in psychology’ \(Braun and Clarke, 2006\) \(Taylor & Francis Online\)](#)).
- 2.15 Reflexive thematic analysis is considered a reflection of the researcher’s interpretive analysis of the data, therefore there should be no expectation that codes or themes interpreted by one researcher may be reproduced by another ([‘A worked example of Braun and Clarke’s approach to reflexive thematic analysis’ \(Byrne, 2021\) \(Springer](#)

[Nature Link](#)). The data was analysed by two researchers in KAS to sense-check ideas with the aim to achieve richer interpretations of meaning.

## **Methodological limitations and considerations**

- 2.16 It is important to recognise the limitations and considerations associated with the research.

### **Monitoring information**

- 2.17 The number of prison episodes of support and interactions are greater than those reported by Careers Wales in annual reports. A comparison can be found in Annex B (Tables B.1 and B.2). It was advised by Careers Wales that the figures in the Careers Wales annual report are based on KPI reports which are often collated using a data extraction from the first day of the following month. This means that any late data entry or corrections to the data are not included. In contrast, the data for this report was extracted in July 2024 so the figures include late data entry or corrections. Additionally, for interactions, Careers Wales annual report figures avoid double-counting work. For example, as some customers in prison may also be recipients of ReAct <sup>[footnote<sup>12</sup>]</sup> then these interactions, related to ReAct, are counted in figures reported for ReAct and not prisons. However, these interactions were not separated out in the data supplied for this report.
- 2.18 'Episodes of support by prison' analysis was based upon the prison of referral to WW. Some episodes of support may have included interactions at more than one prison if, for example, a prisoner had moved prisons. In these instances, the episode of support was included in the proportion for the prison which referred the prisoner for support.
- 2.19 The 'profile of prisoners' analysis provides a breakdown by prison episodes of support. Therefore, if a prisoner received more than one prison episode of support between 2021 to 22 and 2023 to 24 then they will be counted more than once. This may inflate service access for a demographic characteristic compared to if analysis was conducted by unique prisoner.

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<sup>12</sup> This includes ReAct III, Access and ReAct Plus.

- 2.20 877 prison episodes of support had no highest qualification level data recorded (32% of prison episodes of support). Given the large proportion of these, caution should be taken with drawing conclusions from the findings related to qualification data.
- 2.21 Status six months after leaving an episode of support was unavailable for 807 prison episodes of support (29% of prison episodes of support). These were mainly due to the prison episode of support either not yet being closed or due to it, at the point of the data being supplied (i.e. July 2024), not yet being six months since the prison episode of support had ended. This was highlighted by 780 of the prison episodes of support with no status six months after leaving being in 2023 to 24 (57% of prison episodes of support for that year).
- 2.22 There were eight prison episodes of support with no interactions (0.3% of prison episodes of support) and 36 subsequent episodes of support with no interactions (8% of subsequent episodes of support). These episodes were likely where an appointment had been booked, but the individual did not attend the appointment and WW were unable to rebook a new appointment. These episodes were included in the analysis as they form part of the monitoring information provided by the service.
- 2.23 Percentages in tables and graphs are rounded to the nearest whole number. Therefore, some may not total to 100%. Also, 0% may include those with some episodes of support or interaction (less than 0.5%), in addition to those which have no episodes of support or interactions (0.0%).

#### Qualitative interviews

- 2.24 Across the eight prisons where WW is delivered, there are seven advisors. The researchers were able to interview five of these seven.
- 2.25 Given there is one advisor per prison and each setting seemingly quite different, it is not possible to ascertain if responses can be generalised beyond the specific prison setting without a larger sample.
- 2.26 Despite qualitative interviews providing rich insights, texture, and focus, they are only a snapshot and don't necessarily provide wider patterns or information about

longer periods of time. Therefore, findings cannot readily be generalised to a larger population.

- 2.27 The interviews were also only undertaken with WW advisors and not the prisoners. This risks a potential evidence gap, as the full range of experiences and perceptions of the service is not captured.
- 2.28 In addition, interviews were conducted in the context of public sector fiscal restraints and redundancy risk, which may affected response amongst staff when asked about the effectiveness of the service.

### 3. Literature review

- 3.1 As part of this research, a review of the evidence base for the effectiveness of employability advice, information and guidance in prisons in preparation for when prisoners are released was undertaken. This review has drawn heavily on approaches in England and Wales, while also looking more internationally. The review found that education, training, and employability guidance are important in prisons to help prisoners post-release integrate back into society and prevent reoffending <sup>[footnote 13]</sup>. There is also evidence that offering this support to prisoners while in prisons is imperative in keeping a balanced society where individuals are offered equal opportunities <sup>[footnote 13]</sup>. Despite having access to certain support, however, the review found that prisoners struggle post-release to get employment because of hesitant employers not wanting to risk employing an ex-prisoner <sup>[footnote 13]</sup>.
- 3.2 This review has incorporated reviews, reports and research that guide knowledge on the value of employment guidance in prisons and as a result the employment opportunities post-release.

#### **The value of education, training and employment guidance in prisons**

- 3.3 The literature review indicates that education and training is not only a means of supporting prisoners in their transition from prison to the outside world, but according to international conventions and recommendations, prisoners have the same right to education as other citizens. Therefore, education is ‘an imperative in it’s own right’ <sup>[footnote 14]</sup> which prisoners should not forfeit while being in prison.
- 3.4 Research by the Ministry of Justice found that people who had participated in education whilst in prison were less likely to reoffend within 12 months of release than those who had not by 7.5 percentage points<sup>[footnote 15]</sup>. However, across the UK, prison education is in a poor state following a long-term decline in both the quality of education and the number of prisoners participating in learning or training. In 2020, only nine of the 32 institutions inspected by Ofsted were judged to be good or

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<sup>13</sup> GHK (2013) [Prison education and training in Europe](#)

<sup>14</sup> Muñoz, V (2009) [The right to education of persons in detention](#). Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Human Rights Council, UN.

<sup>15</sup> House of Commons (2022) [Not just another brick in the wall](#)

outstanding <sup>[footnote15]</sup>. In Wales, early insights from Estyn inspections in 2023 to 24 suggested that the quality of teaching was inconsistent <sup>[footnote16]</sup>.

- 3.5 These findings are echoed by an American report ([‘Implementing educational courses on social media within prisons to decrease unemployment rates among ex-prisoners and reduce recidivism in the United States’ \(Hernandez, 2019\) \(Regis University Student Publications\)](#)), which suggests that where prisoners have been removed from society, they have not adapted to the advancements of society. Therefore, the training and support currently provided to prisoners in prisons is not adequate or relevant to the skills they’ll need in society. For example, technology is constantly advancing and has now grown to the point where it has become a part of everyone’s daily life. Therefore, [Hernandez \(2019\)](#) suggests that it could possibly be beneficial to implement educational courses on social media within prisons to prepare prisoners for release. This would be valuable to prisoners, and the US, in improving post-release unemployment rates and improving recidivism rates <sup>[footnote17]</sup>.
- 3.6 While there is currently no robust evidence to suggest that a lack of basic skills is predictive of offending, levels of education tend to be low amongst the prison population <sup>[footnote13]</sup>. Therefore, the provision of learning opportunities in prison represents an opportunity to address the qualifications gap, while also providing prisoners with fundamental ‘life skills’.
- 3.7 A Rapid Evidence Assessment of educational programmes delivered within prison revealed a 24% increase in likelihood in gaining employment if the prisoner engages in prison education <sup>[footnote18]</sup>. However, this was only based on a small number of papers with statistical findings being less robust and evidence drawn largely from the USA <sup>[footnote18]</sup>. Therefore, evidence to support the value of education and employability guidance in the UK is very limited.

### **Employment opportunities post-release**

- 3.8 Re-entering society after incarceration presents a formidable set of challenges. According to ([‘Prison Education Maximising the potential for employment and](#)

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<sup>16</sup> Estyn (2024) [Learning in the justice sector](#)

<sup>17</sup> Hernandez, S. (2019) [Implementing Educational Courses on Social Media Within Prisons to Decrease Unemployment Rates Among Ex-Prisoners and Reduce Recidivism in the United States](#)

<sup>18</sup> Ellison, M., Szifris, K., Horan, R., & Fox, C. (2017). [A Rapid Evidence Assessment of the effectiveness of prison education in reducing recidivism and increasing employment](#). *Probation Journal*, 64(2), 108-128.

[successful community reintegration'](#) (Leone and Wruble, 2017) ([Abell Foundation, The Abell Report](#)), those best able to navigate this process have developed skills and credentials while incarcerated that are valued by potential employers, training programs, and colleges.

- 3.9 In England and Wales, criminal reoffending costs £18 billion annually so securing employment is important in supporting desistance from crime <sup>[footnote 19]</sup>. However, only 17% of ex-prisoners are employed a year after release <sup>[footnote 20]</sup>. [Atherton and Buck \(2021\)](#) ([‘Employing with conviction: The experiences of employers who actively recruit criminalised people’](#). *Probation Journal*), in an attempt to understand the motivations of employers who do not recruit criminalised people, found in their qualitative interviews with 12 business leaders in England who proactively employ criminalised people, that inclusive recruitment can be (indirectly) encouraged by planning policies aimed to improve social and environmental well-being <sup>[footnote 21]</sup>. Similarly, [Dar \(2018\)](#) ([‘Using semi-structured interviews to explore employer attitudes towards recruiting ex-offenders’](#). *Manchester Metropolitan University*) reported that negative attitudes towards ex-prisoners can be challenged through policy change and increased awareness and that usually negative attitudes were held due to offence-specific characteristics.
- 3.10 With regards to employment opportunities post-release, similarly to the UK, evidence on an international scale shows prisons to have an extremely limiting effect on employability. Research conducted by [Gilbert, Elley and Best \(2019\)](#) ([‘Second chances: a report on employing offenders in Canterbury’](#). *Independent Research Solutions*.) in New Zealand found that only 65.6% of employers said that they would consider hiring a prisoner. Also, it was found that half of businesses check criminal records during the hiring process and that these businesses were less likely to consider employing a prisoner <sup>[footnote 22]</sup>.
- 3.11 To increase the chances of employability for prisoners, partnership working and decision making at a local level, between prisons, probation services, learning providers, employers and other key stakeholders is fundamental. The Prison Service Information (PSI) presents an operational context for the prisoner

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<sup>19</sup> Probation Journal (2021) [Employing with conviction](#)

<sup>20</sup> Ministry of Justice (2018) [Education and Employment Strategy](#)

<sup>21</sup> Atherton, P., & Buck, G. (2021). [Employing with conviction: The experiences of employers who actively recruit criminalised people](#). *Probation Journal*, 68(2), 186-205.

<sup>22</sup> Gilbert J, Elley B, Best T (2019). [Second chances: a report on employing offenders in Canterbury](#). Pathway Charitable Trust.



employment training and skills experience in custody and facilitates transition and continuity upon release <sup>[footnote 23]</sup>.

- 3.12 Most studies from the UK included in these systematic reviews have been based on male prisoners; there is limited evidence regarding the employability support that women receive while in prison. In the 2018 Female Offender Strategy <sup>[footnote 24]</sup>, the Ministry of Justice underlined the need for ‘an entirely different approach’ to the treatment of women in the criminal justice system. The strategy wanted to help enhance support services in the community and reduce the number of women in custody. In 2023, 18% of all women sentenced to immediate custody in Wales were given sentences of one month or less, this compared to 11% of men <sup>[footnote 25]</sup>.
- 3.13 The literature review found that overall, there is a general lack of evidence regarding employability advice, information, and guidance in prisons, especially across the UK. In search of evidence on an international scale, there is more found in correspondence to reducing reoffending rates and securing employment upon release.

## **4. Analysis of monitoring information**

- 4.1 This chapter details the findings from the quantitative analysis of the WW service monitoring information provided by Careers Wales. Findings cover service delivery, profile of prisoners, referrals to the service, referrals by the service, outcomes and subsequent support.
- 4.2 The analysis of episodes of support are from between April 2021 and March 2024 and the analysis of interactions are from between April 2022 and March 2024 <sup>[footnote 26]</sup>.
- 4.3 The following references to episodes of support refer to analysis of prison episodes of support, except for the ‘subsequent service support’ sub-section – which includes

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<sup>23</sup> Ministry of Justice (2012) [Prisoner employment, training and skills](#)

<sup>24</sup> Ministry of Justice (2018). [Female Offender Strategy](#).

<sup>25</sup> Jones, R. (2024). [Prisons and Sentencing in Wales: 2023 Factfile](#). Cardiff: Wales Governance Centre at Cardiff University.

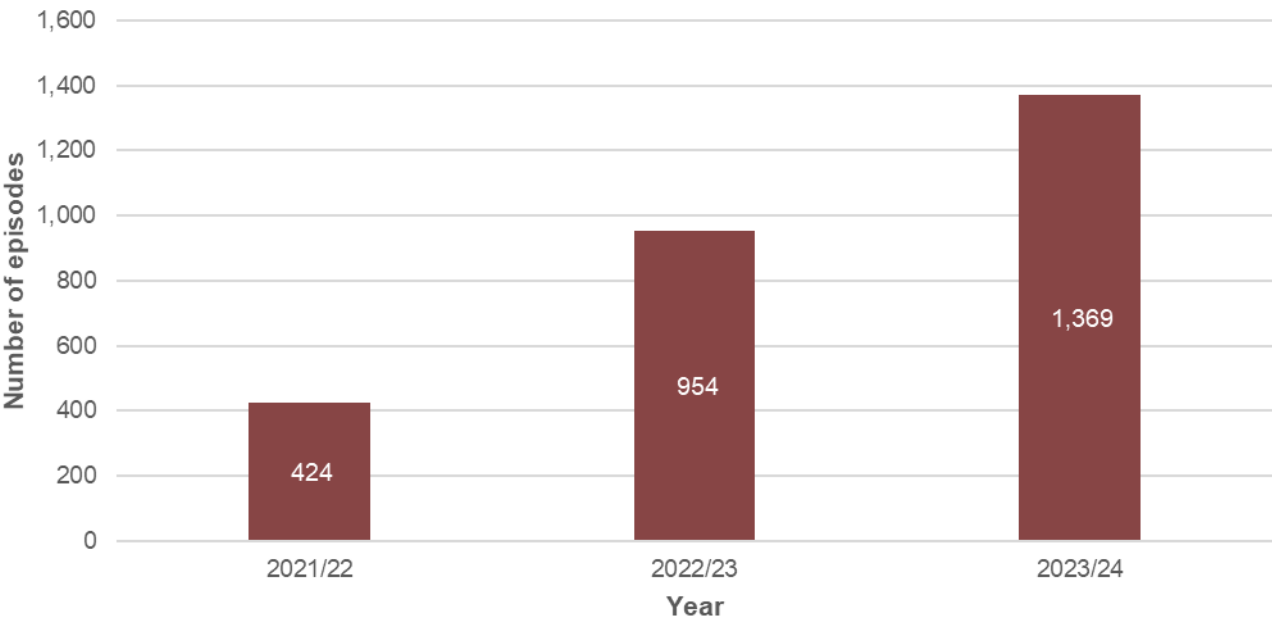
<sup>26</sup> 2021-22 is excluded from analysis of interactions due to Careers Wales’ data retention policy. Further information can be found in the methodology section of this report.

analysis of both prison episodes of support and subsequent episodes of support and, therefore, both are clearly labelled.

**Service delivery**

4.4 There was a total of 2,747 episodes of support which began between April 2021 and March 2024. Figure 4.1 illustrates that the number of episodes of support have increased year-by-year <sup>[footnote 27]</sup>. These increased by 125% between 2021 to 22 and 2022 to 23 and by 44% between 2022 to 23 and 2023 to 24. This finding suggests that WW has met its objective, as outlined in paragraph 1.9, of ‘increased resource to prisons during 2023 to 24’. Episodes of support in 2023 to 24 accounted for half of all episodes of support (50%) during the three-year period.

**Figure 4.1: Episodes of support by year**



Source: Careers Wales – Working Wales monitoring information (n=2,747 episodes of support)

4.5 There was a total of 4,500 one-to-one interactions for episodes of support between April 2022 and March 2024 <sup>[footnote 28]</sup>. The number of one-to-one interactions

<sup>27</sup> Analysis of episodes of support by year is based upon the year that it began.

<sup>28</sup> These include follow-up interactions which sometimes take place between an advisor and a prisoner who has recently been released.

increased from 1,631 in 2022 to 23 (an average of 1.7 per episode of support) to 2,869 in 2023 to 24 (an average of 2.1 per episode of support). This was an annual increase of 76%.

- 4.6 Table 4.1 displays the channel of one-to-one interactions by year. In-person was the most popular channel of interaction in both 2022 to 23 (88%) and 2023 to 24 (86%). The remaining interactions, which were via remote channels, were likely to be follow-up interactions between an advisor and a recently released prisoner but also may have included telephone calls between advisors and prisoners.

**Table 4.1: Channel of one-to-one interactions by year**

Channel	2022 to 23 (n=1,631)	2023 to 24 (n=2,869)
Email	2%	3%
In Person	88%	86%
Telephone	10%	10%
Text	1%	1%
Video	0%	0%

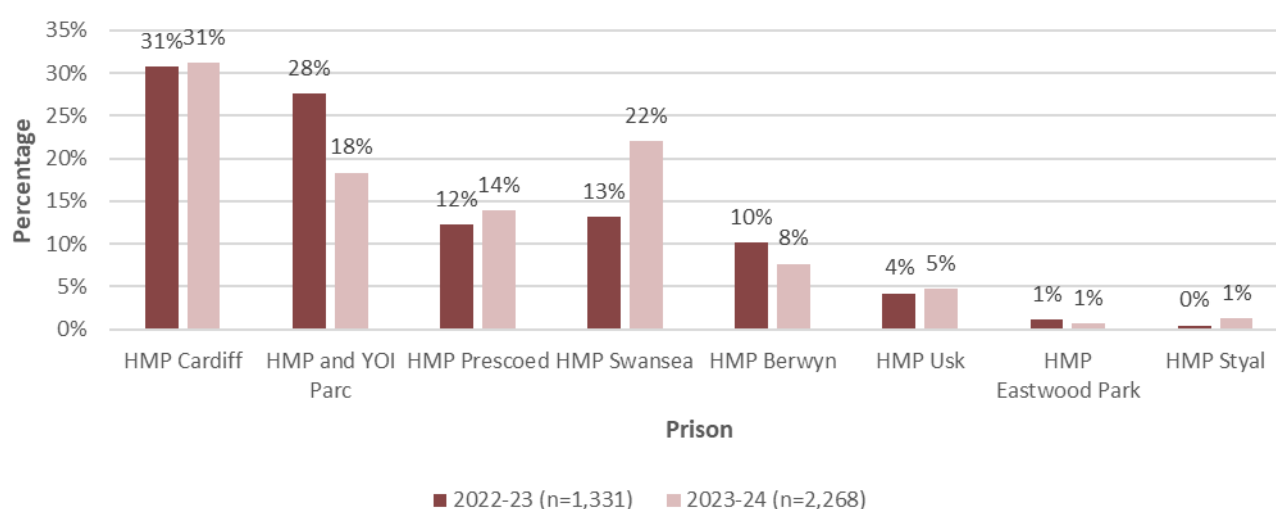
Source: Careers Wales – Working Wales monitoring information (n=4,500 interactions)

#### One-to-one in-person interactions delivered in prisons

- 4.7 In terms of one-to-one in-person interactions between a WW advisor or employability coach and a prisoner, there was 1,437 in 2022 to 23 (an average of 1.5 per episode of support) and 2,456 in 2023 to 24 (an average of 1.8 per episode of support). This type of interaction is used as the basis for analysis as it focuses on the direct face-to-face support delivered by the service.

4.8 Figure 4.2 displays a breakdown of one-to-one in-person interactions by prison and year. HMP Cardiff delivered the greatest proportion of one-to-one in-person interactions in both 2022 to 23 and 2023 to 24, whilst HMP Eastwood Park and HMP Styal delivered the least proportion of these interactions in the same period. An advisor was only allocated to HMP Styal in March 2023, hence the proportion of 0% in 2022 to 23 <sup>[footnote 29]</sup>. Between 2022 to 23 and 2023 to 24, the proportion of one-to-one in-person interactions at HMP and YOI Parc decreased by 10 percentage points whilst the proportion of one-to-one in-person interactions at HMP Swansea increased by 9 percentage points.

**Figure 4.2: Proportion of one-to-one in-person interactions by prison and year**

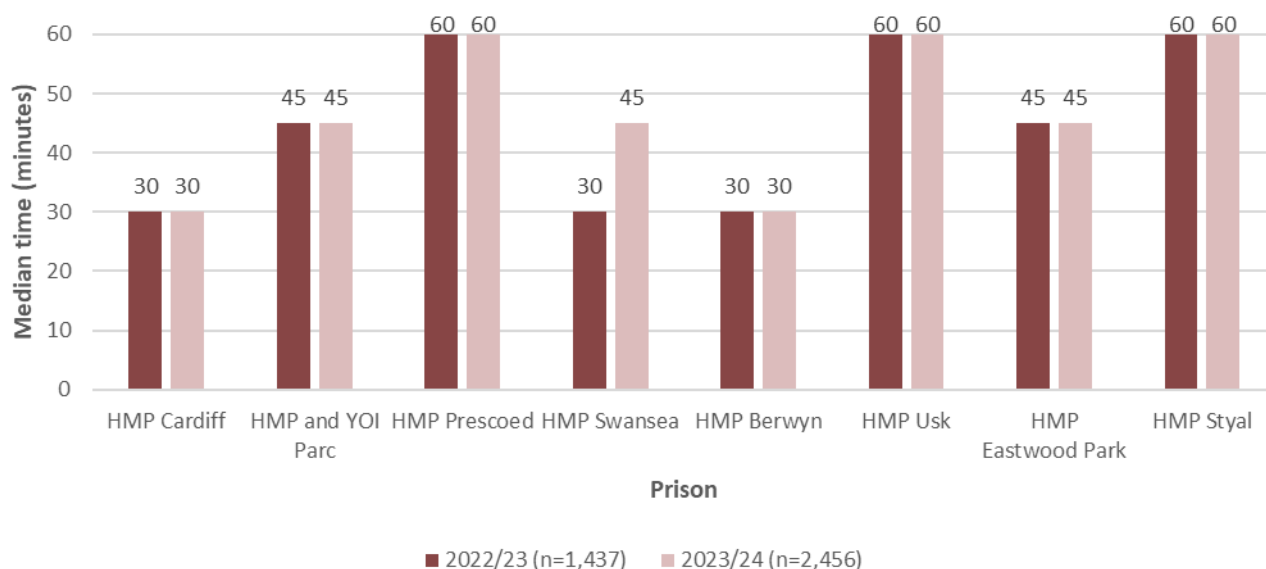


Source: Careers Wales – Working Wales monitoring information (n=3,599 interactions)  
Excluded are 294 one-to-one in-person interactions from venues other than a prison.

4.9 The median time spent per one-to-one in-person interaction was 45 minutes in both 2022 to 23 and 2023 to 24. Figure 4.3 shows the breakdown by prison and year. The median time per one-to-one in-person interaction between a WW advisor or employability coach and prisoner was between 30 to 60 minutes for all prisons. Between 2022 to 23 and 2023 to 24 there was no change in median time per one-to-one in-person interaction at all prisons except HMP Swansea, where interactions increased by 15 minutes in 2023 to 24.

<sup>29</sup> There were 6 interactions at HMP Styal in 2022 to 23.

**Figure 4.3: Median time per one-to-one in-person interaction (minutes) by prison and year**



Source: Careers Wales – Working Wales monitoring information (n=3,599 interactions)  
Excluded are 316 one-to-one in-person interactions from venues other than a prison.

4.10 HMP Cardiff and HMP and YOI Parc have had an employability coach <sup>[footnote 30]</sup> delivering support in addition to a careers advisor. Table 4.2 displays the proportion of one-to-one in-person interactions each year delivered by an advisor and employability coach at both prisons. A greater proportion of one-to-one in-person interactions at HMP Cardiff were delivered by an employability coach in 2022 to 23 than in 2023 to 24. There were no one-to-one in-person interactions delivered by an employability coach at HMP and YOI Parc in 2022 to 23. In both HMP Cardiff and HMP and YOI Parc, one-tenth (10%) of one-to-one in-person interactions in 2023 to 24 were delivered by an employability coach.

<sup>30</sup> Employability coaches are trained to Level 4 CIAG. They provide information and advice by a variety of media, delivering a blended service through both core funded and non-core funded contracts. They deliver employability group sessions and support the running of careers centres.

**Table 4.2: Proportion of one-to-one in-person interactions each year delivered by an advisor and employability coach at HMP Cardiff and HMP and YOI Parc**

Prison	Year	Advisor	Employability Coach
HMP Cardiff	2022 to 23 (n=410)	84%	16%
	2023 to 24 (n=709)	90%	10%
HMP and YOI Parc	2022 to 23 (n=368)	100%	0%
	2023 to 24 (n=416)	90%	10%

Source: Careers Wales – Working Wales monitoring information (n=1,903 interactions)

There is no comparison to the resource split by prison (number of days per week by advisor: number of days per week by employability coach) due to insufficient data available by the service.

## Profile of prisoners

- 4.11 Table 4.3 displays the demographic characteristics for episodes of support between April 2021 and March 2024. A little more than three-quarters of episodes of support were with prisoners between the ages of 25 to 34 (41%) and 35 to 49 (35%). These age groups were also found to be consistently the largest cohorts who accessed the wider WW service in a recent evaluation <sup>[footnote 31]</sup>.
- 4.12 Males accounted for 96% of episodes of support. This is higher than the near 60% of the same sex found to be accessing the wider WW service <sup>[footnote 31]</sup>, but a higher proportion is to be expected given that most of the service being delivered in prisons is to males. Using Welsh prisoner population data for 2021 to 2023 from research by Cardiff University <sup>[footnote 32]</sup>, it can be observed that the proportion of

<sup>31</sup> [Evaluation of the Working Wales Service: final report](#). Please note that the analysis in the WW evaluation excludes categories where demographic data has not been provided, such as '(not recorded)', 'not yet known' and 'prefers not to say', and is for the reporting period from February 2019 to March 2023.

<sup>32</sup> [Jones, R. \(2024\) 2023 Factfile: Prisons and sentencing in Wales](#)

episodes of support being delivered to females (3%) was slightly under-represented in comparison to the proportion of Welsh prisoner population that was female (5%).

- 4.13 In terms of ethnicity, 89% of episodes of support were with prisoners who were White. This was followed by Black/British (4%), Asian/British (3%), Mixed (3%) and Other Ethnic Group (1%). These percentages vary to those found to be accessing the wider WW service <sup>[footnote 31]</sup>, but broadly align with the Welsh prisoner population from 2023: White (88%), Asian (3%), Black (3%) and Mixed (3%) <sup>[footnote 32]</sup>.
- 4.14 More than one-tenth (12%) of episodes of support were with prisoners who reported that they had a disability. This is higher than the 8% who were found to be accessing the wider WW service <sup>[footnote 31]</sup>. [Cunniff et al. \(2012\)](#) ('Estimating the prevalence of disability amongst prisoners: results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) survey'. Ministry of Justice.) estimated that over a third (36%) of people in prison in England and Wales had a disability, in comparison to one in five (19%) of the general population. More recent data from 2023 to 24 shows that 44% of surveyed women, 39% of men and 36% of children in prison report having a disability <sup>[footnote 33]</sup>. Further analysis (see Table 4.4) shows that episodes of support involving a prisoner with a disability steadily increased year-on-year during the reporting period - from 11% in 2021 to 22, to 12% in 2022 to 23 and then to 13% in 2023 to 24. It is unclear whether this is due to changes in the prisoner population and/or whether it is due to improvements in recording/reporting by the service.

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<sup>33</sup> HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2024). [Annual report 2023–24](#). HM Stationery Office

**Table 4.3: Demographic characteristics of prisoners accessing episodes of support**

Category	Subcategory	%
Age	<16	0%
	16 to 18	2%
	19 to 24	16%
	25 to 34	41%
	35 to 49	35%
	50+	6%
Gender	Female	3%
	Male	96%
	Other	0%
Ethnicity	(not recorded)	0%
	Other Ethnic Group	1%
	Asian/British	3%
	Black/British	4%
	Mixed	3%



	Not yet known	0%
	Prefers Not To Say	1%
	White	89%
Disability	(not recorded)	1%
	No	86%
	Not yet known	0%
	Prefer not to say	1%
	Yes	12%

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Source: Careers Wales – Working Wales monitoring information (n=2,747 episodes of support)

**Table 4.4: Disability status of prisoners for episodes of support by year**

Disability	2021 to 22 (n=424)	2022 to 23 (n=954)	2023 to 24 (n=1,369)
(not recorded)	3%	0%	0%
No	85%	88%	85%
Not yet known	1%	0%	0%
Prefer not to say	0%	0%	2%
Yes	11%	12%	13%

Source: Careers Wales – Working Wales monitoring information (n=2,747 episodes of support)

4.15 As displayed in Figure 4.4, more than four-fifths (83%) of episodes of support between 2021 to 22 and 2023 to 24 were with a prisoner who had obtained a qualification of Level 2 or below <sup>[footnote34]</sup>. The most frequent highest qualification obtained by prisoners during episodes of support was Level 1 (31%). This is the equivalent of GCSE grades D to G <sup>[footnote35]</sup>.

4.16 More than half (56%) of episodes of support were with a prisoner with a highest qualification of Level 1 or below <sup>[footnote36]</sup>. This is double the proportion of 28% reported for the wider WW service <sup>[footnote37]</sup>. This finding indicates that those accessing episodes of support in prisons are likely to have a lower level of qualification than those in the community.

<sup>34</sup> This includes the following: None (no qualifications), Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2.

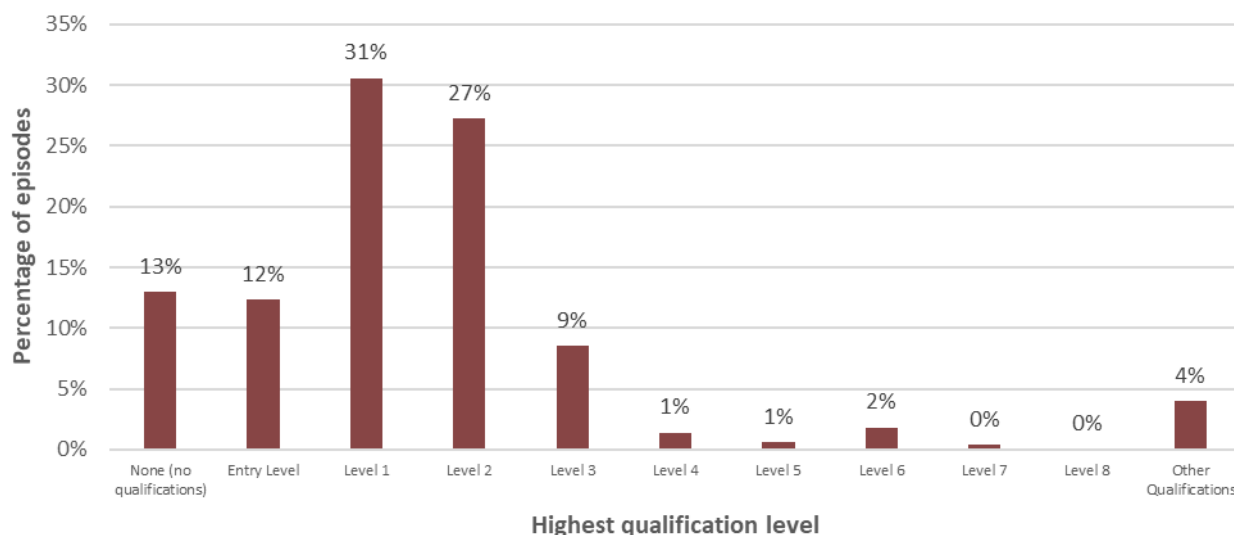
<sup>35</sup> [Credit and Qualifications Framework \(CQFW\): fan diagram | GOV.WALES](#)

<sup>36</sup> This includes the following: None (no qualifications), Entry Level and Level 1.

<sup>37</sup> Burgess, A., Parkinson, A., Allies, O., Gallagher, P., Abekhon, J. and Griffiths, E. (2024) [Evaluation of the Working Wales service: final report](#). Please note that the analysis in the WW evaluation is for the reporting period from February 2019 to March 2023.

- 4.17 Further analysis shows that the proportion of episodes of support with those with a qualification of Level 1 or below was greatest for prisoners aged 16 to 18 (89%) and 19 to 24 (72%) and lowest for prisoners aged 50 and over (35%).

**Figure 4.4: Highest qualification level of prisoners for episodes of support**



Source: Careers Wales – Working Wales monitoring information (n=1,870 episodes of support)

- 4.18 Table 4.5 displays the breakdown for highest qualification level of prisoners for episodes of support by year. The percentage of episodes of support where the prisoner had a Level 1 qualification or below increased year-on-year (from 45% in 2021 to 22 to 57% in 2022 to 23 and then to 59% in 2023 to 24). This suggests that the demographic of prisoners accessing support by the service has become less qualified in recent years.

**Table 4.5: Highest qualification level of prisoners for episodes of support by year**

Qualification Level	2021 to 22	2022 to 23	2023 to 24
None (no qualifications)	9%	17%	11%
Entry Level	13%	11%	13%
Level 1	24%	29%	34%
Level 2	32%	28%	25%
Level 3	12%	8%	8%
Level 4	2%	1%	1%
Level 5	1%	0%	1%
Level 6	2%	1%	2%
Level 7	0%	0%	0%
Level 8	0%	0%	0%
Other Qualifications	5%	3%	4%

Source: Careers Wales – Working Wales monitoring information (n=1,870 episodes of support)

- 4.19 It should be noted that the proportion of episodes of support where no highest qualification level information was recorded increased year-on-year (from 24% in 2021 to 22 to 29% in 2022 to 23 and then to 36% in 2023 to 24). This is a concern as this information is vital to understanding how to tailor support, so prisoners become job ready and gain employment.

- 4.20 English is the preferred verbal and written language for most episodes of support (96%). Welsh is the preferred verbal and written language for 1% of episodes of support. The remaining episodes of support either have no preferred language recorded or the preferred language is not yet known.
- 4.21 As shown by Table 4.6, the proportion of episodes whereby Welsh is the preferred verbal and written language has increased to 2% in the most recent business year. Furthermore, the recording of preferred verbal language and preferred written language has improved since 2021 to 22. Instances of no recording has decreased from 17% of episodes of support in 2021 to 22 to 0% in 2022 to 23 and 2023 to 24. This improvement in recording is encouraging given the need to understand the delivery preference of prisoners.

**Table 4.6: Preferred language (verbal & written) for episodes of support by year**

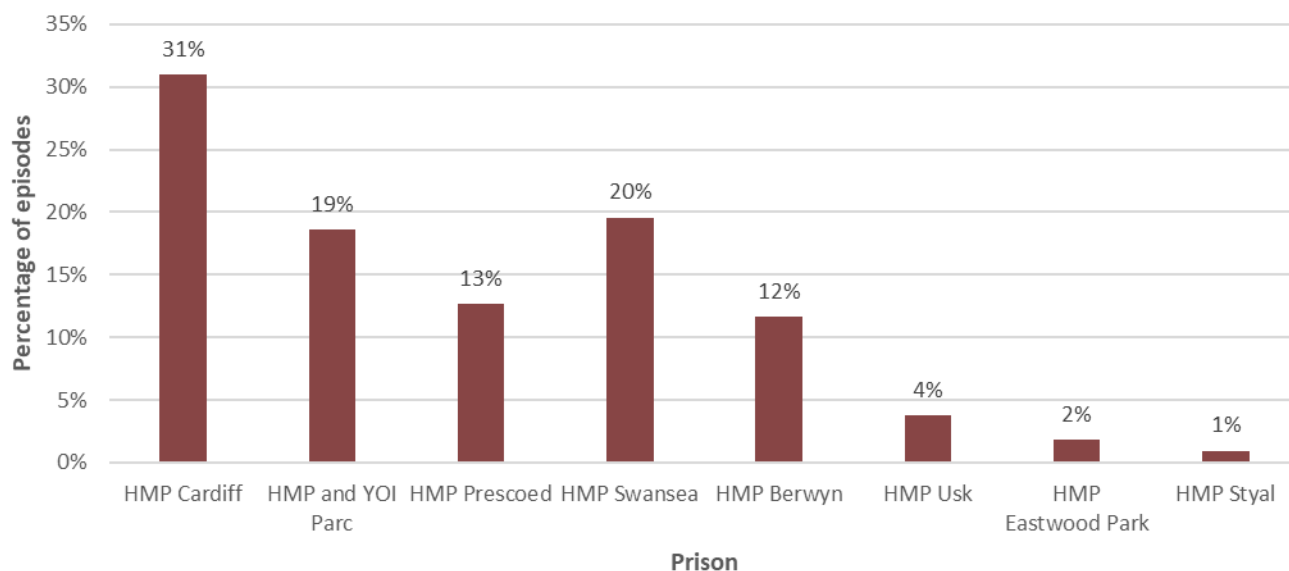
Category	Subcategory	2021 to 22	2022 to 23	2023 to 24
Verbal	(not recorded)	17%	0%	0%
	English	83%	99%	98%
	Not yet known	0%	0%	0%
	Welsh	0%	0%	2%
Written	(not recorded)	17%	0%	0%
	English	83%	99%	98%
	Not yet known	0%	0%	0%
	Welsh	0%	0%	2%

Source: Careers Wales – Working Wales monitoring information (n=2,747 episodes of support)

## Referrals to Working Wales

- 4.22 The main source of referrals to WW for episodes of support was prisons (98%). This is, perhaps, unsurprising given the setting for delivering this service. Other sources of referral for episodes of support include self-referral (1%) and the probation service (1%) <sup>[footnote38]</sup>.
- 4.23 Figure 4.5 shows the breakdown of episodes of support by prison of referral to the service. Nearly a third (31%) of these episodes of support were referred by HMP Cardiff. This matches the proportion of one-to-one in-person interactions found at the prison (see Figure 4.2). It is, perhaps, unsurprising that they have the most allocated WW resource. The lowest proportion of referrals for episodes of support were by HMP Eastwood Park (2%) and HMP Styal (1%). This aligns with these prisons having the least allocated WW resource.

**Figure 4.5: Referrals for episodes of support by prison**



Source: Careers Wales – Working Wales monitoring information (n=2,538 episodes of support)

- 4.24 Table 4.7 displays the breakdown of episodes of support by prison of referral to the service and year joined. The proportion of episodes of support referred by HMP

<sup>38</sup> Careers Wales Education team, Communities for Work, Event and Job Centre Plus were also sources of referral, but these calculated as less than 1 %.

Eastwood Park decreased year-on-year. Conversely, the proportion of episodes of support referred by HMP Styal increased year-on-year. There were 0% in 2021 to 22 as an advisor was only allocated to HMP Styal in March 2023. By 2023 to 24, there was the same proportion of episodes of support referred by each (1%).

**Table 4.7: Referrals for episodes of support by prison and year**

<b>Prison</b>	<b>2021 to 22</b>	<b>2022 to 23</b>	<b>2023 to 24</b>
HMP Cardiff	31%	33%	29%
HMP and YOI Parc	17%	26%	14%
HMP Prescoed	23%	9%	14%
HMP Swansea	19%	13%	24%
HMP Berwyn	2%	14%	12%
HMP Usk	4%	3%	4%
HMP Eastwood Park	4%	2%	1%
HMP Styal	0%	0%	1%

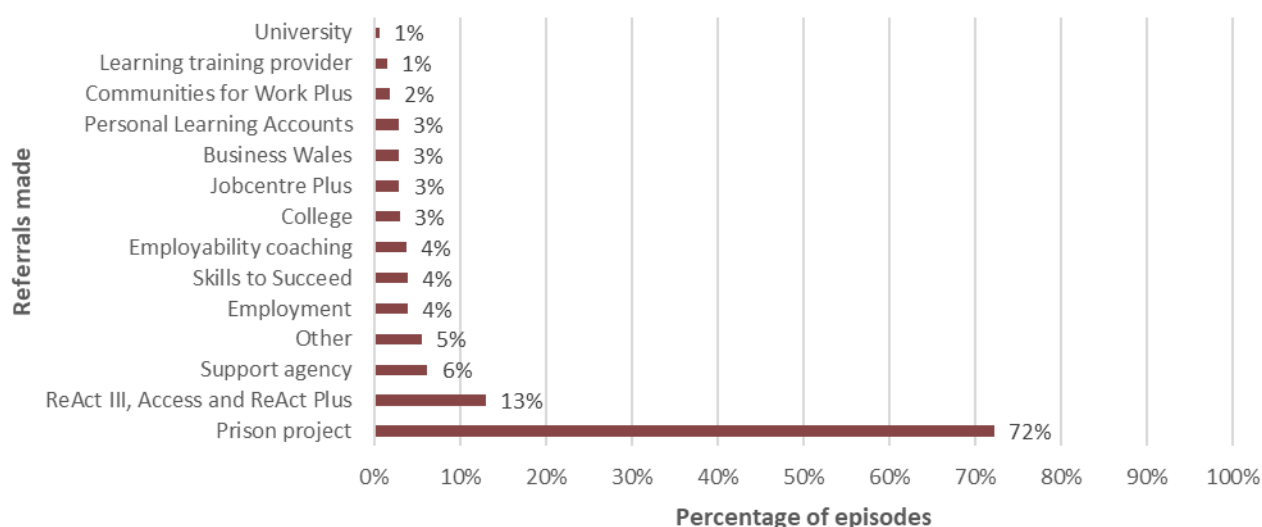
Source: Careers Wales – Working Wales monitoring information (n=2,538 episodes of support)

### **Referrals by Working Wales**

- 4.25 There was a total of 3,581 referrals made to a pathway during episodes of support by the WW service between April 2021 and March 2024. Similar to the number of episodes of support, the number of referrals increased year-on-year from 394 in 2021 to 22 to 1,102 in 2022 to 23 and then to 2,085 in 2023 to 24.

4.26 Figure 4.6 displays the proportion of episodes of support where a referral had been made to a pathway. Nearly three-quarters of episodes of support (72%) involved a referral being made to the prison project <sup>[footnote39]</sup>. This was by far the largest referral being made during episodes of support by the WW service in prisons. The next most popular referrals made were to ReAct <sup>[footnote40]</sup> (13%) and support agencies (6%).

**Figure 4.6: Proportion of episodes of support where a referral had been made to a pathway**



Source: Careers Wales – Working Wales monitoring information (n=2,747 episodes of support)  
Does not display those referral pathways with less than 1%.

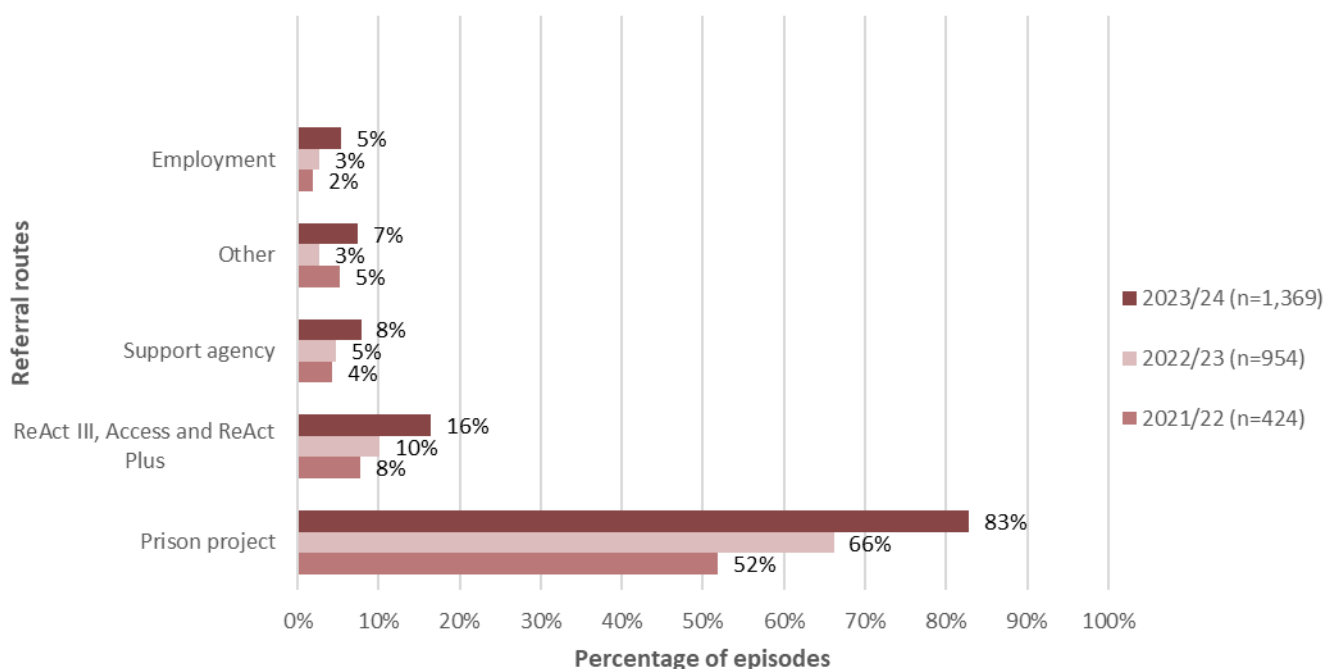
4.27 Figure 4.7 displays the proportion of episodes of support each year where a referral had been made to a pathway. The five most popular referrals are shown. The proportion of episodes involving a referral to prison project increased year-on-year (from 52% in 2021 to 22 to 66% in 2022 to 23 and then to 83% in 2023 to 24). There were also year-on-year increases for referrals being made during episodes of support to ReAct, a support agency and employment. The addition of an offender cohort to the ReAct programme in 2022, when it became ReAct+, is likely to be a key factor for the yearly increases in the proportion of episodes of support involving a referral to the programme.

<sup>39</sup> This is a referral by the WW service to itself for employability support in prison.

<sup>40</sup> This includes ReAct III, Access and ReAct Plus.



**Figure 4.7: Proportion of episodes of support each year where a referral had been made to a pathway**



Source: Careers Wales – Working Wales monitoring information (n=2,747 episodes of support)  
Displays the 5 most popular pathways for referral during an episode of support.

- 4.28 Table 4.8 displays the proportion of episodes of support by each prison where a referral had been made to a pathway. The five most popular referral pathways are shown. HMP and YOI Parc had by far the least proportion of episodes of support where a referral was made to a prison project (31%). This is a 41-percentage point difference to the next lowest proportion (72%) found at HMP Berwyn.
- 4.29 HMP Styal (75%), HMP Usk (53%) and HMP Eastwood Park (30%) had the greatest proportion of episodes of support where a referral was made to ReAct (75%). HMP Cardiff, HMP and YOI Parc and HMP Swansea, which have the highest proportion of episodes of support, had the lowest proportion of episodes of support where a referral had been made to ReAct.
- 4.30 HMP Swansea had the greatest proportion of episodes of support where a referral was made to a support agency (26%). This is a far higher proportion than found at the other prisons.

**Table 4.8: Proportion of episodes of support by each prison where a referral had been made to a pathway**

<b>Prison</b>	<b>Prison project</b>	<b>ReAct III, Access and ReAct Plus</b>	<b>Support agency</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Employment</b>
HMP Cardiff	81%	4%	1%	0%	0%
HMP and YOI Parc	31%	9%	2%	2%	1%
HMP Prescoed	90%	26%	0%	12%	9%
HMP Swansea	95%	8%	26%	1%	10%
HMP Berwyn	72%	17%	4%	20%	3%
HMP Usk	88%	53%	0%	11%	3%
HMP Eastwood Park	91%	30%	2%	11%	11%
HMP Styal	92%	75%	0%	8%	4%

Source: Careers Wales – Working Wales monitoring information (n=2,538 episodes of support)  
Excludes 148 episodes of support where the referral source was a prison but the recorded organisation was not one of the prisons with allocated WW advisor resource. Please note that rows may not total 100% as a prisoner may be referred to none or multiple pathways.

## Outcomes

- 4.31 Careers Wales advised that they do not carry out follow-ups for WW customers <sup>[footnote 41]</sup>. Therefore, a WW customer's status has only been updated where there is further interaction between the customer and the WW service or if information on the customer is received from a partner organisation. Given this, it was determined

<sup>41</sup> Except for systematic follow-ups of YPG, ReAct and Access participants that have been undertaken in the past.

that outcomes data for customers would only be analysed for episodes of support with the following criteria:

- where there was a difference in status between joining and leaving an episode of support, or
- where there was no difference in status between joining and leaving an episode of support, but the current status was different, or
- where there was no difference in status between joining and leaving an episode of support and the current status was not different, but the current status had a later start date than the closed date for the episode of support so had been updated.

These criteria accounted for 581 of 1,940 (30%) of episodes of support which had ended at least six months before data was extracted for this research in July 2024 [footnote 42]. It is acknowledged that a proportion of less than a third of the cohort is limited and it only provides coverage of those who have engaged with further support. Therefore, the analysis is only intended to provide a partial insight into the outcomes of WW service users in prison.

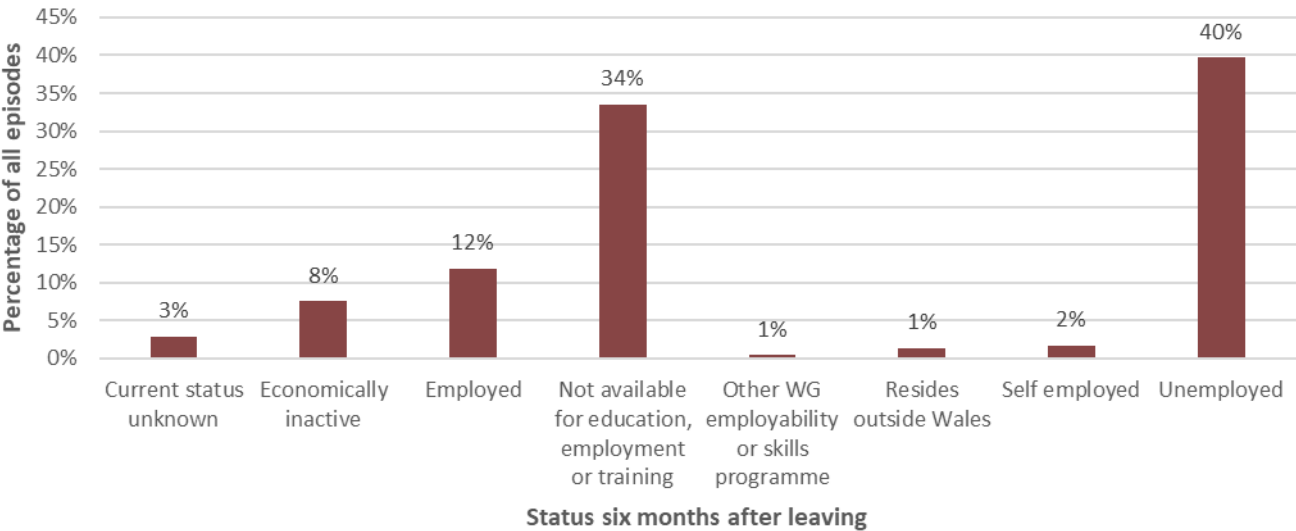
- 4.32 As shown by Figure 4.8, two-fifths (40%) of episodes of support had a status of unemployed six months after leaving. 12% of episodes of support had a status of employed – 11% in full-time employment and 1% in part-time employment – and 2% of episodes of support had a status of self-employed six months after leaving.
- 4.33 Given the concerns around a potentially biased sample, we sought to compare outcome data with MoJ data for the Wales probation region. The proportion of individuals in the MoJ data that accessed the Working Wales service in prison is not known, although this research suggests Working Wales advisors seek to make contact with all prisoners within 12 weeks of their release. Offender employment outcomes data, published by the MoJ, shows that between April 2021 and March 2024, 28% of offenders in the Wales probation region were employed or self-employed at six months post release. However, this calculation excludes those unavailable for work and those with an unknown status. Therefore, removing those unavailable for work from the WW calculation, WW outcomes data shows a

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<sup>42</sup> The remaining 70% of episodes of support with a status six months after leaving had no indicator that it was updated and not simply pre-filled based upon the status at joining.

comparable figure of 25% were employed or self-employed at six months post episode of support. This must be caveated with the acknowledgement that ‘six months after an episode of support’ is not directly comparable with the MoJ measures ‘six months post release’

**Figure 4.8: Sub-sample analysis - status six months after leaving an episode of support**



Source: Careers Wales – Working Wales monitoring information (n=581 episodes of support)  
 This graph only provides a partial insight into the outcomes of WW service users in prisons (30% of episodes of support which had ended at least six months before data was extracted for this research in July 2024). Careers Wales do not carry out follow-ups for customers, therefore this only includes episodes of support where the WW customer has an updated status due to further interaction between the WW customer and the WW service or if information on the WW customer is received from a partner organisation.  
 Does not display any status which was an outcome for less than 1% of episodes of support - this includes dormant, further education, higher education and voluntary work. Further information on statuses can be found at table B.3.

4.34 Table 4.9 shows status six months after leaving an episode of support by year. During the reporting period, the proportion of episodes of support with a status of employed six months after leaving decreased year-on-year. Conversely, the proportion of episodes of support with a status of unemployed six months after leaving increased year-on-year. This is the reverse trend to that found in MoJ employment outcomes data for the same reference period in the Wales probation region. The proportion of episodes of support with a status of economically inactive six months after leaving increased year-on-year, but there was a substantial decrease in the proportion of episodes of support with a status of not available for education, employment or training six months after leaving in 2023 to 24 (combining

the two statuses, there was a 8 percentage point decrease when comparing 2021 to 22 and 2023 to 24). MoJ data and WW data are not directly comparable when considering outcomes; whereas MoJ looks at outcomes 6 months post release, the WW data is based on time since the last episode of support. For most customers, their last episode of prison support will be close to the end of their sentence, however an episode of support may continue post-release into the community or end sometime before release.

- 4.35 Whilst undertaking the analysis, it could be observed that a greater proportion of the episodes of support with a status six months after leaving in 2023 to 24 had a different status when leaving, compared to when joining, than those in 2021 to 22 and 2022 to 23 (33% compared to 15% and 15% respectively). This should be considered in the context that a lower proportion of episodes of support in 2023 to 24 had ended six months before the data was supplied for this research <sup>[footnote43]</sup>.
- 4.36 Given the limited availability of outcomes data, it is not possible to make meaningful comparisons across prisons or look at breakdowns by characteristics.

**Table 4.9: Sub-sample analysis - status six months after leaving an episode of support by year**

Status	2021 to 22 (n=102)	2022 to 23 (n=247)	2023 to 24 (n=232)
Current Status	3%	3%	3%
Unknown			
Economically inactive	1%	2%	16%
Employed	17%	13%	9%
Not available for education, employment or training	41%	45%	18%

<sup>43</sup> This was because the episode of support had either not yet ended or it had not been six months since it ended when the data was extracted for this research (in July 2024). See methodology section for further detail.

Other WG employability or skills programme	0%	1%	0%
Resides outside Wales	1%	0%	3%
Self employed	3%	1%	2%
Unemployed	33%	34%	48%

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Source: Careers Wales – Working Wales monitoring information (n=581 episodes of support)

This graph only provides a partial insight into the outcomes of WW service users in prisons (30% of episodes of support which had ended at least six months before data was extracted for this research in July 2024). Careers Wales do not carry out follow-ups for customers, therefore this only includes episodes of support where the WW customer has an updated status due to further interaction between the WW customer and the WW service or if information on the WW customer is received from a partner organisation.

Does not display any status which was an outcome for less than 1% of episodes of support - this includes dormant, further education, higher education and voluntary work. Further information on statuses can be found at table B.3.

% of episodes with a status six months after leaving included in analysis: 2021 to 22 = 102/419 (24%), 2022 to 23 = 247/932 (27%) and 2023 to 24 = 232/589 (39%).

### Subsequent service support

- 4.37 There was a total of 476 episodes of support with former prison service users in the community by WW between April 2021 and March 2024. These subsequent episodes of support <sup>[footnote44]</sup> followed a similar year-on-year upward trajectory to the prison episodes of support: there were 106 episodes in 2021 to 22, 125 episodes in 2022 to 23 and 245 episodes in 2023 to 24.
- 4.38 The source of referrals for subsequent episodes of support by the WW service was more diverse than for prison episodes of support. The most popular referral source for subsequent episodes of support was self-referrals (47%). This is similar to the

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<sup>44</sup> A 'subsequent episode of support' is WW support that has happened in the community after a previous 'prison episode of support'. It could be immediately following after release from prison or sometime later. Any further episodes of support in prison following re-incarceration are categorised as 'prison episodes of support'.

percentage reported for the wider WW service <sup>[footnote37]</sup>. However, the proportion of referrals by the probation service was much higher at 21%.

- 4.39 Table 4.10 displays the conversion of prison episodes of support into subsequent episodes of support by age group. One-fifth (20%) of prison episodes of support whereby the customer is aged 25 to 34 go on to access a subsequent episode of support. Those aged 16 to 18 years had the smallest rate of prison episodes of support that went on to have subsequent support (9% respectively). It was not possible to report on under 16-year-olds due to very small sample size.

**Table 4.10: Conversion of prison episodes of support into subsequent episodes of support by age group**

Age group	Subsequent episodes of support (n=476)	Prison episodes of support (n= 2747)	%
16 to 18			9%
	5	55	
19 to 24			14%
	62	437	
25 to 34			20%
	222	1,128	
35 to 49			17%
	164	949	
50+			13%
	23	176	

Source: Careers Wales – Working Wales monitoring information (n=476 subsequent episodes of support & 2,747 prison episodes of support). Data for <16 years old is suppressed as N < 5.

Note that a customer may receive one prison episode of support and go on to receive multiple subsequent episodes of support, therefore influencing the conversion rate. Likewise, a customer may receive multiple prison episodes of support and one subsequent episode of support.

- 4.40 Table 4.11 displays the conversion of prison episodes of support into subsequent episodes of support by gender. Females had a smaller conversion rate, that went on to access further WW support in the community, than males. This is surprising given that females were more likely to be unemployed six months after leaving a prison episode of support than males (55% compared to 39%), however females

were also more likely to be employed six months after leaving a prison episode of support than males (18% compared to 12%) <sup>[footnote 45]</sup>.

**Table 4.11: Conversion of prison episodes of support into subsequent episodes of support by gender**

Gender	Subsequent episodes of support	Prison episodes of support	%
Female			7%
	7	95	
Male			18%
	465	2,649	

Source: Careers Wales – Working Wales monitoring information (n=476 subsequent episodes of support & 2,747 prison episodes of support). Data for gender recorded as 'other' is suppressed as N < 5.

Note that a customer may receive one prison episode of support and go on to receive multiple subsequent episodes of support, therefore influencing the conversion rate. Likewise, a customer may receive multiple prison episodes of support and one subsequent episode of support.

4.41 Table 4.12 displays the conversion of prison episodes of support into subsequent episodes of support by disability. The conversion rate, for prison episodes of support that went on to subsequent episodes of support, whereby the customer reported having a disability was 12 percentage points less than for customers without a disability (19% compared to 7%). This indicates that those with a disability are less likely to be accessing further support by the service after their prison support has ended. Further analysis shows that those with a disability are more likely to be economically inactive or not available for education, employment or training six months after leaving a prison episode of support than those with no disability (69% compared to 37%) <sup>[footnote46]</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> % of episodes with a status six months after leaving included in analysis: n=11/71 (15%) females, n=570/1,866 (31%) males

<sup>46</sup> % of episodes with a status six months after leaving included in analysis: n=80/238 (34%) with a disability, n=493/1,665 (30%) with no disability



**Table 4.12: Conversion of prison episodes of support into subsequent episodes of support by disability**

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Subsequent episodes of support</b>	<b>Prison episodes of support</b>	<b>%</b>
(not recorded)			14%
No	2	14	19%
Not yet known	444	2,361	50%
Prefer not to say	3	6	10%
Yes	3	31	7%
	24	335	

Source: Careers Wales – Working Wales monitoring information (n=476 subsequent episodes of support & 2,747 prison episodes of support).

Note that a customer may receive one prison episode of support and go on to receive multiple subsequent episodes of support, therefore influencing the conversion rate. Likewise, a customer may receive multiple prison episodes of support and one subsequent episode of support.

## **5. Feedback from Working Wales advisors**

- 5.1 This chapter reflects on feedback from WW advisors working in prisons across Wales and two female prisons in England to provide insight into the delivery of the service, any barriers or challenges, referrals, and any contact with third party organisations, both internally and externally.

### **Service delivery**

- 5.2 Participants were asked to describe their role as a WW advisor. Their role includes:

- raising awareness of the service;
- information, advice and guidance;
- opening up pathways for prisoners for when they are released;
- building rapport with the prisoners;
- through the gate support;
- identifying and understanding the needs and barriers of prisoners;
- and signposting prisoners to further support in the community.

- 5.3 When looking more specifically at how the service was delivered by advisors, there were a range of methods brought to light in the interviews. Firstly, the running of sessions in the prison. Group sessions are used to talk through 'jobs, CV writing or general employability skills'. They are a chance for the advisors to provide as many prisoners as possible with some introductory information that they cannot always give in one-to-one sessions due to the high demand.

'Just yesterday we had a whole day session where we invited every leaver from March, the men that are going to be leaving in March, to come into just one of our workshops, speak to me, speak to DWP (Department for Work and

Pensions) and say right, if we haven't seen you, why haven't we seen you and what are your plans.'

- 5.4 However, moving forward, one interviewee stated that currently they are trying to develop more session specifics, for example for people with neurodiverse conditions. This is in an attempt to make the sessions more accommodating, while also covering the issues they could potentially face when in or trying to find employment.
- 5.5 Along with group sessions, one-to-ones were also conducted by the majority of the advisors. For some prisoners, this would be a safer environment where they could disclose more information on their goals for future employment. In addition, it also allows advisors to tailor their support to the needs of these individuals.
- 5.6 Another method of delivery was the running of employment fairs. These, according to one interviewee, are coordinated by the prison employment lead, however advisors attend to advertise WW and inform prisoners of their service. These employment fairs also link to employer engagement and the opportunities that prisoners are provided with from WW.
- 5.7 Considering employer engagement, advisors highlighted how they try and link themselves to many organisations, to open as many opportunities as possible for the prisoners. This also helps them to be responsive in their approach, for example, if a prisoner were to be released early, advisors have the strong links within the industry to carry on supporting that prisoner.
- 5.8 A lot of employers also go into the prisons and interview the prisoners before they are released. This gives them an opportunity to try and get a job offer before they're released.

'We've got, like prison employment leads, who work in the prison. So, for example, they brought in [a large company] to interview people within custody for customer service jobs.'

## Prison Setting

- 5.9 Focusing specifically on the prison setting in which advisors deliver the WW service, there were both advantages and disadvantages identified by the advisors. One advisor stated how delivering the service in the prison has allowed a strong rapport to be built between themselves and the prisoners. The advisors suggest they reassure prisoners, especially those in the Vulnerable Prisoner Unit (VPU) by talking through their opportunities available on release.
- 5.10 With focus on trust, in comparison to the community support, one advisor recognised themselves to be in a privileged position delivering the service in prison because, ironically, when an individual enters prison, they become the most honest person and tell the advisors everything because 'they've got nothing to lose'. In comparison to an individual seeking support in the community, the history of that individual is usually unknown.
- 5.11 Whilst exploring the delivery of the service in prisons, many advisors reflected on having to deliver the service on the prison wings directly rather than having a set space prisoners would attend when wanting support. Having to deliver the service on the wings, in some circumstances made it quite difficult because it is not a confidential space. However, many advisors expressed the importance of wing walks in advertising their brand and supporting as many prisoners as they possibly can.

'I tend to go on the wings and interview on the wings...you've got to get out there and get visible and get on the wings.'

## How has the service changed since 2019?

- 5.12 WW started in prisons in 2019. Since then, the researchers were interested in how the service may have changed and whether it has improved or not. Across the board of interviews, advisors spoke only of positive change since 2019, expressing how they are 'constantly trying to update and improve our services'. They do this through having regular meetings, good management and by liaising with probation to ensure prisoners are satisfied before release.

'we sort of created the employment hub from scratch and it went from strength to strength to we were actually sort of named the employment hub to be looked upon as best practice throughout the whole of the UK'

- 5.13 Across the interviews, it was identified that the advisors are extremely passionate about their job and really want to 'see prison leavers change for the better'. In doing so, rather than just providing prisoners with information and a flyer, the advisor will continue to support them throughout their sentence and then into a community appointment.

'I think...we have changed and I think we've changed the way that people look at ex-offenders as well'

- 5.14 The utilisation of [ReAct](#) was also mentioned by most interviewees. One interviewee suggested that the service has positively developed, since it first started in 2019, and that access to ReAct funding has increased the range of opportunities for training for prisoners, so they are less likely to return once they have been released.

#### A Valuable Service

- 5.15 WW advisors suggested that their service is valuable in comparison to other employability services in prison because of its flexibility, in-depth guidance and networking.
- 5.16 In terms of flexibility, the advisors can be anywhere that is needed. Particularly in the prison setting, it is important that WW advisors have the flexibility to adapt the service so that prisoners are receiving the correct support that is suitable for them. This allows for more exploration rather than having to stick to a strict framework, which in this case is valuable to the prison and the prisoner.
- 5.17 In addition, many advisors noted the importance of the guidance they provide. In comparison to other organisations, according to the advisors, WW is a trusted brand that offers the first set of guidance and advice for all prisoners so that it is well-established, and prisoners feel as though they have more of an understanding of what it is they want to do and how they're going to get there.

- 5.18 Finally, partnership working with other services is an extremely valuable aspect of the WW service. One interviewee described the service as the 'central point of all referrals'. Having this referral process is important to ensure that prisoners are attending the correct support for their end goal and having links to these different support networks helps prisoners to have a smoother journey when getting back on their feet.
- 5.19 Focusing on women's prisons in England that imprison Welsh-domiciled women, the advisors suggest the WW service was extremely valuable in that the Welsh female prisoners appreciate the presence of someone from Wales coming in to talk to them. In terms of the bilingual offer provided by WW, some female prisoners appreciate having a conversation in their native language.

#### Prisoner needs

- 5.20 In terms of adjusting the service to suit the specific needs of prisoners, one advisor explained how they try and adjust the service as much as possible by building links with other organisations to help understand how the prisoner is perceived and how their offence would affect future opportunities.
- 5.21 Whereas another advisor explained how they filter the prisoners they can help straight away with those who require support from other services, such as mental health or substance misuse, or those who are unwilling to engage and then try and make sure they see the correct person for their specific needs. So, through multiple interviews, the advisor will build an understanding of the needs of the person and tailor the support that is most suitable for that specific prisoner and then route them to the correct support or training from whichever organisation is most suitable.
- 5.22 Another adaptation noted by an advisor was having to tailor their language to suit the prisoners. For example, having to use simpler vocabulary because some people have never experienced work before or have left school or education very early, therefore lacking literacy skills.

## Barriers

### IT services

- 5.23 Throughout the participant interviews, it was noted that access to IT services was one of the main barriers to delivering the service within prisons, in comparison to in the community. Advisors are not able to take their laptops on the wings, therefore they must take paper notes and then update the data once back in their office.
- 5.24 Those who are working in more historic prison buildings noted that they struggled with the practicality of their offices. For example, having wires crossing over the room and across laptop screens. This does not provide the most suitable environment to be working.

'If I plug it in then I sort of [have] like extension cables coming across the screen, it's not ideal.'

### Prisoner Characteristics

- 5.25 WW advisors stated that in some circumstances a prisoner's career options are limited, dependent on their conviction. For example, those who are convicted of a sex offence would not be permitted to work in an environment with children. As a result of this, almost all interviewees recognised that sex offenders had been particularly difficult to engage with because where some have their minds set on specific jobs they cannot do, it can affect their self-esteem.

'If we're working with somebody who might now be a registered sex offender, for example, they might want to work in the rail track industry. Well, there's a lot of rail track training providers who won't deliver the training to them'

- 5.26 Young prisoners were also recognised by advisors as a difficult group to engage with because of social pressures in their surrounding environment. For example, if they were in group sessions, they would disengage because they wanted to fit in with the other young prisoners in the prison, however, once they were moved into the adult prison, there was a lot more engagement because those men were supportive of the service.

'So, I had a lad who was down in the YOS [youth offending service], who was just like zero engagement, and then as soon as he moved to the mains he was like a different character. So, I think sometimes, just their environment, that you know some of them are really susceptible to their environment'

- 5.27 However, advisors explained how it is young prisoners who should be particularly targeted for this service because they are the future generation - the ones most likely to be released and have a longer life outside of prison, therefore their engagement in the labour market is extremely important. Therefore, the service gives young prisoners the chance to obtain the tools needed to progress.

'I know it's easy to turn young people around in a lot of ways, so if you see them at 18, 19, 20 often they're well aware of working with WW. They are keen and they're in a position we can change things.'

- 5.28 Upon release, advisors suggested young people are usually the most disengaged with the WW service in the community.

'Young people are sometimes the most, the easier to get results with, but they can be the hardest to work with because when they get out they are far less likely to engage with us.'

- 5.29 Due to the nature of the prison population, WW advisors encounter English domiciled prisoners who they also offer a service to. However, advisors explained that there has been a misunderstanding amongst English domiciled prisoners, that the service is unavailable to them, due to them being ineligible for much of the funding that is available only to Welsh domiciled prisoners.

'If an English prisoner is in a Welsh prison, they'll want to engage with us so we can do so much with them, but now, because the funding, I think they talk amongst each other and then this message has gone out that Working Wales doesn't really help [English] prisoners'

'We went through a little period where the English prisoners were saying, you won't work with us, but it's not true we just can't do the funding part of it'



- 5.30 Engagement with WW advisors is difficult to measure with regards to gender because the female prisons only have a visit from an advisor once a month. Despite this, female prisoners were found to show a lot of interest in receiving career guidance.

'I think we don't get quite the same engagement or quite the same outcomes as we do with the male estate because we just don't have enough interventions with them'.

'There's a lack of vocational training in there... there's absolutely little or nothing that happens in there (Eastwood Park) especially for, I would say probably about 50% of the ladies there want construction labour jobs, they want physical hands-on roles, they don't want to be doing nail art or learning how to clean. I just think it's not right that that sort of training is not on offer in this day and age'.

Prisoners engaging in 'anything and everything'

- 5.31 Prisoners are encouraged to access education/training as part of purposeful activity. However, some of the advisors suggest that prisoners attempt to engage in as many training programmes as possible to give them the best possible opportunities when released, some of which were not always appropriate for the prisoner's future. Therefore, WW work with prisoners to ensure they access the appropriate learning/courses which lead to employment outcomes and, if funded by Welsh Government, then they are assessed for appropriateness before referral.
- 5.32 One advisor stated how they filter through programmes, such as [Personal Learning Accounts](#) (PLA), to make sure they upskill and retrain the individuals who have a career focus. Another advisor suggested how they make sure to have an initial meeting with prisoners to assess their needs before enrolling them on certain courses to ensure 'the right man is having the right ticket'.
- 5.33 The advisors reported that in terms of career options, a lot of prisoners automatically turn to the career options that make the most money, ignoring the options that would perhaps be a better fit for them. This is a barrier for prisoners as they are seeking to enrol on the wrong courses, which are unlikely to help them on the outside.

‘Prisoners talk a lot and it’s misinformation in terms of career options, in terms of where the best money is to be made, and that’s quite a big barrier because they automatically go for that rather than thinking what’s best for them and what best fits with their personal sort of skill setting’.

## Staffing

- 5.34 With there only being one WW advisor per prison, this limits the offer of support that the service is able to provide. Each advisor has a large caseload, trying to provide information and guidance to as many prisoners as possible before they are released. WW advisors engage with prisoners 12 weeks prior to release, however, one advisor stated how they would preferably ‘like to be able to do more extensive work maybe six months prior to release’ in the hope of giving prisoners the best possible chance on the outside. This would allow advisors to guide prisoners earlier on regarding their choice of education/training, ensuring that it is the best individual fit for them.

‘People often ask me, would you benefit from having any more resources? I think what they mean is would they benefit from having more of me. And yes, in a lot of ways we would.’

- 5.35 In addition, one advisor noted how access to other programmes, such as ReAct and PLA, has increased the demand of prisoners wanting to access the WW service. One advisor noted how daily they have seven sessions booked in, along with 3 to 4 drop-in sessions. With such large demand, it makes it difficult to provide sufficient guidance sessions to all prisoners.

## Prison Setting

- 5.36 The WW service, as recognised by the advisors, is sometimes limited in its approach because of the setting it is being delivered in.

‘There’s such massive barriers imposed by the justice system in terms of who they can work with, where they can go, what they can do, but still trying to find something that fits with them in terms of a career but also that probation would buy into as well.’

- 5.37 Another challenge recognised by WW advisors is the time prisoners spend in prison, especially for those that are on remand. Until those on remand have had their trial or sentencing, advisors are limited on what they can provide.

'At the moment because of the early releases <sup>[footnote47]</sup>, we try to pack in probably a lot more than we used to because we don't know if they're going to be affected by the early release, if we'll see them again'.

- 5.38 A barrier, particularly for closed prison environments, is security. If there are no prison staff to move prisoners around the prison and bring them off the wings to the employment hubs, where certain WW advisors provide the service, prisoners risk missing out on accessing the WW sessions.
- 5.39 Along with providing the service in employment hubs, WW advisors are also known to walk around the wings providing advice, information, and guidance. This may seem more practical in engaging with prisoners, however, there are often problems in finding a quiet space for engagement.
- 5.40 When engaging with prisoners on the wing, there is a higher risk of interruptions. Firstly, there is a chance of wing lockdowns, where the advisor would have to be removed from the wing immediately. Secondly, due to not having access to their laptops while on the wing, one advisor said sometimes interactions 'can be a lot more stunted because I'll have to go back and check things'.

'we get lockdowns and stuff imposed on us and we'll get different regimes that we have to follow. So, that can affect our ability to see our customers'

## **Referrals**

- 5.41 Induction sessions were mentioned in a couple of the interviews. These sessions were delivered to all of those entering the prison. The purpose of this is to make sure that prisoners are aware of the services available to them and the support there to help achieve their career aspirations upon release.

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<sup>47</sup> When an offender is released earlier than the end of their sentence length.

'I do that (induction sessions) every Wednesday morning, so nobody in my prisons would say they didn't know about me'

5.42 Referrals to WW vary depending on the specific prison. The interviews show that in some prisons, WW will engage with prisoners 12 weeks prior to release, whereas others will engage with prisoners as soon as possible.

5.43 For one advisor, they had interacted with a prisoner who still had two years left of their sentence purely because the prisoner had asked to speak to WW. This early interaction was also important to another advisor because they felt it gave them a higher chance of supporting prisoners to achieve the best possible outcomes upon release.

'we're trying to pick them up as early as we can, so that we've got plenty of time to work with them and in order to achieve an outcome for them'.

5.44 In another prison, there was no set-rule as to when a prisoner was referred to an advisor, however, it was noted that the advisor was usually referred to those who were closer to the labour market. Therefore, those who were dealing with other problems, such as mental health and homelessness, were unlikely to be referred to WW because those were issues that needed to be addressed by other organisations.

5.45 It was also recognised that referrals are made because of prisoners talking to each other on the wings about the service. The type of service provided by WW is dependent on when the prisoner is due to be released. One advisor suggested that those who are further off being released can attend larger sessions, such as CV sessions, however, one-to-one services are usually provided to those closer to their release date (12 weeks prior to release).

'we get a lot of referrals from like "my pad mates seen you and you've helped him with this, this and this" '

5.46 Despite mention of there being no set referral time, one advisor notes how they would not see those who have got life sentences because a priority of the service is the 'through-the-gate' support.

- 5.47 Once referred, one advisor described how through a series of interviews, they get to know the intentions of the prisoner and then start to filter out those who they feel are 'wasting your time'. This ensures that advisors are using their resources efficiently and engaging those who will take that next step and engage on the outside.

'what I tend to do with my first interview...I'll keep them for sort of half hour just so that they get to know me and it's not let's talk about guidance, let's talk about your career at that point, it's let's get to know me, let me get to know you and let's see'

### **Third party organisations: internal opportunities**

- 5.48 It was felt by advisors to be important that prisoners have access to third party organisations while in prison so that they can prepare themselves for the goals they want to achieve when they are released. For example:

'there was a guy recently [who] wants to set up his own food trucks. We got him on a food safety course, rung the Newport council and they were like "yeah, we got space", so got him booked on all stuff like that prior to him leaving'

These opportunities help prisoners to achieve particular 'tickets' which, when the advisors bring employers into the prison, help prisoners progress into having interviews in the hope of securing employment on the outside.

- 5.49 It was also noted that setting prisoners up with third party organisation helps to drive their own self-esteem in accessing services upon release. Having been able to access opportunities within the prison, this enforces a progressive mindset into the prisoners to carry on completing courses that will help them progress into and through the labour market.
- 5.50 One advisor stated how they network with those who are in the same sector because they all have the common goal of getting the prisoner progressed into employment. This networking, however, is not as easy for advisors in women's prisons, as one advisor described not having employability staff in the prison office who were suitable for Welsh female prisoners, rather they liaise with prison staff to make sure the prisoners are signed onto the right courses. The advisor noted that they have a meeting coming up with other providers. They hoped that this meeting

would help them get a better insight and working relationship with attending providers.

'I tend to take it upon myself, if they tell me they've got things that they want to do while they're in prison, I then liaise with the prison staff to make sure that they're signed onto the right courses'.

- 5.51 Another service that runs in prisons is Personal Learning Accounts (PLA) <sup>[footnote48]</sup>. One advisor explained that if it wasn't for WW, PLA would not be running in the prisons. PLA is important in prisons, because not only is it upskilling individuals but it is also meeting the demands of the labour market.
- 5.52 Interestingly, one interviewee explained how they have pathways to work which sit under local authorities. Having these connections with local authorities helps WW to cover a large range of areas in Wales so that when the prisoners are being released, they have partners to cover those areas they are being released to and therefore have a continuation of support.
- 5.53 Despite some services running in prisons, one advisor brought to our attention the limited access to a lot of services that are available in the community, such as Business Wales <sup>[ footnote 49]</sup>.

'Business Wales, for example, [are] nowhere to be seen and yet we get lots of people asking us for self-employment advice.'

Another advisor noted how Business Wales had previously attended their prison in-person, but they now only have irregular contact online.

'I used to be able to get a Business Wales advisor in occasionally to have a chat about general sort of, you know, running a business etcetera. That stopped and it went online.'

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<sup>48</sup> [Personal Learning Accounts](#) provide flexible and fully funded learning, either online or face to face or a combination of both to support eligible individuals to gain higher level skills.

<sup>49</sup> [Business Wales](#) provides free independent advice to people starting, running and growing a business in Wales.

### **Third party organisations: external**

#### **Probation**

- 5.54 As recognised in multiple interviews, probation is the first point of contact for support once a prisoner has been released. The WW advisors have limited information on the prisoner and where they'll be released to, in comparison to probation who deal with support on the outside, such as housing. It was recognised by one of the advisors that probation will 'do their best to make sure they (prisoners) [go to] job centres' and therefore receive the support they need to prevent reoffending once back in society.

'we work quite a lot with like probation and stuff. So, for example, if someone's being released and they want access to something, I'll maybe, like, I'll check with the probation worker first or make contact there and call [to] get in touch with them'

#### **Staying in contact post-release**

- 5.55 In terms of the WW advisors staying in contact with the prisoner post-release, the interviews recognised differing strategies. In a couple of cases, the WW advisors remain in contact with the prisoner post-release over the phone, if the prisoner wants to continue working with them. In addition, one advisor took it upon themselves to ensure that they remain in contact until the prisoner has been picked up by an external party organisation.

'I've got three or four sex offenders at the moment that I worked with up until January and they're still in contact with me now, which is great because I can follow and see what happens with them as well as do work with them'.

- 5.56 Whereas, in other cases, WW advisors suggested how they don't remain in contact with the prisoner on the outside, mainly because the turnover of people is so high in prisons, therefore it would be impossible to remain in contact with everyone post-release along with those currently serving their sentence. Instead, ahead of release from prison, the advisors signpost the prisoner to further support by the WW service in the community.

'My role really is making sure...they engage with us in the community, if they need our support.'

- 5.57 The interview data collected during this project suggests that across all the prisons, keeping in contact with those released into England was almost impossible. One interviewee explained that it is simply not feasible to stay in contact. Interviews also found that there was not sufficient budget to support those released back into England, therefore, the advisors' focus is on those released in Wales.
- 5.58 One interviewee also recognised the importance of other external organisations/services such as Business Wales, [Maximus](#) and [Prince's Trust](#). WW advisors encourage prisoners to self-refer to these organisations/services post-release.

### **Third party organisations: funding**

- 5.59 ReAct funding was mentioned by most WW advisors. ReAct offers tailored support to those trying to re-enter the labour market by removing barriers and providing grant support for vocational training, travel costs and care related to training.
- 5.60 Starting in Swansea, and proving extremely successful, ReAct funding was rolled out across the rest of the prisons in Wales. The rollout of this funding opened more opportunities for prisoners and, for a lot of them, is their priority discussion point.
- 5.61 As of April 2024, ReAct+ had awarded 120 vocational training grants to offenders/ex-offenders totalling over £110k. In terms of the two women's prisons in England, ReAct+ is discussed with Welsh female prisoners who are eligible and suitable.



## 6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The WW programme began in prisons in 2019 to deliver careers and employability advice, guidance and coaching within each of the secure prisons in Wales, as well as two female prisons in England that house Welsh prisoners.
- 6.2 Analysis of monitoring data suggests that WW provision in prisons has been increasing. There was a total of 2,747 episodes of support between April 2021 and March 2024, but half of these episodes began in the latter year of 2023 to 24. This aligns with the findings from interviews, with advisors suggesting increased demand. These findings would seem to indicate that the service met its 2023 to 24 objective of 'increased resource to prisons'.
- 6.3 There were 3,893 one-to-one in-person interactions between a WW advisor or employability coach and a prisoner between April 2022 and March 2024. The proportion of these by prison seemed to broadly align with the allocated WW resource, with HMP Cardiff, the most allocated WW resource, having the greatest proportion of one-to-one in-person interactions and HMP Eastwood Park and HMP Styal, the least allocated WW resource, having the least proportion of one-to-one in-person interactions. It was found that the proportion of one-to-one in-person interactions by an employability coach were greater at HMP Cardiff than at HMP and YOI Parc <sup>[footnote 50]</sup>.
- 6.4 The research evidence suggests WW provision is variable across prison estates. Monitoring data suggests that the proportion of episodes of support where a referral had been made to pathways, such as ReAct, varied greatly by prison. Similarly, interviews with advisors suggested that engagement with prisoners varied by prison, although, advisors would attempt to have at least one chat with each of the prisoners before 12 weeks of their release date. For many, this was done through induction sessions whereby the advisors would provide a brief overview of the service and support they would offer, in the hope that prisoners will start to think and create goals in what they want to achieve.
- 6.5 This research has discovered many positive aspects of the delivery of the WW service in prisons. Taking a flexible approach and partnership working with other organisations has allowed advisors to adapt the service to suit the specific needs of the prisoners, while also successfully referring them onto other suitable

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<sup>50</sup> This was impacted by there being no employability coach interactions at HMP and YOI Parc in 2022-23.

programmes, such as PLA and ReAct+, that will help prisoners achieve their future goals and support integration back into society post-release. Referrals to ReAct+ were found to be increasing but there is great variety by prison. Those prisons with the least allocated WW resource (HMP Eastwood Park, HMP Styal and HMP Usk) were found in the monitoring information to have had the greatest proportion of episodes of support with a referral made to the programme.

- 6.6 Despite the positive picture painted of the service, several challenges in the delivery of the WW service in prisons have been identified including access to IT services, advisor resource, lockdowns in the wings and the prisoners' own motivations. Whilst delivering the service has proved to help the advisors gather more in-depth information about a prisoner in comparison to those in the community, it has also proved difficult to find private and quiet places to work. Many advisors reflected on having to deliver the service on the prison wings due to having no set space. Whilst wing walks can be useful in advertising the WW brand and supporting as many prisoners as possible, it is not a confidential space for supporting prisoners. Furthermore, there can be limited access to some services that are available to the wider WW service, such as [Business Wales](#).
- 6.7 Along with the challenges in the delivery of the service, engaging with specific groups was highlighted as a challenge, particularly young prisoners and prisoners with a sexual conviction. For young prisoners, the Welsh Government, in [the Plan for Employability and Skills](#), committed to make the Young Person's Guarantee accessible to those in prison. There is the added challenge of getting this cohort to engage with the service in the community following release. For those with a sexual conviction, it is important to tailor support to recognise what employment opportunities are available and what effect restrictions will have on employment options, and to encourage participation in relevant courses rather than simply completing as many courses and training as possible.
- 6.8 The service in women's prisons was more limited compared to men's prisons, primarily because advisors only visit monthly and the availability of training options are limited. The proportion of prison episodes of support being delivered to females was found to be slightly under-represented compared to the proportion in the Welsh prisoner population. However, WW support to women's prisons is a recent development and involves an advisor travelling to England. Despite not having regular visits, the Welsh female prisoners appreciated the support and the presence of someone from Wales attending the prison.

- 6.9 This research has also explored the relationship between WW and other third-party organisations. It was found that WW have a strong partnership with other organisations in the prisons, as well as with prison staff, and where this connection is slightly weaker, having provisional meetings was mentioned to build a stronger understanding of what everybody offers so that prisoners are directed to the correct services. Externally, the advisor's main turning point was towards probation, who successfully carry on supporting those released into the community.
- 6.10 Evidence suggests that staying in contact with prisoners once released can prove to be difficult because of the high turnover of prisoners. However, some advisors were found to have remained in contact with prisoners post-release over the phone, where prisoners wanted to continue working with them. For those prisoners released back into England, despite receiving support in prison and having many of the same opportunities as the Welsh prisoners, apart from access to ReAct funding, it was almost impossible for advisors to stay in contact with them and see their progress.
- 6.11 The research was only able to analyse outcome data for prisoners who have re-engaged with the WW service or where information is received from a partner organisation. These accounted for less than a third of episodes of support with a status six months after leaving. This was due to there being no routine capturing of outcomes for all WW service users in prisons. Therefore, analysis undertaken is only able to be used as a partial insight into outcomes. Based upon the analysis undertaken, the most recorded outcome six months later, following an episode of support in prison, was to be unemployed. Only 14% reported to be employed or self-employed six months after leaving an episode of support. This aligns with the finding from the literature review that prisoners struggle to get employment. However, it is acknowledged that this sub-sample is based upon those who have reengaged with the service or other partner organisations and so is likely to be a biased representation and is not generalisable. Nonetheless, the findings in this report highlight the challenges to helping prisoners to 'become job ready and gain and retain sustainable employment', as set out in [Better Learning, Better Chances: prison learning and skills provision in Wales](#).

## 7. Recommendations

- 7.1 The following recommendations are made based upon the findings of the research:
- 7.2 **Recommendation 1:** To review WW resource across prisons in response to evidence of growing demand and large caseloads. This should be a more in-depth review, which builds on the findings in this evaluation and creates a prison-by-prison profile. It also should consider when is best to engage with prisoners (i.e. whether 12 weeks prior to release is the correct timing).
- 7.3 **Recommendation 2:** To make sure advisors are able to deliver the service effectively, there is a need to work with the prison estate to address practical limitations. This includes not having wires crossing over desks, which is a safety concern, and having set spaces to ensure confidentiality for advising prisoners. Careers Wales should also consider how best for staff to carry out record keeping in prisons because lots of time is currently spent on typing up handwritten notes taken on wings.
- 7.4 **Recommendation 3:** To make further use of networking with other organisations and referrals onto other suitable programmes, such as PLA and ReAct+, that engage prisoners in employability support and upskill them. Furthermore, to present more opportunities for prisoners, Welsh Government and Careers Wales should work with organisations/services, such as Business Wales, to provide their services to prisons on a regular basis.
- 7.5 **Recommendation 4:** To consider best practice on how to support those prisoners identified in this research as most difficult to engage with, which includes young prisoners and prisoners with a sexual conviction. This will need to take into account ways to overcome social pressures as a barrier for young prisoners accessing the service and expectation setting for prisoners with a sexual conviction.
- 7.6 **Recommendation 5:** To consider methods to capture outcomes for those who have received support from the WW service in prison. This would ideally be collected on an ongoing basis, by Careers Wales, from all prisoners who have engaged with the service, however it is acknowledged that this may not be possible due to resource. Therefore, alternative options including collecting data, such as a longitudinal study or snapshot survey, or using existing data, such as with data

linkage (e.g. this could include utilisation of the Careers Wales data intelligence hub) could be explored.

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## Appendix A: Literature review protocol

# Working Wales in Prisons Evaluation

## Literature Review Protocol

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### Overview

This document outlines the proposed literature review process that will form a key element of the research into the Working Wales service in prisons. This document explores:

- Key research aims,
- the research approach, and
- the overarching literature review process.

### Research Aims

This research aims to better understand how effective the Working Wales service is in six male prisons across Wales (Usk, Prescoed, Cardiff, Swansea, Berwyn and Parc) and two English female prisons (Styal and Eastwood Park) that imprison Welsh women. The research will focus on how the service differs between prisons and any challenges or obstacles in service delivery.

The key research questions are as follows:

1. To what extent is the service delivered as outlined in Working Wales's objectives?
2. What, if any, challenges are faced by the service?
3. Do these challenges differ by prison?
4. How do referrals and outcomes differ between prisons? What are the trends?
5. What, if any, contact do you have with third party organisations?



## Approach

To respond to the research questions, a range of data will be collected. This will include:

- A short literature review drawing on evidence of Working Wales and other employability support within male and female prisons.
- Semi-structured interviews with Working Wales advisors who work in prisons to better understand the service and how it differs across the prisons.
- Small scale analysis of quantitative data.

The sub-sections below detail the processes associated with the literature review.

### Search Terms

Search terms utilised to systematically filter search engines and research portals will include the following:

### Key terms

- Working Wales
- Working Wales evaluation
- Working Wales guidance
- Working Wales in prisons
- Employability services
- Employability services in prisons
- Employability guidance for offenders
- Employability guidance for ex-offenders upon release

### Screening

Once the search is complete, potentially relevant material will be screened against the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria outlined below.

### Inclusion criteria

- Studies that focus on the delivery of employability/ careers guidance programmes delivered in prisons in Wales or the wider UK.
- Studies that focus on the delivery of employability/ careers guidance programmes delivered out of prisons in Wales or the wider UK.
- Studies that focus on the relationship between the delivery of Working Wales and other employability services across Wales.
- Studies that provide evidence of the effectiveness of Working Wales service on prisoners released back into Wales.
- Studies that identify a gender comparison in the delivery of employability/ careers guidance in prisons.

## Exclusion criteria

To ensure that the literature remains focused, the following will be excluded:

- Soft evidence (i.e. primary commentary or anecdotal evidence).
- Studies not published in English or Welsh language.
- Studies published before 2010.
- Studies from whole books or other work of equivalent length. Also, studies from newspaper articles, blog posts, editorials/ opinion pieces and magazine articles.

## Recording the evidence

To ensure the search is comprehensive and transparent, for each piece of evidence, I will record the following in an excel sheet:

- Title
- Author(s)
- Type of publication
- Publication date
- Country/Region of focus
- Abstract/Executive summary

- Research design/methodology
- Limitations
- Link
- Relevance- The literature will be ranked 1 to3 based on its relevance to the research project.

## Data Extraction

Literature that has been screened against the predefined inclusion criteria will then be reviewed, with any information on best practice methods extracted. Data extraction will also include background information to ensure that contextual knowledge is retained.

## Appendix B: Monitoring information technical information

### Episodes of support variables

- identifier
- episode\_type
- case\_id
- customer
- joined\_date
- closed\_date
- referral source
- referral\_by\_org
- status\_at\_joining
- joining\_postcode\_ward
- joining\_postcode\_la
- rural\_urban\_2011\_indicator\_name
- oac\_2011\_subgroup
- oac\_2011\_group
- oac\_2011\_supergroup
- age\_group\_detail
- ethnicity
- gender
- is\_disabled
- home\_language
- highest\_qual\_level
- preferred\_language\_verbal
- preferred\_language\_written
- current\_status
- current\_status\_start\_date
- circ\_forced\_migrant
- circ\_forced\_migrant\_origin\_country
- repeat\_joiner\_within\_year
- circ\_in\_custody
- circ\_probation
- one\_to\_one\_count
- one\_to\_one\_duration
- cwc\_support\_count
- cwc\_support\_duration
- advocacy\_liaison\_count
- advocacy\_liaison\_duration
- interactions\_in\_person\_count
- interactions\_telephone\_count
- interactions\_email\_count
- interactions\_text\_count
- interactions\_webchat\_count
- interactions\_letter\_count
- interactions\_video\_count
- interactions\_messaging\_service\_count
- interactions\_webinar\_count
- interactions\_whatsapp\_count
- careers\_advisor\_interactions
- employment\_coach\_interactions
- other\_role\_interactions
- latest\_in\_person\_interaction\_date
- latest\_in\_person\_interaction\_venue
- latest\_in\_person\_interaction\_venue\_postcode
- status\_6\_months\_after\_leaving
- referrals\_access
- referrals\_apprenticeship
- referrals\_business\_wales
- referrals\_citizens\_advice
- referrals\_college
- referrals\_college\_pla
- referrals\_cfw\_plus
- referrals\_employability\_coaching
- referrals\_employability\_skills\_programme
- referrals\_employment
- referrals\_engagement
- referrals\_esf\_project
- referrals\_event
- referrals\_housing\_support

- referrals\_jcp\_youth\_journey
- referrals\_jgw\_plus\_advancement
- referrals\_jgw\_plus\_employment
- referrals\_jgw\_plus\_engagement
- referrals\_jobcentre\_plus
- referrals\_jgw\_legacy
- referrals\_learning\_training\_provider
- referrals\_level\_1
- referrals\_la\_provision
- referrals\_other
- referrals\_pace
- referrals\_prison\_project
- referrals\_react\_iii
- referrals\_react\_plus
- referrals\_self\_help
- referrals\_skills\_to\_succeed
- referrals\_social\_services
- referrals\_summer\_sorted
- referrals\_support\_agency
- referrals\_uk\_enic

- referrals\_union
- referrals\_university
- referrals\_voluntary\_work
- referrals\_youth\_service

#### Interactions variables

- interaction\_id
- case\_id
- channel\_of\_interaction
- type\_of\_interaction
- time\_spents\_mins
- date\_of\_interaction
- interaction\_venue
- interaction\_venue\_postcode
- delivered\_by

### Comparison of figures from Careers Wales annual reports and from analysis of monitoring information supplied for this Welsh Government research report

**Table B.1: Number of episodes of support by year**

Status	2021 to 22	2022 to 23	2023 to 24
CW annual report	366	949	1,363
WG research report	424	954	1,369

Sources: Careers Wales annual reports<sup>51</sup> & Working Wales monitoring information

<sup>51</sup> Careers Wales [Annual Report 2021-2022](#), Careers Wales [Annual Report 2022-2023](#) & Careers Wales [Annual Report 2023-2024](#).

**Table B.2: Number of interactions by year**

Status	2022 to 23	2023 to 24
CW annual report	1,463	2,643
WG research report	1,631	2,869

Sources: Careers Wales annual reports<sup>52</sup> & Working Wales monitoring information

**Comparison of status 6 months after leaving categories in the WW monitoring information and those used in this WG research report**

**Table B.3: Status 6 months after leaving an episode of support categories**

WW monitoring information category	WG research report category
Adult training	Other WG employability or skills programme
Current status unknown	Current status unknown
Dormant	Dormant
Further education full-time	Further education
Higher education	Higher education

<sup>52</sup> Careers Wales [Annual Report 2021-2022](#), Careers Wales [Annual Report 2022-2023](#) & Careers Wales [Annual Report 2023-2024](#).

Jobs Growth Wales+ engagement	Other WG employability or skills programme
Job full-time no formal training	Employed
Job full-time with formal training	Employed
Job part-time no formal training	Employed
Job part-time with formal training	Employed
Non employed – actively seeking	Unemployed
Non employed – not available to enter	Not available for education, employment or training
Non employed – not ready to enter	Economically inactive
Out of Wales	Resides outside Wales
Self employed	Self employed
Voluntary work	Voluntary work

Source: Working Wales monitoring information

Note, this only displays those categories that had been selected (i.e. had a value of 1 or more) and is not an exhaustive list of all available categories.

## Appendix C: Interview schedule

1. Background questions:
  - a. How long have you been working in the employability field?
  - b. How long have you been a Working Wales advisor?
  - c. How long have you been delivering support in prisons?
2. What is your role as a career's advisor/ employability coach?
  - a. Do you deliver in both male and female prisons?
3. What are the main support needs offenders present WW with?
  - a. (are there any barriers to offenders accessing WW in prison?)
4. How do you deliver the WW service?
  - a. Would you want to change anything about the delivery of the service?
  - b. How do you tailor WW provision to suit offenders' needs?
  - c. (does the current service use the resources well?)
  - d. (what is valuable about this service)
    - i. (how does the service differ to others-how does their offer in prisons differ from Maximus in practice?)
5. How often do you go into the prisons?
  - a. How long do you spend with each offender?
    - i. To what extent is this targeted or mandated?
  - b. Does this differ?
  - c. If it does differ, why do you spend longer with certain individuals/ in different prisons?
  - d. (depending on answer to 2a) How does this differ between male and female prisons?
  - e. (are there any offender groups that are harder to engage with in prison setting)
6. When do you start interacting with the offenders? /When are offenders referred to you?
  - a. How does this differ between offenders?
  - b. How does this differ between prisons?
7. How well do you feel the WW provision is tailored to offenders needs?
  - a. How do you change how you interact with different offenders?
  - b. Has the WW service changed since it first started in prisons in 2019?
    - i. If so, how and what do you think prompted this?
    - ii. Was this to suit the needs of offenders?
8. What, if any, barriers do you face in delivering WW in prison?
  - a. Do these differ by prison?
  - b. Do these differ by characteristics of offenders?
  - c. What other barriers do you face?
  - d. (How do you think you can overcome these barriers?)



9. Do you have contact with third party organisations whilst offenders are in prison and if so who?
  - a. How do you work with these?
10. Do you have contact with external third party organisations that you refer offenders to when they leave prison and if so who?
  - a. If yes, how long do you stay in contact for?
    - i. Does this allow you to see the progress of the offenders outside of the prison? (How do you know the work you're doing is working?)
      1. (if they don't, what do they think they can do?)
    - ii. (continuing support on release)
  - b. How does this differ between those that stay in Wales on release and those released in England?