

Youth engagement and progression framework

Implementation plan
Executive summary



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Better outcomes for young people



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Audience

This document is for everyone working in the education and training system supporting young people to engage and progress in education and training including senior leaders in local authorities, Careers Wales, the Youth Service and providers (schools, further education (FE) colleges, work-based learning (WBL)).

Overview

This document is focused on reducing the number of young people aged 11 to 25 who are not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET). It provides an executive summary of the *Youth engagement and progression – Implementation plan*. All parts of the system from Welsh Government, national partners, local authorities and providers will need to work together to successfully implement this plan. The plan sets out the different roles and responsibilities of key players and expectations for how each partner will deliver.

Action required

None – for information only.

Further information

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Additional copies

This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at

www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills

Contents

Ministerial foreword	2
Summary	4

Ministerial foreword

Welsh Government has a long standing commitment to maximise the opportunities for all children and young people. This includes supporting their progression into education and training and then employment, enabling them to fulfil their potential. We recognise that economic and personal circumstances present some groups of young people with huge challenges to progression and we are passionate about tackling these barriers, particularly for those who need support the most.

The Programme for Government identifies that intensifying youth engagement and employment is a priority for Wales, and our aim is to help all young people overcome the challenges they face so that they have the opportunity to make a positive progression beyond compulsory education at 16. At the heart of the Government's education reform agenda – set out in the *Improving schools* plan – are the key principles of raising standards of literacy and numeracy and our determination to break the link between poverty and poor attainment. If we are successful, more young people will achieve better results and progress successfully into post-16 education and training.

The recently published *Tackling Poverty* plan clearly identifies that reducing the number of young people who are not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET) will have a long-term impact on the lives of not just today's young people, but generations to come. The cost of not addressing this issue is not just economic, but impacts on levels of unemployment, under employment, crime, well-being, substance misuse, premature death and early motherhood. There is increasing evidence that identification of those at risk of disengaging from education and training must start at an early age, and our *Early Years and Childcare* plan sets out key policies to address these issues at the earliest opportunity.

Regrettably, although we have seen some improvement in recent years, there are still too many young people who disengage from education and training at 16. For many young people, disengaging in this way will prove to be a critical factor which impacts on their ability to make a successful transition into adulthood and the world of work. Our intent, set out in this framework, is to further reduce the numbers of young people who do not have the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

This framework will play an important part in the delivery of the Programme for Government, implementing more effective and systematic approaches to identifying these young people who need support, and making sure they get the help they need to get them back on track. The framework sets out the component elements of a system, proven to be effective at increasing youth engagement and progression.

It aims to drive change through the whole system in Wales and sets out how local authorities, working with Welsh Government and partner organisations such as Careers Wales and providers of education and training can put in place more effective systems in order to achieve this change. It is a challenge for us all, but one we must all embrace, if we are to deliver the outcomes that our young people deserve.



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Huw Lewis".

Huw Lewis AM
Minister for Education and Skills



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ken Skates".

Ken Skates AM
Deputy Minister for Skills
and Technology

Summary



Welsh Government set out its commitment to increase the engagement and progression of young people in the Programme for Government. It is also a key part of the work we set out last year in the *Improving schools* plan to improve literacy and numeracy and break the link between poverty and attainment.

We first set out our expectations for the delivery of Youth Support Services to support the engagement and progression of young people in *Extending Entitlement: supporting young people in Wales* (2000) and the subsequent direction and guidance on *Extending Entitlement: services and support for 11–25 year olds in Wales* (2002).

We remain committed to the principle established in *Extending Entitlement* to support every young person in Wales to maximise their potential in education, training and employment. The *Youth engagement and progression framework – Implementation plan* is non-statutory guidance. It does not replace existing guidance but provides examples of how to implement targeted approaches to the provision of youth support services. Welsh Government will consider whether it is necessary to publish new statutory guidance following the publication of this plan.

Welsh Government set out its ongoing commitment to *Tackling Poverty* by prioritising the needs of the poorest and protecting those most at risk of poverty and exclusion in the *Tackling Poverty Action Plan 2012–2016*. A key part of that plan was a commitment to reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment and training (NEET). New targets were set out in the plan to reduce the:

- numbers of NEETs aged 16 to 18 to 9 per cent by 2017
- proportion of young people aged 19 to 24 who are NEET in Wales relative to the UK as a whole by 2017.

Between 2007 and 2012 there has been some progress in increasing the number of young people who progress successfully into immediate post-16 education. Careers Wales data shows a 2.7 percentage point reduction across Wales in the proportion of Year 11 leavers who are NEET from schools in Wales. However, this success has not been reflected in the official measure of NEET for 16 to 18-year-olds as a whole.

The national measure of young people who are NEET in Wales shows that the figure for 16 to 18-year-olds who are NEET has remained at levels of between 10 and 13 per cent in the last five years to 2012, reflecting the longer term trend, while the rate for 19 to 24-year-olds increased markedly following the last recession in 2008. International comparisons show Wales is not performing as well as other countries.

We are determined to make further improvement. There are clear benefits to the Welsh economy, wider society and most importantly to young people and their families in increasing youth engagement and progression. Wales needs more young people to successfully progress

to further and higher education and into skilled employment. The failure to engage young people increases the costs associated with health and social services, and contributes to the challenges associated with long-term unemployment.

A study by the University of York in 2010 estimated the additional lifetime costs associated with being NEET at over £160,000 per person in England in 2008. When applied to the current cohort of 16 to 18-year-olds in Wales who are NEET this suggests the cost to Wales as a whole of failing to engage these young people is circa £2 billion. There is an economic as well as a moral imperative to deliver improvement.

We believe we need to reinvigorate the approach to increasing engagement and progression in Wales to secure further improvement. While there are no shortage of organisations to support young people's engagement and progression and many of these organisations do a good job in supporting young people, the overall impact has not been great enough given the level of resources being invested. A frequent criticism from those working within the system is the lack of join-up between agencies and a failure to put the needs of young people first.

We want to see a delivery system centred on the needs of young people, with clear roles and responsibilities between the range of organisations working with young people and strong local leadership by local authorities and their partners. The progress made by some local areas at age 16 over the last five years shows what is possible. We need to achieve the same level of progress at all ages and across every area in Wales.

The *Youth engagement and progression framework – Implementation plan* sets out our new approach. The framework has six key elements.

- Identifying young people most at risk of disengagement.
- Better brokerage and coordination of support.
- Stronger tracking and transitions of young people through the system.
- Ensuring provision meets the needs of young people.
- Strengthening employability skills and opportunities for employment.
- Greater accountability for better outcomes for young people.

There are two new offers to young people through the framework.

- The first is 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.
- The second is 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.

Welsh Government has been working with eight local authorities over the last year to test approaches to improving youth engagement and progression. Evidence from these areas

has informed the development of this implementation plan. Much of what is in this plan is not new and is based on effective practice which already exists in many parts of Wales. The challenge is more consistent application of this effective practice in all parts of Wales.

The key to successful implementation of the framework will be a whole system approach in which roles and responsibilities are more clearly defined and in which all of the agencies and providers working with young people will need to collaborate to deliver better outcomes for young people. The plan gives local authorities a key strategic leadership role but they will need to engage organisations like Careers Wales and the Youth Service closely in developing their plans for implementation, as well as working in partnership with schools and the full range of post-16 providers.

There are also important links to other areas of Welsh Government policy. The plan will join up with and build on the work to improve early years of young people's lives set out in *Building a Brighter Future: An Early Years and Childcare Plan*. It will also link with the implementation of the new post-16 planning and funding system in 2014 and the recommendations from the Review of 14–19 Qualifications. Post-18 Welsh Government's wider work to boost youth employment through Jobs Growth Wales, traineeships and apprenticeships will also be critical to our overall success.

Current performance

How are we doing at a local level in Wales?

The chart overleaf shows the outcomes from Careers Wales annual survey of all leavers from maintained schools in Wales which looks at destinations as at end October each year. The results from this survey provide an estimate of the number of 16-year-olds who are NEET by local authority area. They show at a national level there has been a 2.7 percentage point reduction in the number of Year 11 leavers who are NEET between 2007 and 2012. However they also show significant ongoing variation in levels of 16-year-olds who are NEET with some areas only making small improvements since 2007.

Figure 1: Destinations of Year 11 pupils from schools in Wales by local authority – Known Not to be in Education, Training or Employment (NEET)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Wales	6.9	7.1	5.7	5.4	4.4	4.2
Isle of Anglesey	6.7	8.1	5.2	5.3	2.7	2.4
Gwynedd	4.4	5.7	4.2	3.6	3.6	3.0
Conwy	5.5	5.7	4.8	3.7	4.0	3.4
Denbighshire	4.9	6.2	4.4	4.4	3.6	2.9
Flintshire	4.6	7.2	3.7	2.8	2.7	2.3
Wrexham	8.9	9.6	5.0	4.2	3.4	3.2
Powys	5.3	3.0	2.1	2.9	3.0	2.2
Ceredigion	2.6	3.8	2.3	2.3	3.3	2.3
Pembrokeshire	4.7	6.4	4.8	4.8	3.8	3.1
Carmarthenshire	5.5	4.4	4.0	2.9	2.8	4.3
Swansea	5.8	5.8	6.4	4.2	3.1	3.2
Neath Port Talbot	9.0	7.7	7.1	6.6	4.6	3.1
Bridgend	7.3	8.0	7.6	7.1	4.4	6.4
The Vale of Glamorgan	6.8	6.2	5.6	4.6	4.3	3.9
Rhondda Cynon Taf	7.5	6.1	4.9	5.7	3.9	4.5
Merthyr Tydfil	7.9	7.8	4.6	7.6	5.6	6.2
Caerphilly	7.1	7.1	5.0	6.0	4.5	5.9
Blaenau Gwent	10.4	9.7	6.6	8.7	6.6	4.2
Torfaen	10.5	10.1	8.2	7.0	6.7	5.5
Monmouthshire	5.6	5.3	5.0	3.9	3.8	3.8
Newport	9.3	10.4	9.1	7.5	6.7	4.9
Cardiff	8.5	10.6	8.9	8.8	7.7	6.7

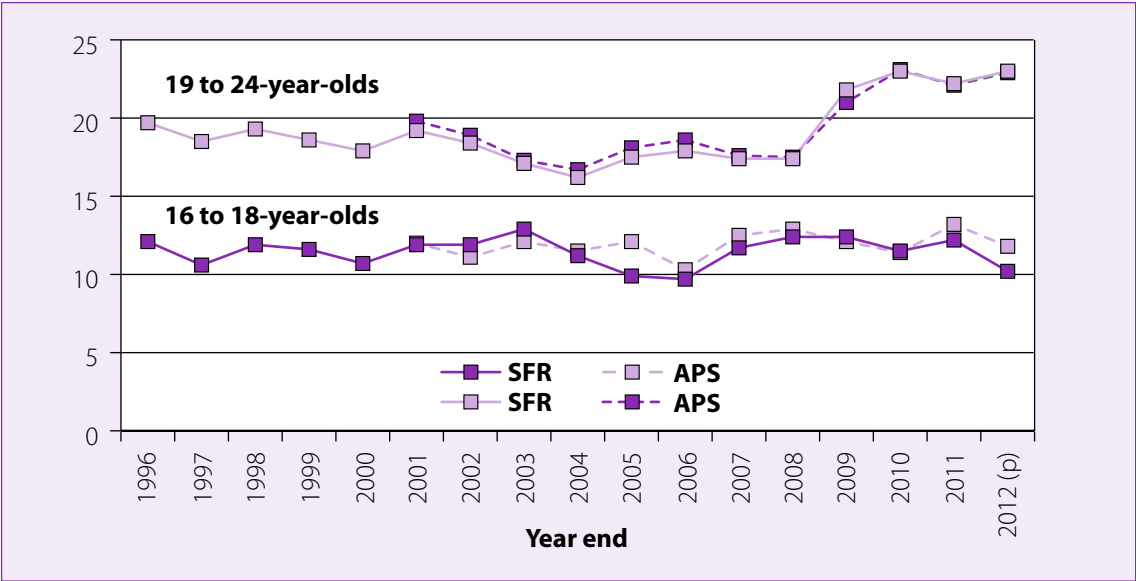
Source: Careers Wales pupil destinations from schools in Wales survey

Careers Wales destination data will in future include outcomes for 16, 17 and 18-year-olds for all providers and will serve as the main accountability measure for local authority performance. However, at the moment, there are no comparable figures available for 17 and 18-year-olds which allow Welsh Government to look at the performance of local authorities for 16 to 18-year-olds as a whole. So we have to look at national data to try to understand whether these improvements at age 16 have been sustained at ages 17 and 18 and beyond into the 19 to 24-year-old cohort.

How are we doing at a national level in Wales?

The chart below shows figures produced through the official national level estimate of young people not in education, employment or training in Wales (the ‘Statistical First Release’ or ‘SFR’ measure are official statistics that have been assessed by the UK Statistics Authority) that is used to monitor our Programme for Government commitments. The measure shows separately the numbers of 16 to 18-year-olds and 19 to 24-year-olds who are NEET.

Figure 2: Participation of young people in education and the labour market



(p) SFR: year end 2012 is provisional and will be updated at the end of July 2014 with final figures for 2012 and provisional figures for 2013.

As Figure 2 shows, despite the improvements in 16-year-old NEET rates seen in the Career Wales data, the proportion of 16 to 18-year-olds who are NEET at a national level has remained fairly constant at a rate of between 10 to 13 per cent over the years 1996 to 2012, albeit with an improvement over the latest period. This suggests that further improvements are necessary at ages 17 and 18, as well as 16, if we are to achieve our 2017 target. It is estimated that achieving this target will require between 4,000 and 4,500 young people to move into education, training and employment by 2017.

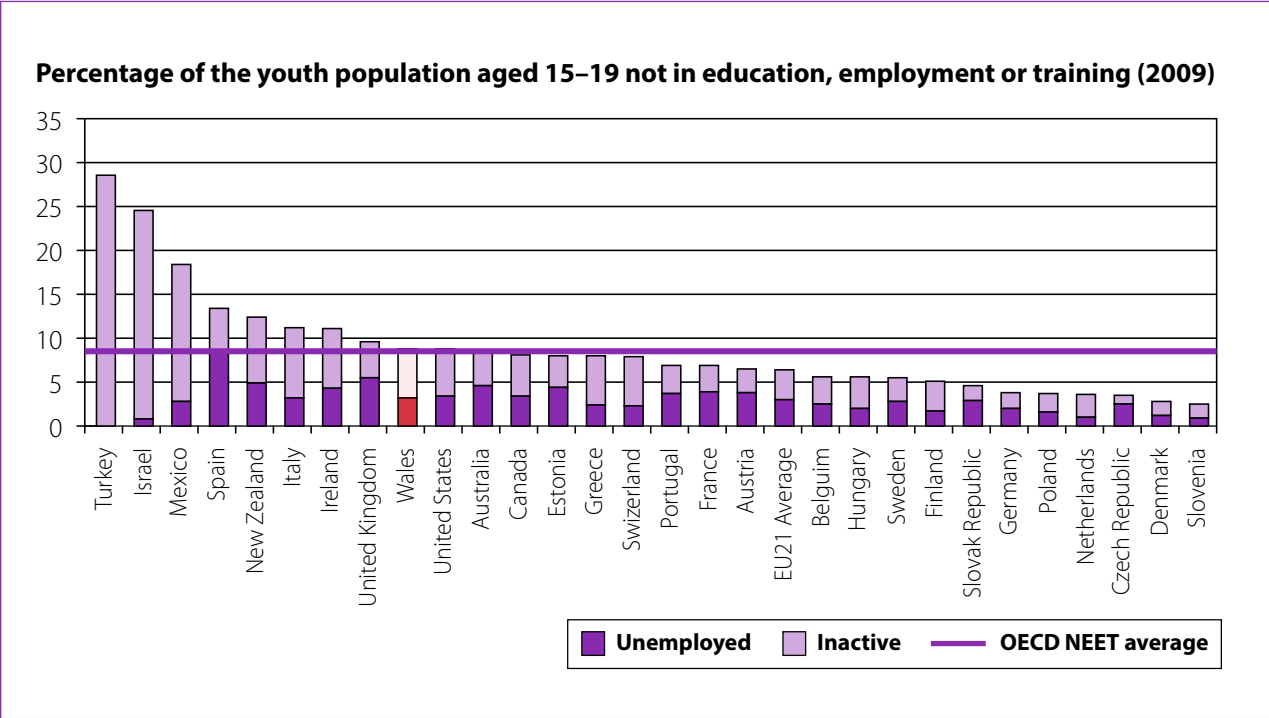
The figure for 19 to 24-year-olds shows a big increase in 2009 following the impact of the recession on youth unemployment in Wales and consequently the decrease in participation

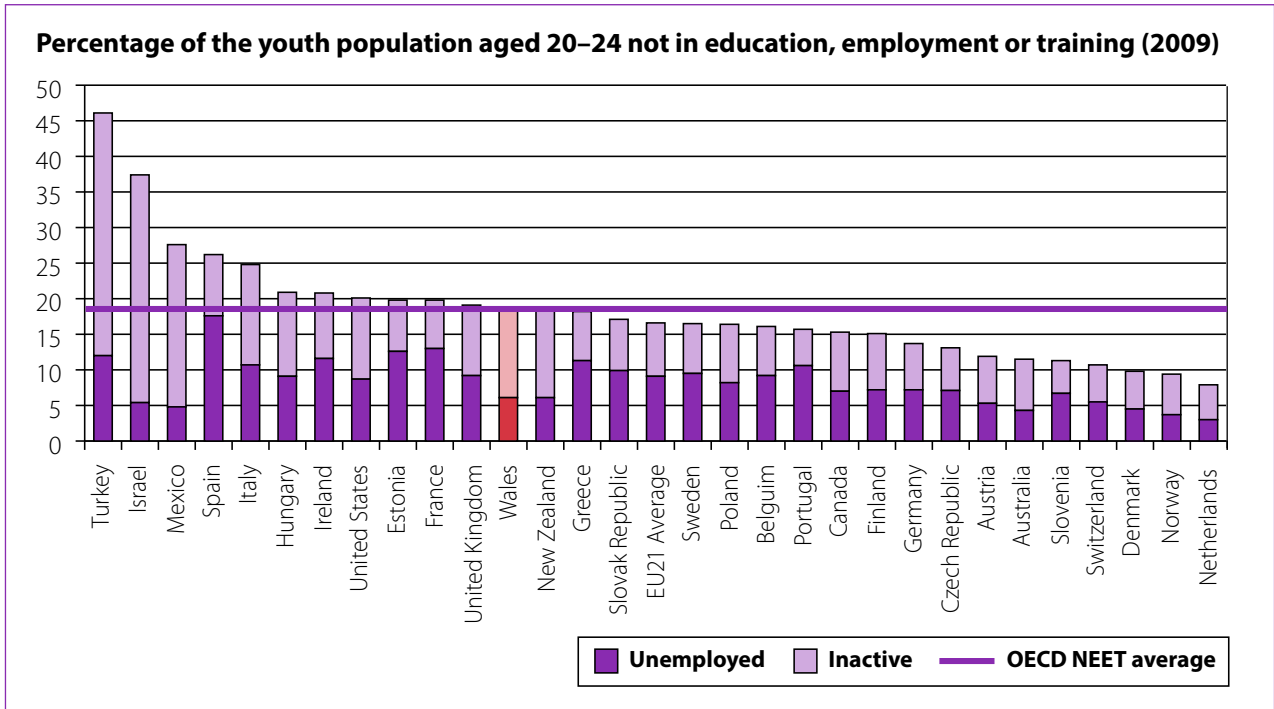
in employment for 19 to 24-year-olds in Wales. Therefore the figure for 19 to 24-year-olds is probably driven more by the wider economic cycle. We have therefore set our target to reflect the fact that Wales cannot control all of these wider economic conditions but it can seek to improve its performance relative to the rest of the UK.

How are we doing compared to other countries?

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) publishes comparisons of the number of young people who are NEET in different countries for two age groups; 15 to 19-year-olds and 20 to 24-year-olds. To include Wales in this comparison, estimates for Wales are derived from the EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS). Wales’ position in comparison to other countries is shown below.

Figure 3: OECD international comparisons of the percentage of the youth population not in education, employment or training (2009)

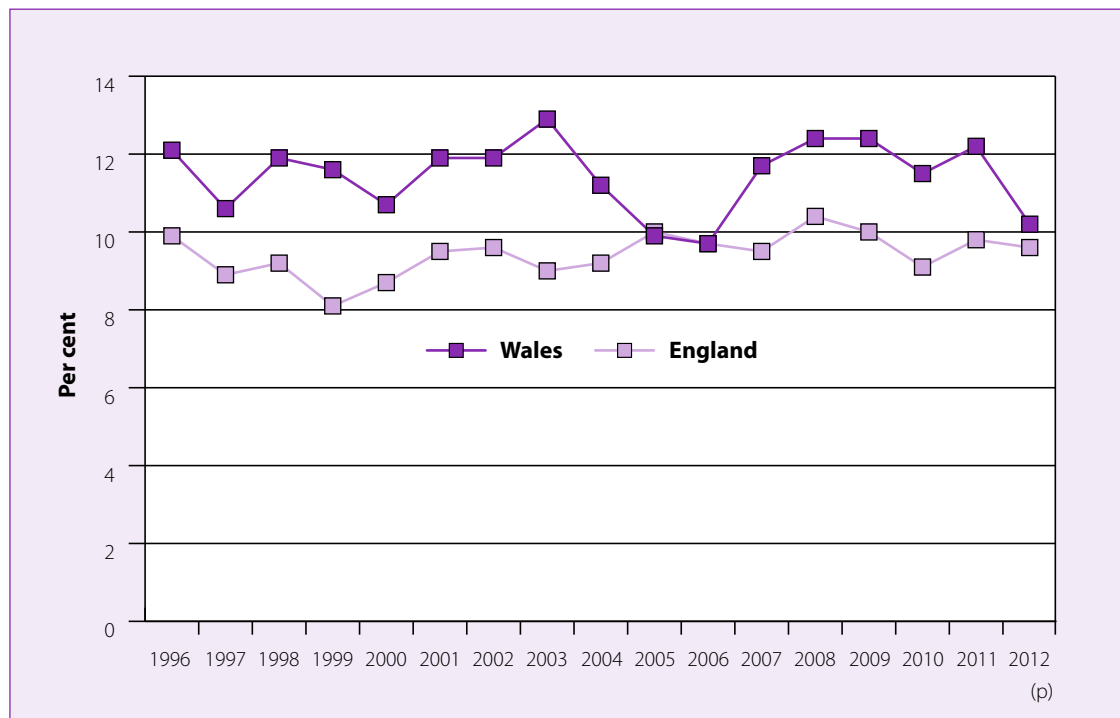




While Wales is doing better than a number of countries (including the UK average on this basis), it is also in the bottom half of the table and countries such as Holland, Slovenia and Denmark show lower levels of young people who are NEET are possible at both age ranges.

One other comparison we can make is with England because it uses a similar official (SFR) estimate as Wales. Figure 4 below shows that for 16 to 18-year-olds although the trends have been similar, Wales has had a larger proportion of 16 to 18-year-olds NEET than England.

Figure 4: Percentage of 16 to 18-year-olds not in education, employment or training (NEET), year end 1996 to 2012 England and Wales comparison



Source Department of Education and Welsh Government

(p) SFR: year end 2012 is provisional and will be updated at the end of July 2014 with final figures for 2012 and provisional figures for 2013.

So why do we need a new approach?

The data above shows that while some local authorities have been successful at reducing the number of young people who are NEET at 16, there remain big challenges and supports a focus on the following priorities.

- Improving outcomes for 17 and 18-year-olds.
- Further reducing the number of 16-year-olds who are NEET in some areas – there are still large variations in local authority performance.
- Sustaining improvements at age 16 to 18 to achieve reductions in the numbers who are NEET aged 19 to 24 as well.
- Ensuring that all young people are supported through education and training whatever their intended destination may be.
- Supporting better engagement and progression for all young people and contributing to higher achievement rates at age 16 and 19.

The youth engagement and progression framework

We have been working closely with local authorities to develop our evidence base around what works in increasing youth engagement and progression. We have identified areas of Wales that can offer a lead to the system on good practice and have been working with eight local authorities over the last year to trial and test approaches to the implementation of a new youth engagement and progression framework. Evidence from these local areas has informed the development of this plan. The foundations of our new approach are based on six key building blocks shown in the diagram below.

Figure 5: The youth engagement and progression framework



What are the benefits of the framework to young people?

The framework is built around the needs of young people with better availability of information enabling the young person to act as a more powerful agent in the system. For example, the publication of local prospectuses in every area in Wales detailing all of the post-16 courses available to them will enable young people to decide for themselves which options might offer them the best chance of successful further progression. The new electronic common application process will enable them to apply directly to any provider.

The framework contains two new offers to young people.

- The first is the allocation of 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.
- The second is 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.

The implementation of both of these new offers should significantly improve the experience of young people. Providing them with a single point of contact who can liaise with other agencies should help to ensure their needs are being met and avoid the duplication, overlaps and confusion which many young people suffer from now. The Youth Guarantee process will highlight gaps in provision and help providers to become responsive to the needs of young people as well as employers.

Welsh Government remains committed to supporting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and will expect to see local areas promoting the involvement of young people in delivering the framework. Welsh Government held a 'Real Conversation' event in developing this plan and young people were very clear about what they wanted. This included the need for better information, advice and guidance, more support for transitions, recognition for all types of provision and to be treated as individuals.

Welsh Government is also committed to seeing the Welsh language thrive. The *Welsh Language Strategy* and the *Welsh-medium Education Strategy* sets out our ambition to 'strengthen the use of the Welsh language in everyday life'. We will expect local areas to consider the importance of the linguistic needs of young people in implementing the framework.

A new approach to implementation

The framework is also intended to lead to a new approach to implementation. This plan is based on effective practice which already exists in parts of Wales. We intend to build on this effective practice by ensuring it is more consistently implemented in every area in Wales. More detail on roles and responsibilities for implementation are given in Section 8 (page 62) but a summary is set out here.

- **Welsh Government's** role in implementing the framework is to set out clear standards and expectations, to help local authorities to develop their plans and support their implementation by helping them to learn from effective practice across Wales, while holding local authorities and providers to account for the outcomes achieved.
- **Local authorities** will have the lead strategic responsibility for implementation of the framework. They may want to allocate responsibility for implementation of the framework to a senior leader within the local authority. In addition, they may want to develop the role of an Engagement and Progression Coordinator to provide operational leadership, and to work closely with Careers Wales and providers.
- **Careers Wales** can help to bring greater consistency to implementation of the framework across Wales and has an important role in supporting the development of new brokerage arrangements and in implementing the data and tracking systems.
- The **Youth Service** will be well positioned to provide the lead worker role for some of the young people identified in greatest need of support. The forthcoming National Youth Work Strategy will position this role in the wider context of Youth Services.
- **Schools** are responsible for ensuring the right young people have been identified and tracking the progress made by young people. They will support young people to use the common application process and ensure access to appropriate information, advice and guidance. We will hold schools to account by developing Post-16 Destination Measures.
- **Post-16 providers** have a key responsibility to identify young people at risk of dropping out and providing support to help keep them engaged. They will need to notify Careers Wales if young people drop out of education and training. They are also critical to ensuring an appropriate mix and balance of provision is in place in every area.