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Evaluation of Work-Based Learning Programme 2011-15: Traineeships

EVALUATION OF WORK-BASED LEARNING PROGRAMME 2011-15:
TRAINEESHIPS

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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

ACL	Adult and Community Learning
ALN	Additional Learning Needs
ALS	Additional Learning Support
B2E	Bridge to Employment (strand of Traineeships)
CW	Careers Wales
EET	Education, Employment or Training
EPC	Engagement and Progression Co-ordinator
ES	Essential Skills
ESF	European Social Funding
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ESW	Essential Skills Wales (Qualification)
FE	Further Education
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
liP	Investors in People
JGW	Jobs Growth Wales
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LLWR	Lifelong Learning Wales Record
LMI	Labour Market Information
NEET	Not in Education Employment or Training
NTFW	National Training Federation for Wales
PSM	Propensity Score Matching
UKCES	UK Commission for Employment and Skills
WBL	Work-Based Learning
WEFO	Wales European Funding Office
YEPF	Youth Engagement and Progression Framework

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Executive Summary

1. The Welsh Government commissioned York Consulting, in association with Old Bell 3, Cardiff University and IFF Research to carry out an evaluation of the Work-based Learning Programme 2011-15 (WBL 2011-15). The evaluation commenced in early November 2013 and continued until November 2015.
2. The Work-Based Learning (WBL) programme included: Apprenticeships; Traineeships; and, Steps to Employment. The aims of the evaluation were to:
 - Assess the effectiveness of the contracting and delivery for WBL 2011-15.
 - Satisfy WEFO's evaluation requirements for projects receiving ESF funding.
 - Carry out specific evaluation of the delivery of Traineeships.
 - Assess the delivery of outputs, outcomes and impacts.
 - Assess the extent to which the programme has secured the participation of individuals according to protected characteristics.
 - Review how Essential Skills Policy has been embedded in the delivery of WBL and how this has contributed to the achievement of WBL 2011-15 objectives.
3. The methodology involved the following elements: interviews with five Welsh Government officials, external stakeholders and training providers; review of Traineeship management information and programme performance data; document review; telephone survey of 45 employers; telephone survey of 209 past Traineeship participants; case studies with seven employers involved with Traineeships.
4. The report is for the whole programme with differences for ESF areas, compared to the rest of Wales, highlighted where they are significant.

Key Findings

5. Over the course of 2011-2015 there had been around 24,500 leavers from the Traineeship Programme. 19,065 of these young people were funded with 65 per cent (12,450) funded through ESF in the Convergence areas of Wales; exceeding the target of 12,120.
6. Performance improved in the second and third years, with increased volumes and improved outcomes; reaching 68 per cent positive progression in 2013/14, closer to being classed as 'good', based on Welsh Government criteria.
7. Overall ESF targets were achieved for total participation, female involvement and numbers progressing into employment. However, targets for qualifications and progression into further learning were not met.

Perspectives of those involved in the programme

8. All stakeholders and providers generally agreed that young people: were low on confidence at programme entry; had low qualifications and skills; sometimes had negative experiences of learning from school; had the potential to contribute positively; typically just wanted a job with less value placed on learning.
9. Traineeships were regarded by stakeholders as the right way to deliver support to the client group but with concerns about implementation. Some of the concerns expressed by stakeholders included the size of contracts, lack of flexibility and tailored provision, turnover of provider staff, competence of provider staff, lack of partnership between providers, lack of employer engagement, lack of support for young people with complex needs and lack of involvement by Careers Wales. These issues are explored in more detail in section five of the report.
10. Most providers perceived a challenging client group, lack of recognition of some types of progression, insufficient resource, lack of national promotion/marketing, completers not ready for Apprenticeships, lower intensity of Careers Wales

involvement and disputed the readiness of some young people referred to the Engagement strand.

11. Former Traineeship participants were generally positive about Traineeships. They valued the support and experience which helped them to find work, gave them confidence and helped them to progress. They were less positive about essential skills/classroom-based learning. This study has not explored in detail the perceptions of young people who drop out or do not start Traineeships.
12. Employers who have been involved were generally positive about Traineeships. Some employers were remarkably patient and understanding of young people's inexperience, unpredictability and support needs. Where employers had negative experiences they cited a lack of information about the young person's needs, lack of support/preparation (linked to provider role and programme design aspects such as lack of support for transport) and lack of commitment of the young person.
13. There was a general view amongst stakeholder and providers that the programme and its purpose was not well-understood by parents, young people and employers.
14. Although the programme appeared to be serving those who participated, there were concerns that a group of young people were often not receiving the support that the original programme design intended. Such young people¹ often identified as Tier 2 in the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework five tier model, required more one-to-one support and additional learning support which providers were not delivering.

¹ Tier 2 refers to unemployed 16 and 17 year olds, known to Careers Wales, who are not available for Employment, Education or Training

Issues around programme elements

15. The Engagement strand worked well for many participants but did not work so well for those with complex support needs. For example, some participants were not ready to move up to 21 hours per week after the first four weeks (when they participate for 12 hours per week); they required a longer period of support at a lower intensity. Others are not ready to engage in centre-based group learning; they require one to one support.
16. The Level 1 strand generally worked well although some individuals were regarded as needing more support before they were ready to progress to an Apprenticeship.
17. The Bridge to Employment strand was barely used; a very small number of participants had been involved.

Wider programme issues

18. Wider programme issues identified through this evaluation included:
 - Contract management arrangements were generally regarded to have improved during the programme period.
 - Not all those referred to Traineeships by Careers Wales actually started. This was often the case for individuals with complex support requirements.
 - In many cases Additional Learning Support (ALS) budgets were not used due to perceived risks of not drawing down funds and concerns about the time to make a claim. This was an additional factor limiting the tailoring of provision and support for young people with complex support needs.
 - Delivery of essential skills could be embedded more effectively in some provision.
 - Welsh medium provision was generally being offered and delivered to those participants that needed it.

- Third sector involvement in the programme delivery and provision of placements could be improved.
- There was evidence of providers tailoring provision but it was usually done around a core of standard provision for the needs of that type of participant.
- A good range of vocational options were provided to young people. However, there is no data on how many experience real work placements compared with those that experience simulated work placements environments and how many experience work tasters.
- Overall, providers had good systems in place to support young people during their Traineeship.
- Providers were generally unlikely to involve Careers Wales when they identified a young person is at risk of dropping out of Traineeships.
- Providers were actively involved in planning a progression path for Traineeship participants, supporting them with job search, interview skills and identifying further learning opportunities.

Recommendations

19. The recommendations for consideration include:

- Providers need to ensure employer engagement is sufficient to identify work tasters and placements required to give participants a good experience of the workplace. In particular, there needs to be a stronger focus on engagement of the third sector/voluntary sector especially as a source for young people with greater need for flexibilities or sheltered work environments.
- The Welsh Government should ensure it understands the balance between placements provided in real workplaces and those in simulated environments. This may be possible using existing data or additional variables may be required within the LLWR dataset.

- Extend the period of support at a lower intensity (12 hours per week) from the first four weeks to the first eight weeks.
- Increase collaboration and sharing of good practice between Traineeship providers, for example, around the embedding of essential skills delivery and managing employers' expectations.
- Clarify the role of Careers Wales and enforce Tier level assessments and referrals that are made.
- Review how the approach to marketing the programme can be improved at a national and local level.
- Review the design of the Engagement element to ensure that it can support all young people in scope and offer genuine individually tailored learning. The Welsh Government should explore further the reasons why providers refuse to accept some participants perceived to be borderline clients.
- Review the Level 1 element of the programme to identify opportunities for improved progression to Apprenticeships. This may require the outcome of an Apprenticeship to be incentivised more significantly in the programme design.
- Review the design of the B2E strand to ensure that it can support young people to progress towards Apprenticeships.
- Explore why the additional learner support aspect of the programme is not utilised and redesign the process to ensure the support is accessed where it is needed.
- The Welsh Government should ensure that data are published and reviewed for all targets set in the ESF Business Plan.

1 Introduction and Methodology

1.1 The Welsh Government commissioned York Consulting, in association with Old Bell 3, Cardiff University and IFF Research to carry out an evaluation of the WBL Programme 2011-15. The evaluation commenced in early November 2013 and will continue until November 2015.

1.2 In summer 2010, the (then) Welsh Assembly Government issued an invitation to tender to deliver its WBL programmes between August 2011 and July 2014 (later extended to March 2015). WBL 2011-15 covers three main areas, elements of which receive funding from the European Social Fund:

- **Apprenticeships** - Foundation Apprenticeships, Apprenticeships, Higher Apprenticeships and Flexible Learning.
- **Traineeships** - Engagement Traineeships and Level 1 Traineeships.
- **Steps to Employment** - withdrawn for new entrants on 31 July 2013 and replaced with the Work Ready programme, therefore not part of this evaluation.

1.3 There were a number of other projects related to the WBL programme in that they provided opportunities for young people to gain skills and/or progress towards employment: Jobs Growth Wales, Pathways to Apprenticeship, Shared Apprenticeships and Young Recruits.

Evaluation Overview

1.4 The aims of the evaluation were to:

1. Assess the effectiveness of the contracting and delivery for WBL 2011-15.
2. Satisfy WEFO's evaluation requirements for projects receiving ESF funding.
3. Carry out specific evaluation of the delivery of Traineeships.
4. Assess the delivery of outputs, outcomes and impacts.
5. Assess the extent to which the programme has secured the participation of individuals according to protected characteristics.

6. Review how essential skills have been embedded in the delivery of WBL and how this has contributed to the achievement of WBL 2011-15 objectives.

1.5 The evaluation objectives in relation to the Traineeships programme were to:

- assess the extent to which Traineeships have been individually tailored, identifying best practice where this has been successful and reasons for tailoring not being achieved.
- assess the extent to which Traineeship providers offer a sufficiently wide range of vocational options to meet learners' individual needs and aspirations taking account of local LMI, including sourcing unusual, specialist and Third sector placements.
- assess and evaluate the support offered by Traineeship providers to ensure learners remain engaged with learning.
- assess the extent to which Traineeship providers ensure employers actively support learners through their learning programme.
- assess the extent to which Traineeship providers actively plan a progression path for learners exiting the programme including the engagement of the learner in the process and the range of progression opportunities considered.

1.6 This current phase of evaluation took place between October 2014 and February 2015. It included the following elements (detailed further in Appendix A):

- Interviews with five Welsh Government officials responsible for different aspects of Traineeships provision between 2011 and 2015.
- Interviews with five external stakeholders to the programme, including voluntary organisations, local authorities, Careers Wales and Estyn.
- Interviews with ten learning provider consortia leads/lead contractors.

- A review of Traineeship management information and programme performance data.
- Design of a logic model describing the flow of inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes and impacts addressed by the programme.
- A telephone survey of 102 employers involved with WBL delivery was undertaken in October 2014, covering 45 Traineeship learners. The statistical significance was between +/-8.8 and +/-14.6 percentage points at the 95 per cent confidence level. Where differences are statistically significant these are explicitly referenced in the text.
- A telephone survey of 209 past Traineeship participants was undertaken from 18th November until 14th December 2014. Participants had left the programme between six and 36 months previously. The statistical significance at the level of the whole survey was between +/-4.1 and +/-6.8 percentage points at the 95 per cent confidence level. Where differences are statistically significant these are explicitly referenced in the text.
- Case studies of seven employers involved with Traineeships.
- Preliminary counterfactual impact analysis comparing the Traineeship quantitative survey data to the Annual Population Survey (APS) using propensity score matching (PSM) could not be undertaken with a sample of 209 records as it was too small.

1.7 The report is for the whole programme with differences for ESF areas, compared to the rest of Wales, highlighted where they are significant.

Reporting phases of this evaluation study

1.8 The key reporting stages of this evaluation are as follows:

- Initial phase (focused on WBL contracting) [March 2014]
- Traineeships report [this report]

- Final evaluation report (focusing on Apprenticeships) [Published March 2016]

Acknowledgements

1.9 York Consulting would like to thank all those who have participated in this research for contributing their views including Traineeship participants, employers, providers and stakeholders.

Report Structure

1.10 In the remainder of this report, we discuss:

- policy context within which Traineeships developed
- current arrangements for Traineeships
- performance of Traineeships
- stakeholder and provider perspectives of Traineeships
- Traineeship participants views of Traineeships
- Traineeship placement employers' views of Traineeships
- emerging conclusions and recommendations.

2 Policy Context

Summary

- The UK has a history of supporting WBL programmes for young people such as the youth unemployment programmes of the 1980s leading up to the Welsh Skill Build programme of the 2000s (Wiseman, 2014). In addition, there has been increased recognition of the value of work experience alongside skills development to help create work-ready individuals (Webb 2007).
- The expectation that employers should take greater responsibility through investment in and development of young people, has been an increasing feature of government policy.
- The Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (Welsh Government, 2013a) followed on from Extending Entitlement: Supporting Young People in Wales (2000) and the subsequent guidance on Extending Entitlement: Services and Support for 11–25 Year Olds in Wales (2002) and set out a number of policy ambitions. In addition it articulated a five tier framework for classifying the support requirements of young people.
- Feedback from providers, employers, Estyn, Welsh Government policy officials and contract managers in late 2013 indicated that the programme had not been utilised to its full potential, and in reality had not offered a truly new and innovative response to the individual needs of those in the eligible learner group (Turner, 2014).
- A number of more recent developments which took place in early 2015 may have addressed some of these criticisms, such as new contracting consortia, improved networking of providers (through an enhanced role for the National Training Federation for Wales) and national marketing.
- Cross cutting themes were identified around: Female participation/non-traditional roles; Work Limiting Health Conditions; and STEM subjects.

Introduction

2.1 This section outlines the WBL policy background across the UK and Wales, describes Welsh Government Traineeships policy and outlines the cross cutting themes which Traineeships aim to address.

WBL Policy Background

2.2 The UK has a history of supporting WBL programmes for young people such as the youth unemployment programmes of the 1980s leading up to the Welsh Skill Build programme of the 2000s (Wiseman, 2014).

2.3 Vocational skills development has been increasingly prioritised by successive governments, in Wales and across the UK. At an economic level, skills are seen as underpinning national competitiveness, hence the Welsh Government has emphasised raising the volume of skills in the workforce as a key economic priority (Wiseman, 2014; Welsh Assembly Government, 2008).

2.4 At the level of the firm WBL programmes seek to raise productivity and efficiency. For individuals, they seek to increase the chances of a rewarding career with financial returns to skill development. For society, they seek to increase social inclusion and social mobility and to reduce poverty. However, concerns have been raised about over-supply of skills (Wolf, 2011) and limited returns on investment (Keep, 2008).

2.5 There has been increased recognition of the value of work experience alongside skills development to help create work-ready individuals (Webb 2007). However, there remain differing views on who should be responsible for funding the training of young people. The existence of the 'youth guarantee' in various guises over the past 30 years has set expectations that the government would support young people aged 16 and 17 to gain a foothold in the labour market, particularly in the face of tough economic conditions.

- 2.6 The general approach across the UK for the past 30 years has seen government fund training providers to implement various national WBL programmes. However, the expectation that employers should take greater responsibility through investment in and development of young people has been an increasing feature of government policy (for example, the BIS/UKCES Employer Ownership Pilot and to a lesser extent Welsh Government ESF programmes such as the Sector Priorities Fund Pilots).
- 2.7 Increased attention has been focused on raising businesses' awareness of the importance of skills development and integrating it into business strategies (such as High Performance Skills explored by UKCES and WESB). However, the pressure of the financial crisis and recession of 2008 led to reduced recruitment of young people (Hasluck, 2011) and reduced training budgets (UKCES, 2013).
- 2.8 Over the past ten years successive governments in Wales have focused on reducing complexity and management costs through reducing numbers of providers (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008).
- 2.9 The Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (Welsh Government, 2013a) followed on from Extending Entitlement: Supporting Young People in Wales (2000) and the subsequent guidance on Extending Entitlement: Services and Support for 11–25 Year Olds in Wales (2002) and set out a number of policy ambitions:
- Identifying young people most at risk of disengagement.
 - Better brokerage and coordination of support.
 - Stronger tracking and transitions of young people through the system.
 - Ensuring provision meets the needs of young people.
 - Strengthening employability skills and opportunities for employment.
 - Greater accountability for better outcomes for young people.

2.10 The intention was that these would be supported by the allocation of single point of contact (a lead worker) to the most at-risk young people *“to help ensure that support is delivered in a joined up and coordinated way and that works to meet their needs”* and through the development of a proactive and positive Youth Guarantee that *“will help to ensure that every young person has access to a suitable place in learning post-16”*.

2.11 The ambition was that lead workers would provide continuity through the transition which young people make at age 16, with lead workers supported through the first three months of the learner’s time in post-16 education and training, except where the lead worker was a learning coach. At this point young people would be re-assessed as part of the following five tier model and a decision reached on whether the support from a lead worker should continue or not:

- Tier 5 Young People in Further Education, Employment or Training (EET): sustaining education, employment or training (EET); working or studying part time over 16 hours; and, voluntary work.
- Tier 4 Young People at risk of dropping out of EET: those engaged in less than 16 hours of EET; those who have been identified at risk of disengagement pre-16 and/or judged as at risk of not making a positive transition who are subsequently in FE, sixth form or training; those who have been made aware to CW by EET providers as at risk of dropping out.
- Tier 3 Unemployed 16 and 17 year olds known to Careers Wales: Engaged with CW and/or known to be actively seeking EET; either ready to enter EET, or assessed as requiring career management or employability skills support to enter EET.
- Tier 2 Unemployed 16 and 17 year olds, known to Careers Wales, who are not available for EET/unable to seek EET (sickness, young carers, pregnancy, custody); young people with significant or multiple barriers requiring intensive personal support.

- Tier 1 Unknown status on leaving Careers Wales services: Young people unknown to Careers Wales.

Traineeships Policy

2.12 The term ‘Traineeship’ was first used by the (then) Welsh Assembly Government in the brand ‘National Traineeship’ which supported level 2 learning. This subsequently became the Foundation Apprenticeship as the Apprenticeship brand and supporting policy developments evolved.

2.13 The term was re-introduced in its current form when the Skill Build programme ended in 2011. Particular criticisms of Skill Build which Traineeships sought to address included:

“Skill Build had not achieved wide recognition by employers and had little brand value amongst participants, being widely associated with failure. It was described as being too frequently part of the ‘revolving door’ phenomenon in which people went through cycles of unemployment, short periods of insecure employment, and participation in skills programmes without ending up in a reasonable job which lasts.” (Wiseman, 2014)

2.14 Furthermore, Traineeships were planned to have “clearly defined stages within them aimed much more clearly at progression towards employment and are more flexible as to the volume of skills development they supply. Whereas Skill Build had become known (not entirely accurately) as a ‘13 week programme’, Traineeships will not have a fixed schedule for all individuals but will supply the level of input which individuals need to become work-ready. It is not intended that the programme should be restricted to low-ability individuals and will be equally available to, say, young people with A/S level qualifications but who have dropped out of college or school” (Wiseman, 2014).

- 2.15 Traineeships was defined as a non-employed status training programme for 16-18 year olds not otherwise engaged in post-16 education or employment, and has been available since 1 August 2011 as a successor programme to Skill Build. The Traineeships programme supports young people to gain sustained employment by helping them with their confidence and motivation, and looks to address barriers to learning – all of which may prevent a young person moving into employment or learning at a higher level. The programme sought to improve skills levels through the delivery of entry level qualifications up to NVQs or equivalent at Level 1 in their chosen occupational area. This includes the delivery of essential skills qualifications to enhance their learning experience.
- 2.16 In addition, young people would also receive work experience and the support and help they need to learn at a pace suitable to them. This could sometimes be with a dedicated employer or through a simulated work environment, depending on the level of support the young person requires.
- 2.17 Young people on Traineeships had direct access to apply for any Jobs Growth Wales (JGW)² opportunity as a progression, or progress into an Apprenticeship opportunity, as part of a seamless routeway into employment or further learning at a higher level.
- 2.18 The Traineeship programme was developed with the aim of creating a very broad programme specification, providing an opportunity for innovative providers to develop new approaches to meet the complex and diverse needs of a cohort of 16-18 year olds.
- 2.19 The main findings identified in the Estyn initial review of the effectiveness of Traineeships (Estyn, 2013) at an early stage of their implementation included:
- The referral process was not regarded as robust and too heavily reliant on personal relationships rather than efficient systems. The quality of

² Jobs Growth Wales is a programme offering six months opportunity in a job paid at least the National Minimum Wage.

information was regarded as incomplete and not helping providers to match learners to appropriate programmes.

- Eligibility rules and the short length of the programme restricted the levels of learning and progression that learners could realistically make.
- The achievement of target outcomes for learners was hampered by the lack of work experience and sustainable employment opportunities.
- Employers often did not fully understand the programme.
- Contract targets were not being met.
- Learners were being taught in groups that were too small to be educationally or economically viable.
- Standards and progression rates were regarded as “adequate”.
- There was competition between providers for employers who can provide work experience.
- Work tasters were not available in some sectors which meant that learners do not necessarily get the experience in the areas of work they want.
- The majority of providers recorded the needs of learners and addressed barriers to learning.
- Providers worked well with partners to secure a variety of support for learners.
- In a minority of providers, serious client barriers were not identified early enough.
- The standard of basic skills and literacy support provided is too variable.
- All providers had sophisticated management information systems in place to record high level outcomes for learners. Most disseminated this information across their consortium but not all monitor the detail of learner progress well enough to help individual learners to succeed.

2.20 Feedback from providers, employers, Estyn, Welsh Government policy officials and contract managers in late 2013 indicated that the programme had not been utilised to its full potential, and in reality had not offered a truly new and innovative response to the individual needs of those in the eligible learner group (Turner, 2014). In addition some of the negative characteristics identified with previous systems (Wiseman, 2014) such as high levels of competition and limited collaborative behaviour were perceived to remain.

2.21 A number of more recent developments which took place in early 2015 were introduced to address some of these criticisms, such as new contracting consortia, improved networking of providers (through an enhanced role for the National Training Federation for Wales) and national marketing. At this stage in the evaluation it has been too early to comment on the impact of these changes.

Cross cutting themes

2.22 The importance of cross cutting themes was clearly emphasised in the 2015 WBL Business Plan (Welsh Government 2014) with clear statements around the following:

- Female participation/non-traditional roles: “All marketing materials recognise the equality agenda and Careers Wales colleagues are at pains not to stereotype opportunities based on gender...Within the tender and subsequent contract, we placed obligations on providers to adhere to, and monitor, equality of opportunity; we are undertaking periodic review of compliance on these issues and we require our contract holders to remind employers of their obligations under equalities legislation....We believe that we have a clear, well embedded strategy to minimise the risk of gender discrimination.”
- Work Limiting Health Conditions: “In addition, referral to the Traineeships engagement programme (the most likely routeway for individuals with work limiting health conditions) is through Careers Wales. We have introduced quarterly meetings with Careers Wales to receive soft feedback on provider performance, including any practice that restricts recruitment

opportunities. Although not a direct link to this cohort, Careers Wales reports that there has been an increase of approximately five percentage points in referrals into the Traineeship programme in respect of learners with Additional Learning needs – although this figure needs to be confirmed.”

- STEM subjects: “We would not normally highlight which sectors have low female numbers with individuals – there is a risk that this would be counter-productive and discourage some females from being one of the few to challenge traditional roles. However, as mentioned above Careers Guidance would not be presented to stereotype. We are confident that Careers Wales encourages females to consider the range of opportunities available to them irrespective of gender.”

3 Current Arrangements

Summary

- The establishment of Traineeships as the successor to Skill Build aimed to create a very broad programme specification, providing an opportunity for innovative providers to develop new approaches to meet the needs of 16-18 year olds facing barriers to further learning or employment.
- The Business Plan for ESF stated that up to 12,120 young people could be supported by Traineeships in the Convergence³ area.
- Traineeship annual delivery expenditure has been between £20 million and £24 million over the first full three year period, across the whole of Wales.
- The delivery of WBL 2011-15 was undertaken through three models of contracting: delivery consortia; lead contractors with sub-contractors; and, lead contractors with no sub-contractors.
- During 2011-15 there were six delivery consortia and 18 lead contractors, with the 13 contractors listed in Table 3.3 delivering minimum contract values of £650,000 for Traineeships. Approximately 120 consortia members and sub-contractors were involved in delivering the WBL programme. In the previous WBL (2007-11) programme, the Welsh Government held contracts with 64 providers, with a minimum contract value of £99,000.
- Generally providers felt that the consortia approach adopted in 2011 had worked well during and was an improvement on previous approaches. Providers were critical of the largely electronic processes, although the

³ The Convergence area of Wales covers the West Wales and Valleys area: Isle of Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Gwynedd, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, Bridgend, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen.

Welsh Government has tried to address this with more effective communication

- Between 2011 and 2015 there have been a number of ESF projects, some of which were targeting a similar client group to that of Traineeships. In particular, projects focusing on supporting those young people who are NEET and at risk of being NEET.

Introduction

- 3.1 The Traineeships programme was introduced from 2011/12 with Skill Build discontinued for new entrants from 2011/12. The establishment of Traineeships as the successor to Skill Build aimed to create a very broad programme specification, providing an opportunity for innovative providers to develop new approaches to meet the needs of 16-18 year olds facing barriers to further learning or employment.
- 3.2 In this section we cover: Traineeship structure; operational strategy, contracting; and programme coverage.

Traineeships Aim

- 3.3 According to the project business plan for ESF (Welsh Government, 2014e):

“The Welsh Government’s Traineeships Programme aims to deliver a flagship All Wales programme (this ESF bid relates to Convergence only) of engagement and level 1 training to over 12,000 young people aged 18 and under who have left compulsory education.”

- 3.4 The cohort group, described as “just leaving school and not continuing an academic route, nor able to take up or ready for an apprenticeship”, are particularly vulnerable to becoming ‘NEET’ status, and risk longer term unemployment. Traineeships seek to intervene early ensuring young people get a chance to acquire work skills and get a good start in working life, sample work options and opportunities, and find job opportunities or other appropriate further training.

3.5 Eligibility criteria stated in the programme specification said that: “Traineeships is a non-employed status training programme for 16-18 school leavers not otherwise engaged in post-16 education or employment” (Welsh Government, 2015a). More specifically individuals were considered ineligible in the following circumstances:

- of compulsory school age; or
- 19 years of age and over; or
- intend to, or are, attending school sixth form or college, full-time, as a pupil or student; or
- in full time higher education; or
- not assessed to enter Traineeship learning by Careers Wales (or other legitimate organisation/agency as notified by the Welsh Ministers); or
- an ineligible overseas national; or
- in custody or on remand in custody; or
- in receipt of an Assembly Learning Grant or an Education Maintenance Allowance; or
- taking part in any other employment or enterprise programme funded directly by the UK Government or the Welsh Ministers; or
- taking part in any other UK Government or Welsh Government funded vocational learning programmes; or
- taking part in any other EU funded employment or enterprise programme or vocational learning programme (or any other form of EU funded scheme) unless permitted under ESF funding regulations; please refer to European Funding Guidance Chapter 3 for further advice; or
- being mandated to attend the DWP Work Programme.

3.6 The three strands of Traineeships are as follows:

'Engagement'

3.7 This strand is for participants who are assessed as needing to address a barrier (or barriers) to further learning or employment and/ or need to confirm or contextualise an occupational focus prior to entering further learning or employment. Learners must attend learning for 12 hours or over in any 5 day period (Monday to Friday only). The maximum hours of attendance is 21 hours⁴ in any 5 day period. Those following an Engagement Traineeship programme must be paid a non-means tested allowance of £30 per week; reduced according to attendance.

Level 1 Traineeship

3.8 This strand is for those who are assessed as being occupationally focused; and able to follow a programme of study at Level 1⁵. The learning delivery involves the identification and addressing of a learning barrier (or barriers) that prevent the learner from progressing into vocational or other learning at level 1 or specified level 2, or entering employment.

3.9 We expect providers to develop learning opportunities with: employer work placements, community projects, voluntary work and centre based facility (i.e. within a training centre).

Bridge to Employment

3.10 This strand is for learners who have achieved a level 1 qualification and are eligible but are unable to progress to an alternative level 2 learning option – there is no direct recruitment to this strand.

⁴ Less than 21 hours first four weeks only

⁵ Credit and Qualifications Framework level 1 is equivalent to a GCSE level D - G and level 2 is equivalent to a GCSE between A* - C

3.11 Traineeship Level 1 and Bridge to Employment learners shall normally attend learning for 30 hours or over in any 7 day period - The maximum hours of attendance shall be 40 hours (including one meal break per day) in any 7 day period. Those following a Traineeship Level 1 or Bridge to Employment programme must be paid an allowance of a minimum of £50 per week – reduced according to attendance. All Traineeship learners are eligible to receive a contribution towards travel costs in excess of £5 per week, plus childcare and other support.

Operational Strategy

3.12 The key features of Traineeships operational strategy from the Welsh Government operational perspective are set out in Table 3.1 (Welsh Government, 2014e).

Table: 3.1: Summary of Traineeships operational strategy

Contract with main training providers delivering Traineeships as part of a wider procurement for other WBL programmes including Apprenticeships.
Receive monthly learner activity data from Training Providers via the LLWR.
Convert training data into a payment value using a formula and pay the training providers on a monthly basis, limiting it to annual contract value, after first ensuring the data is potentially fundable.
Audit providers' adherence to their contract including via PAGS audit team.
Where data is ESF Convergence eligible, provide ESF claims to WEFO and draw down ESF funding against planned ESF Convergence targets.
Impose a strict quality framework on training providers to determine eligibility for any additional funding which may become available in year. This framework will be seeking to ensure improvements in learner experience, management of the programmes and contracts and improved retention, attainment, and outcomes.
Operate and monitor cross cutting themes aspects by building key aspects into the contracts and proactively encouraging training providers to engage.
Operate an ESF funding team, in parallel with a contract funding team, internal audit team and EDMS data team, to operate the programmes. Include some additional marketing costs for activities incurred by Participation and Engagement Branch DfES.
Review and issue contracts to appropriate training providers each year.
Ensure all ESF Audits are undertaken during the project lifetime.

Source: Project Business Plan (Supplementary) Traineeships

3.13 From a Quality Perspective the following “aspirational contract framework targets” have evolved over a three year period:

- Engagement – 60 per cent progression to employment or higher level learning (including progression to Level 1 Traineeships).

- Level 1 – 65 per cent progression to employment or higher level learning (including progression to Bridge to Employment).
- Bridge to Employment – 85 per cent progression to employment or higher level learning.

3.14 Other ESF targets included:

- Female participants (42 per cent).
- Female participants receiving training in Maths, Science, Engineering and Technology (1 per cent).
- Participants gaining qualifications (61 per cent).
- Participants go into further learning (18 per cent).
- Participants gain employment (21 per cent).
- Female participants entering further learning (7.5 per cent).

3.15 ESF impact targets identified included:

- Participants in employment, education or training at 12 months (40 per cent).
- Participants gaining part qualifications (4.3 per cent).

3.16 In terms of the planned age profile of participants it was anticipated that just over half (53 per cent) would be age 16, just over two fifths (41 per cent) aged 17 and six per cent would be aged 18.

Funding

3.17 Traineeship annual delivery expenditure was between £20 million and £24 million over the first full three year period (Table 3.2).

Table: 3.2: Traineeships delivery expenditure¹ for each contract year 2011-2015

Year	£ million
2011/12	19.96
2012/13	22.70
2013/14	24.25
2014/15 ²	13.47

Source: Welsh Government, Learner Provision Funding.

Note 1: Delivery expenditure excludes 'Support Costs' such as the Training Allowance.

Note 2: 2014/15 contracts are for the 8 month period August 14 – March 15.

Contracting

3.18 In the previous WBL (2007-11) programme, the Welsh Government held contracts with 64 providers, with a minimum contract value of £99,000.

3.19 The delivery of WBL 2011-15 was undertaken through three models of contracting:

- delivery consortia
- lead contractors with sub-contractors
- lead contractors with no sub-contractors.

3.20 During 2011-15 there were six delivery consortia and 18 lead contractors, with minimum contract values of £350,000 for Apprenticeships and £650,000 for Traineeships and Steps to Employment. Approximately 120 consortia members and sub-contractors were involved in delivering the programme. This has subsequently changed with the most recent procurement round (known as WBL4, see below).

3.21 Generally providers felt that the consortia approach adopted in 2011 had worked well during and was an improvement on previous approaches because there was a greater sense of partnership between providers. Providers were critical of the largely electronic communication processes (Turner, 2014). The Welsh Government had tried to address this with more effective communication processes including more face to face contact with a named individual contract manager.

WBL4 procurement round

3.22 Allocations for Traineeships from 1 August 2014 to 31 March 2015 totalled just over £22 million, which is around a quarter of the total WBL allocation (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3: WBL and Traineeships provider allocations 2014-2015 (£)

	Traineeships	Percentage of Traineeships	All WBL ¹	Traineeships as a percentage of all WBL
ACT Ltd	7,255,826	32.7	15,781,545	46.0
ITEC Training Solutions Ltd	3,573,285	16.1	8,268,332	43.2
Grŵp NPTC	2,324,862	10.5	6,423,680	36.2
Rathbone Training	1,979,103	8.9	2,361,593	83.8
A4E Wales Ltd	1,656,610	7.5	2,476,499	66.9
Pembrokeshire College	1,231,228	5.5	6,693,714	18.4
Employment Training City & County of Swansea	1,120,220	5.0	2,534,387	44.2
Coleg Cambria	1,032,824	4.6	6,201,911	16.7
Grŵp Llandrillo-Menai	696,314	3.1	6,977,542	16.7
Torfaen Training (Part of Torfaen CBC)	478,773	2.2	5,150,741	10.0
Hyfforddiant Ceredigion Training (Ceredigion CC)	455,502	2.1	1,944,388	9.3
Gower College Swansea	398,242	1.8	2,019,473	23.4
Cardiff and Vale College	16,357	0.1	4,550,418	19.7

Source: (Welsh Government, 2014f)

Note 1: WBL includes Traineeships, Apprenticeships, Work ready and Bespoke delivery

3.23 Amounts for individual lead providers ranged from the largest at £7,256,000 to the smallest at £16,000. One lead provider (ACT Ltd) has nearly a third of the overall provision for Traineeships. Two lead providers (Rathbone Training, A4E Wales Ltd) specialise in Traineeships over Apprenticeships and other WBL delivery, with a further three lead providers where Traineeships represents more than two fifths of their WBL provision.

Programme Coverage

3.24 Between 2011 and 2015 there have been a number of ESF projects, some of which were targeting a similar client group to that of Traineeships, operating in specific eligible areas. Providers report that these projects have acted as competition engaging some potential Traineeships clients making recruitment harder. In particular, projects focusing on supporting those young people who are NEET or at risk of being NEET.

3.25 Two examples include:

- Reach the Heights First Footholds (involving Arts Council of Wales, Children in Wales, Funky Dragon, Save the Children Fund, WAG DCELLS Children and Schools, WAG DCELLS Lifelong Learning and Skills, Wales Audit Office, Wales Council for Voluntary Action). Funded under Theme 1: Tackling Underachievement (which aims to improve the educational outcomes of young people at risk of underachieving). It developed 'keeping in touch' systems and sought to raise levels of achievement, stimulating skill levels and the aspirations of young people. The project provided a range of interventions for young people drawing on international practice and made available a range of tools, resources and training materials for use to assist practitioners in engaging with young people with higher levels of need. Most of the delivery of First Footholds would have been delivered to those who were still in the school setting and at risk of becoming NEET. Reach the Heights covered the age range 11-19 so the duplication would only be in those who were already NEET.
- Prevent 14-19: Provided constant, flexible and consistent support for learners throughout KS4 and KS5 to develop resilient learners, with the skills, confidence, attitudes and aspirations to progress to further learning, training and/or employment. The programme was a multi-agency approach to developing non-formal and informal education and learning opportunities to improve and enhance competence levels, self-esteem and educational outcomes. Prevent sought to improve capacity for supporting NEETs to develop life and work skills, aspirations and employability through a range of additional interventions from the world of work and

business, in line with Skills that Work for Wales. Prevent was used to provide additional support to those on Traineeships.

3.26 Other projects also existed across Wales such as the Prince's Trust TEAM programme:

- TEAM is a structured 12-week personal development course for around 15 unemployed 16-25 year olds, offering work experience, qualifications, practical skills, community projects and a residential week. Young people join a team of up to 15 participants.

3.27 During 2013-14 local authorities became responsible for procuring provision to support Tier 2 delivery. A review of the Provision Mapping data indicates variable coverage across Wales. An example, of just a small subset of provision, from one local authority (Wrexham) indicated the variety of examples of provision available to the Tier 2 group (Table 3.4).

3.28 Some of this provision existed prior to the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework. The range of providers and nature of provision indicates the different types of support required by young people.

3.29 This overview of projects relevant to some of those eligible for Traineeships, serves to indicate the wide array of provision that has existed and still exists across Wales. There has been criticism that ESF delivery resulted in a degree of competition between national and sub-regional programmes, although steps have been taken to avoid this in the future.

Table 3.4: Examples of potential provision for Tier 2 learners

Provider Name	Venue	Course Name
Wrexham itec	APTT Ltd	Vibrant and Viable Places - CSCS
Wrexham itec	Universal Assist (Wrexham) Ltd	CRE8 The Warehouse Project
Princes Trust	Wrexham Football Club	Get Started
Communities First (Caia Park & Hightown Cluster)	Bersham Road	Working in construction (CSCS Card)
Communities First	Felin Puleston	Hairdressing
STARS Project	Caia Park Partnership	various courses
Communities First	various locations	Food Hygiene (Accredited)
REMPLOY	REMPLOY	Courses to support young people with disabilities, health conditions and barriers to work
YOUR SPACE	Black Park Chapel, Halton	Volunteer Programme
Wrexham Youth Service	various locations	various activities accredited through ASDAN and Agored Cymru
Barnardo's Compass Partnership	Barnardo's	ASPIRE Project
Bitesize Theatre	Bitesize Theatre	BTEC Performing Arts
Groundwork North Wales	Groundwork	NEXT STEPZ
Kickstart2employment	Llay Industrial Estate, Wrexham	Outdoor Education

Source: Welsh Government Provision Mapping 2014

4 Performance

Summary

- To July 2014, there had been around 24,500 leavers from the Traineeship programme.
- Destinations of Traineeship leavers for the whole programme, three months after leaving, in 2013/14 indicate that 68 per cent progressed into a positive destination.
- The overall numbers of participants in ESF Convergence areas targeted were achieved (12,450 against a target of 12,120) including female participation (45 per cent, surpassing the target of 42 per cent) and gaining employment (26 per cent compared with a target of 21 per cent). Performance was below target for other ESF progression targets such as gaining qualifications (36 per cent compared with a target of 61 per cent) and entering further learning (14 per cent compared with a target of 18 per cent⁶).
- Other demographic characteristics included: over one in eight (13 per cent) participants indicated a disability and/or learning difficulty; 4 per cent were learners from minority ethnic groups; in terms of language 7 per cent were fluent Welsh speakers, 7 per cent said they were Welsh speakers but not fluent and 85 per cent said they were not Welsh speakers.

⁶ Note that the ESF progression targets are a proportion of all learners in learning. Tables 4.4 and 4.5 of this chapter are for leavers only.

Volumes

4.1 Over the year to 2013/14 participation in WBL rose by 7.5 per cent to just under 65,900 unique learners (Welsh Government, 2015c). Of these 8,500 were on Traineeships.

Learning Programmes

4.2 In total there were 73,000 enrolments on WBL learning programmes during 2013/14; 46 per cent by males and 54 per cent by females. This equates to 65,900 unique individuals (some individuals have multiple enrolments). Around 12,400 of these learning programmes were Traineeships, having grown from 10,280 in 2011/12 when the Traineeships were introduced (Table 4.1). This equates to 8,500 unique individuals. The gender balance for Traineeships has been consistently 55 per cent male and 45 per cent female over the past three years to 2013/14 (Welsh Government, 2014d).

Table: 4.1: WBL and Traineeships Learning Programmes 2010-2014

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
All WBL Programmes	64,980	59,665	68,210	73,035
Skill Build ¹	20,725	*	*	0
Traineeships	0	10,280	12,185	12,380

Source: STATS Wales, Title: EDUC0022 Learning Programme numbers by Gender, Mode, Programme Type, Provider; Author: Post-16 Education Statistics, Welsh Government.

Note 1: Skill Build (Adult and Youth programmes but discontinued for new entrants from 2011/12).

Note 2: *=small numbers

Characteristics of participants

4.3 Further analysis of Welsh Government learning programme data indicates the number of programme leavers for each strand; in particular it highlights very few participants for the Bridge to Employment⁷ strand of Traineeships (Table 4.2). Of programmes concluded within the academic years 2011/12 to 2013/14 around 62 per cent or 15,100 programmes were recorded as completed.

Table 4.2: Reason for termination of Learning Programme 2011-2014

	Engagement	Level 1	B2E	Total
Learning programme continuing	70	105		175
Completion of LP	9,425	5,620	60	15,105
Failure	2,555	2,605	*	5,165
Health	170	140		310
Death	*	*		*
Financial	30	10		40
Other personal	360	290		645
Exclusion	250	165		415
Other	260	100		360
Transferred to another LP at another	265	265		530
Transferred to another same	545	60		605
Employment related to LP	70	165		235
Employment	240	540	*	785
Redundancy	-	*		*
Unknown	85	35		120
Total	14,330	10,100	65	24,495

Source: Welsh Government, LLWR

Note LP=Learning Plan

⁷ All B2E participants were with one provider specialising in military preparation – all ended their learning programme in 2013.

4.4 Just under two fifths of programmes (9,200 or 38 per cent) were not completed in full for a range of different reasons. Around three quarters of these reasons (Failure before end of learning programme, Other personal reasons leading to dropping out, Exclusion/left in bad standing) may be negative, while most of the other quarter of reasons relate to decision choices that may be positive (such as going into employment and transferring to another learning programme).

4.5 Key characteristics of all Traineeship programmes up to July 2014, based on LLWR data, include:

- 45 per cent were undertaken by females.
- 13 per cent were undertaken by learners who indicated a disability and/or learning difficulty. The most common types of disability and/or learning difficulty included 'moderate learning difficulties', 'specific learning difficulties e.g. dyslexia' 'behavioural, emotional difficulties' and 'physical and/or medical disabilities'.
- 4 per cent were undertaken by learners from minority ethnic groups. This is slightly below the proportion of individuals in minority ethnic groups across the 15-19 year old population⁸ in Wales (5 per cent).
- 7 per cent were undertaken by learners recorded as fluent Welsh speakers, with a further 7 per cent by learners recorded as Welsh speakers but not fluent.
- At the start of the Traineeship a third of programme learners were recorded on the LLWR as having a highest prior qualification at Level 1, just under 3 in 10 (29 per cent) a Level 2 equivalent qualification, just over a fifth (21 per cent) had pre-entry level qualifications and 16 per cent entry level qualifications.

⁸ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/peeg/population-estimates-by-ethnic-group--experimental-/current-estimates/population-estimates-by-ethnic-group-mid-2009--experimental--.zip>

ESF Data

- 4.6 ESF data for the programme period indicates that the 19,065⁹ funded Traineeship participants in convergence and non-ESF areas were generally very similar (Appendix F). For example: the proportion of females in convergence areas (45 per cent) was almost the same for non-ESF areas (46 per cent); and 23 per cent declared a learning difficulty and/or disability in both areas. However, a bigger proportion of non-ESF participants was from ethnic minority groups (8 per cent) compared with convergence areas (1 per cent) and convergence participants were slightly higher qualified prior to the programme (33 per cent with NQF Level 2 and 65 per cent below NQF Level 2) compared with non-ESF participants (30 per cent with NQF Level 2 and 68 per cent below NQF Level 2).
- 4.7 Participants in non-ESF areas were more likely to gain qualifications and to enter employment (Table 4.3) than those in convergence areas.

Table 4.3: Participants, Qualifications and Destinations of all Traineeship leavers in the three month period following end of programme, 2011-15¹⁰

Destination	2011-15					
	Convergence		Non-ESF		All	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Total Participants	12,450	100	6,615	100	19,065	100
Participants gaining qualifications	4,448	36	2,690	41	7,138	37
Participants entering further learning	1,753	14	901	14	2,654	14
Participants entering work	3,289	26	2,025	31	5,314	28

Source: Welsh Government WEFO Claim data

⁹ The reason for the difference between the LLWR data (27,333) and the Claim data (19,065) was that there were a number of participants that would have been classed as non-fundable.

¹⁰ Note that this includes learners who are still in learning. Tables 4.4 and 4.5 are for leavers only.

Performance against ESF targets

4.8 The targets for overall numbers of participants were achieved including female participation and progression to employment. Performance was below target for other ESF progression targets such as gaining qualifications and entering further learning:

- 12,450 participants were supported against a target of 12,120.
- 45 per cent were female, surpassing the target of 42 per cent.
- 36 per cent of ESF participants gained qualifications (compared with a target of 61 per cent).
- 14 per cent of ESF participants went into further learning (compared with a target of 18 per cent).
- 26 per cent of ESF participants gained employment (compared with a target of 21 per cent).

4.9 For the following ESF targets there was not sufficient detail in the monitoring data shared to confirm performance:

- Female participants receiving training in Maths, Science, Engineering and Technology.
- Female participants entering further learning.
- Participants in employment, education or training at 12 months. There is no formal follow-up of Traineeship participants at 12 months.
- Participants gaining part qualifications.

Learning Outcomes

4.10 In 2013/14 the learning activity success rate within the Engagement strand was 86 per cent and 79 per cent for the Level 1 strand. More recent data shows that for 2014/15 these increased to 87 per cent for the Engagement strand and 81 per cent for the Level 1 strand (Welsh Government, 2016b).

4.11 Both are well above the 60 per cent learning activity success rate target for all Traineeships and represent steady improvement on the previous years (74 per cent for Engagement and 68 per cent for Level 1 in 2011/12).

Destinations

4.12 Destinations of Traineeship leavers for the whole programme, three months after leaving, in 2013/14 indicate that 68 per cent progressed into a positive destination¹¹ (Welsh Government, 2015b). Two fifths (41 per cent) progressed to learning at a higher level (well above the target of 18 per cent) and 20 per cent progressed into employment (below the target of 21 per cent); while 23 per cent were seeking work/unemployed (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: Destinations of Traineeship leavers in three month period following end of programme, 2013/14

Destination	2013/14					
	Engagement		Level 1		All	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Continuing programme of learning	225	4	115	3	340	4
New programme of learning at the same level	170	3	170	4	340	4
Progressed to learning at a higher level	2,890	56	815	21	3,705	41
Full time employment	380	7	1,320	35	1,700	19
Part time employment	20	0	40	1	60	1
Self-employment	*	0	5	0	10	0
Voluntary work	45	1	175	5	220	2
Seeking work / unemployed	1,055	21	960	25	2,015	23
Other	170	3	145	4	315	4
Not known	170	3	60	2	230	3
Total	5,125	100	3,805	100	8,930	100

Source: Welsh Government, 2015, Statistical First Release

¹¹ Progression to employment (including self-employment or voluntary work) or learning at a higher level

4.13 Over half (56 per cent) of Engagement Traineeship learners progressed to learning at a higher level, typically moving on to a Level 1 Traineeship. For Level 1 Traineeship learners just over a fifth (21 per cent) progressed to learning at a higher level, such as an Apprenticeship.

4.14 There were some changes compared with the previous year when learner numbers were 130 lower at 8,800 (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5: Destinations of Traineeship leavers in three month period following end of programme, 2012/13

Destination	2012/13					
	Engagement		Level 1		All	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Continuing programme of learning	255	5	255	6	510	6
New programme of learning at the same level	125	3	225	6	350	4
Progressed to learning at a higher level	2,660	55	920	23	3,580	41
Entering new employment / changing employment	325	7	1,180	30	1,505	17
Continuing current employment	*	0	20	0	25	0
Self-employment	10	0	10	0	15	0
Voluntary work	65	1	140	4	205	2
Seeking work / unemployed	1,055	22	910	23	1,965	22
Other	175	4	190	5	360	4
Not known	180	4	100	2	280	3
Total	4,855	100	3,945	100	8,800	100

Source: Welsh Government, 2014, Statistical First Release

- 4.15 Overall, in 2012/13 just over two thirds (67 per cent) of leavers from Traineeship programmes had a positive progression¹² (Welsh Government, 2014b). Compared with 2012/13, the percentage entering employment¹³ in 2013/14 increased from 17 per cent to 20 per cent, progression to learning at a higher level remained the same at 41 per cent and the percentage seeking work/unemployed rose from 22 per cent to 23 per cent (Table 4.4).
- 4.16 Survey data¹⁴ from the English Evaluation of Traineeships¹⁵, which is a similar but not identical to Welsh Traineeships (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2015) indicated two thirds achieved a positive outcome (67 per cent). Just over a fifth of participants progressed into Apprenticeships (22 per cent), went into work (28 per cent) and went into training or education (17 per cent). The remainder were either looking for work (28 per cent) or doing something else (7 per cent).

¹² Progression to employment (including self-employment or voluntary work) or learning at a higher level.

¹³ It must be noted that the categories changed between the two time periods from 'new employment / changing employment' to full time employment and part time employment

¹⁴ relating to learners who commenced in August 2013 and July 2014.

¹⁵ are not currently in a job and have little work experience, but who are focused on work or the prospect of it; are 16-19 and are qualified below Level 3 or 19-24 and have not yet achieved a full Level 2 qualification.

5 Stakeholder and Provider Perspectives

Summary

- There is a general view amongst providers that the cohort of young people in scope for Traineeships has become more complex and harder to help. This is perceived to be compounded further by economic circumstances and social changes, particularly in more deprived areas. Other stakeholders do not agree and feel that providers are not supporting the most hard to help young people.
- There were differing views on whether the Traineeships programme is designed effectively for the client group. While there is general agreement that the programme contains the necessary flexibilities to support the different needs of participants, some providers felt that additional support was required for some participants prior to starting an engagement level Traineeship. Other stakeholders believed that additional support was available but was not being used.
- There were also concerns about the other end of the programme and the extent to which it is able to support progression from Level 1 Traineeships to an Apprenticeship.
- The role of Careers Wales was regarded, by all stakeholders, to have been reduced compared with their previous role. Some providers felt that the referral process did not give them everything they need to support the young people.
- In many cases Additional Learning Support (ALS) budgets were not used due to perceived risks of not drawing down funds and concerns about the time to make a claim.
- There was concern among some stakeholders that the level of employer engagement was insufficient to support the range of placements and tasters required for Traineeships delivery.

- There is general agreement that the extent of engagement of voluntary and community organisations that could provide placements has not been sufficiently developed.
- The extent of marketing and publicity and its effectiveness was questioned by many stakeholders.
- The general view amongst stakeholders was that the performance of the programme has been satisfactory but could do better.
- It is recognised by most stakeholders and providers that the extent to which providers have worked together as a group to discuss programme delivery and good practice could have been more effective.

Introduction

5.1 Key issues raised through interviews with stakeholders and providers have covered: the cohort of young people; programme design; programme delivery; employer engagement; public awareness; performance; and good practice and networking.

Cohort of young people

5.2 There is a general view amongst providers that the cohort of young people in scope for Traineeships has become more complex and harder to help. This is perceived to be compounded further by economic circumstances and social changes, particularly in more deprived areas. Some providers felt that part of the cohort of young people referred onto the programme cannot be helped by Traineeships and require some form of preparatory support.

5.3 This is disputed by Careers Wales who have a primary role to refer young people onto Traineeships. They felt that all young people who are referred to the programme could benefit from its support. Furthermore Careers Wales felt they correctly identified young people falling into tier 2 (of the Careers Wales 5 tier engagement model) who have 'significant or multiple barriers requiring intensive personal support' or 'not being available due to sickness, young caring, pregnancy or custody'.

- 5.4 There was no independent data that confirms or corroborates the idea that young people have become harder to help.
- 5.5 There needs to be a clearer understanding by the Welsh Government of why providers are not supporting some individuals referred on to Traineeships by Careers Wales. This may require more in-depth monitoring by the Welsh Government or by Careers Wales.
- 5.6 Providers observed that the attitude and desire to work of Traineeship starters had declined. Some providers felt that young people had been failed by schools although they also recognise that young people 'don't always help themselves' in terms of engaging with the support provided. There is also a perception of resistance amongst young people to essential skills learning.
- 5.7 Providers observe that learners can be reluctant to disclose sensitive personal information about themselves and as a result their barriers to learning may not be identified and addressed early enough. While providers endeavoured to identify such issues sometimes they only became evident during the programme.

Programme Design

- 5.8 There were differing views on whether the Traineeships programme was designed effectively for the client group. While there was general agreement that the programme contained the necessary flexibilities to support the different needs of participants, some providers felt that additional support was required for some participants prior to starting an Engagement level Traineeship (see discussion on ALS below). There was a concern that some young people were not ready to engage in Traineeship learning, let alone be placed with an employer.
- 5.9 The dispute revolved around whether Traineeships funding is sufficient to support such young people within the programme.

- 5.10 Providers have not generally seen it as their responsibility to provide support to those considered hardest to help (especially those identified as Tier 2). Even though they are referred to the programme they are often not formally started and referred back to panels overseen by Engagement and Progression Co-ordinators. This suggests that the programme was not working for certain young people. Further research is required to understand more about this group who did not benefit from a Traineeship. Also the programme design needs to be tightened up to ensure such young people receive the support from the programme given they are intended clients.
- 5.11 One aspect of the programme design that was claimed to be hampering those with complex needs was the requirement for learners to be on the programme for a minimum of 12 hours per week. Many providers felt that some learners were not ready to commit to this level of involvement. However, a few providers thought that this could be overcome with focused support and creative forms of delivery. For example, undertaking trips and visits to make the programme interesting and engaging to learners.
- 5.12 There were also concerns about the other end of the programme and the extent to which it was able to support progression from Level 1 Traineeships to an Apprenticeship. The Bridge to Employment strand was clearly not being utilised extensively (only 65 participants – see Table 4.2). Providers said this was because participants did not satisfy the criteria. Some providers felt there should be an additional strand which enables progression to a Level 2 qualification, but this is currently counter to the Welsh Government policy of seeing the Apprenticeship as the Level 2 WBL offer.

- 5.13 Some stakeholders raised a question about the small number of lead providers; in particular there were concerns about quality assurance and monitoring systems. There was a concern that where successful providers have joined together this has been to the disadvantage of some (excluded) providers who required further support to improve. The voluntary sector providers in particular have struggled to maintain their involvement in the programme. This was considered to be a concern as it risks losing some specialist provision and expertise/understanding of the voluntary sector and how to effectively engage with it (see further point under employer engagement).
- 5.14 The relationship with other government programmes such as Jobs Growth Wales and the Young Recruits programme was noted by a number of interviewees. While Jobs Growth Wales was regarded as not vocationally specific it was identified as helping to bridge a link between Traineeships and starting Apprenticeships. The Young Recruits programme (which has now been suspended) was seen as facilitating the progression of Traineeship participants into employment.

Programme Delivery

- 5.15 The role of Careers Wales was regarded, by all stakeholders, to have been reduced compared with their previous role. Some providers felt that the referral process did not give them everything they needed to support the young people, for example, providers felt that referral forms were not sufficiently detailed and did not cover all the support needs of young people. In turn Careers Wales felt that the relevant referral information and process was not being utilised, particularly for young people at risk of dropping out of Traineeships, thus limiting their ability to engage with young people and support them to find the right outcome.

- 5.16 This was leading to a downward spiral with Careers Wales not providing sufficient detail (as it was perceived not to be used and they did not want to put off the provider from taking the young person) and providers not relying on the information (because it was perceived to be inadequate). In particular, providers felt they were not given sufficient information about a young person's experience of school and wider risk factors such as the possibility of mental health issues.
- 5.17 There were different views on whether providers were utilising the flexibilities within the programme design to support young people. Some stakeholders felt that too much of a 'one size fits all' approach was being utilised while others were aware of a 'standard core' approach around which additional provision was tailored. In terms of tailoring around vocational interests, there was a concern by some stakeholders that providers were not engaging with a sufficient range and quantity of employers to identify such opportunities. However, an obvious counterpoint to this was that the economic circumstances currently prevailing limit the extent to which employers are prepared to engage in such programmes. There were perceived to be specific problems in particular rural geographies and in some very niche employment sectors, which by definition were hard to resolve.
- 5.18 Providers felt that they did implement appropriate levels of flexibility but that the Welsh Government did not perceive this in general or through any kind of performance data, and so it was assumed not to be happening.
- 5.19 Providers said that they worked closely within consortia and across consortia to identify the best outcome for young people. Progression data also indicated around 1,000 participants moved between providers, suggesting that this was not a major issue. One stakeholder was concerned that providers may not have been re-referring clients to other providers where they were better placed or had vocationally specific provision, due to issues of competition.

- 5.20 There was limited awareness among stakeholders of whether providers support young people following on from completion of their Traineeship to ensure a positive outcome. Providers said that they do follow-up with young people unless they are in a secure positive outcome, at around 13 weeks or sooner if requested by the young person or the employer.
- 5.21 The requirement to deliver numeracy and literacy learning as part of the Traineeship was perceived to be challenging by some providers because of learners' resistance to essential skills learning. Some examples of good practice were identified, for example, where essential skills was embedded throughout the Traineeship learning activity.
- 5.22 There was a perception that the Additional Learning Support (ALS) budget was not being fully utilised to address Additional Learning Needs (ALN) of learners. It was regarded by providers as very difficult to make a claim plus it was undertaken on a retrospective basis therefore providers had to take a risk on whether they would be reimbursed or not.
- 5.23 Evidence from the Welsh Government indicated that few providers were using the ALS fund. The ALS was accessed to support 193 learners in 2011-12 and 279 in 2012-13. Nine out of 17 providers had never used the ALS fund, seven had used it for small numbers and one provider (ITEC Training Solutions) had used it extensively (supporting 221 learners in 2012-13).

Employer Engagement

- 5.24 There was concern among some stakeholders that the level of employer engagement was insufficient to support the range of placements and tasters required for Traineeships delivery. Providers felt they had worked hard over the past few years during the recession to maintain and develop their network of employers.
- 5.25 Traineeships delivery utilised a range of simulated work environments created by providers to give young people experience across different sectors. These simulated work environments often replicated all aspects of employment including having a line manager and working in teams. Data was not available to establish the balance between actual and simulated employer environments.

5.26 There was general agreement among stakeholders that the extent of engagement of voluntary and community organisations, that could provide placements, had not been sufficiently developed. Some suggested this may have been connected to a number of ESF funded initiatives and projects supporting the voluntary and community sector. Such placements were considered valuable for participants that required a degree of shelter from overt commercial expectations of private sector employers.

Public Awareness

5.27 The extent of marketing and publicity and its effectiveness was questioned by many stakeholders. There was a general view that public awareness of the programme was low including among employers and parents. The branding and promotion of Traineeships does not appear to have gained as much traction as the Apprenticeship brand. There were good examples of interesting and attractive approaches to marketing by individual providers to young people, such as websites, fliers and awards events.

5.28 Providers were frustrated that national marketing had not supported their local approaches to engage employers, schools, parents and young people. There remained an ongoing feeling amongst stakeholders and providers that schools did not promote Traineeships as a route for young people.

Performance

5.29 The general view amongst stakeholders was that the performance of the programme has been satisfactory but could do better. Providers felt that some aspects of progression are not valued by the monitoring system and are therefore not recognised in terms of the support provided to young people: “For some young people continuing to learn at the same level is a form of progression and will increase their likelihood of employment in the longer term” (Provider).

5.30 As noted in the Estyn initial review of Traineeships, “the standard of basic skills and literacy support provided is too variable” (Estyn 2013), although it must be remembered this was undertaken at an early stage of the programme.

Good Practice and Networking

5.31 It is recognised by most stakeholders and providers that the extent to which providers have worked together as a group to discuss programme delivery and good practice could have been more effective. While networking meetings have taken place there was limited evidence of impact. However a recent conference of Traineeship providers made clear commitments to improving this situation. It included sharing of good practice and identifying opportunities to continue this process in a collaborative manner in the future.

6 Traineeship Participants

Summary

- The majority of young people were looking for work (93 per cent) prior to starting the Traineeship. Three quarters of trainees were told about the Traineeship from a Careers Wales Advisor.
- Overall, 71 per cent of surveyed trainees completed their Traineeship. Over 84 per cent of young people agreed their Traineeship was in their sector of interest. The majority (89 per cent) of young people felt that the training provider asked them what type of work they wanted to do. Most trainees also felt (84 per cent) that they had a choice of training subject area.
- A larger proportion of the trainees with a long term illness/health problems/disability left the course early.
- Half of those who completed the Traineeship were in paid work, after the Traineeship at the time of interview, and 27 per cent were in full time education or training. Over one third (34 per cent) of the trainees who were in work after the Traineeship were working for their Traineeship placement employer.
- Almost all young people (98 per cent) felt that Traineeships were good for getting experience and skills and that they were 'a stepping stone towards getting an Apprenticeship' (91 per cent).
- Of the 89 trainees who were in paid employment and not working for the same employer as when they started the course over one quarter (26 per cent) felt that the Traineeship was vital in them getting their current job and over half (54 per cent) felt it helped. Only 20 per cent said it was not a factor in them getting the job.
- Overall the majority of trainees were satisfied with the course (86 per cent) and agreed that they enjoyed the Traineeship (89 per cent).

Introduction

- 6.1 The Traineeship survey sample consisted of 209 respondents. 148 (71 per cent) young people completed the Traineeship and 60 (29 per cent) left early¹⁶. Survey respondents were either on the Engagement (54 per cent) or Level 1 Traineeship (46 per cent) strands with no trainees reporting being on the Bridge to Employment (Level 2).
- 6.2 The Traineeship programme is aimed at young people aged 16-17 years who are not in employment (eligible young people aged 18 may also participate).

Participant Characteristics

- 6.3 The majority (63 per cent) of participants surveyed were male with 133 males compared to 76 females. This is slightly higher than the 55 per cent found in the LLWR programme data.
- 6.4 Fifteen per cent (32) of surveyed trainees reported having long-term illness/health problems/disability.
- 6.5 The majority (97 per cent) of surveyed trainees identified English as their first language. Just over one quarter (26 per cent) of Traineeship participants reported being able to speak Welsh, one quarter (25 per cent) being able to write Welsh and 30 per cent being able to read Welsh. LLWR data identified 7 per cent of Traineeship participants as 'fluent Welsh speakers', a further 7 per cent as 'Welsh speakers - not fluent' and 85% as 'not Welsh speakers'.

¹⁶ One respondent did not know, hence these numbers add up to 208

Before the Traineeship

Main activity

6.6 In order to start a Traineeship young people had to satisfy the eligibility criteria stated earlier in chapter 3. Before starting the Traineeship the majority of surveyed trainees described their status as either 'unemployed and looking for work' (45 per cent) or 'in full-time education or training' (28 per cent).

Table 6.1: Trainee main activity before starting Traineeship

	Count	Percentage of Sample Respondents
Doing paid work as an employee	15	7
Unemployed and looking for work	93	45
In full-time education or training	58	28
On a government funded training programme	12	6
Not in or looking for paid work	18	9
Doing voluntary work	9	4
On training course that was not government funded	1	-
Other	3	1
Total	209	100

Source: Traineeship Survey, 2014

Base: All (209). Respondents were asked 'Which one of the following best describes your MAIN situation or activity in the week before starting the course.' Closed question, single response.

6.7 The majority of survey respondents (194) answered a question about the main thing that made it difficult to find work (Table 6.2). The most cited reasons for saying work was difficult to find were a 'lack of qualification or skills' (22 per cent) and 'lack of relevant work experience' (18 per cent).

Table 6.2: Main difficulty in finding work before the course

	Count	Percentage of Sample Respondents
A lack of qualifications or skills	43	22
A lack of relevant work experience	35	18
Lack of appropriate jobs	28	14
Your age	21	11
Health problems	8	4
Transport difficulties and it being hard to get to appropriate work	7	4
Not sure what I wanted to do	7	4
Not looking for work	5	3
In education	4	2
Only wanting to work part time	2	1
Recession/economic climate	2	1
Having caring responsibilities	1	1
Having a criminal record	1	1
Other	13	7
Don't Know	10	5
None of these	22	11

Source: Traineeship Survey, 2014

Base: 209. Respondents were asked 'Thinking about before you started the course or project, what was the main thing that made it difficult for you to find work' Open question, single response

6.8 When the Traineeship course began 42 per cent (81) had been out of work for less than three months and 41 per cent (78) had been out of work for more than three months. Some (6 per cent) trainees said that they had been out of work for three years or more.¹⁷

Qualifications

6.9 The majority of young people (76 per cent) responded in the survey that before the Traineeship they had a level 1 or higher qualifications and 9 per cent said they had no qualifications (Table 6.3). This spread of prior qualifications is slightly higher than that identified from the LLWR learning programme data, where 64 per cent of learning programme participants were recorded as having a prior qualification of level 1 or higher. In particular the percentage stating a level 3 qualification or above is much higher at 10 per cent compared with only two per cent in the LLWR data. This difference is most likely due to a combination of poor recall, misunderstanding the question and/or inflation of actual achievements.

¹⁷ While in theory 16-18 year olds could not be out of work for three years or more, this self-reported response may be a confusion linked to individuals who left school early.

Table 6.3: Highest qualification before starting Traineeship from survey and LLWR data

	Survey Count ¹	Percentage of Sample Respondents	LLWR count ¹	Percentage of LLWR records
No qualifications	18	9	5,935	22
Entry	2	1	4,015	15
Level 1	81	39	8,905	33
Level 2	59	27	7,895	29
Level 3 and above	22	10	595	2
Level unspecified	19	9	0	-
Other	3	2	0	-
Don't Know	5	3	0	-
Total	209	100	27,335	100

Source: Traineeship Survey, 2014 and LLWR data

[1] Base 209 (All). Respondents were asked 'Before you started the <TRAINEESHIP>, what was the highest qualification that you had obtained?' Open question, single response

[2] All recorded participants on the LLWR database up to July 2014

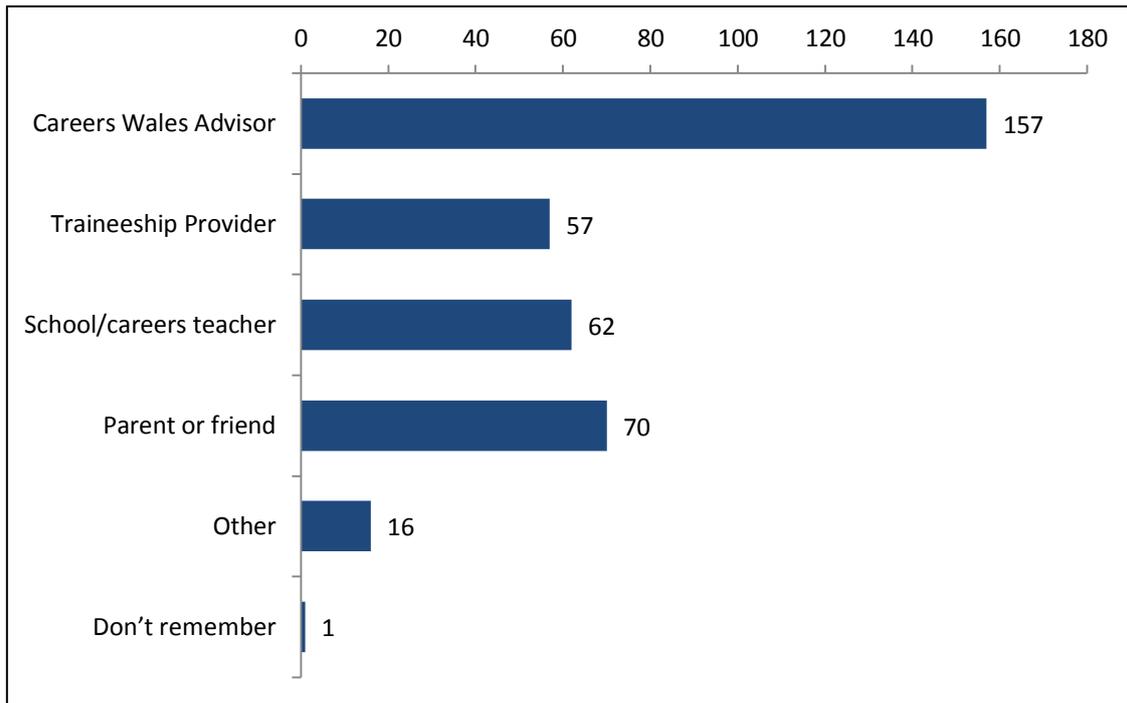
6.10 The majority of participants who had no qualifications before the Traineeship were on the Engagement strand (15 out of 18 in the survey and 4,194 out of 5,935 from LLWR data).

6.11 Case study findings indicate that many young people did not enjoy school and generally struggled academically: *"I started the Traineeship with one GCSE, I had disliked school and rarely attended for two years"*. Another young person was described by her employer as *"having a learning difficulty, being in a bad place before the Traineeship and suffering from anxiety"*. Other young people progressed from school to college but then dropped out after finding it wasn't the right course for them.

Source of course information

6.12 Three quarters of trainees (157) were told about the Traineeship from a Careers Wales Advisor (Figure 6.1). Other important sources included parents/friends, school/careers teachers and Traineeship providers. These referral routes were confirmed in the case study interviews.

Figure 6.1: Who told trainee about Traineeship?



Source: Traineeship Survey, 2014

Base: 209 (All). Respondents were asked: 'Who told you about the Traineeship? Was it...?' Closed question, multi-response.

6.13 Other sources of information included: college staff, found out for themselves, research on the internet, other family members, jobcentre, college tutor, work colleague, neighbour and army recruitment.

6.14 Young people's expectations about what the Traineeship would involve were varied; they did not have clear common expectations before they began the course (Table 6.4).

Table 6.4: What trainees thought the Traineeship would involve

	Count	Percentage of Sample Respondents
Work experience/ work placement	83	40
Learning theory/ classroom based	35	17
Learning new skills	39	19
Chance to find a job/career	12	6
Qualifications	12	6
Improve key skills (maths, English, IT)	14	7
Hard work/ long hours	10	5
Earning money	4	2
Meeting, working with new people	3	1
Don't Know	42	20
Other	33	16

Source: Traineeship Survey, 2014

Base: 209 (All). Respondents were asked: 'Before you started this Traineeship what did you think that a Traineeship would involve?' Open question, multi-response

6.15 The most common expectation (40 per cent) was that it would involve work experience/work placement. Twenty 20 per cent of trainees said they did not know.

6.16 However, the majority (83 per cent) of participants reported having received information about the Traineeship before they started but as indicated in quotes below young people said they did not always read it. This suggests that alternative methods may be required to convey what will be involved.

6.17 This information was provided by a range of sources. Almost three quarters (72 per cent) received the information from Careers Wales and over half (53 per cent) from their Traineeship provider.

6.18 Qualitative findings from case study interviews reflect this mixed level of prior understanding, with some not knowing much and others having a rudimentary knowledge:

- *“I didn’t know what to expect before starting.”*
- *“The Traineeship was presented to me as something that was practical and different from school and that would help me get employed.”*
- *“I didn’t mind not having much information because it meant I just found out about it when I got here and I enjoyed it.”*
- *“It was presented to me as involving training, meeting people and getting work skills.”*
- *“The training provider gave me information about the Traineeship before I started but I hadn’t looked at it.”*

6.19 The young people surveyed who had received information were satisfied with this information (169 or 97 per cent) and most, 165 (95 per cent), reported that the information was useful.

6.20 When asked what information about Traineeships would be helpful for other young people in the future 89 (43 per cent) of respondents didn’t know. However over one fifth (22 per cent) reported that more information about the Traineeship/what the work involves and which skills are developed would be useful.

Reasons for doing the Traineeship

6.21 Young people cited a range of reasons for doing the Traineeship. The most commonly cited included: ‘to develop a broad range of skills and or knowledge’ (88 per cent), ‘to improve or widen your career options’ (88 per cent), ‘to help you get a job’ (92 per cent) and ‘to gain work experience’ (81 per cent).

6.22 When asked to identify their most important reason for doing the Traineeship the most common reason was ‘to help you get a job’ which was cited by 31 per cent (65) of young people (Table 6.5). It is encouraging that most gave positive reasons; only two trainees said they were told they must attend by an advisor.

Table 6.5: Most important reason for doing Traineeship course

	Count	Percentage of Sample Respondents
To help get a job	65	31
To get work experience	45	22
Develop a broader range of skills and/or knowledge	40	19
To improve or widen career options	24	12
To help you progress on to another education, training or learning course	13	6
An advisor recommended it as it was relevant to particular needs	5	2
Couldn't get on the course that wanted to do	4	2
To improve pay, promotion or other prospects at work	2	1
An advisor told you that you must attend this course as it was relevant to particular needs	2	1
Other	8	4
Total	208	100

Source: Traineeship Survey, 2014

Base: 208 (All) Respondents were asked 'I'd now like to ask some questions about your reasons for taking the course or project. Which of the following were reasons for doing the course? Which of these reasons was the most important?' Closed question.

6.23 Qualitative case study findings confirm this, with many young people saying their motive for participating was to get a job and to gain skills and experience for the workplace.

On the Traineeship

Location

6.24 Participants were mainly located at a college (43 per cent), a training centre (28 per cent) or at workplace/employer premises (22 per cent) (Table 6.6).

Table 6.6: Location of Traineeship

	Count	Percentage of Sample Respondents
College	89	43
Training centre	59	28
Workplace/employer premises	46	22
Community centre/organisation	5	2
Split between work and another place	8	4
Other	1	-
Don't Know	1	-
Total	209	100

Source: Traineeship Survey, 2014

Base: 209 (All) Respondents were asked: 'was the Traineeship based at....' Closed question, multi-response.

6.25 Our analysis of LLWR data indicated that over four fifths (82 per cent) of all learning programme participants that completed their Traineeship were 'in centre' (this may be subject to some errors as the field is not considered reliable if an individual had multiple work tasters/placements). This rose to 90 per cent for Engagement Traineeships and was around 68 per cent for Level 1 Traineeships. This indicated that just under a third of Level 1 Traineeship learners experienced a real employer placement. The other two-thirds of young people experienced a simulated work environment. There was no more detailed national management information recorded on work tasters/placements provided to young people.

Duration

6.26 The majority (60 per cent) of young people spent 25 hours or more per week on the Traineeship course and almost one quarter (24 per cent) said between 16-24 hours.

6.27 Of the 148 trainees who completed the course, one third (51) spent between one and six months on the Traineeship, 31 per cent (46) spent six months to one year and 26 per cent (38) spent one year or more (Table 6.7).

6.28 The majority (68 per cent) of trainees who left the course early spent between one month and six months on the course.

Table 6.7: Length of time on the course

	Total		Completed		Left early	
	Count	Percentage of Sample Respondents	Count	Percentage of those completed	Count	Percentage of those not completed
Less than 1 week	1	-	1	1	-	-
1 week up to 1 month	4	2	1	1	3	5
1 month up to 6 months	93	44	51	34	41	68
6 months up to 1 year	56	27	46	31	10	17
1 year or more	42	20	38	26	4	7
Don't Know	13	6	11	7	2	3
Total	209	100	148	100	60	100

Source: Traineeship Survey, 2014

Base: 209 (All), 148 (All Completed), 60 (All Left Early). Respondents were asked: 'How long were you on the course?' Open response.

What Traineeship involved

6.29 Traineeships involved work placements and learning at a number of locations (Table 6.8). The majority (78 per cent) of respondents reported that they experienced a placement with an employer (we suspect some have confused a work taster as a work placement as this is higher than the 18 per cent identified in the LLWR data) and learning at a training centre (69 per cent).

Table 6.8: Placements and learning locations

	Count	Percentage of Sample Respondents
Work placement with an employer	164	78
Work placement with a community project	35	17
Work placement with a voluntary organisation	59	28
Learning at a training centre	145	69
Activities at other location	4	2

Source: Traineeship Survey, 2014

Base: 209 (All). Respondents were asked 'did your Traineeship involve any of the following...?' Closed question, multi response.

6.30 When asked what 'the main thing they did' during the Traineeship 63 per cent (131) reported 'work placement with an employer' and one quarter (52) of respondents reported 'learning at a training centre'. This is a positive finding suggesting that trainees regarded the employment placement as the dominant element of Traineeships.

6.31 Trainees reported undertaking a range of roles during the Traineeship including:

- Customer Service
- Cleaning and housekeeping
- Vehicle repair work
- Clerical tasks/admin/filing/payroll
- Answering phone/making calls
- Shelf filling
- Working with children (feeding, playing, reading etc.)
- Cashier/ till operator
- Construction/trade work (bricklaying, carpentry, labouring)
- Cooking/ food preparation
- Washing/blow drying hair
- Learning job specific skills/observing/training
- Making sales
- Data entry/ database
- Making tea
- Passing/carrying (tools etc.)
- Stock taking/moving stock
- ICT /computer maintenance
- Bar/waiting work
- Graphic design work
- Working with animals
- Classroom learning
- Physical exercise/training
- Learning basic skills (literacy, interview)

6.32 The most common roles included: customer service (16 per cent); cleaning/ housekeeping (14 per cent); vehicle repair work (10 per cent); clerical tasks (10 per cent); and other (25 per cent). The remaining roles were undertaken by less than 10 per cent of the sample.

6.33 Young people reported undertaking a range of valuable workplace skills during the Traineeship (Table 6.9) with 'learning about team working' (93 per cent) and 'learning about communication skills' (92 per cent) being the most frequently cited activity.

Table 6.9: Activities undertaken during Traineeship

	Count	Percentage of Sample Respondents
Learning about team working	194	93
Learning about communication skills	192	92
Learning about problem solving	186	89
Learning about organisational skills	179	86
Learning about numeracy skills	174	83
Learning about literacy skills	165	79
CV writing	156	75
Learning about IT skills	154	74
Learning about interview skills	154	74
Learning job specific skills related to a specific occupation	139	67
Job search activities (e.g. looking at job adverts, searching the internet)	134	64
Learning about leadership and/or strategic management skills	117	56
Learning about English for speakers of other Languages (ESOL)	77	37
Other	8	4
None	1	-

Source: Traineeship Survey, 2014

Base: 209 (All) Respondents were asked: 'Which, if any, of the following activities did you cover while undertaking the course?' Closed question, multi-response

6.34 In the case study interviews young people mentioned many of the above points including:

- Sitting tests and initial assessments at the beginning.
- Spending generally one day at the training provider/college and the remaining time with an employer; a few said up to two days at the training provider/college.

- Practiced writing applications, CV writing and mock interviews.
- Completing various work booklets and assessments as well as being observed at work by external assessors.

6.35 Some young people mentioned aspects of their work experience during the case studies. For example, three young people described the placement as *“like having a job”*. Two also described how they were treated like another member of staff and not just doing the ‘menial jobs’.

6.36 Over 84 per cent of young people agreed their Traineeship was in their sector of interest:

- Of the 164 trainees who were on a work placement with an employer, 84 per cent (137) agreed that the work placement was ‘in the sector of interest’.
- Of the 35 trainees who were on a work placement with a community project, 80 per cent (28) agreed that it was ‘in the sector of interest’.
- Of the 59 trainees that were on a work placement with a voluntary organisation 85 per cent (50) agreed that it was ‘in the sector of interest’.
- Of the 145 trainees that experienced learning at a training centre, 87 per cent (126) agreed that it was ‘in a sector of interest’.

6.37 During the case studies a number of examples described how young people had worked in different parts of one business to get different occupation experiences or moved between different employers as they realised an occupational area was not for them:

“[The young person] came to the Traineeship without any idea of the area he wanted to work in, he tried mechanics and realised it wasn’t suitable so moved into the depot and found that he enjoyed that.” Employer

“I initially tried horticulture but realised it wasn’t for me, I then moved into retail, which I am enjoying.” Young Person

6.38 One provider gave researchers a list of feedback from young people, collected at the end of a session (Figure 6.2) which demonstrates the range of skills that young people have learnt covering occupational skills, job search skills, improved confidence and general life skills. The areas that young people identified that they struggled with indicated their awareness of important job skills such as timekeeping and communication.

Figure 6.2: Support whilst on the Traineeship

What new skills/things do you think you have learned whilst on the programme?

- 'How to create the perfect CV, how to lay bricks and how to write poetry'
- 'Communication skills and managing my temper'
- 'Timekeeping'
- 'Being made aware of the dangers of alcohol'
- 'How to research for jobs'
- 'How to listen to people'
- 'I am wiser and more confident'
- 'How to work as part of a team'
- 'How to budget properly so I have enough money for the week'
- 'That it's important to join in'
- 'That I can stick at something'

What did you struggle with the most?

- 'Coming out of my comfort zone and interacting with new people'
- 'Timekeeping!'
- 'Dealing with some tough to hear conversations'
- 'Getting the bus on time'
- 'Getting up!'
- 'At first my confidence but then I worked out how to do percentages'.

Source: Traineeships Learning Provider

Support during course

6.39 The majority (89 per cent) of young people felt that the training provider asked them what type of work they wanted to do. Most trainees also felt (84 per cent) that they had a choice of training subject area (Table 6.10).

Table 6.10: Support whilst on the Traineeship

	Count	Percentage of Sample Respondents
Training provider asked what type of work they wanted to do	187	89
Felt they had a choice of training subject area	175	84
Training provider helped develop skills in the areas wanted	185	89
Received a training maintenance allowance	183	88

Source: Traineeship Survey, 2014

Base: 209 (All). Respondents were asked 'Did.....' for each of the above options. Closed question single response.

6.40 The majority (183) trainees reported receiving a training maintenance allowance whilst on the Traineeship. 55 per cent (101) of these trainees either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the training could have been done without the allowance, 59 (32 per cent) agreed and 22 (12 per cent) neither agreed nor disagreed.

6.41 Forty five per cent (94) of young people reported that they had been provided with a learning plan and 45 per cent (94) reported that they did not have a learning plan. The remaining 20 (10 per cent) young people did not know if they had an individual learning plan during the Traineeship.

6.42 Case study findings about flexibility and support are more mixed. Some positive examples highlight choices and pace of work:

"[the provider] let me work at my own pace."

"I felt that I had input into choosing the placement which has worked out well."

“I wanted to get the classroom work done quickly so I chose to do it once a week rather than once a fortnight.”

“I was asked what type of job/sector I was interested in.”

“I had lots of support from the work placement employer and if I didn't have that I wouldn't have gone and done it.”

6.43 However, other young people felt they didn't have so much choice:

“My training could have been tailored better; there was a lot of repetition in the essential skills training – they didn't plan sessions and didn't keep track of the work we had done.”

“I don't remember whether I had a learning plan or timetable or not, but I just went with it.”

On the subject of the opportunity to make decisions about what she learned and at what pace, one learner said *“sometimes but not mostly – I did what they wanted.”*

6.44 The challenge of transport was raised by four young people through the case studies. In one case the young person didn't like having to travel one day a week to the learning provider's centre. In the other three cases learners had to travel long distances to reach the employer location. In two cases the employer and provider organised for the young people to stay in a bed and breakfast during the week, while in another case a female participant with learning difficulties was helped to work out how to catch two buses to reach the employer. In all these examples a successful solution was engineered, although the young people had to be very motivated to achieve the challenge and the costs associated with transport. Providers indicate that in some cases it is just not possible to work out such arrangements.

Welsh Language

6.45 Three-fifths (126) of young people said that they were offered the option 'to learn in Welsh' as part of their Traineeship (Table 6.11). A third (70) of trainees were not offered any Welsh speaking/learning options. Just under a fifth of the learners made this offer actually took it up (representing 11 per cent of all learners); broadly in line with the proportion of the client group by learning programme who speak Welsh as identified through our analysis of LLWR management information.

Table 6.11: Welsh language offered as part of the Traineeship

	Count	Percentage of Sample Respondents
To learn in Welsh	126	60
To speak on the in-centre course in Welsh	104	50
To work towards a Welsh Medium qualification	81	39
To work at a Welsh speaking employer, community project or voluntary work placement provider	71	34
None of the above	70	33

Source: Traineeship Survey, 2014

Base: 209 (All). Respondents were asked 'As part of your Traineeship were you offered the choice of the following?' Closed question, multi-response.

6.46 Of the 126 who were offered the option to 'learn in Welsh' 23 (18 per cent) reported undertaking some learning in Welsh for the Traineeship.

6.47 Of the 104 trainees (50 per cent) who were offered the option to speak on the in-centre course in Welsh, 11 (11 per cent) reported having done so.

6.48 Of the 71 respondents (34 per cent) who were offered the option to work at a Welsh-speaking employer, community project or voluntary work placement provider, 11 (15 per cent) reported having done so.

6.49 Of the 81 (39 per cent) trainees that were offered the option to 'work towards a Welsh-medium qualification', seven (9 per cent) actually did so.

After the Traineeship

Qualifications Obtained

6.50 Over three quarters (76 per cent) of the 148 who completed the course obtained a qualification or accredited certificate as a result of being on the course.

6.51 Those on the Level 1 Traineeship were more likely to have obtained a qualification with 90 per cent (73) of those on Level 1 obtaining a qualification compared to 62 per cent (42) of those on the Engagement Level.

6.52 Of the 118 respondents that gave details about their obtained qualifications, the majority (61 per cent) of qualifications were at level 1 (Table 6.12). There are clearly some errors as Traineeships do not fund Level 3 qualifications.

Table 6.12: Qualifications obtained on the Traineeship.

	Count	Percentage of Sample Respondents
Entry	1	1
Level 1	72	61
Level 2	16	14
Level 3	6	5
City and Guild (unspecified)	1	1
Key skills (unspecified)	1	1
BTEC (unspecified)	1	1
Diploma/certificate (unspecified)	7	6
NVQ (unspecified)	3	3
Other	5	4
Don't Know	5	4
Total	118	100

Source: Traineeship Survey, 2014

Base: 118. Respondents were asked: 'What qualification or accredited certificates did you get?' Open question.

Course Completion

6.53 Overall 71 per cent (148) of trainees completed their Traineeship (Table 6.13). Those aged 18 or above, at the time of the interview, had a higher rate of completion (75 per cent) than those aged 16-17 (58 per cent).

Table 6.13: Completion rate by age at time of interview

	All Ages		16-17		18+	
	Count	Percentage of total sample	Count	Percentage of age group	Count	Percentage of age group
Completed	148	71	31	58	117	75
Left Early	60	29	22	42	38	25
Total	208	100	53	100	155	100

Source: Traineeship Survey, 2014

Base 208, 53 (all 16-17), 155 (all 18+). Respondents were asked 'Did you complete the Traineeship learning, did you leave before the end or are you still on the course?' Closed, single response.

6.54 Those on the Level 1 Traineeship had a higher rate of completion than those on the Engagement strand, with 84 per cent (81) of those on the Level 1 Traineeship completing compared to 60 per cent (67) on the Engagement strand.

6.55 The reasons for the 38 not completing the course were varied. Sixteen left to 'start another course', ten to start a job, seven due to family/personal circumstances and eight because the course did not meet their expectations. Those with a long term illness/health problems/disability were more likely to say 'family/personal circumstances' and 'problems accessing course e.g. travel problems', although the numbers were very small.

6.56 Other reasons for leaving that were reported by less than 10 per cent of trainees included:

- Problems accessing course e.g. travel
- Lack of time/too busy
- Ill health/ disability
- Did not like it – the students, the tutors, the way the course was taught
- Dismissed/dropped from the

- Lack of support/help course
- Childcare difficulties
- Course cancelled/closed down
- No longer eligible/funding ran out
- Didn't like the placement workplace

6.57 A larger proportion of the 32 trainees with a long term illness/health problems/disability left the course early (41 per cent) than those without a long term illness/health problems/disability (27 per cent).

Main activity after the course

6.58 Half (74) of those who completed the Traineeship were in paid work after the Traineeship at the time of interview (which was on average 19 months after their Traineeship ended) and 27 per cent (40) were in full time education or training (Table 6.14).

Table 6.14: Main activity of trainees on completion of course

	All		Completed		Left early	
	Count	Percentage of Sample Respondent	Count	Percentage of Sample Respondent	Count	Percentage of Sample Respondent
Doing paid work as an employee	92	44	72	49	19	32
Unemployed and looking for work	42	20	26	18	16	27
In full-time education or training	37	18	22	15	15	25
On a government funded training programme	21	9	16	11	5	8
Not in or looking for paid work	8	4	5	3	3	5
Other	9	5	7	4	2	3
Total	209	100	148	100	60	100

Source: Traineeship Survey, 2014

Base: 209, 148 (all completed), 60 (all left early). Respondents were asked 'I would like to get a few details about what you are doing at the moment. Which of the following do you regard as your main activity?' Closed question, single response.

- 6.59 Almost half of trainees who completed the course (72) were doing work as a paid employee at the time of interview after the course had ended.
- 6.60 A lower percentage of trainees who left the course early were in work as paid employees (33 per cent) after the course compared to those who completed the course (49 per cent). However a higher percentage of those who had left early (35 per cent) were in full-time education or training compared to those who had completed the Traineeship (18 per cent).
- 6.61 Other activities that trainees were undertaking after the course included doing voluntary work, on a training course that was not government funded, working self-employed, unwell, looking at another course, in part time education and on a course but unsure if it is government funded.
- 6.62 Over one third (34 per cent) of the 92 trainees who were in work after the Traineeship were working for the Traineeship placement employer.
- 6.63 Over half (115) of trainees were not in paid work after the Traineeship (Table 6.15). The majority felt the reasons that were making it difficult to find work were either transport difficulties and it being hard to get to appropriate work (41 per cent), a lack of qualifications or skills (37 per cent) or a lack of relevant work experience (37 per cent).

Table 6.15: Reasons that make it difficult to find work

	Agree (Count)	Percentage of Sample Respondents
Transport difficulties and it being hard to get to appropriate work	47	41
A lack of qualifications or skills	42	37
Lack of relevant work experience	42	37
Lack of appropriate jobs where you live	32	28
Age	22	19
Only wanting to work part time	20	17
Health problems	13	11
Having caring responsibilities	10	9
Lack of affordable childcare	8	7
Believing you would not be better off financially in work	5	4
In full time education	4	3
Alcohol or drug dependency	2	2
Having a criminal record	2	2
Other	3	3
Don't Know	2	2
None of these	18	16

Source: Traineeship Survey, 2014

Base: 115 (those not in paid work) Respondents were asked 'Which, if any, of the following things (would) make it difficult currently for you to find work?' Closed question, multi-response

6.64 Of the 92 trainees currently in paid employment over two thirds (67 per cent) said they worked for 30 hours or more per week and over one fifth (21 per cent) between 16 and 29 hours per week. 94 per cent (88) of these employed trainees reported being either satisfied or very satisfied with their work (Table 6.16).

Table 6.16: Satisfied or very satisfied with aspects of current work

	Agree (Count)	Percentage of Sample Respondents
Actual work itself	88	94
Overall pay including overtime or bonuses	80	85
Job Security	85	91
Opportunity to use own initiative	87	93
The number of hours you work	85	88
The work takes place in a safe and healthy environment	93	99
Your capacity to fulfil your potential at work	87	93
Job Overall	87	93

Source: Traineeship Survey, 2014

Base: 92, Respondents were asked. 'How would you rate your job on the following aspects? Please use a scale of very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, satisfied or very satisfied' Closed Question, single response for each.

6.65 Over one fifth (22 per cent) of trainees had attained more qualifications since the course.

6.66 Trainees had used a variety of sources of help or support to improve their skills or qualifications since the course (Table 6.17). Almost half (47 per cent) sourced it from friends/family and almost three out of ten (30 per cent) had used Careers Wales.

Table 6.17: Source of support for skills or qualifications

	Agree (Count)	Percentage of Sample Respondents
Friends/Family	99	47
Careers Wales	62	30
The jobcentre / an advisor at the job centre	38	18
A Government scheme	29	14
Voluntary/community organisation	12	6
Educational establishment	8	4
Employer (e.g. manager/colleagues/in the workplace)	2	1
Internet/Facebook/Social Media	1	-
Other	2	1
No Support	69	33

Source: Traineeship Survey, 2014

Base: 209 (All), Respondents were asked 'Have you had any help or support to improve your skills or qualifications or to move into work since the course from any of the following?' Closed with 'other' option, multi-response

Opinion of Traineeships

6.67 Almost all young people (98 per cent) felt that Traineeships were good for getting experience and skills and that they were 'a stepping stone towards getting an Apprenticeship' (91 per cent) (Table 6.18). However, this data contrasts with stakeholder views that young people are not ready to start an Apprenticeship, suggesting a need for better management of expectations.

Table 6.18: Agree that Traineeships are

	Agree (Count)	Percentage of Sample Respondents
Good for getting experience and skills	204	98
A stepping stone towards getting an Apprenticeship	190	91
Respected by young people in general	162	78

Source: Traineeship Survey, 2014

Base: 209. Respondents were asked 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Please use a scale of disagree strongly, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree or agree strongly.' Single-response.

6.68 Over half (62 per cent) of young people agreed that with hindsight they would do the same Traineeship at the same place. Only 15 per cent (32) said that they would not repeat it. The remaining trainees would either do the same Traineeship at a different place (11 per cent) or do a different Traineeship (11 per cent).

6.69 Trainees enjoyed various parts of the Traineeship (Table 6.19). The most commonly reported part (42 per cent) was the work placement/practical experience.

6.70 Overall, this combined with the previous two points represents a positive view of participants' Traineeships experience.

Table 6.19: Best part of the training

	Agree (Count)	Percentage of Sample Respondents
The work placement / practical experience	88	42
Learning new skills/improving knowledge	42	20
Working with new people / making friends	40	19
Trainers, staff were nice / help / supportive	8	4
Getting qualifications	7	3
Gaining confidence	7	3
Getting a job	6	3
Specific activities (various)	9	4
Being paid	4	2
All of it / nothing in particular	5	2
Other	14	7
Don't Know	8	4
Nothing	13	6

Source: Traineeship Survey, 2014
Base: 209. Respondents were asked 'What was the best part of the training?' Open question, multi-response

6.71 Over one third of trainees reported 'nothing' (37 per cent) as the worst part of the training (Table 6.20). Other comments were made by small numbers of respondents included staff (inadequate / unhelpful / rude), having to travel / transport difficulties, other trainees and not liking classroom based learning.

Table 6.20: Worst part of the training

	Agree (Count)	Percentage of Sample Respondents
Nothing	77	37
Teaching staff inadequate / unhelpful / rude	13	6
Having to travel / transport difficulty	11	5
Other trainees	11	5
Don't like classroom – based learning	10	5
Too much paperwork / written work	8	4
Not learning enough / nothing to do	9	4
Getting up early / long hours / long days / had to be there weekends	9	4
Difficult to find placement / time taken to get a placement	5	2
Poor pay	5	2
Having to do numeracy / literacy training	4	2
Lack of relevant learning	4	2
Assessments / inspections	4	2
Leaving the course	3	1
Cleaning up	3	1
Other	19	9
Don't know	19	9

Source: Traineeship Survey, 2014

Base: 209. Respondents were asked 'What was the worst part of the training?' Open question.

Benefits of the course

6.72 Trainees felt they experienced a range of benefits as a result of the Traineeship (Table 6.21). The benefit that was most agreed to was being ‘more confident about your abilities’ (93 per cent).

Table 6.21: Benefit of Traineeship course

	Agree (Count)	Percentage of Sample Respondents
More confident about your abilities	195	93
Feeling better about yourself generally	190	91
Clearer about the range of opportunities open to you	185	89
Made new friends	181	87
Feeling you have improved employment or career prospects	177	85
Feeling more healthy	173	83
Clearer about what you want to do in your life	169	81
More enthusiastic about learning	164	78
Thinking about setting up your own business or working self-employed	73	35
Taking part in more voluntary or community activities	69	33
Taken up new interests or hobbies e.g. club or society	58	28

Source: Traineeship Survey, 2014

Base 209: Thinking about the course do you feel you benefited in any of the following ways by going on the Traineeship? Are you now...’ Closed question, multi-response

6.73 Most of the young people interviewed during the case study visits indicated that an increase in confidence had helped them feel more positive:

“I am definitely more confident now.”

“[She] benefitted from the Traineeship through an increase in confidence which has been boosted by the various assessments she has had to do

and through the need to talk to a variety of new people on a daily basis.”
(Employer)

“I used to be scared to go on the till but I’m happy to serve anyone now.”

6.74 Providers also expressed views in qualitative interviews that an important underpinning aspect to positive progression was confidence and improved self-esteem.

6.75 Young people felt that they improved a range of skills throughout the Traineeship (Table 6.22). The most cited benefits were team working skills (92 per cent) and communication skills (92 per cent).

Table 6.22: Skills improved

	Agree (Count)	Percentage of Sample Respondents
Team working skills	193	92
Communication skills	192	92
Problem solving skills	186	89
Organisational skills	183	88
Job specific skills related to a specific occupation	174	83
Numeracy skills	170	81
Job search skills	169	81
English language skills	170	81
Literacy skills	164	78
CV writing or interview skills	163	78
IT skills	150	72
Leadership and/or strategic management skills	130	62
Other	5	2

Source: Traineeship Survey, 2014

Base: 209. Respondents were asked ‘Which, if any, of the following skills do you feel you have gained or improved from undertaking the course?’ Closed question, multi-response, ‘other’ specified by respondent.

6.76 The majority (80 per cent) of trainees felt that they had been able to apply what they learnt in the Traineeship to their work.

6.77 Of the 89 trainees who were in paid employment and not working for the same employer as when they started the course, over one quarter (26 per cent) felt that the Traineeship was vital in them getting their current job and over half (54 per cent) felt it helped. Only 20 per cent said it was not a factor in them getting the job.

6.78 This was re-iterated through the case study interviews:

“the Traineeship scheme helped to improve my future employment prospects, and also helped my confidence– I now find it easier to talk to people.”

“the Traineeship really helped me with the Apprenticeship interview. Without being on the Traineeship I probably wouldn’t have known about the Apprenticeship.”

6.79 Of the 114 trainees not currently working the majority (84 per cent) felt that they had either slightly or significantly more chance of getting work as a result of the Traineeship.

Overall Satisfaction

6.80 Overall the majority of trainees (86 per cent) were satisfied with the Traineeship.

6.81 In the words of one young person interviewed in a case study “there are ‘no negatives’ to my experience and I would be happy to do it again.”

6.82 The majority (89 per cent) of participants agreed that they enjoyed the Traineeship. Just over ten per cent (26) of trainees felt that ‘the learning in the Traineeship could have helped more’. This was for a variety of reasons including that the learning (provider) could ‘try harder to find placements for application’ (23 per cent), provide ‘one to one teaching’ (15 per cent), ‘lengthen the course’ (12 per cent), and ‘teach basic skills’ (12 per cent).

7 Traineeship Placement Employers

Summary

- Just over a quarter (28) of employers had received training from their current training provider prior to being involved with Traineeships. Just under half of employers (47) reported having no previous involvement with WBL programmes.
- Employers' reasons for getting involved in Traineeships were varied with the dominant reason for two fifths of employers being that they wanted to provide new opportunities for young people.
- Just under a quarter of employers (22) recalled discussing with the provider whether they would benefit from having a learner with Welsh language skills on placement or whether they had any Welsh language skills requirements for the learners.
- The majority of employers felt that at the beginning of the Traineeship trainees were at a satisfactory or above level in areas such as punctuality and potential to progress into employment. Over half of employers also reported seeing improvements in these areas during placements. Between a fifth and a third saw no change or deterioration in these areas.
- Almost a third of employers (31) thought trainees were 'better than expected' while under two-thirds said they were not (63). Just over a quarter (26 per cent) said trainees had learning disabilities and just under a quarter (22 per cent) said they had behavioural difficulties.
- Nearly three quarters of employers were satisfied (77) with Traineeship participants; however, they were mixed in their likelihood to offer placements in the future; with under three quarters (67) saying they were fairly likely or very likely.
- Employers on the whole reported that trainees had had a positive impact on various elements on their organisation.

Introduction

- 7.1 During the programme period it was estimated that around 2,500 employers had been involved in providing placements to participants (analysis of LLWR data).
- 7.2 A total of 196 employers were sampled in the Evaluation of WBL 2011-15 Employer Survey. Of these employers 100 (52 per cent) were delivering Traineeships.

Employer Characteristics

- 7.3 Of the 100 Traineeship employers 20 (20 per cent) were from Competitiveness areas and 79 (79 per cent) from Convergence areas.
- 7.4 Employers were mainly small companies with 54 (54 per cent) having up to 10 employees and 34 (34 per cent) between 10 and 49 employees. Only one employer had over 250 employees and four employers had between 50 and 249 employees.

Training Providers

- 7.5 The sample consisted of employers from thirteen training providers.
- 7.6 Twenty Eight (28 per cent) of the employers had received training from their current training provider before being involved with Traineeships.

Traineeship Strand

- 7.7 Employers were either delivering the Engagement (42) or the Level 1 (57) Traineeship strand to the trainees in the sample; one of the sample trainees were on the Bridge to Employment Strand.
- 7.8 Comparing survey responses with programme data suggests that when employers were asked which strands of Traineeships they were delivering some appeared confused and provided responses that were not consistent with their current trainees.

Employer Introduction to Traineeships

7.9 Employers found out about Traineeships from a variety of sources with nearly a third (30 per cent) informed via direct marketing from a training provider. Eight (8 per cent) employers found about Traineeships from staff within their organisation. Other sources of information included: local radio, local press, internet search, contact with Careers Wales, industry forum or group, other employers, friends, jobcentre, volunteers and local trainee provider.

7.10 Upon finding out about Traineeships 32 (32 per cent) tried to get hold of further information while 63 (63 per cent) did not.

7.11 Information was sought from a range of sources, with the local training provider (58 per cent) being the most common (Table 7.1). Of those seeking information most (49 or 73 per cent) said that finding information was quite easy or very easy. Only 1 employer reported finding information to be very difficult.

Table 7.1: Sources of further information for Traineeship employers¹

	Number of employers	Per cent of total respondents
Local training provider	18	58
Internet	4	13
From the College	2	6
Information Fair	1	3
Careers Wales	1	3
Other companies engaged in the programme	1	3
Wales County for Voluntary Action	1	3
Job Centre	1	3
Somebody else found it for me	1	3
Can't remember	1	3
Total	31	100

Source: Evaluation of WBL 2011-15 Employer Survey, Wave 1, 2014

Base = 31 Traineeship Employers who answered yes to seeking further information

1. Respondents were asked 'Who or where did you get the additional information from?' Open question.

7.12 Of those seeking information, most (51 or 76 per cent) reported that the information that they found on Traineeships was either quite or very clear. Just under three-quarters (49 or 73 per cent) found the information to be either quite or very accurate.

7.13 Prior to the current learners, 47 (47 per cent) Traineeship employers reported having no previous involvement with the WBL programme (Table 7.2).

Table 7.2: Traineeship employers' previous involvement with WBL¹

	Employers	Per cent of total respondents
No previous involvement in WBL	47	47
Previous involvement with the Apprenticeship programme	21	21
Previous involvement with other Welsh-Government funded WBL programmes e.g. Skill Build	13	13
Previously delivered in-house training programmes for new recruits	10	10
Previously received funding or support from other European funded work-based learning programmes	1	1
Other - come from school (work experience)	3	3
Other - contact with college	3	3
Other - training provider	3	3
Other - Jobcentre	1	1
Don't know / can't remember	3	3

Source: Evaluation of WBL 2011-15 Employer Survey, Wave 1, 2014

Base = all (100) Traineeship Employers

1. Respondents were asked 'Prior to your current learners, what previous involvement had your organisation had with WBL programmes?' Multiple Choice closed question with 'other' option as open ended.

7.14 Evidence from case study visits highlighted a range of perspectives in the understanding of Traineeships:

"Traineeships were focused on making young people 'work ready' and the aim on progressing especially into apprenticeships."

"A work experience programme that bears no cost on the organisation."

“We received a letter from [a local college] asking if they would like a young person on work experience for 13 weeks, free of charge.”

7.15 Some employers confused Traineeships and Apprenticeships, or just did not know the difference between the two.

7.16 One employer explained that she knew of a number of other employers who were struggling to recruit young people but weren’t aware of Traineeships. She felt it was an excellent way to recruit young people who had the potential to progress to Apprenticeships. She was also aware of another employer who had a negative view of Traineeships, *“they provide you with the dregs and the young people are beyond upskilling”*, she felt that this indicated the challenge to change employers’ views.

Employer Involvement in Traineeships

7.17 Employers’ reasons for getting involved were varied (Table 7.3), the dominant reason (40 per cent) being that employers got involved to provide new opportunities for young people. Smaller numbers had reasons centred on improving their current workforce or recruitment.

Table 7.3: Employers’ main reason for involvement in Traineeships¹

	Count	Per cent of total respondents
To provide new opportunities for young people	40	40
To train new entrants to the workforce	20	20
To increase the workforce capacity of the business	15	15
To help with recruitment	7	7
To increase the qualifications of the existing workforce	4	4
Other – a mixture of those reasons	4	4
To achieve Corporate Social Responsibility goals	3	3
Other – Financial Incentives	2	2
Other	5	5

Source: Evaluation of WBL 2011-15 Employer Survey, Wave 1, 2014

Base = all (100) Traineeship Employers

1. Respondents were asked ‘What was the main reason your organisation got involved in Traineeships’ closed single choice question. Single code closed question with open ended ‘other’ option

7.18 Discussions with employers during the case studies indicated three main (sometimes overlapping) reasons for employers to become involved with Traineeships:

- Recruitment mechanism, some employers see the Traineeship as ideal to try out young people with a view to recruiting for employment and/or progressing towards an Apprenticeship.
- To provide a placement capable of doing work at low cost with a quid pro quo of supporting their development. For some employers it was more mercenary than others *“it’s a form of cheap labour”*, compared with, *“we both gain something – any opportunity for additional human resources is welcomed”*.
- Social responsibility, linked to a desire to ‘give something back’ or to ‘help someone like myself when I was younger’, in the words of one employer *“we wanted to give young people a chance”*. For social enterprises there can also be wider benefits as described by one care home, *“Traineeships help support an intergenerational objective with young people and older people working together”*.

7.19 The majority of employers (between 68 and 76 per cent) were either fairly or very satisfied with: information provided by the training provider, support, issue handling, learner support, links between learning activities and organisation work and the content of learning activities (Table 7.4).

Table 7.4: Employer satisfaction with aspects of Traineeship delivery¹

	Count of employers					
	Not at all	Slightly Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Fairly Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Don't Know/ NA
The information provided by training provider	5	4	11	21	55	4
The ongoing support provided to your organisation by training provider	7	5	11	19	54	4
The handling of any issues you may have experienced by Training provider	8	4	11	18	50	9
The provision of ongoing support to the learner(s) in your organisation by training provider	6	3	12	20	56	3
The links between learning activities and the work of your organisation	7	1	14	19	56	3
The content of the learning activities undertaken by the learners in your organisation	6	4	11	22	53	3

Source: Evaluation of WBL 2011-15 Employer Survey, Wave 1, 2014

Base = all (100) Traineeship Employers

1. Respondents were asked 'On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = not at all satisfied and 5 = very satisfied, how satisfied are/were you overall with:' Closed single choice questions

7.20 Just under a quarter (23 per cent) of employers recalled discussing with the provider whether they would benefit from having a learner with Welsh language skills on placement or whether they had any Welsh language skills requirements for the learners. Sixty-seven employers (70 per cent) did not.

7.21 In case study interviews employers highlighted a range of issues related to satisfaction. Positive issues included:

- Benefits of skills and knowledge sharing: *“some young people had better skills than the workforce in things like ICT.... we actually utilised this and some young people completed EDCL qualifications and helped build excel databases and shared their skills with other team members.”*
- Additional support to ensure a good outcome, *“The training provider had to provide ‘more rounded support’ as opposed to just the Traineeship delivery – for example, they had to help one trainee find accommodation.*

This had not been highlighted when they first started, but now it was almost 'part of the norm'.

- Perceived added value, *"The provider has been very helpful, they do all the advertising for us. We use the same application form for the Traineeships as we do for our regular recruitment of staff. We also give everyone an interview who puts in an application form, that way we can give them interview experience. We run an information day before people submit their applications. We do a presentation about what you will do on the course and how it will work."*
- Support for learners with learning difficulties, *"The provider has been really good in providing support to trainees with dyslexia and it is felt that their communication with us – we have always had discussions and reviews on a regular basis."*

7.22 Employers were generally positive about flexibilities such as how many days the young people attend a centre and the scheduling of these days. They were also generally positive about the visits from provider staff to the young people.

7.23 Less positive issues included:

- Lack of advanced information: *"a major bugbear is that with dyslexia and other similar issues providers/young people don't tell us when they first get here, as they are worried it will be a problem but once they tell us we can easily put things in place. They only really tell us when a mistake has been made and they need to explain it."*
- One employer who felt he experienced young people who were not motivated said *"was not aware of any improvements in skills or knowledge for the young people as a result of attending the college."*
- Frustration with the training provider management *"less satisfied with the training provider due to poor communication and delays in the assessment process which meant that the Traineeship took longer to complete than she had hoped."*

- Frustration with a lack of selection of candidates *“the provider did not vet the trainees before sending them to the store and so one or two trainees have had a ‘bad attitude’ towards work – in these cases, we went back to the training provider and said that it won’t work out.”*
- Frustration with a lack of preparation of candidates *“they help them with their CVS, but not with the interviews.”* However, other employers have said that candidates were well prepared.

7.24 Some employers expressed concerns about the changing of training providers due to contract changes. They felt they had lost an established relationship and that new staff did not have the local knowledge. Some employers who had worked with two providers over similar periods of time contrasted different approaches and styles, for example, one provider was regarded as more stringent with the rules for young people, which was seen by the employer as a positive. In another case one provider was regarded as more flexible and supportive of young people.

Employers view of Traineeship Participants

7.25 At the beginning of the Traineeship the majority of employers felt that trainees’ punctuality (86 per cent), completion of tasks set (84 per cent), general readiness for work (82 per cent), overall employability (77 per cent), potential to progress into employment (80 per cent) and potential to progress to further learning (80 per cent) was at a level of satisfactory or above (Table 7.5). In all categories over half of employers rated their Traineeship participants as fairly good or very good.

Table 7.5: Traineeship employer rating when trainees started their placement¹

Employers (Count)	Count of employers					
	Very Poor	Fairly Poor	Satisfactory	Fairly Good	Very Good	Don't Know/ NA
Punctuality	2	9	19	27	40	3
Completion of tasks set	3	11	21	23	40	2
General readiness for work	6	10	17	28	37	2
Overall employability	8	12	17	27	33	3
Potential to progress into employment	4	13	16	26	38	3
Potential to progress onto further learning	4	9	22	26	32	7

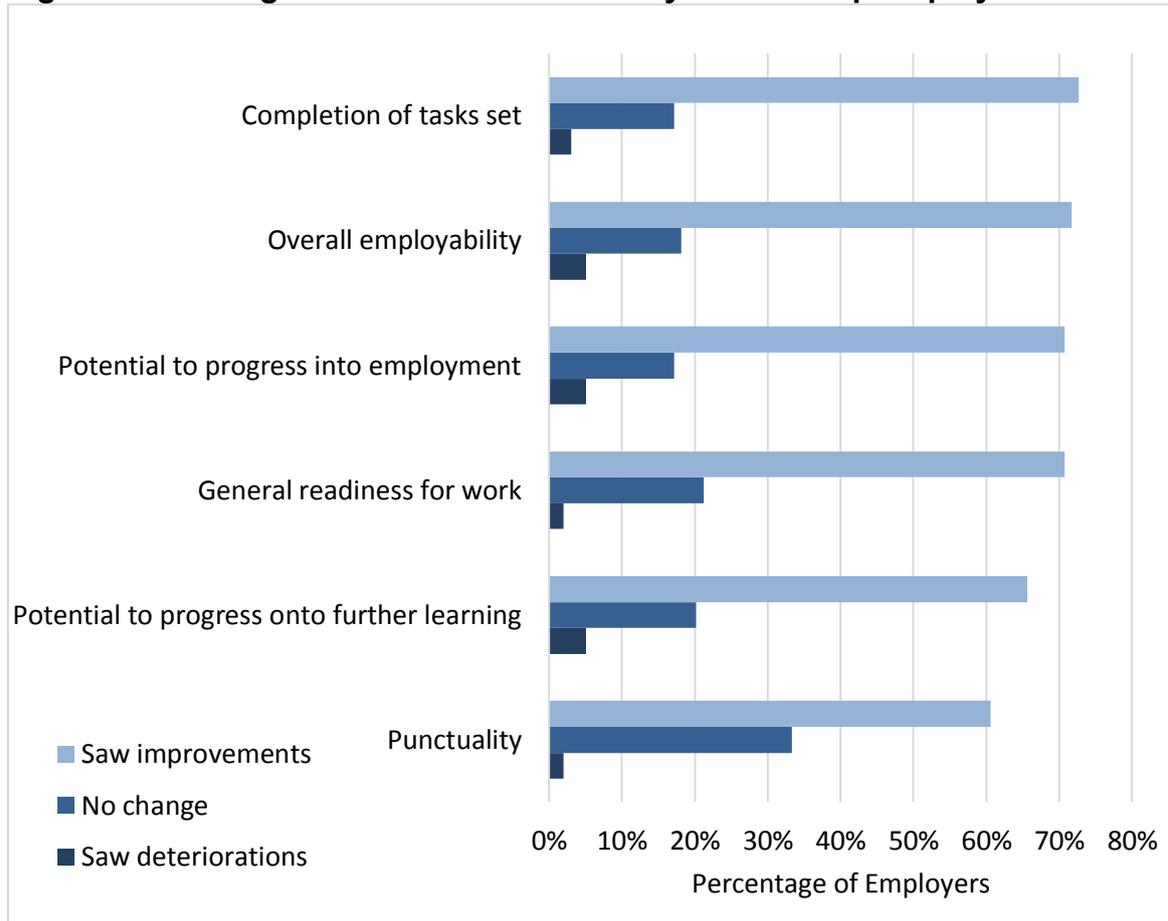
Source: Evaluation of WBL 2011-15 Employer Survey, Wave 1, 2014

Base = all (100) Traineeship Employers

1. Respondents were asked 'On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = very poor and 5 = very good, how would you rate Traineeships participants when they started their placement with your organisation, in terms of:' Closed single choice questions

7.26 Over half of employers also reported seeing improvements in these areas during trainee's placements (Figure 7.1). Between a fifth and a third saw no change or deterioration in these areas.

Figure 7.1: Changes in trainees observed by Traineeship employers¹



Source: Evaluation of WBL 2011-15 Employer Survey, Wave 1, 2014

Base = all (100) Traineeship Employers

1. Respondents were asked 'Did you see any improvement to Traineeships participants during their placement with your organisation, in terms of their:' closed single choice question.

7.27 Employers had mixed opinions about whether trainees were 'better than expected' (Table 7.6). Some employers identified learning disabilities (26 per cent) or behavioural problems (22 per cent) displayed by trainees.

7.28 The fact that over three-fifths of Traineeship employers said 'no' to the statement 'Trainees were better than I expected' suggests the need for better management of employers' expectations through provider contact and marketing activity. Although a 'no' response may mean expectations were in fact met, qualitative evidence confirmed that while some employers were very aware of the needs of Traineeship participants, others had much higher expectations.

7.29 There may be merit in discussing this issue at the provider networking group to agree how to address it, for example, creating a flier about support required or having a consistent checklist all providers use.

Table 7.6: Meeting Traineeship employers' expectations¹

	Yes		No	
	Count	Per cent of total respondents	Count	Per cent of total respondents
Trainees better than I expected	30	30	63	63
Trainees had learning disabilities	25	25	69	69
Trainees had behavioural problems	21	21	73	73
Other	12	12	83	83

Source: Evaluation of WBL 2011-15 Employer Survey, Wave 1, 2014

Base = 100 Traineeship Employers

1. Respondents were asked 'Did you experience any of the following surprises in terms of the calibre of Trainees sent on placement?' Closed single choice for each question with 'other' option being open ended.

7.30 Other issues volunteered by survey respondents included: low levels of confidence expressed as 'how put down trainees were before the placement', 'maturity levels of trainees' and 'trainee's family issues.'

7.31 A variety of views were expressed by employers through the case studies, on the positive side some are motivated and looking to develop:

"The young people were all very motivated and have displayed excellent commitment."

"The young people were very motivated. They were happy to be doing something and that the environment was not the same as school."

"We knew what to expect and we were happy with that. Most trainees had no qualifications and no chance of a job before arriving and we understood that. The whole point of the programme is that there is no quality there. The first three months are the hardest but after that you can really see a difference in the young people."

7.32 However, some employers had negative experiences with Traineeships:

"[the young person] had an awful attitude, she was just a not very nice person, she was rude to customers and to staff and really she just didn't have a clue."

“Their skills were very low, I am surprised they even knew how to get up in the morning and get dressed, they really couldn’t do anything.”

“One lad who was with us for 6 months was beginning to get interested in the mechanics and picking it up well, but then we found out that he had been stealing from us, so we had to fire him.”

“The calibre of those who come on work placements as part of the Engagement Level Traineeship programme tends to be a little lower but this is to be expected.”

“Trainees tend to be ‘slower learners’ than other staff but I am ‘a sucker for that kind of thing’ and I don’t feel this is attributed to lack of motivation so I am happy to put the extra time into training them.”

7.33 While the theft example is probably extreme, the issues about poor attitude were mentioned by two other employers, although some had more realistic expectations. Employers also mentioned family issues and pregnancy among girls as factors that affected the success of Traineeships.

7.34 Some employers recognise that there are individuals with real potential among Traineeship participants:

“The quality of Traineeship candidates varies greatly. Approximately 60% of the trainees I see don’t want to be here, but on the other hand I have also seen some brilliant trainees who I would not hesitate in employing if I could.”

“For many, Traineeships were a big shock. For many, it’s the first time they have had to toe the line. If they can get past that, they generally stay on and successfully finish the Traineeship. But it’s down to personality if they succeed.”

7.35 Among the 30 employers who experienced surprise in terms of any learning disabilities and behavioural problems associated with learners, 16 (53 per cent) reported that they were in fact notified in advance and fourteen (47 per cent) said that they were not.

7.36 Case study evidence supports the above findings. While some employers as referenced earlier felt they were not told about important information others did feel informed: *“The training provider was very honest about the skills levels of the young people so they met our expectations”*. In fact most case study employers felt their expectations were satisfied.

7.37 Some employers positively seek young people who make up the Traineeship cohort:

“The nature of the young people is that they tend to think differently to those who are more academic, but this is fitting because most of those who train and mentor them in the depot also think more practically and therefore they are able to adapt the Traineeship well to their needs.”

7.38 The majority of employers (79 per cent) felt that overall they were satisfied with their trainee participants since 2011, with 38 (39 per cent) reporting they were fairly satisfied and 39 (40 per cent) very satisfied. Only four of the respondents were very dissatisfied (Table 7.7).

Table 7.7: Traineeship employers’ overall satisfaction with participants¹

	Count	Per cent of total respondents
Very dissatisfied	4	4
Fairly dissatisfied	3	3
Neither satisfied or unsatisfied	13	13
Fairly satisfied	38	39
Very satisfied	39	40

Source: Evaluation of WBL 2011-15 Employer Survey, Wave 1, 2014

Base = all responding to question (97) Traineeship Employers

1. Respondents were asked ‘Overall on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = very dissatisfied and 5 = very satisfied, how satisfied are/were you overall with your Traineeship participants since 2011? Closed single choice

7.39 Two (public sector) employers talked positively about cross cutting themes in the case studies. For example: addressing gender stereo-types such as females entering mechanic roles, supporting learners with learning difficulties and encouraging learners to use Welsh language skills as part of their training.

7.40 Employers did not describe providers as proactively probing in these areas, but recognised that providers walk a tight-rope of not alienating employers.

7.41 Employers mentioned good work by providers in supporting and motivating young people. Even when things don't go to plan one employer felt well-supported by their provider: *“We have only really had one problematic trainee where there was an accusation of bullying because the young person wasn't happy with being spoken to like one of the work force. The young person brought their parent in but we managed to get the issue properly dealt with. The college was great and organised an independent investigation into the situation and we had a formal meeting where by the parents understood the situation and I think the young person learnt a lesson from it.”*

Impact on organisation

7.42 Nearly three quarters (72 per cent) of employers were either fairly or very satisfied overall with their recent experience (Table 7.8). Only eleven employers reported a level of dissatisfaction with their recent experience.

Table 7.8: Traineeship employers' overall satisfaction with recent experience¹

	Count	Per cent of total respondents
Very dissatisfied	9	9
Fairly dissatisfied	2	2
Neither satisfied or unsatisfied	13	14
Fairly satisfied	26	27
Very satisfied	43	45
Don't know/Not applicable	3	3

Source: Evaluation of WBL 2011-15 Employer Survey, Wave 1, 2014

Base = all (96) Traineeship Employers

1. Respondents were asked 'Overall on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = very unsatisfied and 5 = very satisfied, how satisfied are you with your recent experience of the WBL programme? Closed single choice

7.43 Employers on the whole reported that trainees had had a positive impact on various elements on their organisation (Table 7.9).

7.44 The highest level of impact was in the areas of ‘overall efficiency of the workforce’ with 37 (82 per cent) of employers finding Traineeships had a fairly or very positive impact. Similarly higher levels were identified for ‘organisational approach to training and development’ and ‘organisational attitudes towards the recruitment and employment of young people’ with 33 (73 per cent) and 32 (71 per cent) of employers respectively agreeing trainees had either a fairly or very positive impact on this area of their organisation.

7.45 Employers were less clear about the impact of trainees on other areas. Ten (22 per cent) employers responded ‘don’t know’ for ‘Retention of staff’ and eleven (24 per cent) for ‘Employment growth’.

Table 7.9: Traineeship employers’ assessment of impact on aspects of their organisation¹

Employer (Count)	Very Negative	Fairly Negative	Neither	Fairly Positive	Very Positive	Don't Know/ NA
Recruitment of new staff	1	5	34	19	30	7
Retention of staff	0	4	44	17	16	15
Employment growth	2	4	41	18	18	12
Overall efficiency of the workforce	2	7	12	38	35	2
Cost of production and service delivery	3	10	17	36	21	9
Organisational approach to training and development	4	6	20	45	16	5
Organisational attitudes towards the recruitment and employment of young people	4	4	27	35	21	5
The development of new businesses relationships or networks	1	4	46	18	14	13

Source: Evaluation of WBL 2011-15 Employer Survey, Wave 1, 2014

Base = all (96) Traineeship Employers

1. Respondents were asked ‘On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = very negative and 5 = very positive, to what extent has your organisation’s involvement in the programme led to any of the following impacts:

7.46 Employers interviewed as part of the case studies identified a number of areas of impact in the business ranging from choosing new recruits to development of existing managers’ skills and support for delivering the services of the organisation:

“Traineeships offer us the chance to see if the young people are suitable.”

“I would say after the three month milestone that is when the trainees became an asset. At that point we can stop looking after them as they become useful and make a contribution. It has been great for our managers also, the experience of managing these young people was something very new for a lot of the employees here but it gave them the managerial experience to move on to other management roles, dealing with our staff can be a lot similar to dealing with these young people so in that way it has been a real benefit to us.”

“I have seen eight Trainees progress with us and contribute to our business, one has even set up her own business.”

- 7.47 One manager within an employer organisation, speaking personally, said it was a disappointment that she could not recruit the Traineeship young people; she was unable to as the company policy was just to offer the Traineeship placement but not jobs.
- 7.48 One employer felt that the experience with Traineeships had been a negative experience, resulting in stress and concerns about losing customers.
- 7.49 Employers were mixed in their likelihood to offer placements in the future with 67 (70 per cent) either fairly or very likely to offer them in the future and 4 (4 per cent) responding don't know/not applicable (Table 7.10). Only five employers expressed that they were very unlikely to deliver the programme.

Table 7.10: Traineeship employers' likelihood to offer placements in the future¹

	Count	Per cent of total respondents
Very unlikely	5	5.2
Fairly unlikely	9	9.4
Neither likely or unlikely	11	11.5
Fairly likely	20	20.8
Very likely	47	49.0
Don't know/Not applicable	4	4.2

Source: Evaluation of WBL 2011-15 Employer Survey, Wave 1, 2014

Base = all (96) Traineeship Employers

1. Respondents were asked 'Overall on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = very unlikely and 5 = very likely, how likely are you to offer placements in the future given your recent experience?' Closed single choice

7.50 Most of the employers interviewed as part of the case studies said they would participate again in the future and recommend Traineeships to other employers:

"I am very satisfied with the support provided during the delivery of the training and would, and have, recommended the use of trainees to others."

7.51 One employer emphasised the importance of the payment to the young people:

"I think without the £50 funding we probably wouldn't be able to continue because the young people couldn't have managed without that funding and it would have raised the issue of unpaid work placements especially with the controversy around zero hours contracts. And we have a lot of austerity at the moment with redundancies in the pipeline so I think it would be difficult for me to convince management to provide that funding ourselves."

7.52 Another employer highlighted a problem with the little used Bridge to Employment programme, citing that she was fully aware of the progression pathways for the trainees, but raised concerns that some pathways were not currently possible due to the gap between rounds of European Funding. They currently have a Bridge to Employment Trainee in Health and Social Care and would really like to employ him, but they need ‘buffer money’ at the moment as Jobs Growth Wales is not currently in operation to fund a potential job. This is limiting the potential progression of the trainee in question, who has now opted to stay on as a volunteer with the organisation in the hope that a chance for employment will come soon. She asked “*what is the point of offering these pathways if there is no job at the end?*”

Overview of case study employers

7.53 The case study employers were varied in size and were drawn from a wide range of sectors (Table 7.11). Collectively they indicated that they had been involved in all three levels of Traineeships.

7.54 Overall, they tended to have a positive attitude to training with four out of the seven having Investors in People (IiP). Most had been actively involved in Traineeships over the past four years.

7.55 Employers’ motivations for involvement in Traineeships ranged from corporate social responsibility reasons, a desire to provide placements for the benefit they can provide to an organisation and a few used it as a method of recruiting young people.

7.56 Case study employers generally had a positive view of providers and Traineeships overall.

7.57 Learning difficulties and disabilities were mentioned as an issue facing participants in five out of the seven case study examples.

Table 7.11: Case study employer summary

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Size	6	500+	38	10	500+	200+	6
Sector	Automobiles	Public sector	Care Home	Childcare	Education	Public sector	Retail
No YP in last yr	3	2	1	2	1	-	1
T'ships over 4 yrs	3	5+	8	5+	-	20+	7
Engagement	✓	✓		✓	✓		
Level 1			✓	✓		✓	✓
B2E		✓	✓	✓			
Motive:							
Recruitment		✓	✓	✓			
Placement	✓		✓			✓	✓
CSR	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Provider*	1	3	2	2	3	3	3
Overall*	1	3	3	3	3	3	3
LLDD mentioned	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
liP	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-
Attitude to Training*	1	3	3	3	3	3	3

Source: Qualitative case study visits

* Key to Ratings: 3=positive, 2=mixed, 1=negative

8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 This section draws together the overarching conclusions and then lists a series of recommendations at the end of the section.

Conclusions

Overall performance

8.2 To July 2014, there had been around 24,500 leavers from the Traineeship Programme. 19,065 of these young people were funded with 65 per cent (12,450) funded through ESF in the Convergence areas of Wales; exceeding the target of 12,120.

8.3 Traineeship annual delivery expenditure was between £20 million and £24 million over the first full three year period to 2013-14.

8.4 Overall ESF targets were achieved for total participation, female involvement and numbers progressing into employment. Although targets for qualifications and progression into further learning were not met. In terms of cross cutting themes:

- Female participation was good, although the extent to which gender stereotypes were addressed was unclear. Providers addressed it with learners but admitted it was difficult to challenge employers.
- The level of involvement from individuals with disabilities and/or learning difficulties as a proxy for those with work limiting health conditions suggests the programme did well against this cross cutting theme. That said, the issues of not supporting individuals with the most complex needs indicated that some potential participants in this category were missing out.
- There was limited information on STEM subjects, which limited the assessment against the cross cutting theme of developing female involvement in STEM subjects.

8.5 The delivery of the programme was broadly consistent across Wales and the characteristics of participants between Convergence areas and the rest of Wales were also similar.

- 8.6 The rate of positive progressions in the first year of operation (2011-12), in terms of positive progression three months after completion, was classed as 'adequate' at 63 per cent. This was regarded as being linked to the bedding in of a new programme and delayed effects of the recession.
- 8.7 Performance improved in the second (2012-13) and third year (2013-14), with increased volumes and improved outcomes; reaching 67 and 68 per cent, respectively - closer to being classed as 'good, based on Welsh Government criteria'.
- 8.8 The overall numbers of participants targeted were achieved for female participation (45 per cent, surpassing the target of 42 per cent) and gaining employment (26 per cent compared with a target of 21 per cent). Performance was below target for other ESF progression targets such as gaining qualifications (36 per cent compared with a target of 61 per cent) and entering further learning (14 per cent compared with a target of 18 per cent).

Young people's experiences of Traineeships

- 8.9 Participants' main motivation was to get a job or to gain work experience/skills that would help them to get a job. Participants were generally satisfied with the Traineeship programme and felt they were asked what type of work they wanted to do, felt they had a choice of subject areas and that the provider helped them develop the skills in the areas they wanted. A minority of just over one in ten participants do not feel that they were offered these options.

Engagement Traineeship

- 8.10 The Engagement strand worked well for many participants but has not worked so well for those with complex support needs. For example some participants are not ready to move up to 21 hours per week after the first four weeks (when they participate for 12 hours per week); they require a longer period of support at a lower intensity. Others are not ready to engage in centre-based group learning; they require one to one support.
- 8.11 In some cases such individuals dropped out or failed to progress, in others they were regarded by providers as not being ready for the programme.
- 8.12 More understanding is required about the refusal of providers to accept some participants perceived to be borderline clients.
- 8.13 Some providers have models to support such young people with flexible and adaptable provision, drawing on experience from within their organisation and in some cases from partner organisations.

Level 1 Traineeship

- 8.14 The Level 1 strand generally worked well although some individuals were regarded as needing more support before they were ready to progress to an Apprenticeship. Providers did not feel that young people were ready for a Level 2 apprenticeship and that they needed more time to support learners.
- 8.15 The ending of the Young Recruits programme was regarded as reducing the successful progression to employment, with less incentive for employers to recruit a young person.

Bridge to Employment Traineeship

- 8.16 The B2E strand was barely used; a very small number of participants had been involved. Stakeholders suspect providers were reluctant to use it due to the open ended commitment which cannot be claimed for.

Thematic areas

Contracting arrangements

8.17 For most of the 2011-15 period there were six delivery consortia and 18 lead contractors, with 13 contractors delivering a minimum contract value of £650,000. Approximately 120 consortia members and sub-contractors were involved in delivering the programme.

8.18 This situation represented a significant change to the previous funding period when smaller contract values and greater numbers of providers were involved. This reduced number of contractors was regarded as a positive move although there was some bedding in of the new arrangements (such as sub-contractors adopting new systems and the establishment of contract management arrangements between the Welsh Government and providers).

Additional learner support

8.19 ALS budgets were not used by providers due to perceived risks of not drawing down funds and concerns about the time to make a claim. This may be an additional factor influencing the tailoring of provision and support for young people with complex support needs. Insufficient information has been generated to know if this is in fact the case.

Essential Skills

8.20 The importance of essential skills was evident from the low levels of skills identified at the start of the programme. Delivery of essential skills was a clear part of the Traineeships programme, although it could have been embedded more effectively in some provision. Where it worked well it was a seamless part of learning throughout the participant's experience. Where it works less well was when it was a stand-alone classroom-based element; participants viewed this as a negative aspect of the programme, especially where it felt like going back to school.

Delivery through the medium of Welsh

- 8.21 There was evidence of provision being offered through the medium of Welsh to over three-fifths of participants, although some participants did not recall being offered it. Just under a fifth of the learners made this offer actually took it up (representing 11 per cent of all learners); broadly in line with the proportion of the learning programme participants who speak Welsh as identified through our analysis of LLWR management information.
- 8.22 Smaller proportions were offered: the option to speak Welsh on centre-based courses (50 per cent), the option to work at a Welsh-speaking employer (34 per cent) or to work towards a Welsh-medium qualification (39 per cent). Between 9 per cent and 15 per cent actually took up these offers. All providers explained that they had the capability to undertake delivery through the medium of Welsh if required.

Good practice

- 8.23 Examples of good practice around understanding the world of work included visits to employers' premises, presentations by employers at a learning centre about the type of work they did and supporting young people to experience working in more than one occupational area.
- 8.24 Some providers organised trips and outdoor activities based around self-esteem, team building and self-confidence. There is good evidence of innovative, attractive resources and teaching strategies being used to engage young people in activities from job search through to essential skills learning.

Third sector involvement

- 8.25 There was generally perceived to be insufficient third sector involvement in the programme delivery and provision of placements. This is perceived to be linked to: external factors (such as the economic recession and reductions in voluntary organisation funding and headcount); challenges of engaging the third sector; and, the reduced number of WBL contracts which has made it harder for third sector providers to participate.

Tailoring provision

- 8.26 There was evidence of providers tailoring provision but it was usually done around a core of standard provision for the needs of that type of participant. This was necessary to make the programme operationally viable but meant it was not always possible to provide complete one to one support to all individuals that may have required it. There was good evidence of pastoral support while on the Traineeship and some outreach activity for participants at risk of dropping out.
- 8.27 However, some stakeholders felt that providers may be pushing some young people towards provision for Tier 2 individuals (designed for those not ready for a Traineeship), as they were deemed too hard to help or a high risk of dropping out of the programme. Having said this there was also evidence of providers being asked to support Tier 2 young people because appropriate, local provision was not currently available.
- 8.28 Overall the subject of tailoring is very difficult to judge without understanding the exact circumstances of the young person and the delivery provided.
- 8.29 There were examples of tailoring to specific circumstances such as the use of taxis initially to support travel and attendance, working with a young person's family and providing breakfast at the centre where they are not getting it at home.
- 8.30 More recently there has been recognition by providers that they can and should do more with the flexibility within Traineeships to support young people. The National Training Federation for Wales recently hosted a Welsh Government-funded conference which concluded that more could be done in terms of supporting participants through internal staff training and development and better sharing of materials and good practice.

Range of vocational options

8.31 There was no particular evidence of a lack of vocational options provided to young people, from the evidence collected to date. As stated earlier around one in ten Traineeship participants felt they were not offered the options they wanted. Some examples of difficult to source, unusual occupations were mentioned and in some cases satisfied and others not. Providers evidenced that they had transferred young people to other providers, both within their consortium and externally, where another provider could satisfy the young person's requirements. Although other stakeholders were sceptical that this happened very often.

Provider support to ensure participants remain engaged

8.32 Overall, providers had good systems in place to support young people during their Traineeship (such as a learning coach, pastoral support and tutor staff). Young people had regular contact with a range of staff who regularly monitored their progress and tried to identify issues requiring further support.

8.33 Providers were less likely to involve Careers Wales when they identify a young person is at risk of dropping out of Traineeships. This is because they felt they were able to help the young people themselves through pastoral support. Therefore, the system did not quite operate as intended.

Provider role to ensure employers actively support participants

8.34 Provider staff endeavoured to establish a strong relationship with employers; however, there were different approaches and different philosophies which influenced potential success. For example, some providers have clearly identified employer engagement roles, whose responsibility was to make employers aware of Traineeships. In other providers the employer engagement role is a responsibility across the provider team. Some providers were very proactive about seeking employers, for example, most employers in the survey heard about the Traineeship from the provider. However, other providers were more passive, relying on national marketing and past relationships.

- 8.35 As identified in the research, employers had a mixture of motivations to engage with Traineeships. The nature of the relationship varied, particularly, between large and small employers. For example, in large employers a director or senior manager may agree to the Traineeship, but in practice an operational manager or supervisor will have most contact with the young person and provider.
- 8.36 Typically the same individual from the provider would 'account manage' that employer, although sometimes a different member of staff would maintain contact with a given young person. Provider staff had to be alert to pick up on any concerns (from the participant or employer) and be able to negotiate to resolve such issues. This could be challenging when expectations (of any of the parties) were unrealistic or misaligned. So some young people would grumble if they felt they were not receiving a good experience or being used to do menial jobs. Employers might complain to the provider if they felt the young person was not demonstrating acceptable behaviour.
- 8.37 The employer's motivation to be involved influenced the extent to which they would support the development of the young person (for example, by providing feedback). For example, employers who saw the Traineeship as a way to recruit young people would be more likely to provide such support, but those that felt they were just providing a placement might expect the provider to handle such support.
- 8.38 Feedback from employers indicated that most (four-fifths) were satisfied with their Traineeship placements and a third said participants were 'better than they expected'. Many saw improvements in the young people, although around a quarter saw no change and two to eight per cent saw deterioration.

Planning for progression

- 8.39 Providers were actively involved in planning a progression path for Traineeship participants, supporting them with job search, interview skills and identifying further learning opportunities.

Awareness and expectations of Traineeships

8.40 There was evidence of confusion among young people and their parents but particularly employers about what Traineeships was about. There was some direct confusion with the Apprenticeship programme. There was also a lack of a clear understanding about the purpose of Traineeships compared with the way people's understanding of Apprenticeships has developed over the past 20 years. To some extent this is about sufficient time for a new programme to bed in, but it may also be about the clarity of the message. There continues to be a lack of promotion and communication of Traineeships within schools as an option at the end of Year 11.

8.41 There is a need for better management of employers' expectations through provider contact and marketing activity. Qualitative evidence confirmed that while some employers were very aware of the needs of Traineeship participants, others have much higher expectations. There may be merit in discussing this issue at the provider networking group to agree how to address it, for example, creating a flier about support required or having a consistent checklist all providers use.

Perspectives of those involved in the programme

8.42 All stakeholders and providers generally agree that young people: were low on confidence at programme entry; had low qualifications and skills; sometimes had negative experiences of learning from school; had the potential to contribute positively; typically just want a job with less value placed on learning.

8.43 Traineeships were regarded by stakeholders as the right way to go but not necessarily implemented in the best way. Stakeholders were concerned about the size of contracts, lack of flexibility and tailored provision, turnover of provider staff, competence of provider staff, lack of partnership between providers, lack of employer engagement and lack of involvement by Careers Wales.

- 8.44 Providers perceived a challenging client group, lack of recognition of some types of progression, insufficient resource (to cover additional support requirements), lack of national promotion/marketing, completers not ready for Apprenticeships, lower intensity of Careers Wales involvement and dispute the readiness of some young people referred to the Engagement strand.
- 8.45 Former Traineeship participants were generally positive about Traineeships. They valued the support and experience which helped them to find work, gave them confidence and helped them to progress. They were less positive about essential skills/classroom-based learning. This study has not explored in detail the perceptions of young people who drop out or do not start Traineeships.
- 8.46 Employers who had been involved were generally positive about Traineeships. Some employers were remarkably patient and understanding of young people's inexperience, unpredictability and support needs. Where employers had negative experiences they cited a lack of information about the young person's needs, lack of support/preparation (linked to provider role and programme design aspects such as lack of support for transport) and lack of commitment of young person.
- 8.47 There is a general view that the programme and its purpose is not well-understood by those who have not been involved including parents, young people and employers. Some believe it needs a clearer focus such as 'to help young people get a job' rather than overplaying the purpose of vocational learning. This is a delicate balance which if tilted too far the other way leads to accusations of exploitation and lack of investment in/progression of young people by employers.
- 8.48 Although the programme appeared to be serving those who participated, there were concerns that a group of young people were not receiving the support that the original programme design intended. Such young people, often identified as Tier 2, required more one-to-one support and additional learning support which providers were not delivering. More needs to be understood about this group of young people and the reasons why they were not starting provision with providers even though they were referred by Careers Wales.

Recommendations

8.49 The recommendations for consideration include:

- Providers need to ensure employer engagement is sufficient to identify work tasters and placements required to give participants a good experience of the workplace. In particular, there needs to be a stronger focus on engagement of the third sector/voluntary sector especially as a source for young people with greater need for flexibilities or sheltered work environments.
- The Welsh Government should ensure it understands the balance between placements provided in real workplaces and those in simulated environments. This may be possible using existing data or additional variables may be required within the LLLWR dataset.
- Extend the period of support at a lower intensity (12 hours per week) from the first four weeks to the first eight weeks.
- Increase collaboration and sharing of good practice between Traineeship providers, for example, around the embedding of essential skills delivery and managing employers' expectations.
- Clarify the role of Careers Wales and enforce Tier level assessments that are made.
- Review how the approach to marketing the programme can be maximised at a national and local level.
- Review the design of the Engagement element to ensure that it can support all young people in scope and offer genuine individually tailored learning. The Welsh Government should explore further the reasons why providers refuse to accept some participants perceived to be borderline clients.
- Review the Level 1 element of the programme to identify opportunities for improved progression to Apprenticeships. This may require the outcome of

an Apprenticeship to be incentivised more significantly in the programme design.

- Review the design of the B2E strand to ensure that it can support young people to progress towards Apprenticeships.
- Explore why the additional learner support aspect of the programme is not working and redesign the process to ensure the support is accessed where it is needed.
- The Welsh Government should ensure that data are published and reviewed for all targets set in the ESF Business Plan.