

North Wales Regional Skills Partnership

Young Person's Guarantee
Report 2022



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Regional Skills Partnership



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Introduction & Background

What is the Young Person's Guarantee?

In 2020, Welsh Government's Programme for Government set out an ambitious commitment to deliver the Young Person's Guarantee, giving everyone under 25 the offer of support into sustainable work, education, training, or self-employment. The Guarantee was set to ensure no lost generation across Wales as a result of the pandemic and Brexit. Since the Programme for Government was published, the job market has recovered far more rapidly than predicated and seems to be buoyant with demand outweighing supply. However, the Young Person's Guarantee still has an important role to play in supporting Welsh Government reach its policy goal of becoming a fairer, greener and more successful Wales.

The broad aims and objectives of YPG are to help:

1. More young people are able to make well-informed choices about their next steps and/or future careers.
2. More young people feel better prepared for work and life
3. More young people have access to pathways back into education, training and employment for all young people who are unemployed
4. Young people have access to support if they are interested in becoming self-employed
5. Employers have the confidence and support to recruit young people into quality jobs and apprenticeships
6. More employers are offering workplace experiences to young people
7. More disadvantaged young people are benefiting from the availability of paid employment opportunities and learning opportunities.

The Young Person's Guarantee is the umbrella structure, which sits above all programmes for young people, aiming to create a straightforward journey for young people regardless of their circumstances and background. The Guarantee brings together a range of programmes and initiatives which have been designed to provide the right support at the right time for the diverse needs of young people across Wales. Some of the programmes of support that form part of the Young Person's Guarantee include:

- Jobs Growth Wales+
- ReAct Apprenticeships
- Personal Learning Accounts
- Traineeships
- Community Employability Programmes

Purpose of the Report

Welsh Government have asked all four Regional Skills Partnerships in Wales to undertake mapping work, desktop research and engagement meetings with delivery stakeholders in the region.

The aim of this work is to better understand the current landscape in North Wales as regards local and regional projects targeting Young People (16–24 years old) who are not in education, employment or training (NEETS).

There are a range of projects and programmes already supporting young people across North Wales and the mapping work enabled us to have a better understanding of any gaps and duplications in services across counties.

Below we have gathered the findings into a report that will support the ongoing development and delivery of the Young Persons Guarantee. The report will cover the following themes:

- What's currently available for young people 16–24 across the region linked to education, employment, training and self-employment
- Identified barriers/ gaps in provision across the region and how YPG can help address these challenges
- Recommendations

Data Sources and Review

Since January 2022, the North Wales RSP have met with key stakeholders and Networks across the region to understand the current offer for young people and have produced a mapping spreadsheet which details all support for young people between 16–24 years old (**Appendix 1**). List of stakeholders and networks consulted is attached (**Appendix 2**).

It was agreed to input all local, regional and national provision on to one worksheet/ excel spreadsheet. The worksheet has been broken down to county level with details for the 6 Local Authority areas of North Wales.

The first initial provision information was taken from the following data sets/ consultative meetings:

- Working Wales Local Support Finder Database;
- WCVA Active Inclusion Projects list;
- Local, Regional and National ESF programme list produced by the North Wales Regional Engagement Team;
- Community Renewal Fund Projects lists;
- North Wales RSP Employability Working Group – information on employability and skills offer from all partners that sit on the working group;
- One to one meetings with each Local Authority Engagement and Progression Co-ordinators (EPC) in line with the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework
- One to one meetings with providers/ organisations who currently work in the region

Provision in the spreadsheet (**Appendix 1**) has been RAG rated to show when funding for delivery of programme / provision will end:

Red- provision already come to an end

Yellow- Provision ending in the next 18 months

Green- Provision continuing / no end date specified

Summary of the data has been presented and challenged by the RSP Employability Working Group, the RSP Board and ESF Network meetings. The summary of the provision landscape was well received and feedback received.

Issues & Risks

The main issues encountered during the project related to quality assurance, potential inaccuracy or missing data, due to directories/ information being out of date or sometimes incomplete. The mapping only provides a snapshot of the provision and support in place for young people who are NEET, rather than a comprehensive picture.

The spreadsheet (Appendix 1) is also a snapshot in time (January-June, 2022) in the region and with new funding streams such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund coming on board, some new projects / programmes may start to deliver in the next few months.

The main risk posed is the maintenance of the mapping, as the data and information could become inaccurate if not reviewed and updated regularly. With ESF programmes also coming to an end over the next year projects will also come to a close at different points and gaps will occur in provision as a result.

Current Landscape

North Wales Labour Market Overview

Below is a snapshot of the North Wales Labour market:

Economy Overview 2021



POPULATION

701,149



total regional
EMPLOYMENT

284,220



average
WAGES PER JOB

£24,800

SOURCED FROM: EMSI BURNING GLASS



Labour Force Breakdown 2021

total
WORKING AGE
POPULATION

410,371



16+ not in
LABOUR FORCE

98,636



LABOUR FORCE

311,735

EMPLOYED

299,933



UNEMPLOYED

11,802

UNDER 16

125,068

OVER 64

165,710

SOURCED FROM: EMSI BURNING GLASS



North Wales NEET Figures

Source of data: Careers Wales 5 Tier Model Data:

Careers Wales tracks all customers in the Five Tier model (those in the 16/17 and 17/18 academic cohort groups by DoB).

July 1st snapshots for last 3 years for comparison (North Wales)

NEET 1st July 2020 = 4.31% (621 young people)

NEET 1st July 2021 = 3.6% (515 young people)

NEET 1st July 2022 = 3.1% (452 young people)

NEET 1st July 2022 snapshot (North Wales)

Of the 452 NEET young people:

- 60% are Male compared to 39% Female and 1% Unknown
- 16% are categorised as Tier 3 'Actively Seeking' EET. 84% are categorised as Tier 2 'Not ready / Not available' for EET

NEET 1st July 2022 snapshot (All Wales)

- The All-Wales NEET average is 2.9% compared to 3.1% in North Wales
- 23% of NEET young people in Wales reside in the North Wales RSP region

NEET 1st July 2022 snapshot by Local Authority

Local Authority	NEET Number	NEET Percentage %
Conwy	75	17%
Denbighshire	80	18%
Flintshire	78	17%
Gwynedd	73	16%
Isle of Anglesey	52	11%
Wrexham	94	21%
Total	452	100%

Total NEETs by Month and Year (3 Year Comparison)



The above data shows that North Wales has witnessed a decrease in *NEET* from 4.31% (621 young people) in July 2020 to 3.1% (452 young people) in July 2022.

Access to the above data is crucial for the YPG partners as it gives a clear insight and understanding the changing regional picture when it comes to NEETS in the region.

Impact of Covid-19 on the labour market

The speed at which COVID-19 has impacted the economy and labour market has been unprecedented. The combined impact of the pandemic and Brexit has exacerbated the scale and depth of some of the long-term challenges faced by the North Wales economy and pushed the region **off-course** from the progress it was steadily making up to 2020.

The pandemic has impacted individuals throughout the workforce. It has created challenges for young students and graduates seeking quality employment, employers and businesses facing recruitment issues and workers who have either left the workforce through redundancy or have seen their employment environments change dramatically over the past 18 months. These challenges have exacerbated existing skills gaps and pushed the region jobs growth off course.

Labour and skills shortages remain a substantial challenge across the region. The economy is in the grip of a strong hiring recovery with a large increase in the number of vacancies. However, there are growing concerns around a mis-match between skills demand for vacancies and the skillset of those searching for new jobs. This has affected most sectors, but most noticeably, Hospitality and Tourism, Social Care, Food and Farming, Construction and Logistics, which have all faced immense challenges.

For **younger adults** (under 25 years old), the challenges were especially acute:

- 11% of 18-24 year-olds in North Wales had lost their job or hours and pay at the end of 2020 and 24% were furloughed. This is significantly higher than overall figures for North Wales, where 7% lost their job or hours/pay 15% were furloughed.

- Of those made redundant from Work-Based-Learning schemes in North Wales, 72% were aged between 16 and 24.
- New graduates are struggling to find job opportunities and businesses may have less capacity to take on apprentices and school leavers. North Wales's 'class of 2020 and 2021' need to be recognised as particularly vulnerable to the direct and indirect effects of the pandemic.

Employers are crucial to the rising to the recovery challenge recovery in skills and employment:

- Businesses need confidence to recruit and invest in staff training for recovery.
- Some sectors will be more affected by job losses and/or difficulty in filling roles; 46% of jobs in Wales have a high potential for automation whilst employment in North Wales is overrepresented in more traditional industries such as Manufacturing. This will necessitate a step change in our digital skills base if North Wales is to compete.
- Digital infrastructure is crucial to people being able to work and run businesses from home - during lockdown, 40% of people in Wales could work from home compared to 46% across the UK.
- The economic turmoil brought about by the pandemic has provided an opportunity to focus more closely on a green recovery and a strategic regional response that reinforces the need for green skills and jobs.

Key Findings of the mapping

The first thing to note is the breadth of support and provision targeting young people (16-24) across the region. By talking with stakeholders, it became evident that the provision is vast and wide ranging. Programmes of support are funded by various streams including ESF, Lottery, Charity funded, Local Authority funded, Community Renewal Funded programmes and projects.

There is a broad mixture of regional projects and programmes of more local support:

Organisations Delivering in North Wales

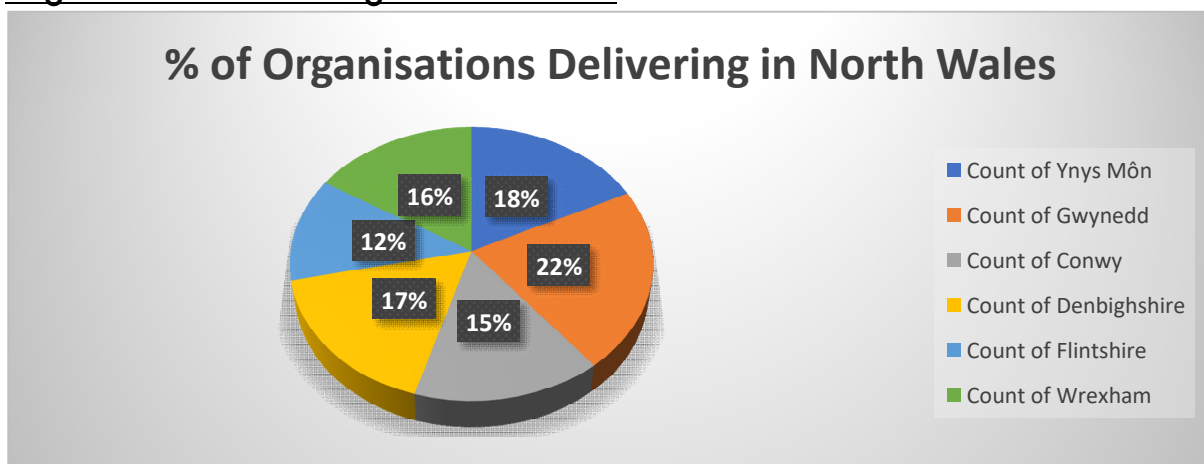


Figure 1. Regional Overview of coverage (percentage)

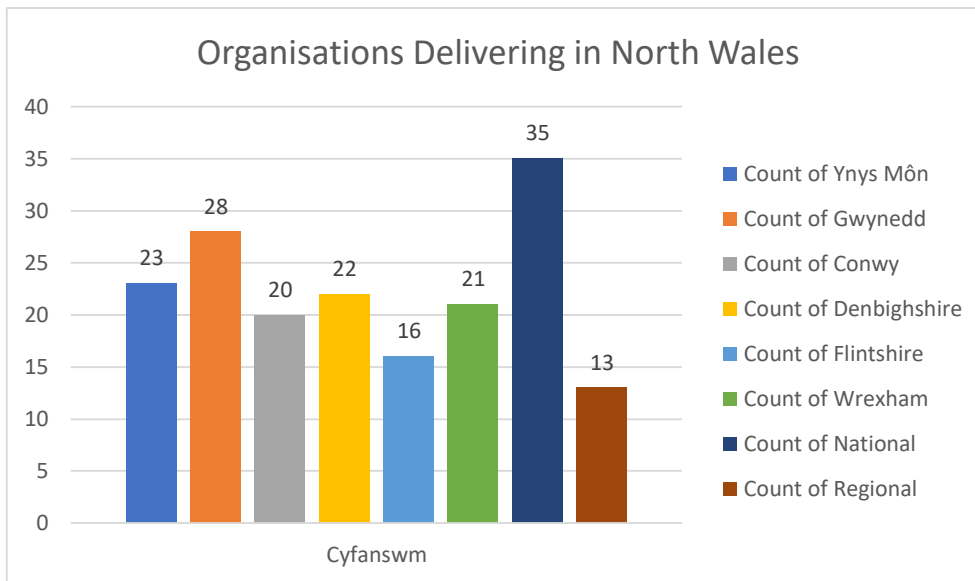
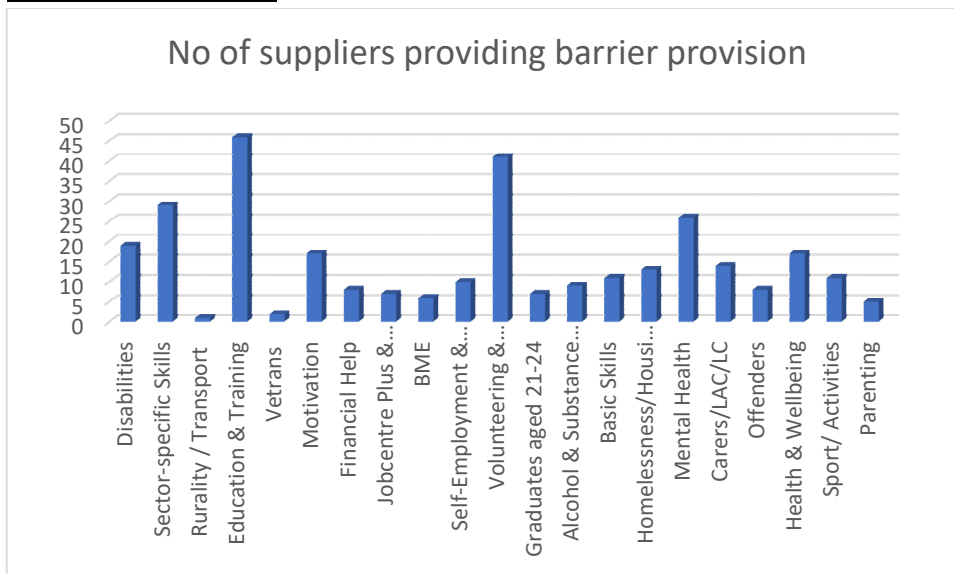


Figure 2. Regional overview of coverage (number)

Barriers Provision



From analysing the mapping and approximate coverage of organisations and services for each county, it appears that Gwynedd has the greatest concentration of provision and support, with a total of 28 organisations working in Gwynedd alone, supported by 48 Regional and National organisations. The majority of the support is provided across the county and not targeted at specific areas. This suggest there are gaps in provision for NEETS in rural Gwynedd areas. Some of the specific support organisations for Gwynedd include The Outdoor Partnership Pathways to Employment programme, Abbey Road Centre in Bangor and Gwaith Gwynedd.

Flintshire has the least number of organisations providing support with 21 organisations. Many of the organisation are third sector organisations that offer various form of support programmes; 'Mental Health', 'Carers', 'Basic Skills', 'Volunteering & Work Experience' were

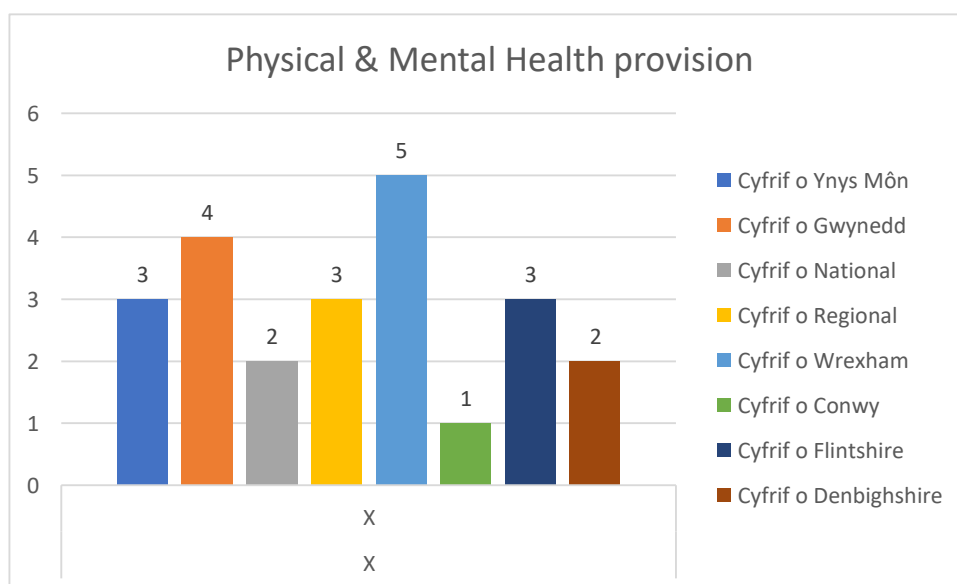


some of the barriers supported in Flintshire. Flintshire and Wrexham are part of the East Wales area when it comes to ESF funding and this provides the area with opportunities to be part of projects and programmes that are not available to the rest of the region- Learning to Grow, Coalfields Regeneration Trust being one of them.

Provision across the region is generally based around *engagement and skills and work experience training*, with the majority supporting education and training and providing volunteering opportunities. Many of these came through Active Inclusion projects such as Gisda Academi Cyfleuon, Cymunedau Ymlaen Môn Communities Forward and CAIS Limited -At Your Service.

Currently it is also evident that *provision for Physical and Mental Health barriers* was also high. 43 suppliers provided this type of intervention and support across the region, although this will not be the case in a few months due as much of the provision is funded through ESF projects. Active Inclusion funded projects were key in delivering this type of support and intervention, tapping into third sector organisations and their knowledge and networks of local areas in order to engage young people, for exaple KIM Inspire a programme running in Flintshire that provides Mental Health support for individuals in the community. The Outdoor Partnership was running support which included physical health benefits as well as employability and upskilling. This type of support opens the doors to the wild of North Wales to young people that would not always have the opportunity to explore it. But with Active Inclusion projects coming to an end in the next few months, it's concerning that the level of support and provision for physical and mental health will disappear in the region, at a time when the need is high.

During our regional workshops, stakeholders have indicated the *need for a holistic, person-centred approach for a young person, which brings together employability support and mental health and wellbeing provision*, this being important due to a concern surrounding high levels of poor mental health and wellbeing among individuals who are NEET. This has not only been identified as a gap in the region as ESF project come to an end, but it's also been identified as regional need going forwards.



It is also unclear whether there is sufficient coverage of mental health services in rural areas of North Wales. The insufficient coverage is very problematic for young people, as they may

not have access to a car or frequent and reliable transport to reach services elsewhere. Rurality and Transportation is the barrier with the least programmes and provision of support. This is a significant barrier for some of the more rural areas of the region of which there are many. Main towns such as Llangefni, Bangor, Caernarfon, Conwy, Llandudno, Rhyl, Mold and Wrexham have many organisations based and offering support. This leaves substantial gaps for areas further South in the region. Covid has meant that much of the support has been available virtually but with the loosening of restrictions and the return to some sort of normal life, it is important that young people are not left feeling isolated in their rural communities. The barrier of transport not only affects those in rural areas but in more urban areas also. Young people are sometimes reliant on public transport to take them to support destinations if their parents are unable to take them or if they do not have access to their own car.

Careers Advice and Insights

Throughout the stakeholder meetings, a common theme was around the provision of career advice and insight to young people from early years through higher and further education. Much of this support was provided by National organisations such as Working Wales and Careers Wales, DWP programmes of support such as the Re-Start Scheme and other more local support. Following workshops on the initial findings of the mapping work with stakeholders, the message was simple, the current landscape is inconsistent and is influenced by many differing factors. If the YPG is to have a long-lasting impact on our young people and they are to receive the quality of advice to help them with choices and decisions they will need to make, then addressing this issue is important. Having the support on offer all located in one place online with clear direction as to what provision offers which support is crucial for the success of the YPG if it is to create a more collaborative approach to support for young people. Another key take away from discussions with stakeholders was the need to have effective and clear career pathways into sectors which can be clearly articulated to young people, but also to 'influencers' such as parents.

Sector Specific Skills Provision for NEETs

Sector Specific Skills provision targeting young people in the region predominantly covers Hospitality, Construction and, retail and volunteering sectors. This is in line with some of the key and growth sectors identified in the region as part of the North Wales Skills and Employability Plan 2019-2022, but, there are gaps in provision in other areas of need such as food and drink, health and social care, energy and environment and creative and digital. These sectors are experiencing recruitment issues and skills shortages at all levels therefore there could be better alignment of this provision with the need as stated by employers. The end of STEM and STEM Gogledd programmes mean there is no specific programme in the region committed to developing STEM subjects with the Young People of North Wales, this at a time when employers are struggling to recruit in these areas. The North Wales Growth Deal has projects that will require sector specific skills in the Energy, Food and Farming, High Value Manufacturing, Digital and Land and Property sectors and there is an opportunity to better align the jobs and opportunities that will be created with the Young Person's Guarantee, to create clear pathways into employment in the area.

The Local Authority's programmes of Support for young people are working well to target those leaving school and not going on to either College, 6th form or into employment. Programmes such as:

- Barod Sir Ddinbych
- Cynnydd, Sir Conwy
- Wellbeing Hubs on Anglesey
- Flintshire Resilience
- Communities 4 Work

These projects are working on the ground with young people to not only identify those in need of support but creating a network of different partners that can offer the support needed to get these young people engaged with some sort of training or employment. Covid-19 has made it much easier for young people to disengage completely from society, these programmes are offering a lifeline to those at risk. This could become a stepping stone for a more regional approach to implementing the YPG to best help young people furthest from the labour market, and those facing barriers, to enter and sustain education, training and employment.

The mapping research has identified many barriers and obstacles that are facing young people in the North Wales region. The mapping focused on the below barriers:

Disabilities
Mental Health
Physical Health & Wellbeing
Carers
Homeless / Housing
Alcohol & Substance Abuse
Education & Training
Rurality

A list of stakeholder responses during our workshops is in **Appendix 3**. Discussions on gaps in provision as ESF and other funded programmes coming to an end and other challenges facing the region highlighted the following areas:

- Transition and bridging between school into college will be gap as projects such as ADTRAC and TRAC close
- Support to prevent young people from becoming NEET will be an issue as ESF funding draws to a close. Current YPG focuses on 16-24 year olds and link between the potential increase in NEET at 16 will need to be considered
- Pathways into employment or into college is not always clear, including work experience opportunities
- Progression for young people from entry level jobs into sustainable employment

- Graduate support for young people over 21 years old to match with employers and vacancies

Conclusions

The findings from the mapping exercise demonstrate that there are programmes of support for all in need of it in the region. With over 110 individual programmes or projects being delivered- and this is just what the mapping has collected. The support on offer is spread out across the region in terms of Local Authority areas but perhaps not spread evenly within those Local Authority areas. **There is greater need for the support on offer to reach all corners of the region and for this support to be available both face-to-face** and virtually if needs be.

What the mapping and the subsequent meetings and workshops have also demonstrated is the need for the organisations delivering **these programmes to work much more collaboratively**. To create partnerships between programmes, pathways from one programme to the next so that the ultimate goal of reducing the number of NEET individuals in the region is reduced and that those individuals have found meaningful and sustainable education, employment or training.

There seems to be **widespread duplication** in services providing soft outcomes for young people who are not work ready but need the pre-employment support element. There are many forms of this type of provision running in the region and the access to these can be unclear. This needs to be addressed as the people accessing this type of support are those furthest away from employment or training, individuals that are not engaged with support networks and are difficult to engage with. Many partners are in agreement that there needs to be less duplication and more co-ordination when it comes to provision for young people and need to ensure that young people themselves are able to be part of the conversation and solution.

During our engagement with stakeholders, many were unclear on parts of the YPG and how it aligns with other key policy areas such as YEPF framework and youth services. The Young Persons Guarantee needs to be an accessible programme that anyone can use to find the support they are looking for. There could be a website in place that has all the regional links to the support networks and how to contact them, it could be a credit-based programme whereby you gain X amount of YPG credit every time you engage with a programme of support- this would give the YPG more value amongst young people. Ultimately it needs to be seen as the go to place for information on how a NEET individual or those supporting them can find advice on programmes and access to those programmes in an easy, user friendly way.

It became clear during the mapping research and the subsequent meeting and workshops that there is a **lack of clear career pathways and referral routes in the region**. Pathways that a young person can easily access and understand and see the way form where they are in the present and how to get to where they want to in the future and how to access support to help them with that journey. Clear pathways into gaining employment in different sectors and how to upskill within those sectors, to carve out a meaningful and sustainable career.

Although not a direct impact that came up during the mapping and meeting with stakeholders, **the cost of living crisis and in work poverty is a barrier** that cannot be ignored

whilst compiling a list of recommendations for the Young Person's Guarantee. Both these factors will have a huge impact on young people across Wales and in various ways. It will impact young people on Universal Credits and other benefits, the value of these will decline. It will also impact graduates and young people with student loans because of higher interest rates. Young people spend more on rent and bills and it is important that support is made available to them to remain in employment or education throughout this crisis. The strategy for the YPG should make note of this.

The final recommendation is for the YPG to become a catalyst **for creating a tailored work experience programme for young people across the region**. This is closely aligned with the pathway's recommendation. Due to the pandemic, work experience has not been available to young people. It is crucial to inspire young people and one way of doing this is to bring young people in to the workplace they have an interest in. With the new Curriculum for Wales, this is the perfect time to bring together resources in the region to create a successful work experience that is a true reflection of what it is like to work with an employer of their choice. This is a crucial step on the career pathway.

Next Steps

The next steps for the North Wales RSP in regard to the YPG is to continue to engage with regional stakeholders on the opportunities the YPG has to offer. This will be managed with further workshops and events to raise awareness. The RSP will also be looking into ways of bringing organisations together to create a more collaborative approach to working with and supporting young people in the region.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Provision Mapping/ Excel Spreadsheet



YPG Mapping North
Wales RSP 2022.xlsx

Appendix 2: Stakeholders Engaged via mapping work / workshop / follow up meetings

Regional Engagement Team- North Wales
North Wales Training
Grŵp Llandrillo Menai
DWP
Flintshire Council
Conwy Council
Denbighshire Council
ReStart
Mon CF
Remploy
Anglesey Council
Gwynedd Council
Gisda
WCVA
Coleg Cambria
Wrexham Council
Adra
Careers Wales
North Wales Employability Working Group Workshop
North Wales RSP Board
Regional EPC Co-ordinator's Group Workshop
North Wales RET Workshop
North Wales RSP Board
FSB North Wales
Careers Wales
Working Wales
DWP - JCP
Princes Trust

Appendix 3

Young Person's Guarantee Workshop with North Wales RSP Employability Group, RSP Board, Regional EPC's, RET Network Workshop:

As an RSP we arranged many workshops across the region with various networks to provide feedback to us on the YPG. Below are some of the main comments captured. This information has been used in creating the report.

1. What approaches exist for engaging young people in the YPG locally - especially YP furthest away from the labour market? How can we ensure we have ongoing dialogue with a diverse range of young people locally in the planning, design, and delivery of the YPG?

- Lots of points of contact already exist i.e. schools and colleges - the challenge is transferring individuals from those contacts into referrals
- One of the difficulties is to capture the young people when they come through the door rather than lose them further down the line
 - Schemes like Kickstart has been a help
- Word of mouth has been useful
- Put community events on to attract people into the interventions

2. Could processes be strengthened across the region to support YP furthest from the labour market to overcome other barriers such as supporting their mental health, addressing homelessness, caring responsibilities or disability, travel or financial hurdles etc. - what local support/third sector orgs etc. are available locally?

- Engagement needed to redesign the new interventions
 - Need to ensure we plan something that doesn't just target the people who are usually captured within these programmes
 - Needs to go beyond this but can take a bit of time to bring it together
 - How do we capture individuals who are from households with historic lines of unemployment?
- Need to involve young people in discussion about what support would be beneficial for them to overcome their barriers so we can learn what works for them
 - Importance of feeding back to the young people to say what we're doing to be able to support them

3. How can the ongoing needs of marginalised groups or people not in education, employment, or training be supported appropriately at different stages of the YPG process?
 - Need to pick out what makes young people marginalised in the first place
 - A lot of ESF project have been targeting the same people
 - Need a step before the first step in the employability pathway
 - Engaging with them in terms of soft skills as well as more complex barriers
 - Role of the voluntary sector once there was a clear definition of what is meant by marginalised individuals

4. Are there clear progression routes for young people within the region?
 - Making sure that we utilise community resources
 - Ensure appropriate advice, information and guidance on employment is shared with young people from year 9 onwards
 - Seen this in feedback from classroom representatives
 - This guidance has been lacking during COVID
 - A lot of work to explain to young people what sustainable work is
 - Not always focus on the traditional routes into employment

5. Other key messages
 - Mental Health is a major barrier for young people

 - Rurality is a barrier- young people in rural communities unable to access support and programmes due to transportation issues.