

# North Wales Regional Skills Partnership

ANNUAL REPORT  
2020-21



Partneriaeth Sgiliau Rhanbarthol Gogledd Cymru  
North Wales Regional Skills Partnership

# North Wales Regional Skills Partnership – Annual Report 2020-21



## Foreword

Welcome to the North Wales Regional Skills Partnership 2020/21 Annual Report, showcasing how we have been driving forward the skills and employability agenda across our region; both in line with our strategic plan and in response to the unprecedented challenges of the past year.

As we publish this report, we are acutely aware that organisations and individuals continue to face enormous challenges arising from the pandemic, as well as adjustment to new trading arrangements with the European Union. Within this context, the North Wales Regional Skills Partnership takes the lead in identifying skills and employment needs, both now and in the future, and steering regional provision to best meet these needs.

Increasingly we see it as an RSP to inform and inspire, be that at an individual level regarding the range of role opportunities that currently exist, or that will emerge in growth sectors; Or at an organisational level helping businesses to tap into the high quality skill development provision that is available to support their own needs and aspirations.

As a partnership made up of the key regional bodies with a skills or employability interest, we see the role of the RSP team as one of 'orchestra leader', helping to bring the bear the many resources that we have available to best effect. The forthcoming year will present many challenges as we re-build from the pandemic, but there will be many opportunities too, and we believe that regionally we are in a good place to take advantage of these.

**David Roberts,  
Chair – North Wales Regional  
Skills Partnership**

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# 1.

## Introduction

There are four Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) in Wales, covering North Wales, South West, Mid Wales and South East Wales. Each RSP produces and analyses labour market intelligence, engages with regional employers and advises the Welsh Government on skills provision in the light of employer-led insight.

The RSPs form part of the Welsh Government's broader approach to regional economic development. This includes the commitment in the Economic Action Plan to strengthened strategic planning at regional level and the development of the North Wales Growth Deal and City Deals.

The North Wales Regional Skills Partnership brings together employers, skills providers and key local stakeholders to better understand and resolve skills mismatches at a regional and local level. The aim of the partnerships work is to identify current and future regional skills needs, and using this intelligence to shape the provision of post-16 education and training. In 2019, Welsh Government asked the RSP to take a more strategic, long-term view of the skills system in the region by producing a three year Regional Skills and Employment Plan 2019-2022. The aim of the plan is to get the North Wales skills system working harder and smarter to meet jobs, now and in the future. The North Wales RSP launched and published its plan in November 2019, following extensive consultation with employers and stakeholders.



## 2.

### Governance & Membership

The North Wales RSP is integrated within regional structures and support the delivery of a shared North Wales skills and employability agenda for Welsh Government and broader North Wales Growth Vision.

The RSP has four sub-groups/ networks that are part of its structure including:

**Employability Working Sub** - Group aims to provide co-ordination to improve the coherence, quality and cost-effectiveness of employability provision across the region.

**North Wales Kickstart Network** newly formed in 2020 focusing on bringing together DWP approved Kickstart Gateway Organisations who operate in North Wales to improve co-ordination, quality and outcomes of Kickstart provision in the region.

**RSP Provider Sub** - Group considers work-based learning provision for the region and make annual recommendations to the RSP.

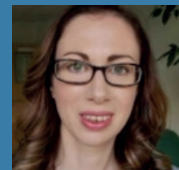
**Digital Skills Cluster Sub** - Group newly formed group in 2021 which aims to develop a collaborative, coordinated and targeted approach to digital skills challenges so that the region has a clear vision and set of priorities.



**NIALL WALLER**  
Chair, Employability  
Working Group

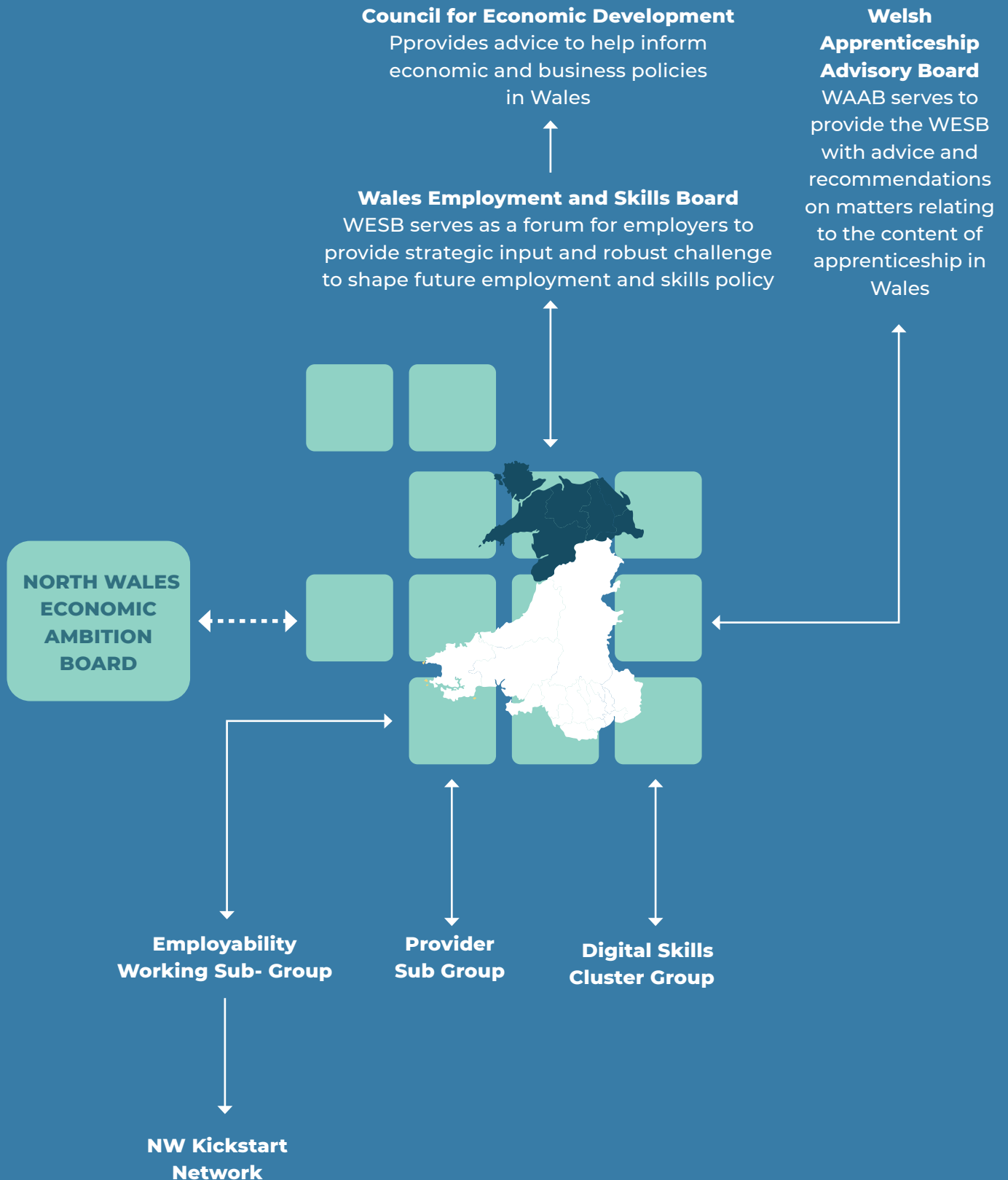


**PRYDERI AP RHISIART**  
Pryderi Ap Rhisiart  
Chair, Digital Skills Cluster  
Sub Group



**EMILY JONES**  
Chair, North Wales  
Kickstart Network

# North Wales Regional Skills Partnership Structure



## Membership

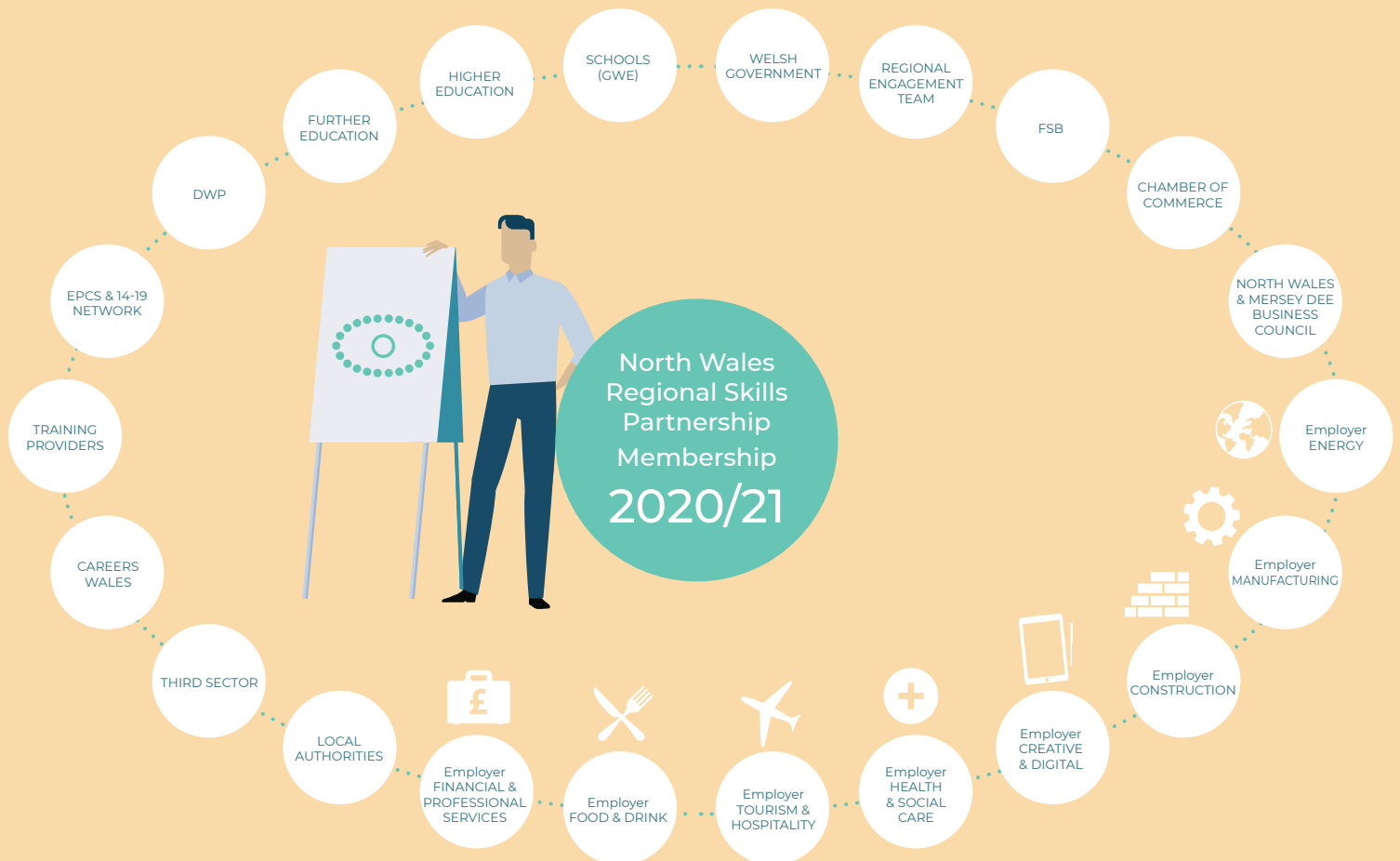
An Industry member chairs the board, with membership drawn from a wide variety of stakeholders who attend as representatives of their industry sectors or networks. The North Wales RSP is also represented on the Wales Employment and Skills Board (WESB), Wales Apprenticeship Advisory Board (WAAB) and Council for Economic Development (CED).

The membership includes a wide range of stakeholders including employers, education & training providers, Careers Wales, the Department for Work and Pension and the third sector. The RSP continues to promote its structure and membership with stakeholders across the region and nationally.

Over the last 12 months the focus has been on ensuring employer membership and input from our key and growth sectors. We have welcomed new members in the following sectors:

- Food & Farming
- Digital & Creative
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Energy
- Financial & Professional Services

Full details and information on the North Wales RSP Board Membership and Terms of Reference can be found online [www.rspnorth.wales](http://www.rspnorth.wales).



# 3.

## Our Regional Priorities

Underpinning our Skills and Employment Plan are **three overarching skills priorities** that are required to support sector growth in the economy. The priorities were drawn together by our extensive evidence base on regional needs, consultation feedback from a wide range of employers, providers and key stakeholders.

**Despite the challenges faced in the last year due to Covid, our priorities remain unchanged and have become even more important to ensure a skills led economic recovery in the region. We are still focused on providing support for our key and growth sectors in the region.**

This year we have made progress in laying the foundations that will bring life to our vision for the region. An action plan of activities for each of the three priorities has been produced, setting out short, medium and long term programmes of activities over the last year and into 2021-22.

### PRIORITY

# 1

Building our future workforce and attracting talent

### PRIORITY

# 2

Skills development for an inclusive North Wales

### PRIORITY

# 3

Promote career perception, pathways and apprenticeship opportunities



# 4.

## Activities & Achievements

### Our focus over 2020/2021:

- Deliver on actions in our delivery plan for all 3 priorities
- Delivering brokerage support to assist both businesses and individuals in the region
- Help identify trends and changes in our labour market as a result of Covid-19 through our Covid-19 Labour Market Insight Reports
- Covid-19 Employment & Skills Recovery Response and plan

- Assist our education partners (FE, HE & WBL) with insights from employers on skills challenges and future skills needs, especially in light of Covid-19.
- Assist and support Welsh Government and FE partners with the recently rolled out Personal Learning Account Programme which aims to support individuals earning under £26k to re-skill and upskill to switch careers and progress in the workplace
- Campaigns and promotion of regional and national skills and employability programmes to ensure that our citizens and businesses are aware of the support available to them

## Highlights

This year has undoubtedly been unprecedented, requiring rapid response to a fast changing situation. The North Wales RSP and related sub groups and partners have delivered on many activities and actions in relation to the skills and employability agenda in the region. Here are a few highlights:



# 5.

## Assessment of progress over last 12 months

### PRIORITY 1

#### Building our future workforce

The availability of a skilled and motivated workforce, which can adapt to meet current and future business needs is the cornerstone of our Strategy and therefore fundamental to our ability to improve productivity across North Wales. Brexit, technological advances in artificial intelligence and big data, increasingly fluid work patterns, and the demands of an ageing society; all have the potential to impact on the skills agenda in the years to come. That is why we have remained agile in our response. To that end, with our partners we have reviewed the actions in our Skills & Employment Strategy to ensure its continued relevance and alignment.

Our evidence base points to ongoing examples of skills mismatch within key sectors and difficulties retaining those that we work hard to upskill, such as graduates. The challenge has been made more pressing by the Covid-19 pandemic as employer requirements change and businesses struggle to navigate what is often seen as a confusing and complex skills landscape.

Beyond specific sectors, the pandemic has also highlighted a wider range of cross-cutting competencies and softer skills that have become increasingly important as we adapt to a new way of working, particularly around digital skills and capability, leadership & management and business resilience.

## What did we do?

### Skills pipeline for capital investments:

Discussion have started with the Digital Connectivity Programme and the Morlais project for the North Wales Growth Deal to ensure we have a skills and talent pipeline for jobs created in the region. This work will be ongoing over the next 12 months.

### Digital Skills:

We have mapped the skills supply for the region, and we are now articulating the demand for skills and identifying future skills needs for digital skills across all our key and growth sectors. We have established an Industry Cluster Group who will be steering this work for the next 12 months.

### Labour Market Information (LMI):

Throughout 2020-21, we have strengthened our analytical capability and embarked on an analytical deep dive to understand our changing landscape and the challenges and skills issues that are facing employers across our key and growth sectors. We have produced **three Covid-19 LMI reports** over the year. The main purpose of this report is to provide intelligence that enables Welsh Government and other stakeholders to understand the employment and skills impact of COVID-19 in the region.

### National Occupational Standards:

Welsh Government tasked the RSP with utilising our employer networks to identify occupations that are a priority, emerging or declining in 2020. This intelligence then informs the new Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) and Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes and assists in the future prioritisation of National Occupational Standards.

# Case Study

## Supporting Individuals - Opportunity for Change - Opportunity North Wales

**BUSINESS, skills and careers organisations in North Wales launched a campaign to support workers at risk of unemployment due to the Coronavirus pandemic in April 2020.**

The Regional Skills Partnership, Welsh Government's Working Wales programme, Careers Wales, and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) launched Opportunity for Change – Opportunity North Wales campaign.

With thousands of people across the country facing uncertainty or struggling to find a role in the wake of the global crisis, the aim is to help match them with essential job vacancies in alternative sectors, as well as offering online training and guidance to furloughed staff and anyone considered a change of career.

The focus was on providing people with clear information – including a bulletin with new vacancies and a dedicated email and web service with advice and guidance that was crucial as business started to unlock after the first lockdown restrictions were lifted.

Working alongside the region's employers and recruitment firms the focus was on encouraging people to apply for essential positions in key industries such as health and social care, remote IT work, nursing, administration, transport and logistics and other sectors where there is reported demand. David Roberts, chair of North Wales Regional Skills Partnership, said it was important those feeling distressed and concerned about the future are reassured that help is on hand.

“Ultimately, if someone is facing redundancy there needs to be a clear way for them to get advice, be pointed in the right direction and made aware of what opportunities are out there.

“That might be a different sector where their skills are valuable, the opportunity to retrain or to take part in online workshops and reskill.

“We will come out of the other side of this, but we have to work together, so this campaign is heartening and will hopefully help people quickly and efficiently when they need it most, which is right now.”

### Supporting Businesses

Supporting our employers in our key and growth sectors during the last year has been a priority for the North Wales Regional Skills Partnership.

We have worked with industry and employers across our key sectors, especially those sectors who were struggling to recruit and match individuals and skills to their vacancies. One example of this was the work we undertook for employers within the Health and Social Care sector, helping to shape the skills pipeline and broker support for employers and individuals alike with our key partners across the region.

***“We had a significant recruitment challenge across North Wales. Sian mobilised colleagues across the region to support the recruitment drive which had previously proven to be a challenge. The team were resourceful, efficient and extremely positive. They worked effectively with and clearly supported their clients to succeed. The team are clearly passionate about their work and the people they support”.***

**Jane Paice,  
Track and Trace Programme Lead,  
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health  
Board**

*“The RSP offered appropriate and timely support whenever it was requested, we felt they understood and appreciated the urgency of the situation in social care sector. The work not only supported our immediate need as a sector but has also led to longer term recruitment plans with our employability partners’*

Gill Paul,  
North Wales Social Care  
Workforce Board.



*“The RSP plays an essential role in bringing people together to ensure that stakeholders, businesses and education providers work together to deliver skills and prosperity for North Wales.”*

James Nelson,  
Executive Director, Academic  
Services, Grwp Llandrillo Menai

*“By working with the RSP on the important work of skills development, not only for young people but for the education institutions in the region, we are able to continue our work of creating great jobs and developing the regional economy. We can say with certainty that the RSP has supported us in driving our organisation’s agenda, of creating good jobs in the region, and having the skills to make the most of those jobs.”*

Pryderi Ap Rhisiart,  
Managing Director, M-SParc  
(Menai Science Park)



*“At Cambria, we work closely in partnership with the RSP to identify skills gaps and challenges faced by employers in North Wales to ensure that we meet the needs of industry and support sustainable communities.”*

Sue Price,  
Deputy Chief Executive &  
Principal, Coleg Cambria



## PRIORITY 2

### Skills Development for an Inclusive North Wales

Priority 2 actions have been mainly led by our Employability Working Sub-Group. Working in Partnership, the group recognise the need to enhance the employability and labour market prospects for our most disadvantaged residents by targeting support services around core skills, vocational and job readiness training, work experience, job-search assistance, and career guidance.

During the last 12 months, the focus has been on the following key actions:

- **Co-ordinate support that helps people in to work and encourage collaboration and alignment between providers.**
- **Make finding help and support as straightforward as possible.**
- **Provide more co-ordinated engagement with employers.**
- **Aligning Personal Learning Account Programme with regional priorities**

In the last 12 months, we have seen the levels of claimant counts increasing across the region, as well as redundancies being made as a result of challenges posed by Covid-19.

The aim was to ensure that these individuals were able to re-skill/ up-skill and to be aware of other opportunities in the region to ensure their re-entry into the labour market.

In what is a challenging and changing jobs market, businesses in the region recognise the need to support young people looking for jobs and generally, the support from employers wanting to participate in Kickstart has been high in the region. The RSP have worked closely with DWP and Kickstart Gateway providers during the year to ensure a co-ordinated approach and emphasising regional economic priorities.



## What did we do?

### **Opportunity North Wales Jobs Fair:**

RSP in collaboration with Working Wales and DWP arranged a virtual event to support customers to access job vacancies and get support with their career and employability needs, including those on furlough, unemployed or at risk of redundancy as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Jobs Fair also supported employers in the region with their recruitment, including those struggling to fill vacancies. Over 6,000 customers/ clients attend the fair.

### **Employability Conference:**

The RSP arranged a virtual conference in October 2020 for frontline employability and support staff. The aim of the conference was to provide information on the labour market changes and support packages to help customers, as well as key note address from the Minister. Over 150 frontline staff attended the event.

### **North Wales Kickstart Network established:**

The North Wales KickStart Network brings together DWP approved KickStart Gateway Organisations who operate in North Wales to improve the co-ordination, quality and outcomes of KickStart provision in the region. To ensure provision is aimed at sustainable and longer term employment that benefits the region's priority and growth sectors and aligns with opportunities in the North Wales Growth Deal and Regional Recovery Plans.

### **Personal Learning Accounts:**

We have worked with Welsh Government and both our FE Colleges on the development of this new programme. It provides an enhanced package of support for employed people (earning under £26k), furloughed workers, workers on zero hours contracts, agency staff and those at risk of being made redundant. It provides support through courses and qualifications which help address regional skills requirement in order to obtain skills and qualifications to progress into employment opportunities at a higher level or in alternative

sectors. The RSP has been working with our FE colleges to identify eligible qualifications to address skills needs.

### **Pop up business school with housing associations & local authority partners:**

Budding entrepreneurs were given a helping hand make their dreams a reality, thanks to a unique partnership between a leading business school and a host of North Wales organisations. The North Wales Pop-Up Business School took place in November 2021 and its aim was to inspire people and help them find the confidence to develop their business ideas.

For two weeks, start-ups will be able to have free access online to practical sessions, one-to-one coaching, workshop sessions and local peer support. Over 100 individuals took part in the two week course.





# Case Study

## Opportunity North Wales Jobs Fair

**Online employer event to support jobseekers in north Wales.**

A free virtual event took place in January 2021 to provide vital support for people looking for work opportunities in north Wales. This was the second event arranged for the region.

The event, called Opportunity North Wales, ran as a partnership event between North Wales RSP, Working Wales, delivered by Careers Wales, and The Department of Work and Pensions.

Over 6,000 people attended the event across the region browse a range of fantastic employment and training opportunities within the region. Jobseekers found out more about vacancies available through on-demand videos from the employers themselves, explaining more about the roles and the candidates they are looking for.

A number of the employers from across the region were in attendance to answer questions live direct from attendees through the live chat feature,

Information was also provided about other opportunities such as apprenticeships, training schemes and employability support in the north Wales area and how these can help the attendees.

Sian Lloyd Roberts, Regional Skills Manager, North Wales Regional Skills Partnership (NWRSP), said: "It is more important than ever that we provide whatever support we can for those seeking work and training. Many people are at risk of redundancy or have lost their jobs in recent months and it is a stressful time for them.

"However, opportunities and a wealth of advice are available across the region and by working together, and with businesses, we can ensure people with the right skills are matched with vacancies or can access the training they need to obtain those skills.

An attendee and job-seeker commented: "The event has been very helpful, thank you!"  
A North Wales employer commented: "This event has been fantastic, love the live chat".



**Opportunity North Wales**  
21 January 2021  
10am - 12pm

- Jobs
- Apprenticeships
- Training
- Employment Support

Opportunity North Wales is a partnership event supported by:



*“The Regional Skills Partnership is a Key organisation in helping STEM Gogledd achieve its objectives. A key strategic partner, the RSP are always on hand to offer support and guidance. As a valuable critical friend, we benefit from their ability to make connections and introduce us to other stakeholders, allowing us to build on those for the success of the STEM Gogledd project and wider network. Their strategic approach and overview is key as we progress and develop the project and support us when looking at how our project can be sustainable in the longer term.”*

**Dyfed Jones,  
STEM Gogledd Manager**

*“Morlais is an important renewable energy project with fundamental repercussions for North Wales in terms of employment and training. If successful this project will create 100 jobs by 2035, 200 or more by 2040. Menter Mon has progressed this project primarily in order to ensure that people born, educated and trained in North Wales become available to take these jobs. Marine services, Data engineering, Fabrication and Assembly, Environmental services Electrical and Mechanical engineering present just some of the opportunities we are striving to make available to people in our region. The RSP is an important component of this shared aspiration and we look forward to working with the Partnership over the next twelve years to ensure that we have the skills pipeline in the region.”*

**Gerallt Llewelyn Jones,  
Morlais project**





# Case Study

## North Wales Employability Conference

Frontline staff in north Wales attended a Virtual Conference in October 2020, rising to the challenge of getting people in the region into employment.

Organised by the Regional Skills Partnership, the Conference supported 150 Frontline staff in building a more resilient north Wales, discussing opportunities and potential employment barriers that could affect employability.

Collaborating with several Organisations operating in the area, including Working Wales, Department of Working Pension, ACAS and Flintshire County Council, the Conference focused on discussing best practice and providing frontline staff with techniques to support employability.

Also in attendance was The Welsh Government who provided an update on challenges within the region, the keynote speech given by Ken Skates, Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales.

The Conference also included an interactive opportunity for Frontline staff to ask the Employers and Organisations who were present any questions or issues of concern.

One of the attendees from the Conference was a staff member from a youth Service in the region. They stated:

“The conference was useful and interesting - I learnt a lot about the current Employability barriers and the support that’s available to respond and overcome this”.

Another attendee, an employee from a national training institute stated that it was “great to see the collaboration and the amazing work being undertaken in North Wales”.

# Case Study

## Supporting projects to pivot

The North Wales Business Academy (NWBA) project supports businesses to adapt, change and consolidate their working practices by delivering practical short courses in areas of strategy, change, digital media, finance and operations. The European Social Funded (ESF) and Welsh Government supported project has been in existence for 4 years, successfully supporting over 300 small businesses and 435 employees with business skills training. The project is a partnership between Grwp Llandrillo Menai (lead partner), Bangor University and Wrexham Glyndwr University.

The project has benefited greatly in 2020 from the strategic direction of the NWBA Board that encompasses representatives from Federation of Small Business, West Cheshire & North Wales Chamber of Commerce, North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council and the Regional Skills Partnership. Ffion Jones (RSP Team) is an active member providing market intelligence on employer needs, emerging skills gaps, recruitment and the impact of Covid 19 and Brexit on these areas. The impact of Covid 19 has necessitated a change in what we offer in terms of courses and how we deliver these courses to our core customer base. With up to date detailed labour market intelligence provided by the RSP the project has been able to pivot and rationalise its course offering to become more concise, more accessible to businesses and to develop 2 new courses that meet the business community’s needs. Acting on this intelligence has supported the North Wales Business Academy to continue to achieve its objectives of uplifting the skills of employees within North Wales businesses, helping them grow, consolidate and plan for the future. Without the support from the RSP, the project could potentially have not pivoted as quickly as it did in mid-2020 and thus struggled to find its place within the skills training market.

### PRIORITY 3

#### Promoting career perceptions, pathways and apprenticeship opportunities.

The perceptions of sectors, lack of understanding about different learner routes and apprenticeship opportunities is a key priority for our RSP. The Provider Sub-Group which includes all work-based learning providers in the region have taken actions forward in this field of work over the last year. The group has been focusing on the following key areas:

- **Improve the use and sharing of data analysis, research and trends relating to work based learning/ apprenticeships**
- **Synchronise regional marketing, promotion and communication activities of WBL/ apprenticeships at a regional level**
- **Improve Information, Advice and Guidance specific to WBL and apprenticeship that will increase take up and perception of this option amongst young people, teachers and parents**

We want to raise awareness amongst both learners and employers of the varied skills opportunities and pathways available locally to better equip our Workforce to respond to changing employer requirements. This includes boosting take up of apprenticeships and higher level technical vocational route, such as Degree Apprenticeships by raising their profile as an attractive alternative to academic pathways.

## What did we do?

### Data Sharing

Systematic data sharing systems established relating to WBL regionally – bi-monthly covid reports . We also continue to see data sharing from providers regarding the number of WBL learners choosing Welsh medium learning options and discussions with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to ensure no adverse effects of covid on Welsh medium learners and choices

### Regional Degree Apprenticeship event

Held an online event aimed at employers to raise awareness of degree apprenticeships in digital and manufacturing across the region. Bangor University, Wrexham Glyndwr University, The Open University and Grwp Llandrillo Menai joined forces with the RSP and regional employers to highlight opportunities.

### Career Perceptions

Set up a focus group with employers in our key and growth sectors to understand the barriers to perceptions and take forward an action plan on how the region can over-come these challenges.

### Targeting pupils at school

We worked with Careers Wales and the *Choose your Futures virtual event* to target young people in year 9. We produced an online video which outlined some key labour market intelligence and information about the opportunities for careers and jobs in our key and growth sectors across the region.



# Case Study

## Degree Apprenticeship Event

**FREE digital and manufacturing apprenticeships was the focus of a webinar uniting colleges and universities in North Wales.**

Bangor and Wrexham Glyndwr universities, Coleg Cambria, Grwp Llandrillo Menai and The Open University (OU) have joined forces to promote fully funded apprenticeships.

With places available in 2021, partners include Welsh Water, Cartrefi Cymru, Airbus and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, bringing education into the workplace and giving learners vital hands-on experience while achieving an undergraduate degree over three years.

Presented by David Roberts, chair of North Wales Regional Skills Partnership encouraged employers to consider degree apprenticeships to upskill employees. At a crucial time for all industries in the face of the global Coronavirus pandemic, degree apprenticeship should be viewed as a clear pathway for employers and individuals alike.

He said: "The webinar was a platform to inform businesses and anyone looking to retrain or progress in their current role about the opportunities that are out there.

"These are fully funded positions in a range of fields, though during the session the focus was specifically on the IT, digital and manufacturing sectors as these are areas where there is huge demand."

Mr Roberts added: "This is something we should be shouting about more. Fully funded apprenticeships right on the doorstep of so many employers here in Wales.

Among those to have benefited from the scheme is Carl Jeffreys, a software engineering apprentice with Welsh social landlord, Trivallis. He said: "The high level of flexibility and autonomy really helps. I can map things out and plan my work and study, but I can also be malleable with my time when something comes up. Plus, I am able to juggle it all with my wife and child."



*Since its establishment, the NTfW has had a very positive and productive working relationship with the North Wales RSP and its team members. Our collaborative relationship has been even more important during the last 12 months or so, as we have both worked to limit the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on employers and individuals across the North Wales region.*

*Given the NTfW's area of interest, we have worked with the RSP to provide real-time labour market information on apprenticeships, and to ensure that the Apprenticeships Programme remains high on the agenda of all key stakeholders within the North Wales region*

**Jeff Protheroe**  
**Director of Operations**  
**National Training Federation for Wales**

# 6.

## Covid-19 Recovery Plan: Our approach to skills and employment recovery

The pandemic has had a major impact on individuals and households, and on students, workers and communities. For younger adults, the challenges are especially acute; new graduates are struggling to find job opportunities while businesses may have less immediate capacity and inclination to take on apprentices and other school leavers. North Wales's 'class of 2020' needs to be recognised as particularly vulnerable to the direct and indirect effects of the pandemic.

Older workers are also being forced to reconsider their assumptions about work. Many will need to seek new and different jobs, and to apply their skills in new ways for different employers – all of which signals upheaval, anxiety and uncertainty. Within this context, lower skilled adults are especially vulnerable.

Our employers and businesses across all sectors have been affected. The extent to which they have the confidence to recruit and invest in their staff (through (re-)training) is critical to unlocking recovery. Some sectors as we've seen in the region are more likely to see job losses than others. The crisis may well accelerate underlying trends which are leading to shifting skills needs in the economy, and in some cases to automation.

**In seeking to accelerate economic recovery, our people matter hugely. We need to respond effectively. We need to match people with job opportunities, equip them with the skills to thrive in the future, and give employers the confidence to recruit and use those skills well.**

The RSP and partner have put together a recovery plan, which includes financial and non-financial 'asks' in the short, medium and long term. The following challenges have been identified:

**Young People (under 25 years old)** adversely affected by the pandemic; Increase in NEETs figures;

**Adults (Over 25 years old):**

End of furlough, rising redundancies and unemployment and the need to retrain and routes to better employment; Further away from the labour market and long term unemployed will experience more barriers; Deploy people from one sector into another.

**Respond to Future skills needs:**

Need for digital skills, leadership & management skills and transferrable skills, entrepreneurship growth in green recovery.

Many of the specific actions and interventions identified within our skills recovery action plan are already underway, particularly those actions relating to supporting economic recovery in the short term. In many cases we have been able to make early progress by building on existing, successful Partnerships with our partners FE, training providers, DWP and Careers Wales.

Since the onset of the pandemic, partners have mobilised quickly to provide a comprehensive range of ongoing support for employer and individuals across the region, and these continue to evolve in response to the changing economic situation.

# 7.

## The next 12 Months – What will we do in 2021-2022?

### Our focus over 2021/2022

The actions set out in our Skills & Employment Plan and the Covid-19 Recovery Plan align strongly with the areas Welsh Government is targeting to ensure that skills provides a core pillar of recovery. In what has been a challenging year for employers and educational providers alike, our focus as a partnership will be on the recovery plan and how we can assist with ensuring that skills gaps and challenges are met.

We will also:

- Continue to ensure close alignment between North Wales Skills & Employment Strategy and emerging changes in the economy;
- We will continue to provide a detailed analysis of North Wales' labour and skills market, enabling our skills and education provision to meet or continue to meet the current and future skills needs of local business and residents.
- Continue to gather intelligence that will encourage partners to develop strategies that increase emphasis on stimulating employer demand for higher level skills, enabling providers and partners to introduce/flex/respond with the appropriate provision needed.
- Deliver on our skills recovery plan for the region.
- Work with the North Wales Growth Deal to map skills needs across programmes and further develop and re-purpose the skills and employability programme in the area.
- Support our key and growth sectors skills needs, with particular emphasis on developing green economy, digitalisation and Health & Social Care:

### Green Skills:

In order to become net zero, a step change is required across a number of deliverables including ensuring that the labour market is equipped with the right skills to support this transition - be it in ensuring the construction sector has the skills required to retrofit existing buildings and implementing low carbon standards in new developments; or supporting traditional businesses to benefit from growth in the green economy e.g. within advanced engineering and aerospace. In order to support the net zero carbon goal and aid green recovery, RSP has commissioned a study to analyse the current scale of the 'green skills' market and retrofit and how this can be stimulated to support our current skills pipeline and where further skills provision is required.

### Health & Social Care:

An aging population and the Covid-19 pandemic have highlighted a growing demand for skills within health and social care. The demand within this sector spans a wide range of roles and covers a breadth of skills and training levels from entry level to high skilled, technical roles. Further evidence exploring the specific skills and qualifications needs, and progression pathways of this sector will be undertaken in the coming months.

### Digital Skills:

Digital skills are becoming ever more important in today's economy and are a near universal requirement for employment. Digital skills in digital employers, alongside cross-sectoral digital skills requirements, are especially important to the region's recovery and growth. This covers the spectrum of basic digital skills which are transferable between multiple sectors, to more specific digital sector skills such as analytics, cyber security, games and animation, networking and cloud infrastructure and programming and software development.

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