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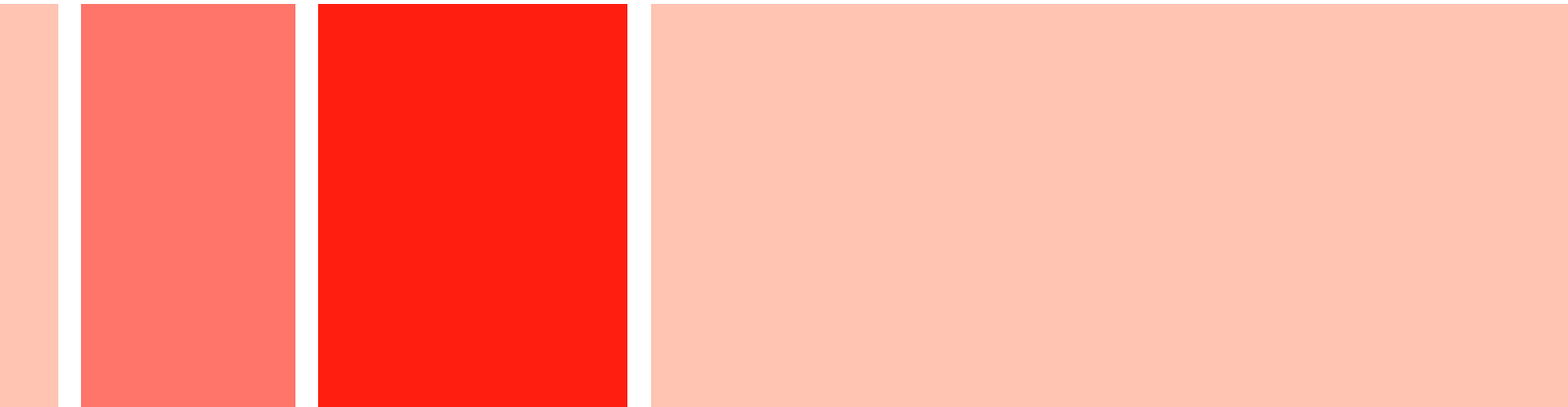
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Research into Employment Outcomes for Young People with Autistic Spectrum Disorders



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Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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Glossary of acronyms

ALN	Additional learning needs
ASD	Autistic spectrum disorder
ASC	Autism spectrum condition
ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
ALNCos	Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DLHE	Destinations of leavers from higher education
DEA	Disability Employment Adviser
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ESA	Employment and Support Allowance
ESP	Employment support provider
ESF	European Social Fund
FE	Further education
FEI	Further education institution
FSF	Flexible Support Fund
HEI	Higher education institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
IDP	Individual Development Plan
ISC	Independent specialist college
IT	Information technology

JCP	Jobcentre Plus
JGW	Jobs Growth Wales
JSA	Jobseeker's Allowance
LA	Local authority
LHB	Local health board
LLWR	Lifelong Learning Wales Record
LSA	Learning support assistant
NAS	National Autistic Society
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
OCD	Obsessive compulsive disorder
PIP	Personal Independence Payment
PLASC	Pupil Level Annual School Census
SEA	Supported employment agency
SEN	Special educational needs
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States of America
WBL	Work based learning
WG	Welsh Government

1 Introduction to the research

Context for the research

- 1.1 The Welsh Government is aware that many young people with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) face difficulties in the transition to employment from school, college or university (National Assembly for Wales, 2010). In April 2008, the Welsh Government published its ASD Strategic Action Plan (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008), which created a number of funded actions aimed at improving understanding and provision of services for individuals with ASD in Wales. In relation to the transition to employment, these included:
- The provision of ASD awareness training for all Careers Wales specialist advisers and Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs)
 - The engagement of Robert Lloyd Griffiths from the Institute of Directors as Wales Autism Employment Ambassador
 - The funding of a project run by Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan local authorities to develop and pilot materials for supporting people with ASD to consider employment and to seek work
 - The development of a range of booklets aimed at raising awareness of the issues affecting people with ASD, one of which focuses on employment and work related issues.
- 1.2 The Welsh Government has made a commitment to a refresh of the 2008 ASD Strategic Action Plan, which will concentrate, in particular, on diagnostic assessment services, post-16 transition pathways and improving employment opportunities for young people and adults (Thomas, 2013).
- 1.3 In order to inform the development of the refreshed ASD Strategic Action Plan, and in response to concerns about post-education employment outcomes of young people, the Welsh Government commissioned this independent research to investigate the extent and nature of employment outcomes and barriers to employment

for young people with ASD living in Wales. The key objectives of this research were:

- To map the extent to which young people with ASD living in Wales secure employment
- To identify the barriers to employment faced by this group of young people
- To document which of these barriers are being reduced or overcome in Wales currently and which are not
- To identify and document initiatives in Wales and elsewhere which are working effectively to overcome or reduce barriers to employment for young people with ASD
- To consider how any un-addressed barriers might realistically be reduced or overcome.

1.4 The research was conducted from November 2012 to October 2013 and involved three main phases:

- A scoping stage which involved informal interviews with key stakeholders; secondary analysis of national statistics on employment outcomes for young people with ASD; and an evidence review to highlight barriers to employment for young people with ASD and how these might be addressed
- An online practice survey and follow-up research with mainstream, pan-disability and ASD-specific employment support providers¹ currently operating in Wales in order to understand the extent to which they are able to address the key barriers to employment for young people with ASD
- Interviews and survey work with young people with ASD and their families to understand more about the lived experience of securing, or trying to secure, employment after leaving formal education, the nature of support received and the difference this made to any employment outcomes achieved.

¹ The research targeted **post-education** providers of employment support, including providers of Apprenticeships, Steps to Employment (now Work Ready), Traineeships and Jobs Growth Wales programmes. Some further education institutions (FEIs) and higher education institutions (HEIs) were included as providers of work based learning and/or other mainstream employment support programmes. However, it was outside of the scope of this research to survey all FEIs, HEIs or schools with regard to their provision of careers advice and/or vocational and employment support and learning programmes for young people with ASD.

- 1.5 A full description of the methodology is in Appendix A. The results of the evidence review are presented in a separate volume.

Young people with ASD

- 1.6 In the context of this research, the term ‘young people with autistic spectrum disorder’ (ASD) describes young people, age 16 to 25, who have a lifelong developmental disability that affects how they make sense of the world, communicate with and relate to other people. As a spectrum condition, autism affects different young people in different ways and varies in severity and impact from person to person. Some young people will be relatively independent, whilst others may have accompanying learning disabilities, ranging from mild to profound, and may need significant support on a daily basis (National Autistic Society, undated 5).
- 1.7 Around 50 per cent of people with ASD have a learning disability, sometimes known as ‘low-functioning’ autism (National Audit Office, 2009). Those without a learning disability are sometimes described as having ‘high functioning’ autism, which includes Asperger syndrome. Young people with ‘high functioning’ autism or Asperger syndrome may have fewer problems with verbal communication, but may have social impairments and mental health problems which can have a significant impact on their ability to live independent lives (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010). For many people with Asperger syndrome or ‘high functioning’ autism, it may not be immediately apparent that they have ASD and some people may choose not to disclose their condition (National Audit Office, 2009).
- 1.8 Other conditions associated with autism can include attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia and epilepsy. Some people with ASD may also have a physical impairment.

- 1.9 There have recently been many accounts of the **advantages** of autism, primarily by people with ASD and their families. It is increasingly recognised as a neurological **difference**, rather than being assumed to be a disability by the 'neuro-typical' population (Baker, 2006; O'Neil, 2008).

Prevalence of ASD in school-aged pupils living in Wales

- 1.10 Welsh Government policy documents relating to ASD (e.g. Welsh Assembly Government, 2008) cite an all-population prevalence rate for ASD of 0.6 per cent, calculated from research by Stuart-Hamilton et al (2009). An on-going evaluation of the ASD strategic action plan has reviewed the literature on estimates of prevalence of autism (Welsh Government, 2014). The authors suggest that most recent estimates of prevalence are around 1 per cent of the total population.
- 1.11 The Welsh Government requires maintained schools to collect and submit data relating to numbers and ages of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) as part of the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC). Analysis of PLASC data shows that the prevalence of ASD in school-age pupils for the academic year 2011/12 may be around 1.09 per cent (see Table 1).
- 1.12 Pupils with a primary or secondary educational need of ASD, as recognised by the PLASC, include those with a Statement of SEN and those receiving School Action or School Action Plus support. Some of these pupils may have a formal diagnosis of ASD, whilst others may not. For those pupils without a formal diagnosis, or a statement of SEN, there is a possibility that once they leave school, post-16 providers will not have access to a formal assessment of need or statement regarding the ASD-specific support required by the young person². Therefore, a critical issue for young people with ASD is that of early diagnosis and the

² Personal communication, Careers Wales, December 2013.

subsequent formal recognition of their needs via the statementing process. If a young person is diagnosed there is greater opportunity to identify individual support needs (including those relating to employment support) and for those needs to be considered via the transition planning process from Year 9 of compulsory schooling onwards.

Table 1: Number of pupils with ASD aged 16-19 attending maintained secondary and special schools in Wales in January 2012³

Year group	Total number of pupils for 2011/12 ⁴	Total number of pupils with a registered primary or secondary need of ASD ^{5, 6}	Prevalence rate for ASD
Year 11 (age 16)	34,215	320	0.94per cent
Year 12 (age 17)	17,120	185	1.09%
Year 13 (age 18)	13,040	140	1.08%
Year 14 (age 19)	335	60	18.34%
Year 11 to 14	64,705	710	1.09%

Source: Pupil Level Annual Schools Census 2011/12

³ All data in this report are presented according to the Welsh Government's standard rounding methodology for national statistics which states that all raw data should be rounded to the nearest five or 10 and any number less than five should not be reported.

⁴ <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Schools-and-Teachers/Schools-Census/Regions-of-Wales/Pupils/NumberOfPupils-by-Region-YearGroup>

⁵ Current census data held by the Welsh Government only includes (a) those young people whose needs have been recognised as having School Action or School Action Plus status, or who have a statement of special educational need (SEN); and (b) all young people defined as having an autistic spectrum disorder, regardless of their place on the spectrum.

⁶ The Independent Schools Census recorded 45 pupils in all non-maintained secondary and special schools aged 16+ with primary or secondary need of ASD. Table 1 does not include these pupils as the Independent Schools Census does not collect data by year group and only includes pupils who have statements of SEN.

2 Employment and young people with ASD

- 2.1 This chapter uses data from the secondary analysis of national statistics, relevant literature and data from interviews undertaken during the scoping stage of the research, in order to examine:
- Current entitlements of young people in Wales to employment-related support, advice and training
 - The post-education destinations of young people with ASD living in Wales
 - Employment outcomes and young people with ASD
 - What we know from the literature about the barriers to employment for young people with ASD and how these might be overcome through effective support
 - Messages from the literature about the experience of employment support for young people with ASD.

Current entitlements of young people with ASD in Wales to employment-related support, advice and training

- 2.2 Employment is an important life goal, and like all young people, those with ASD are entitled to support whilst in formal education to consider their career options and to plan for future employment choices. From Year 9 onwards, all pupils with ASD should be encouraged to think about career options, and by Year 11 all pupils should have been offered the opportunity to undertake a work experience placement. For those young people who have been assessed as having special educational needs or 'equivalent' needs (Welsh Government, 2012b), there is an entitlement to an annual review at Year 9 which focuses on drawing up a transition plan and/or a Learning and Skills Plan, during which discussions about future career choices should be integral.
- 2.3 In Wales, careers advice and support at transition is co-ordinated by schools in collaboration with Careers Wales, local authority

transition teams and transition key workers (where available). All statemented young people and those with equivalent needs, are entitled to individualised careers information, advice and guidance from a Careers Wales specialist adviser from Year 9 onwards and up to age 25 if required.

- 2.4 Young people with ASD who have neither a formal diagnosis, nor are receiving differentiated support through School Action or School Action Plus interventions are not eligible to access local authority transition team or transition key workers, where they exist. The remit of Careers Wales advisers includes working with schools to identify young people who are at risk of becoming NEET ('not in education, employment or training'), or who are not on track in terms of careers management and vocational aims. Additional young people with ASD, who have no formal diagnosis or whose needs have not been formally recognised through existing systems should be picked up at this stage.
- 2.5 For young people with a statement or equivalent needs, their Learning and Skills Plan should identify their education and training needs and the provision of support that is needed to meet those needs. Post-16 provision could involve a range of pre-vocational and vocational learning programmes at either sixth form, further education (FE) college, or via contracted work based learning (WBL) programmes run by colleges, local authorities, private and third sector organisations. Whilst undertaking these programmes, young people should continue to have access to a Careers Wales adviser. They may also have access to generic in-house careers and employment preparation and support from the provider organisation. Where a young person has a Learning and Skills Plan, providers are required in their funding terms and conditions to 'have regard' to the content of the Plan.
- 2.6 Following post-16 provision, some young people will wish to go straight into employment or supported employment. Others will

want to progress to higher education. For those seeking employment, support providers at this stage can include Jobcentre Plus (including benefits advice, access to a Disability Employment Adviser and access to the Work Programme); other types of mainstream employment support provided by statutory or third sector providers (such as library based job clubs, the Want to Work programme, COASTAL, New Work Connections, etc); pan-disability employment support providers (such as Remploy, the Shaw Trust, Agoriad Cyf, Mencap, Quest, Elite, etc); and, for some young people, access to an ASD-specialist service such as the National Autistic Society's Prospects employment service. Some young people, where eligible, will also continue to have support from Careers Wales, local authority or third sector transition teams.

- 2.7 For those who move onto higher education, generic careers advice and employment preparation/support should be available from the host institution. In some HEIs, students may also be able to access individualised and/or ASD-specific input, but there is no guarantee that this will be available everywhere. On leaving university, young people with ASD will be able, in theory, to access the same services as those listed in 2.6, assuming they are eligible for the programme or service and that it is available in their local area.

Destinations of school leavers with ASD living in Wales

- 2.8 The Welsh Government commissions Careers Wales to run an annual survey of pupil destinations⁷, three to six months post-school, for Year 11, Year 12 and Year 13 school leavers. For the 2011/12 survey, the destination information was recorded as a

⁷ destinations.careerswales.com/index.html

result of the pupil's known activity on 31st October 2012⁸.

Information about pupils' major recorded special education need is collected, but not currently published or available in the public domain. However, such data has been made available for the purposes of this research and is in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Destinations of pupils with ASD aged 16-18, by year group, for the academic year 2011/12⁹

Destination	Year 11 leavers		Year 12 leavers		Year 13 leavers	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Post-16 education (at school or FE college)	255	92.0%	140	93.2%	110	94.7%
Work based learning	10	3.0%	*	2.7%	*	1.8%
Employment	*	0.4%	0	0%	0	0%
Unemployment	10	3.1%	*	1.4%	*	3.5%
No response or not recorded	*	1.5%	*	2.7%	0	0%
Total leavers	275	100%	150	100%	115	100%

Source: Careers Wales survey of pupil destinations 2011/12

2.9 Data provided to the research team by Careers Wales analysts for the academic year 2011/12 show that almost all young people with ASD across year groups 11 to 13 progressed to full or part time post-16 education, with a tiny percentage going into work based learning with registered providers (less than five per cent) and almost no-one going into employment (less than half of one per cent).

⁸ It should be noted therefore that the survey provides a snapshot of pupils' destinations; we do not know from these data if destinations are sustained beyond this date.

⁹ All data in this report are presented according to the Welsh Government's standard rounding methodology for national statistics which states that all raw data should be rounded to the nearest five or 10 and any number less than five should not be reported (denoted by an asterisk). Thus numbers may not sum to totals given, and percentages may not equate to numbers.

2.10 Data relating to **all** pupils (see Table 3) show a similar trend: the vast majority of young people (80-90 per cent) who leave school at age 16, 17 or 18, go onto some form of post-16 education. Very few young people, with or without a disability, access work based learning or employment straight after leaving school.

Table 3: Destinations of all pupils aged 16-18, by year group, for the academic year 2011/12¹⁰

Destination	Year 11 leavers		Year 12 leavers		Year 13 leavers	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Post-16 education (at school or FE college)	29,755	85.1%	14,835	89.4%	10,340	79.1%
Work based learning	2,335	6.7%	590	3.5%	275	2%
Employment	565	1.6%	390	2.3%	1,285	9.8%
Unemployment	1,470	4.2%	440	2.7%	670	5.1%
No response or not recorded	805	2.3%	340	2.1%	510	3.9%
Total leavers	34,935	100%	16,595	100%	13,075	100%

Source: Careers Wales survey of pupil destinations 2011/12

Destinations of FEI leavers with ASD living in Wales

2.11 The Welsh Government's Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR)¹¹ requires all further education institutions (FEIs) and work based learning (WBL) providers to record destination data on individual learners within three months of leaving a learning programme. Data are collected on learners' primary and secondary disability (including ASD) and on a number of employment-related destination options. This information is recorded by FEIs for learning activities with guided contact hours

¹⁰ All data in this report are presented according to the Welsh Government's standard rounding methodology for national statistics which states that all raw data should be rounded to the nearest 5 or 10 and any number less than 5 should not be reported. Thus numbers may not sum to totals given, and percentages may not equate to numbers.

¹¹ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/learningproviders/datacollection/llwr09>

of 450+ per year. LLWR does not collect data from any independent specialist colleges (ISCs) which also offer FE provision to young people with ASD. Currently, there are six ISCs in Wales and many more in England attended by Welsh-domiciled young disabled people.

Table 4: Destinations of FEI learners aged 16-24 who terminated a learning programme during 2011/12¹²

Destination	Learners with ASD as their primary or secondary disability		All learners	
	No.	%	No.	%
[Learners starting a new learning programme with the same provider or new provider]	[150]	-	[14,005]	-
Learners who left college and have not continued in FE	30	24%	8,630	31%
<i>Leavers employed or self-employed</i>	10	8%	4,960	18%
<i>Leavers doing voluntary work</i>	*	0%	100	0%
<i>Leavers who are unemployed</i>	20	16%	3,570	13%
Other (<i>left due to long-term sickness, pregnancy, death, custodial sentence, leaving Wales</i>)	25	20%	4,490	16%
Not known (<i>FEI has not been able to ascertain the destination of a learner who has terminated a learning programme</i>)	70	56%	15,085	54%
Total	125		28,205	

Source: Lifelong Learning Wales Record 2011/12¹³

2.12 The table above indicates that immediate employment outcomes for all young people leaving FEIs are low (18 per cent), and even lower for those with ASD (8 per cent). However, it is important to note the limitations of the LLWR data in that for 56 per cent of

¹² Excludes learners undertaking WBL provision at FEIs.

¹³ Data are presented according to the Welsh Government's standard rounding methodology for national statistics which states that all raw data should be rounded to the nearest five or ten and any number less than five should not be reported (denoted by an asterisk).

young people with ASD and for 54 per cent of all young people, destinations were recorded as 'not known'. Recent research conducted by Old Bell 3 for the Welsh Government (2012a) raises some important concerns in relation to the quality of the destinations data submitted to the LLWR by FE institutions. For example, institutions may record data about leavers' intended, rather than actual, post-learning destinations, and, completion of the destinations field may be variable, with the consequence that that a large proportion of LLWR learners have destinations recorded as 'not known'. In terms of the FE sector, it is unclear as to the extent that individual colleges conduct their own destination surveys, or are aware of the post-college outcomes of individual young people with ASD.

- 2.13 Destination data collected from WBL providers (see Table 5) show a significantly reduced number of destinations recorded as 'not known': 33 per cent for learners with ASD and seven per cent for all learners leaving WBL during 2011/12. These data also show that 60 per cent of all learners leaving WBL went into employment or self-employment. This may reflect both better employment outcomes (arguably the purpose of WBL provision), and the fact that destination is a key performance measure for WBL programmes and data on destinations is audited by the Welsh Government, hence providers are less likely to enter a 'not known' code for this data field. The numbers of young people with ASD are low in WBL and therefore it is not possible to fully report the number leaving WBL and going into employment or self-employment.

Table 5: Destinations of WBL learners aged 16-24 who terminated a learning programme during 2011/12¹⁴

Destination	Learners with ASD as their primary or secondary disability		All learners	
	No.	%	No.	%
[Learners starting a new learning programme with the same provider or new provider]	[15]	-	[3,400]	-
Learners who left and have not continued in learning	20	67%	15,095	88%
<i>Leavers employed or self-employed</i>	*	*	10,365	60%
<i>Leavers doing voluntary work</i>	*	*	285	2%
<i>Leavers who are unemployed</i>	15		4,450	26%
Other (<i>left due to long-term sickness, pregnancy, death, custodial sentence, leaving Wales</i>)	*		810	5%
Not known (<i>FEI has not been able to ascertain the destination of a learner who has terminated a learning programme</i>)	10	33%	1,235	7%
Total	30		17,140	

Source: Lifelong Learning Wales Record 2011/12

2.14 Tables 4 and 5 highlight that the proportion of young people with ASD who terminated post-16 FE learning programmes during 2011/12, in relation to all FE leavers of the same age and for the same time period, was 0.6 per cent (275 as a percentage of 42,210¹⁵) for those leaving FEIs and 0.2 per cent (45 as a percentage of 20,540¹⁶) for those leaving WBL programmes (at FEIs or elsewhere). Given a prevalence of autism of at least one per cent, these data may suggest that young people with ASD in

¹⁴ Includes WBL provision at FEIs and at other training providers.

¹⁵ Based on figures presented in Table 4: total number of learners with ASD who terminated a learning programme during 2011/12 = 275 (150: who remained in education + 125: who left education); total number of all learners who terminated a learning programme during 2011/12 = 42,210 (14,005 who remained in education + 28,205 who left education).

¹⁶ Based on figures presented in Table 5: total number of learners with ASD who terminated a WBL programme during 2011/12 = 45 (15: who remained in education + 30: who left education); total number of all learners who terminated a WBL programme during 2011/12 = 20,540 (3,400 who remained in education + 17,140 who left education).

Wales are significantly less likely than the general population of young people to access (and complete) learning programmes in FE or WBL settings¹⁷. On the other hand, these data could also reflect a degree of under-reporting of ASD by those completing the LLWR, or issues with recognition, understanding, disclosure or diagnosis of ASD for individual young people. As explained in chapter one, where young people with ASD do not have a formal diagnosis, or a statement of SEN, FE and other post-16 providers may not have access to an assessment or statement regarding the ASD-specific support required by the young person and, in some cases, may be unaware that the young person has an ASD.

Destinations of HEI leavers with ASD living in Wales

- 2.15 The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) conducts an annual survey of the destinations of leavers from higher education (DLHE survey). To be sent the survey, HE leavers had to have completed a qualification. DLHE data is collected six to nine months after the end of the previous academic year. For 2010/11, data were collected in January 2012 and April 2012. Data for 2011/12 leavers were not available at the time we undertook the analysis for this report. Data fields include a disability marker (including ASD and a social/communication impairment such as Asperger syndrome) as well as detailed information about employment circumstances (including type of employment, salary and how the job was found).
- 2.16 Numbers of HE leavers with ASD are small (less than 50 per year) and potentially disclosive under HESA reporting regulations. Therefore data has been aggregated for the three academic years (2008/9, 2009/10 and 2010/11). These data were comprehensive and include Welsh-domiciled students who had

¹⁷ It is not clear if young people with ASD are less likely than other groups of disabled learners to be accessing (and completing) learning programmes in FE and WBL settings: data are collected by the Welsh Government but investigation of this issue was outside the scope of this research.

disclosed an ASD and were registered at HEIs for the three academic years covered. There were 73 leavers with ASD from all UK HEIs in this period, of whom 54 (74 per cent) responded to HESA's DLHE destinations survey. Table 6 below shows that 35 per cent of HEI leavers who responded to the survey were employed or self-employed, 41 per cent were unemployed and 18 per cent were in 'other' destinations including further study. Comparisons with all UK HEI leavers are also shown. It is worth highlighting that HEI leavers with ASD were five times more likely to be unemployed than other HEI leavers for the same time period.

Table 6: Destinations of HEI leavers amalgamated across three academic years 2008/9, 2009/10, 2010/11

Destination	Welsh-domiciled HEI leavers with ASD	All UK HEI leavers ¹⁸
Employed	35%	62%
<i>Self-employed</i>	5%	<i>not known</i>
<i>Employed full time</i>	15%	51%
<i>Employed part time</i>	15%	11%
Unemployed	41%	8%
Other destination (including further study)	18%	30%
Not answered	6%	-

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency's survey of destinations of leavers from higher education

Post-education employment outcomes for young people with ASD

2.17 The data presented in the preceding sections suggest that employment rates for young people with ASD, three to nine months after leaving formal education in Wales, are currently in the region of:

¹⁸http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2611&Itemid=278 Numbers have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage.

- 0.4 per cent for school leavers aged 16 (source: Careers Wales survey of pupil destinations 2011/12, based on a total cohort size of 275¹⁹)
- 0 per cent for school leavers aged 18 (source: Careers Wales survey of pupil destinations 2011/12, based on a total cohort size of 115²⁰)
- 8 per cent for FE college leavers aged 16 to 24 (source: Lifelong Learning Wales Record 2011/12, based on a total cohort size of 125)
- 35 per cent for HEI leavers aged 18 and over (source: Higher Education Statistics Agency's survey of destinations of leavers from higher education 2008 to 2011, based on an aggregated cohort size of less than 50).

2.18 These figures contrast with those of the general population of young people in Wales as follows:

- 1.6 per cent for school leavers aged 16 (source: Careers Wales survey of pupil destinations 2011/12, based on a total cohort size of 34,935)
- 9.8 per cent for school leavers aged 18 (source: Careers Wales survey of pupil destinations 2011/12, based on a total cohort size of 13,075)
- 18 per cent for FE college leavers aged 16 to 24 (source: Lifelong Learning Wales Record 2011/12, based on a total cohort size of 28,205)
- 62 per cent for HEI leavers 18 and over (Higher Education Statistics Agency's survey of destinations of leavers from higher education 2008 to 2011, cohort size not available).

2.19 It is important to be mindful of the completeness and quality of the LLWR data, in particular. Nor is it clear if young people with ASD in Wales are more or less likely to be employed than other groups of young disabled people: investigation of this issue was outside

¹⁹ Careers Wales destination data for 2011/12 school leavers aged 16 represents 86 per cent (n=275) of pupils with ASD identified by the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) (n=320) in January 2012.

²⁰ Careers Wales destination data for 2011/12 school leavers aged 18 represents 81 per cent (n=115) of pupils with ASD identified by PLASC (n=140) in January 2012.

the scope of this research, although comparative data is collected by the Welsh Government.

2.20 Research conducted (Rosenblatt, 2008) for the National Autistic Society (NAS) in England suggested that just 15 per cent of adults with autism were in full time employment: nine per cent were in part time employment and 66 per cent were not working at all (including voluntary work). The research also found that 26 per cent of graduates with autism were unemployed and over 60 per cent of all people with ASD were financially reliant on their families. Although this research is with a different age group, this does suggest that employment outcomes for young people with ASD in Wales may be lower than estimates from previous research.

2.21 A number of other key points in relation to employment outcomes were highlighted by the evidence review (see the separate volume for the full review):

- Meaningful employment outcomes for this group of young people may include a broader definition of ‘employment’ than just paid work (Taylor and Seltzer, 2012)
- Employment outcomes, in terms of entry to paid work, are likely to take longer to achieve for many adults with ASD (Shattuck et al, 2013; Farley et al, 2009)
- Access to appropriate employment-related support at an early stage in the transition process can have a significant impact on enabling young people with ASD to achieve better vocational outcomes as adults (Cimera et al, 2013)
- Employment rates for **young** people with ASD are likely to be significantly lower than for the ASD population as a whole, as rates of employment for young people aged 16 to 25 within the general population are generally lower than those of all working aged adults. Labour Force Survey figures for 2011 show that the unemployment rate in Wales was 8.7 per cent for those aged 16-64, whilst for young people aged 16-24 it was 22.5 per cent.

- Recent research from the US indicates that employment rates for young adults with autism may be lower than for other groups of disabled people (Roux et al, 2013). In 2012, 46.3 per cent of working-age disabled adults in Great Britain were in paid employment (Office for Disability Issues, 2012), in contrast to the figure of 15 per cent for adults with autism suggested by the NAS (Rosenblatt, 2008).
- Despite low employment rates, most adults with ASD want to work (Rosenblatt, 2008; Roberts et al, 2012)
- Lack of work has been shown to have an adverse effect on the mental health and general life prospects of people with ASD (Howlin, 2012). Conversely, having a job in the open market (with support if needed) can promote increased independence and self-esteem, provide learning opportunities, structure to the day and a predictable environment, all of which are beneficial to many people with ASD (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010; Garcia-Villamizar et al, 2002)
- People with ASD can have valuable skills to offer employers (National Audit Office, 2009). Some people with autism may have a particular skill or specialised interest that can be linked with paid employment. However it is important to remember that whilst they may seem to be 'typical jobs' for some people (Segar, 1997), these will not be universally true as people are individuals with their own different skills and interests (National Autistic Society, 2012)
- Some employers recognise these attributes and actively recruit people with ASD. For example in England, BT worked with the National Autistic Society's supported employment service, Prospects, to recruit people with autism as part of their diversity policy (National Audit Office, 2009). The software and IT company SAP has recently made a commitment to employing people with ASD to at least one per cent of its workforce in Ireland, the US, Canada and Germany (Pritchard, 2013).

Barriers to employment for young people with ASD

- 2.22 Barriers to employment for people with ASD are well documented in the available formal and grey literature: for full details see the separately published evidence review. The barriers to employment were also covered in scoping interviews with key stakeholders. Overall, the evidence review found that there is a reasonable quantity, of mostly good quality data available on the barriers to employment for people with ASD and how these can be reduced or overcome. There are limitations to this evidence however: very few of the studies were conducted in Wales; the emphasis has mostly been on all working age adults with ASD, as opposed to focusing primarily on young people; and much (though not all) of the evidence is qualitative, not comparative and small-scale (case studies or small sample sizes).
- 2.23 Many research studies have focused on the experience of employment for people with ASD and the barriers they face in seeking, obtaining and retaining work (Forsythe et al, 2008). There are also a number of personal accounts, from people with ASD, about the employment difficulties they have faced and practical suggestions and tips about how these might be overcome (Grandin, 2012; Johnson, 2004; Meyer, 2000; Segar, 1997). In addition, some literature and resources exist which highlight successful strategies for (a) people with ASD who want to work and their families (e.g. Welsh Assembly Government, 2010); (b) employers considering recruiting people with ASD (e.g. National Autistic Society Northern Ireland et al, 2011); and (c) provider organisations offering supported employment to people with ASD (e.g. Howlin, 2012). For example, the National Autistic Society has published a series of resources which includes a guide for employers, and a series of leaflets for people with autism about employment issues (National Autistic Society, 2004).

- 2.24 The key barriers to employment for young people with ASD identified by the evidence review are summarised as follows (please see the separate volume for full details):

Barriers to considering employment

- 2.25 Employment may not be considered as a post-school option for young people with ASD (Beyer and Kaehne, 2010; Forsythe et al, 2008; Lee et al, 2012), despite that fact that from Year 9 onwards, all pupils should be encouraged to think about career options. By Year 11 all pupils should have been offered the opportunity to undertake a work experience placement.
- 2.26 Transition planning for young people with ASD who have statements of SEN, or equivalent needs, may focus on the move to further education as an end in itself, rather than a step towards future employment (Beyer, 2008; Lee et al, 2012, Department of Health, 2011).
- 2.27 Transition support services may lack knowledge and understanding of the needs of young people with ASD (Forsythe et al, 2008). In Wales, all Careers Wales specialist advisers received training from National Autistic Society Cymru and Autism Cymru in 2011.
- 2.28 Some schools and colleges find it hard to source work experience placements for young people with ASD. In HEIs, most young people are expected to source their own work placements, which can be very difficult for those with ASD. Research shows that work experience is an important factor in both gaining future employment and in helping to consider different work options and, for young disabled people (including those with ASD) it may be best sourced through specialist employment agencies rather than by education providers (Beyer, 2008).

- 2.29 Previous research highlighted that there is variability of access to pre-vocational training and vocational preparation schools and colleges in Wales (Beyer, 2008). This research found that some schools and colleges offered well-structured modules from established work preparation programmes (such as those offered by Agored Cymru or ASDAN), whilst other providers relied on their own work awareness curricula or provided no input at all. More recently, the introduction of the Careers and World of Work (CWW) framework should ensure that all pupils aged 11 to 16 can access core units on work-related education and careers education and guidance. Research from Ulster and Scotland indicates that special schools may be more skilled than mainstream schools in providing appropriate work preparation input (Patterson and Rafferty, 2010; Richards, 2012). Where available to young people with ASD, work based learning programmes such as Traineeships or Work Ready also offer opportunities for considering employment and the chance to try out a range of vocational options prior to developing a clearer vocational focus.
- 2.30 Some young people with ASD may have fixed, and possibly unrealistic ideas about the sort of work they wish to undertake in the future. Without early and regular access to pre-vocational training and discussion about the world of work, young people's fixed aspirations, if unrealistic, may create a barrier to considering other options, which may be difficult to overcome (Hillier et al, 2007).
- 2.31 Families may have concerns about employment as an option for their son or daughter with ASD. They may fear that the young person, or family, will be financially worse off in paid work (Tucker et al, 2012), or that the young person will not cope well in a work environment (Graetz, 2010). Support from parents and carers is a crucial factor in the consideration of employment as a positive

and feasible post-education option for young people with ASD (Lee et al, 2012; Forsythe et al, 2008; Beyer, 2008).

Barriers to seeking employment

- 2.32 Jobcentre Plus services, including access to Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) may lack awareness of the employment support needs of young people with ASD. Research by the National Audit Office (2009) found that not all DEAs working with people with ASD in England had received autism-specific training; lack of awareness of autism led to inappropriate referrals; and advisers did not always signpost appropriately, collect or share appropriate information or correctly identify the needs associated with having an ASD.
- 2.33 Employer attitudes towards young people with ASD as potential workers may be based on inaccurate awareness of ASD and media stereotypes. Employers may be fearful of the behaviour traits of people with ASD and of the effect of these on their business, resources and other employees and may thus be unwilling to consider employing people with ASD (Forsythe et al, 2008).
- 2.34 In terms of searching for a job, evidence from the scoping interviews suggests that using the internet to do online searches of advertised vacancies, can be particularly hard for young people with ASD. Online searches can produce many hundreds of potential employment opportunities and for people with impaired social imagination, trying to envisage what these roles might involve in order to limit the search to a manageable number of hits, can be a huge barrier. Another widely used job search strategy is 'word of mouth', or networking, which again presents problems for people whose social networks may be limited or who find it hard to communicate socially. However, evidence suggests that this strategy may work when family and friends use their

personal contacts to help a young person with ASD find a job (Howlin, 2004; Henn et al, 2005).

- 2.35 The standard recruitment process may also be a barrier for young people with ASD (Richards, 2012). Compiling a CV, completing an application form, attending an interview, or doing a work-place assessment, all rely heavily on social and communication skills (National Autistic Society, undated 1). They also entail the need to tailor one's skills and experience in a way that focuses on strengths and plays down weaknesses (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010). People may have particular difficulties in responding to open questions, or responding to abstract, hypothetical situations (Forsythe, 2008; National Autistic Society, undated 1). They may also have huge difficulties in 'selling themselves' in a positive and confident way (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010), understanding body language, maintaining appropriate eye contact, varying the tone of their voice and finding the appropriate level of formality (National Autistic Society, undated 1).

Barriers to keeping a job

- 2.36 There are many social barriers experienced by young people with ASD who have found employment, often caused by not understanding the subtle, unwritten or hidden messages in workplace communication (Howlin, 2012, 2008; Richards, 2012; Higgins et al., 2008). Difficulties in establishing relationships and interacting with colleagues may lead to their exclusion by colleagues or managers, misunderstandings or crises, and can cause people with ASD to leave jobs they enjoy, or to be dismissed (Richards, 2012; Wallis, 2012; Tucker et al, 2012). When people lose jobs, or made redundant, the psychological impact can be considerable and may make it hard for them to return to the labour market (Tucker et al, 2012). Richards (2012) found that many people with ASD were excluded by everyday

people management practices such as task-based meetings, annual performance reviews and team-building events. This 'exclusion by stealth' may also be exacerbated by lack of awareness of ASD by managers, colleagues and human resources departments and an unwillingness of some employers towards making reasonable adjustments to ensure participation of workers with ASD in all work-related activities.

- 2.37 Some people with ASD also face cognitive barriers to maintaining employment, such as concrete and literal thinking (Patterson et al., 2010), leading to difficulties with time keeping, sequencing and organisation of work tasks (Griffith et al, 2011; Burke et al., 2010; Howlin et al, 2005; Howlin et al, 2008). For people with ASD who also have a learning disability, cognitive issues for those pursuing employment include low literacy and numeracy skills and difficulties learning tasks and transferring learning from one setting to another (Beyer and Kaehne, 2010).
- 2.38 Many people with ASD may have particular sensitivities to noise, smell or colour may experience sensory overload, stress and confusion in what appears to be an ordinary workplace environment (Wallis, 2012). Davidson (2010) found that many people with ASD suffer from sensory mingling and confusions associated with fluorescent lighting and the hum of electrical appliances such as computers.
- 2.39 Work place stress and anxiety can create a significant barrier to employment for many people with ASD, who may experience extreme reactions in social situations, or when established routines or expectations change (National Autistic Society, 2012). In the workplace, this can lead to inappropriate behaviour, such as verbal outbursts, or challenging behaviour as a response to the feeling of being anxious or overwhelmed (Patterson, 2010; Howlin et al, 2005; Griffith et al, 2011).

- 2.40 Transport to and from work is a frequent barrier to keeping employment for young people with ASD. Most young people with ASD do not drive and may have problems travelling independently (Forsythe et al, 2008).

What do we know from the literature about how barriers to employment for young people with ASD might be overcome?

- 2.41 The review of literature highlighted a number of evidence-based factors that appear to mitigate many of the barriers to employment cited above and which could be considered key components of effective employment-related support for young people with ASD. These are summarised below (please see the separate volume for full details):

Key components of support to young people with ASD to consider employment

- Considering (and promoting) employment as a realistic and achievable post-education aspiration for young people with ASD and finding ways to support discussion about the world of work within the curriculum from Year 9 onwards
- Person-centred, employment focussed careers advice and sign-posting from Year 9 onwards, available both in a group and one-to-one
- Work preparation and employability (pre-vocational) training available from Year 9 onwards
- Ensuring person-centred, community-based careers advice, signposting and pre-vocational training continues to be available to all young people with ASD and their families at transition and post-FE and post-HE if needed
- Access to work experience (best sourced through external specialist employment agencies) whilst at school and thereafter as needed, including feedback to families about the skills and capabilities of their son or daughter in the workplace
- Availability of vocational training through work based learning or other means, to those young people who want to access it
- Offering advice on self-employment if this is required

- Accurate and appropriate benefits advice, help with benefits calculations and ‘better off in work’ calculations for the young person and their family to help them consider employment as a realistic option.

Key components of support to young people with ASD to seek employment

- Targeted and ASD-appropriate support to develop a personal profile leading to a CV or vocational profile
- Discussion and support about when, where and how to disclose an ASD
- Help with job searching, personal presentation and interview skills which recognises the barriers that young people with ASD are likely to experience in relation to these tasks (this may involve seeking reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process)
- Helping young people to focus on the most suitable jobs and job tasks for them using established supported employment techniques²¹ such as personal profiling, job analysis and job matching, whereby individual skills and job requirement are analysed on an individual basis and sensitively linked together
- Direct work and awareness raising with employers, for example to highlight individuals’ skills, provide support with job carving²² or offer advice on reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process and prior to the young person starting work
- Providing access to the services of an ASD-trained job coach who can provide one-to-one support with job searching, through recruitment and onwards into the workplace
- Tackling employer attitudes and discrimination by making a business case to employers for taking on workers with ASD

²¹ Supported employment schemes help disabled people (including those with ASD) to get and keep jobs that are available in the open market. Supportive measures aimed at employees and employers and the techniques involved are often described as a ‘place, train and maintain’ model of support.

²² Job carving is a term for customising job duties and can be used in different circumstances: to create specialist job roles thus freeing up the time of specialist staff; or to swap job duties to make the most of individual skills. (Summarised from base-uk.org)

and highlighting the additional benefits adopting a ‘disability confident’ approach may bring.

Key components of support to young people with ASD to keep employment

- The continued input of an ASD-trained job coach to provide in-work training (including training in systematic instruction²³ if needed), in-work mentoring and follow-up support in the work place
- The continued use of established supported employment techniques to support the introduction of a person with ASD into employment, including work place analysis, job analysis and task analysis
- Follow-up support to the employer as needed – for example continued support with reasonable adjustments, awareness raising work and training for staff and managers, etc
- The possibility of follow-up support outside the work place (e.g. social groups, counselling, etc).

Other important components of employment-related support, advice and training for young people with ASD

- Regular and on-going contact with the young person’s family (with consent from the young person)
- Well-being support and advice, for example access to counselling for work-related stress and anxiety if needed
- Access to travel training or support with travel to and from work if needed
- Personal awareness work and behavioural support – this might also include discussion and support about when, where and how to disclose an ASD
- If needed, access to child-care support and basic skills training

²³ Training in systematic instruction (TSI) is a method for training people with learning disabilities (including those with ASD) in complex work skills, where the trainer takes responsibility for the learner acquiring the skills needed. Hence the trainer must be competent in the task before commencing the training. The trainee is taught the task in steps and will only move into the next step when she or he can reliably complete the previous one. The trainer is encouraged to intervene before an error is made on any particular step. From base-uk.org/features/tsi-perspective

- Timely and appropriate referral onto other/specialist services if needed – e.g. for advice on self-employment
- Autism awareness training for staff providing direct employment-related support, advice or training to young people with ASD
- Ensuring access to on-going and appropriate employment support is available to those who need it.

Post-education employment support for young people with ASD

2.42 In Wales, all young people with ASD who have left formal education are entitled to access support from a range of providers of employment-related support, training and advice. There were four main types of post-education employment support that could potentially be accessed by young people with ASD living in Wales in 2013:

- Work based learning programmes
- Mainstream employment support
- Pan-disability employment support
- ASD-specific employment support.

2.43 Welsh Government-commissioned work based learning (WBL) opportunities includes Traineeships, Apprenticeships, Pathways to Apprenticeships, Work Ready (previously known as Steps to Employment) and the Jobs Growth Wales programme. (See Appendix B for more information about what the different programmes/services offer.) WBL programmes may claim ‘additional learning support’ funding from the Welsh Government to assist them with the costs of making their provision accessible to young people with additional learning needs (including ASD). Additionally, the Traineeships and Work Ready programmes have recently been able to extend the maximum amount of time a learner can spend on the programme and to link activities to experience in work, rather than formal qualifications²⁴. Jobs

²⁴ Personal communication, Welsh Government, January 2014.

Growth Wales provides ‘job-ready’ young people aged 16 to 24 with a job opportunity of six months at the national minimum wage for a minimum of 25 hours a week. This includes a ‘supported strand’, which is delivered through third sector providers to assist those young people who need a more supported employment environment²⁵.

- 2.44 Mainstream employment support includes Jobcentre Plus services (including access to a Disability Employment Adviser and/or Work Psychologist), the DWP Work Programme, and the Welsh Government Careers Wales service (including access to a Careers Wales adviser). Additional mainstream employment support is available, mostly at local or regional, level, from a range of mainstream statutory and third sector providers. In Wales, this includes a large range of Welsh Government, DWP, ESF and local authority-funded work preparation and support programmes, such as the Want to Work programme, Bridges into Work, QWEST for Employment, Building the Future Together, COASTAL, South West Workways, New Work Connections and others. (See Appendix B for more information about the different programmes/services.)
- 2.45 Pan-disability employment support refers to specialist services offered by generic, cross-disability providers and funded through a variety of means. In Wales, this includes the Work Choice programme, (a DWP employment support programme for disabled people), as well as a number of other established pan-disability employment support services such as Quest Employment Agency, Elite Supported Employment Agency, Remploy, Agoriad Cyf, Mencap Cymru, Vision 21, Arena Supported Employment, the Shaw Trust and others. In addition, the ESF-funded Regional SEN Transition to Employment Initiative

²⁵<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/skillsandtraining/jobsgrowthwales/voluntarysector/?lang=en>

(Real Opportunities project) currently offers employment-related support and advice to 14-19 year olds with additional learning needs in certain areas of Wales until September 2014. (See Appendix B for more information about the different services).

- 2.46 There are currently three specialist sources of ASD-specific employment support for young people with ASD living in Wales: the National Autistic Society Prospects service in Cardiff, the ASD Employment Service (ASDES) in Swansea and the ASD Employment Project in Cardiff, Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan. (See Appendix B and Appendix D for more information about these services.)

The experience of mainstream and pan-disability employment support for young people with ASD

- 2.47 Within the formal literature, there is evidence of high, unmet demand from people with ASD for effective employment support. A recent survey by the National Autistic Society (Bancroft et al, 2012) found that although 53 per cent of adults with autism would like access to employment support, only 10 per cent get it. Evidence, from the literature review and scoping interviews, shows that mainstream and pan-disability employment support programmes can be difficult to access for young people with ASD (National Audit Office, 2009; Forsythe et al, 2008), do not always meet needs (Cimera and Cowan, 2009) and often deliver low employment outcomes for this group (Hurlbutt and Chalmers, 2004; Mawhood and Howlin, 1999).
- 2.48 The National Audit Office (2009) noted that the current approach to employment support by the Department for Work and Pensions is pan-disability, rather than disability-specific. The appropriateness of this approach was questioned by the National Audit Office research. Concerns included: reliance on group work; short-term focus on producing job outcomes rather than building confidence and trust; and a lack of involvement by carers where

services had low awareness of autism, with a risk that correct information would not be obtained due to people's communication difficulties (National Audit Office, 2009, p35). At present, referral to the Work Choice programme, a pan-disability employment support scheme, and to other government schemes, is only via DEAs at Jobcentres. The National Audit Office research (2009) highlighted that many DEAs may lack ASD awareness, a fact that had previously been noted by Owen (2004). In a survey for the National Autistic Society, Owen found that 86 per cent of DEAs had supported clients with a diagnosis of ASD in the last two years. However, only 33 per cent felt they had sufficient knowledge about how to support the person to find suitable employment, with 75 per cent agreeing that they would like more training about ASD.

2.49 Although not an ASD-specific document, the DWP's recently published disability and health employment strategy (Department for Work and Pensions, 2013), emphasises that current mainstream and specialist employment support has not met disabled people's needs. In this paper, the DWP sets out some high-level proposals to improve employment support for disabled people which include:

- Improving the accessibility of vocational training to disabled people
- Developing a new gateway to employment services, including adopting a more personalised approach that caters for each individual's needs
- Improving the full suite of both mainstream and specialist employment support services, including ensuring that all specialist employment support includes a number of key features: greater personalisation, better integration of local services, better use of local providers and a greater focus on supported employment.

Outcomes and benefits of specialist employment support for people with ASD

- 2.50 There is some evidence from the literature review that specialist supported employment schemes, geared specifically towards people with ASD, can achieve success in helping people get jobs and stay in their jobs (Wehman et al, 2013; Howlin et al, 2005; Howlin, 2012). Beyer, Robinson and Pledger (2009) explain that although descriptions of the supported employment process vary in the number of key stages required, they can be summarised under five main headings: vocational profiling, job finding, job analysis and placement, job training and follow-along services.
- 2.51 Specialist supported employment schemes for people with ASD are very scarce, with just three being available in the south and west of Wales at present. Research conducted by the National Audit Office (2009) found that in England, although 83 per cent of local authorities commissioned generic employment support for disabled people, only 10 per cent of this provision was autism-specific.
- 2.52 A recent review of supported employment schemes for adults with ASD (Howlin, 2012) found that few research studies exist which document the experience, or the benefits, of different forms of employment support. Despite the small and limited evidence base, the research available suggests that when compared to pan-disability employment services, ASD-specific employment support can result in:
- Significantly higher rates of employment (Wehman et al, 2013; Cimera et al, 2009; Howlin et al, 2005)
 - More appropriate employment (Cimera et al, 2012)
 - Higher employer satisfaction (Mawhood and Howlin, 1999)
 - Improvements in quality of life (Garcia-Villamizar et al, 2002).

2.53 Howlin's recent literature review (2012) lists the characteristics of successful supported employment schemes for people with ASD as follows:

- Careful matching of the skills of the client to the demands of the job
- Pre-job training
- In-job support
- Support workers and job coaches who have a good understanding of the specific needs of people with ASD and who are able to advise and educate employers and supervisors.

2.54 Although not ASD-specific, it is significant to note that the recently published, and evidence-based, strategy document on disability and health employment (Department for Work and Pensions, 2013) proposes specialist employment support for disabled people should include a greater focus on personalised support and the use of supported employment. In this document, the DWP also highlights that young people with autism are particularly under-represented in employment and will need extra, specialist support to make the successful transition to employment. An employment support offer, which includes a suite of mainstream and specialist services, with more emphasis on the use of high-quality, small-scale, local providers is propose to increase the range of employment provision.

The cost benefits of providing targeted specialist employment support for people with ASD

2.55 The eight year evaluation of the National Autistic Society's Prospects service by Howlin et al (2005) also collected costs data. This indicated that the cost per job found by Prospects decreased from £6,542 in 2000-1 to £4,281 in 2002-3. Funding for the service from the Department for Work and Pensions was £673,781 between 2000 to 2003. Taking into account the impact of reduced benefits payments and income from tax and National

Insurance, the overall benefit to the public purse was estimated at £494,686, giving a net cost of £179,095 for providing 114 jobs over that period.

- 2.56 The National Audit Office (2009) used these figures to explore the possible impacts of providing more widely available specialised support for people with ASD in England. It was estimated that if such services identified and supported around four per cent or more adults with 'high functioning' autism in their local area they could become cost-neutral over time. Further analysis showed that identifying six per cent could lead to potential savings of £38 million per year, and if eight per cent of this group were identified then annual savings could reach £67 million.
- 2.57 These estimated cost benefits highlight how important it is for employment support providers to (a) identify people with ASD; and (b) tailor their service offer accordingly.

Could outcomes of specialist ASD employment support be replicated more widely?

- 2.58 There appears to be no research, and very little available information, about (a) the extent to which mainstream or pan-disability employment support staff have either experience or training in working with young people with ASD; and (b) the impact of this on young people's experience of employment support services and employment outcomes.
- 2.59 Both the National Audit Office (2009) and the National Autistic Society (undated 3) advocate the provision of wider access to specialist ASD employment support services. However, they also suggest that more consideration could be given to how the good practice and successful outcomes of ASD-specific services could be replicated more widely. The National Audit Office (2009) suggests that specialist job coaches with knowledge of autism could be provided through pan-disability providers and funded

through existing government programmes. The National Autistic Society (undated 3) presses for more ASD awareness training for DEAs, measurement of the diversity of client groups served by mainstream and pan-disability programmes, measurement of 'distance travelled', not just job outcomes and the recognition that there are additional costs and more time involved in supporting people with ASD. The National Autistic Society also suggests that mainstream and pan-disability providers could be required to sub-contract, with appropriate funding provided, to ensure that the expertise of specialist (and smaller) contractors remains available to those who need it. The new DWP strategy document on disability and health employment (Department for Work and Pensions, 2013) highlights better use of local providers and the importance of learning from local delivery, particularly in terms of whether small-scale local programmes could be replicated on a larger scale.

Summary

- 2.60 Using data from national statistics, this chapter has documented the current post-education employment outcomes of young people with ASD living in Wales. With reference to the literature review and scoping work, we have also identified the barriers to employment that are likely to be faced by this group of young people and how these might potentially be overcome. Using this evidence, we have documented the key components of service/programme delivery that are known to be effective in supporting young people with ASD to consider, seek and keep employment. We have also examined the evidence regarding the effectiveness of mainstream, pan-disability and ASD-specific employment support for this group of young people.
- 2.61 In the next chapter, we examine the extent and nature of employment-related support currently available to young people with ASD living in Wales, and using data from the online survey of

provider organisations, consider the extent to which current support appears to be delivering solutions to the identified barriers.

3 Employment support for young people with ASD living in Wales

- 3.1 There are numerous services and programmes aimed at helping people in Wales (including disabled people and people with ASD) overcome barriers to employment. Appendix B provides a list of employment support services and initiatives that were potentially available to young people with ASD living in Wales in 2013.
- 3.2 Using data collected via desk research, an online practice survey of employment support providers and qualitative interviews²⁶, this chapter explores the extent to which the barriers to employment identified in chapter three are currently being addressed by the following providers of employment support in Wales:
- Work based learning (WBL) programmes
 - Mainstream employment support
 - Pan-disability employment support
 - ASD-specific employment support.

Overview of responses to the online survey from employment support providers (ESPs)

- 3.3 As explained in the detailed methodology set out in Appendix A, 120 separate organisations were emailed a link to the online survey. These comprised the following:
- WBL programmes – all contracted providers of Apprenticeships, Traineeships and Steps to Employment (now known as Work Ready); all third sector employers contracted to provide the ‘supported strand’ of the Jobs Growth Wales programme; we did not contact providers of Pathways to Apprenticeships or employers providing the Young Recruits programme as contacts lists were not

²⁶ The survey and interviews were conducted during September to November 2013 and collected data relating to provision that was available in 2013.

available for these contracts (see Appendix B for more information about WBL programmes offered in Wales)

- Mainstream employment support – all mainstream services or programmes currently available (and listed in Appendix B); this included 45 DEAs or Work Psychologists based at Jobcentre Plus services, five of the ten sub-contracted providers of the Work Programme, and Careers Wales as one organisation
- Pan-disability employment support – all 12 of the currently available specialist services (listed in Appendix B), including the three contracted providers of Work Choice
- ASD-specific employment support – the three providers currently operating in Wales (and listed in Appendix B).

3.4 Organisations were encouraged to take part in the survey irrespective of whether they were currently working with young people with ASD since we wished to capture barriers, as well as enablers to working with this group. In all, 65²⁷ separate organisations responded (of which 18 were providing more than one employment-related programme or service) resulting in a set of 99 separate records for analysis purposes. Each of the 99 records represented a separate response from an employment support provider (ESP) in relation to a specific programme or service. For example, one private sector organisation may have been offering three programmes under contracts for Apprenticeships, Traineeships and Jobs Growth Wales, only one of which was working with young people with ASD. For analysis purposes, therefore, this response would be counted as three separate ESP services or programmes, since there were three separate sets of data to be included in the analysis overall.

²⁷ Giving a response rate of 54 per cent. However we did not have direct access to Jobcentre Plus contacts, were unable to issue reminders and thus received a much lower response from these providers than for those we were able to contact directly. If the JCP responses are taken out of the calculation, the response rate increases to a mean average of 69 per cent across the other organisational groups. See Appendix A for more information about the methodology used for the online survey.

Access to employment support services by young people with ASD

3.5 The survey commenced by asking ESPs to say whether their service or programme worked with young people with ASD. The results are presented in the table below, which shows that of the 99 separate programmes and services included in the analysis, 64 (65 per cent) said they worked with young people with ASD. These 64 programmes were offered by 46 separate employment support provider organisations. Of the remaining 35 programmes or services, 19 said they did not currently work with young people with ASD, whilst for 16, the response submitted was 'don't know'.

Table 7: Numbers of employment-related programmes or services working with young people with ASD

Type of employment-related programme or service	Number of programmes or services included in the survey results	Does your programme or service work with young people with ASD?		
		Yes	No	Don't know
WBL	60	30	18	12
Mainstream	27	22	1	4
Pan-disability	9	9	-	-
ASD-specific	3	3	-	-
Total	99	64 ²⁸	19	16

Source: Online survey of Employment Support Providers operating in Wales in October 2013²⁹

3.6 The definition of 'worked with' included referral onto other or specialist services as well as direct work with individual clients. There was no limit put on numbers worked with, so a provider could be working **with just one person with ASD** at the point at which they completed the survey. There is also the possibility that ESPs who were likely to respond negatively to this question simply chose not to complete the survey, so the overall number of

²⁸ These 64 programmes or services were offered by 46 separate provider organisations.

²⁹ Base size for this table is 99 employment support programmes or services, being offered by 65 separate provider organisations.

programmes or services who were not working with young people with ASD may be significantly higher nationally. Nonetheless, responses to this question provide an indication of the potential for access to the range of ESPs in Wales that currently exist.

3.7 It is worth highlighting the variability of access to WBL programmes by young people with ASD as the following table indicates.

Table 8: Numbers of WBL programmes who worked with young people with ASD

WBL programme	Number of WBL programmes included in the survey results	Does your WBL programme work with young people with ASD?					
		Yes		No		Don't know	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Apprenticeships	19	9	47%	7	37%	3	16%
Traineeships	11	8	73%	2	18%	1	9%
Steps to Employment (now known as Work Ready)	11	7	64%	3	27%	1	9%
Jobs Growth Wales	19	6	31%	6	32%	7	37%
Total	60 <i>28 providers</i>	30 <i>12 providers</i>	50%	18 <i>11 providers</i>	30%	12 <i>7 providers</i>	20%

Source: Online survey of Employment Support Providers operating in Wales in October 2013³⁰

3.8 In all, 28 contracted providers of WBL responded to the survey, between them offering 60 potential programmes to young people with ASD. Responses indicated that a higher proportion of contracted providers of Traineeships or Steps to Employment/Work Ready programmes said they were working with young people with ASD, than providers of Apprenticeships or Jobs Growth Wales opportunities. Jobs Growth Wales (JGW)

³⁰ Base size for this table is 60 employment support programmes or services, being offered by 28 separate provider organisations.

providers also appeared to have the least clarity about whether or not they were working with young people with ASD, as evidenced by the 37 per cent of JGW providers who responded 'don't know' to this question. The responses from WBL providers covered work with a very small number of young people with ASD, as just 30 young people with ASD completed a WBL programme in Wales for the year 2011/12 and numbers for 2012/13 are unlikely to be significantly higher than this.

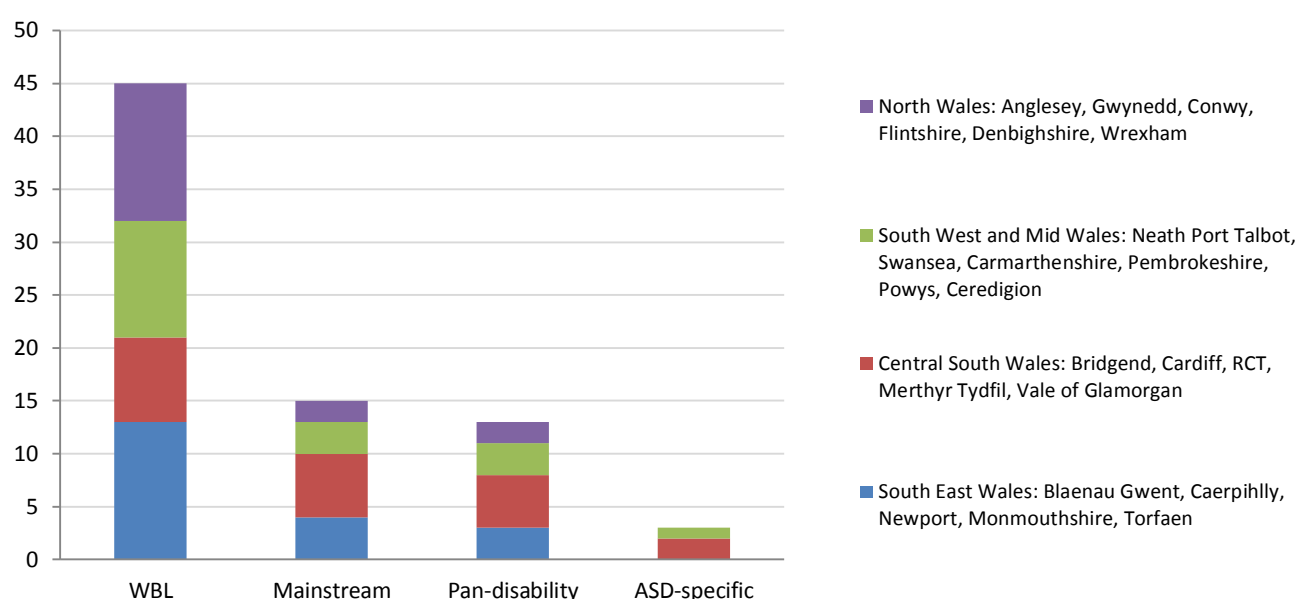
- 3.9 Additional comments from providers also highlighted the important link between recognition, assessment and disclosure of ASD and access to appropriate provision. If a young person does not disclose their ASD, then the ESP will (a) not be aware that they are working with someone with autism; and (b) not be able to offer the most appropriate provision to meet their ASD-specific employment support needs. Although not specifically related to ASD, a review by Estyn (2013) of Traineeships and Steps to Employment programmes noted that not all learners disclose personal issues which affect the identification of learning and employment barriers, and that some referring agencies do not always pass on sufficient information about learning and employment support needs to WBL providers.

Geographical location and coverage of employment support services working with young people with ASD

- 3.10 The figure below shows the geographical location and coverage of employment support provided by the ESPs who were working with young people with ASD. We have excluded responses from Jobcentre Plus, Careers Wales, Work Programme providers and Work Choice providers since these are intended to be universal services available throughout Wales.
- 3.11 The geographical distribution clarifies the lack of ASD-specific employment support available to young people outside of the south and west Wales areas. However, this overview does not

tell us about any local access issues, which may be particularly significant for young people with ASD for whom travel is a recognised barrier. It is also important to bear in mind that some of the programmes and services represented in this figure may be ending soon due to short-term funding (e.g. COASTAL).

Figure 1: Geographical location³¹ and coverage of employment support programmes or services working with young people with ASD³²



Nature of employment support currently offered to young people with ASD

3.12 ESPs responding to the online survey indicated the nature of employment support their programme or service offered to young people with ASD, from a list of 31 potential types of support, advice or training. This list was developed from the analysis of barriers/enablers to employment outlined in chapter two and included the following items:

³¹ Geographical locations represent the Welsh Government's Education Consortia groupings, see www.adew.org.uk/about

³² Source: online survey of employment support programmes operating in Wales in October 2013. Base size for this figure is 47: 30 WBL; 7 mainstream; 7 pan-disability; 3 ASD-specific, but the analysis takes into account where a programme or service covers more than one area of Wales.

- Support to consider employment: careers advice and signposting, work preparation and employability training, vocational training, organising external work experience, advice on self-employment, benefits advice and help with benefits applications, 'better-off in work' calculations.
- Support to seek employment: personal profiling leading to a CV or vocational profile, help with job searching, personal presentation and interview skills, work place analysis, task analysis, services of a job coach, training in systematic instruction³³, other direct work with employers (e.g. support with job carving³⁴ or reasonable adjustments), placement into paid work, support to develop or test a business idea.
- Support to keep employment: in-work training, in-work mentoring, follow-up support to client in the work place, follow-up support to employer, follow-up support outside the work place.
- Other employment-related advice, training and support: regular contact with the young person's family, well-being support and advice, travel training, personal awareness work and behavioural support for clients, child-care support, basic skills training and support, disability awareness training, autism awareness training, referral onto other/specialist services.

Support to consider employment

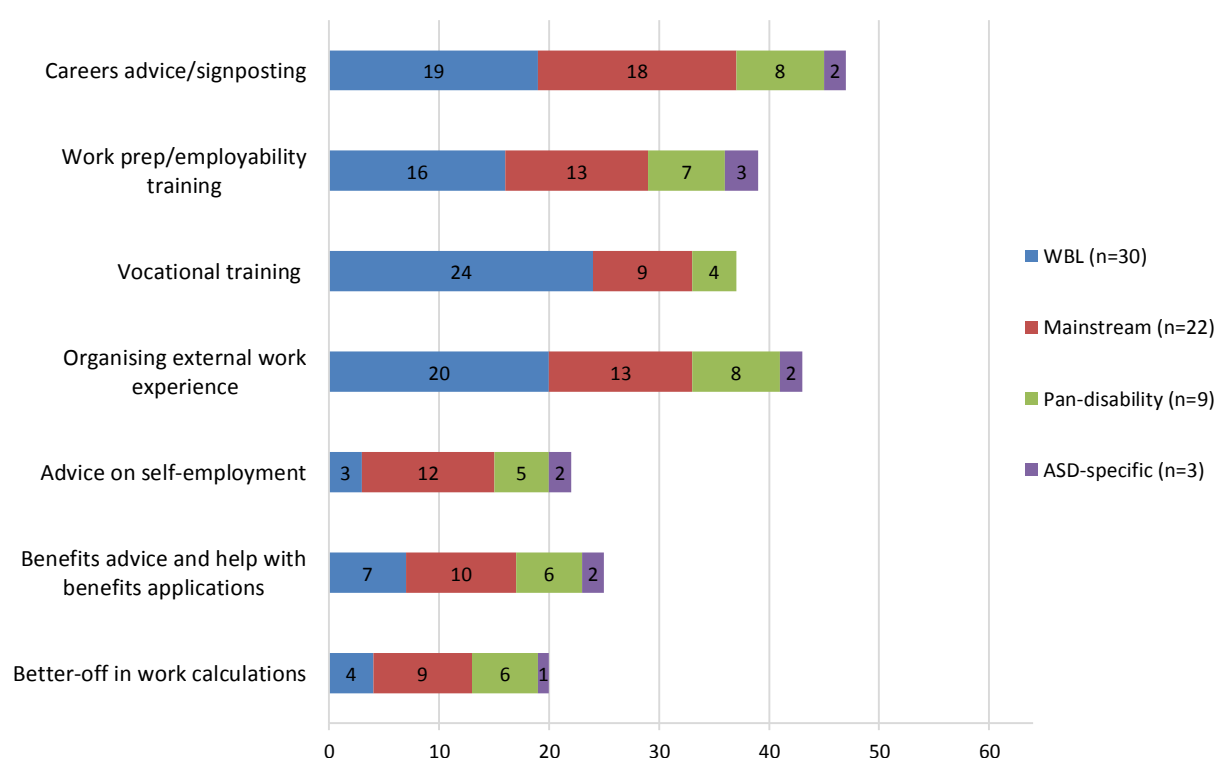
3.13 In terms of support to consider employment: it appears that the focus, for all providers, was on careers advice/signposting, work preparation/employability training and organising external work experience placements. Only around one-third of all providers

³³ Training in systematic instruction (TSI) is a method for training people with learning disabilities (including those with ASD) in complex work skills, where the trainer takes responsibility for the learner acquiring the skills needed. Hence the trainer must be competent in the task before commencing the training. The trainee is taught the task in steps and will only move into the next step when she or he can reliably complete the previous one. The trainer is encouraged to intervene before an error is made on any particular step. From base-uk.org/features/tsi-perspective

³⁴ Job carving is a term for customising job duties and can be used in different circumstances: to create specialist job roles thus freeing up the time of specialist staff or to swap job duties to make the most of individual skills. (Summarised from base-uk.org)

were offering benefits advice or ‘better off in work’ calculations, and even fewer offered advice on self-employment. WBL and mainstream services were proportionally less likely to offer these elements of support than pan-disability or ASD-specific providers.

Figure 2: Support to consider employment³⁵



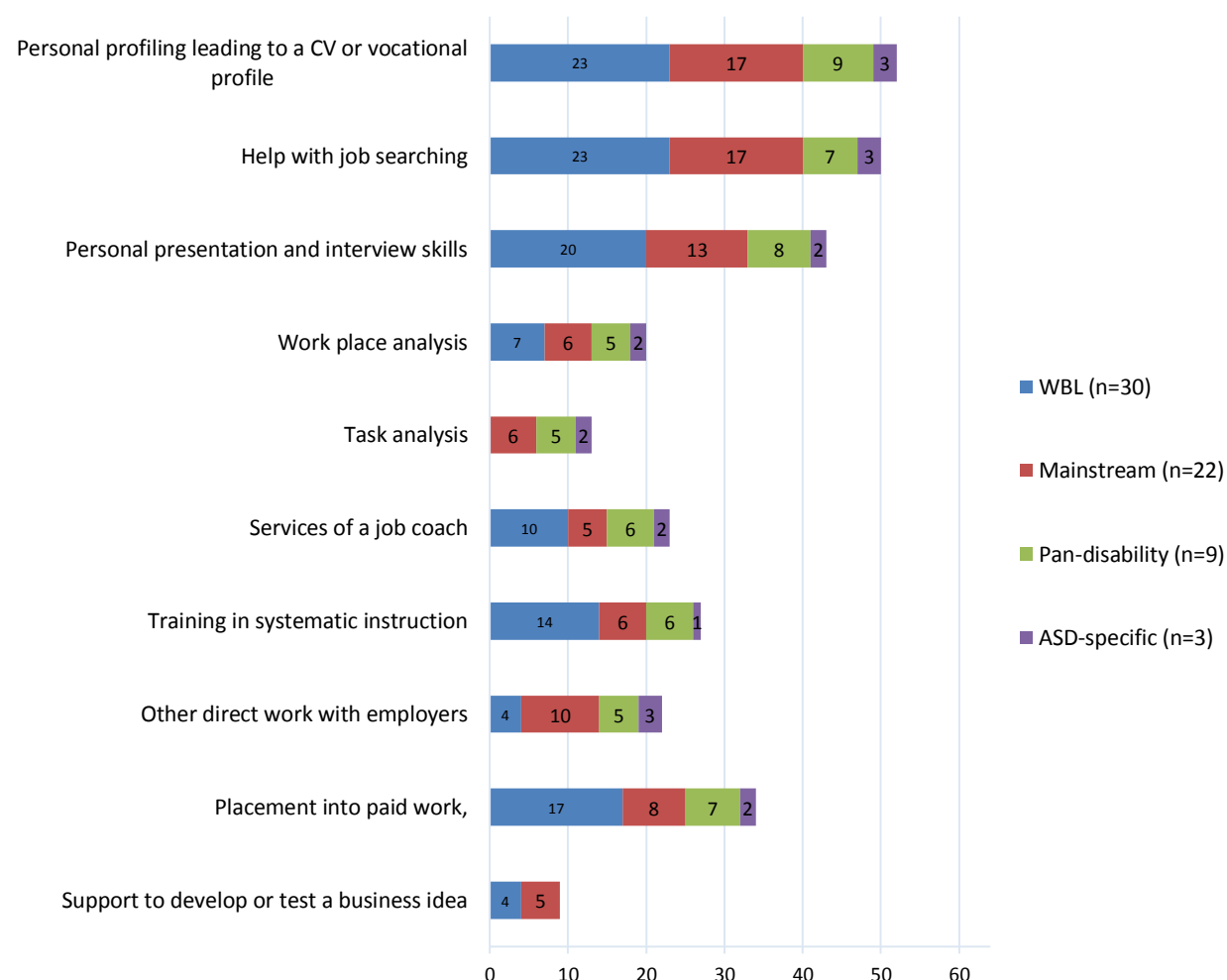
Support to seek employment

3.14 In terms of support to seek employment: most support at this stage of the pathway to employment focussed on personal profiling, help with job searching and personal presentation and interview skills. Nearly two-thirds of pan-disability and ASD-specific providers were offering work place analysis and task analysis, whilst only around a quarter of the WBL and mainstream services did so. Similarly, the services of a job coach were available from two-thirds of the pan-disability and ASD-specific

³⁵ Source: Online survey of employment support providers operating in Wales in October 2013. Base size for this figure is 64 employment support programmes or services.

services, but it was less likely to be offered by WBL providers (33 per cent), or mainstream employment support services (23 per cent).

Figure 3: Support to seek employment³⁶



3.15 We asked ESPs to tell us if they were doing any other direct work with employers to help young people with ASD find work, such as highlighting or promoting the skills of individual clients, advice on job carving, or suggestions about how to make reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process and/or workplace. All of the ASD-specific services were in direct contact with employers

³⁶ Source: Online survey of employment support providers operating in Wales in October 2013. Base size for this figure is 64 employment support programmes or services.

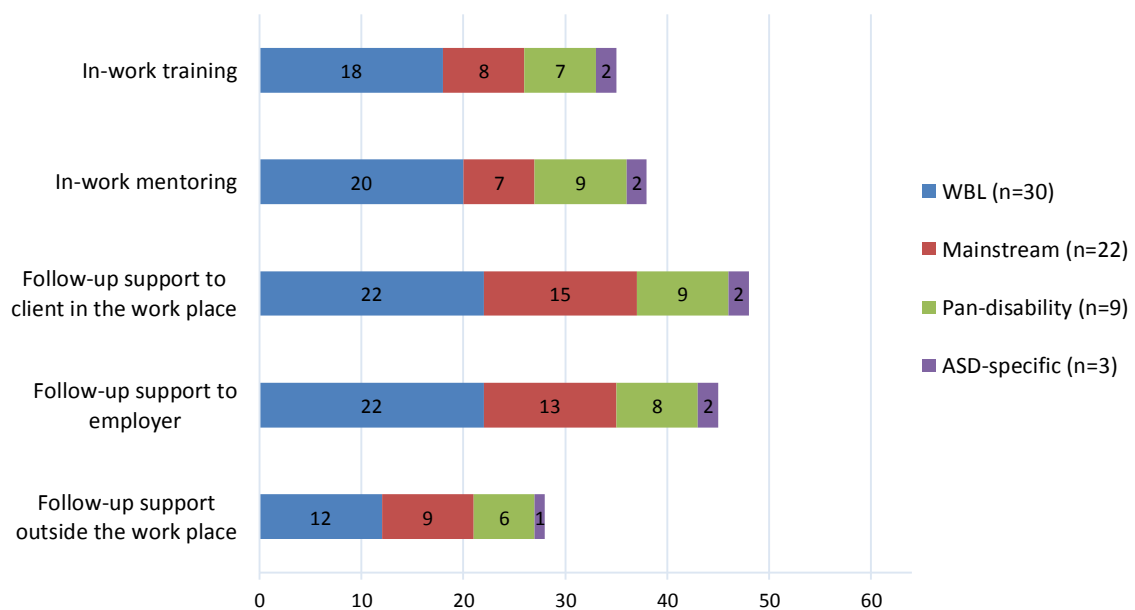
with regard to these issues. Half of pan-disability or mainstream services were engaging with employers directly about these issues, and even fewer WBL providers (13 per cent) were doing so.

- 3.16 One area where input was almost non-existent was in terms of support to develop or test a business idea: none of the ASD-specific or pan-disability services were offering help with this, and only a very small proportion of mainstream (23 per cent) and WBL (13 per cent) providers said they were doing so.

Support to keep employment

- 3.17 In terms of support to keep employment: some degree of follow-up support to young people once in work was available from most (but definitely not all) providers, however more specific input (via in-work training and mentoring) was available from almost all pan-disability and ASD-specific services, but from fewer WBL and mainstream providers. Less than half of all ESPs offered follow-up support to young people with ASD outside of the work place, for example in terms of on-going social support, counselling, or simply a point of contact if needed.

Figure 4: Support to keep employment³⁷

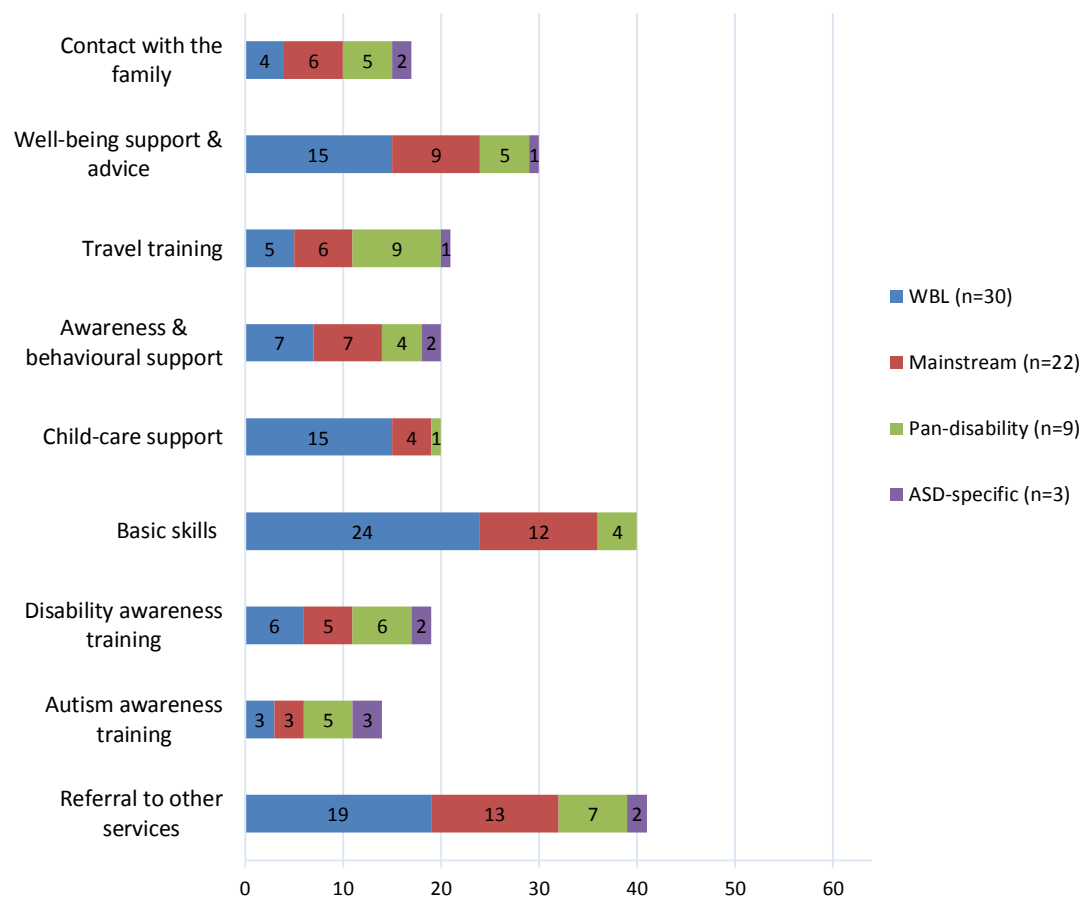


Other employment-related advice, training and support

3.18 Other support involved a range of additional help and advice that could be relevant at any point of the pathway to employment. Being able to refer young people onto other/specialist services if their current provision was inappropriate is an important component of effective support, but only 60 per cent of WBL or mainstream providers offered this. Very few of the pan-disability and none of the ASD-specific services were offering support with literacy and numeracy and more partnership working on this could be useful. In terms of travel training, all pan-disability and one of the ASD-specific services offered this, but few WBL or mainstream services did so. Similarly, regular contact with families, and behavioural support to clients, were key components of ASD-specific and pan-disability services, but were much less likely to be available from WBL or mainstream providers.

³⁷ Source: Online survey of employment support providers operating in Wales in October 2013. Base size for this figure is 64 employment support programmes or services.

Figure 5: Other employment-related advice, training and support³⁸



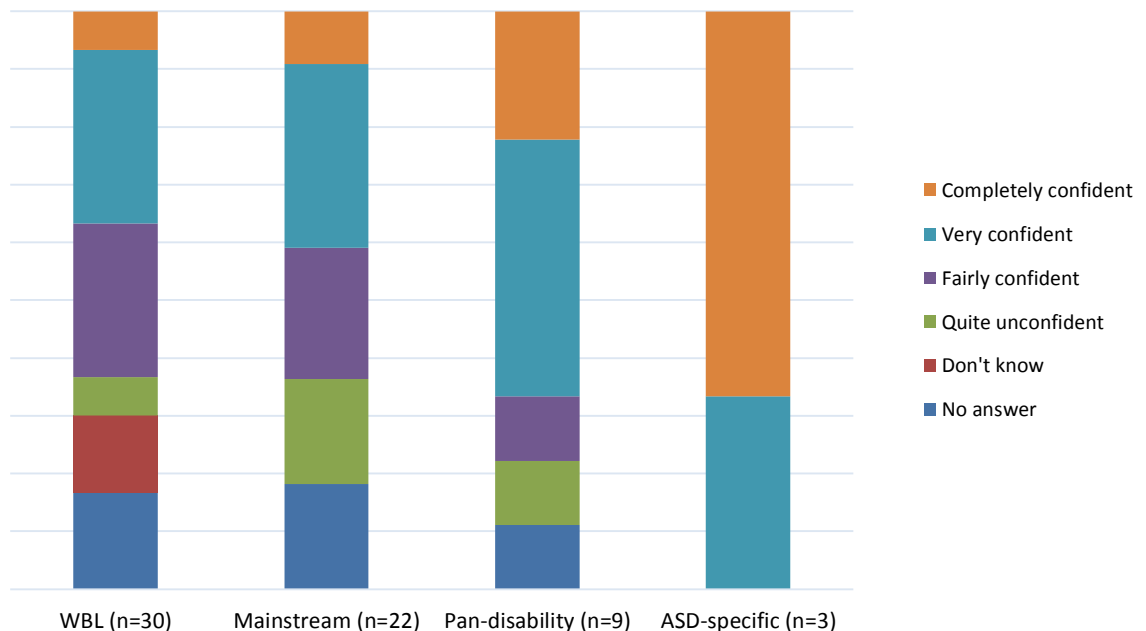
How confident are ESPs that they can meet the employment support needs of young people with ASD?

3.19 We asked ESPs already working with young people with ASD about their level of confidence in meeting the young people's employment support needs. One-fifth declined to provide an answer or didn't know what their level of confidence was. Of the ESPs who did respond, none said that they were completely unconfident about their ability to respond to the employment support needs of young people with ASD. Although around one

³⁸ Source: Online survey of employment support providers operating in Wales in October 2013. Base size for this figure is 64 employment support programmes or services.

tenth felt quite unconfident, the vast majority were fairly, very or completely confident.

Figure 6: Confidence level by provider type³⁹



3.20 Looking at the distribution of confidence levels by provider type shows that overall, WBL and mainstream providers had the most mixed feelings regarding their confidence in providing employment-related support to young people with ASD. These provider organisations were also the most likely to provide a ‘no answer’ or ‘don’t know’ response, indicating their uncertainty regarding this issue and suggesting that many ESPs are not aware of their own skills and competence in dealing with this group. As one might expect, all of the ASD-specific providers were very or completely confident about their ability to meet young people’s ASD-related employment support needs, whilst 37 per cent of the WBL providers, 41 per cent of mainstream providers and 66 per cent of pan-disability felt similarly confident. However it is worth highlighting that several of the pan-disability

³⁹ Source: Online survey of employment support providers operating in Wales in October 2013. Base size for this figure is 64 employment support programmes or services.

services raised questions about their ability to adequately meet the ASD-related employment-support needs of this group of young people.

3.21 We asked the ESPs who responded to this question to provide an explanation for their answer. Those ESPs who felt completely or very confident that they were meeting young people's needs explained the reasons for this as follows:

- Personalised programmes of support to meet individual needs with a focus on responding to young people's individual employment support needs, not just on meeting external targets
- Access to ASD specialists who could provide advice and training
- Availability of regular, on-going training on working with young people with ASD
- Use of tried and tested methods for supporting young people with ASD into employment and a means of keeping their knowledge base up-to-date about 'what works?' for this group
- Experienced and dedicated staff, who can act as mentors for new staff
- Monitoring the effectiveness of their programmes and services through regular feedback from clients and through collecting outcome data
- Understanding that some young people with ASD will need more support than the service or programme can offer and recognising when onwards referral (including the transfer or termination of funding 'attached' to a client), or external specialist input is necessary
- Good partnership working and routes for referral onto other/specialist organisations.

3.22 For the ESPs who felt fairly confident, or quite unconfident, their reasons given are summarised below:

- Not all staff in the service or programme have had training on working with young people with ASD
- Lack of access to ASD specialists

- Not enough resources or time to meet individual needs in a personalised way
- Lack of knowledge and understanding of what ‘good support’ looks like for this group
- Insufficient employment or work experience opportunities available with local employers
- No feedback from agencies to which young people are referred.

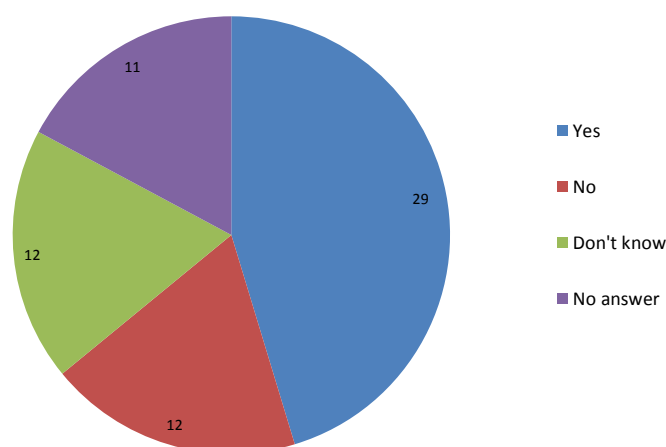
Competence and training

3.23 We asked all ESPs who were working with young people with ASD whether, in their opinion, their service or programme had any competence gaps in terms of supporting these young people into employment. A high proportion (36 per cent) of ESPs either responded ‘don’t know’ or chose not to answer this question, again possibly indicating their difficulties in gauging their own levels of confidence/competence in working with young people with ASD.

3.24 Figure 7 shows that nearly half of the 64 programmes or services were able to identify that they had competence gaps and these can be summarised as follows:

- Staff lacked specialist knowledge, awareness and experience in supporting young people with ASD
- Lack of access to ASD specialists who can provide advice or run training
- Lack of access to training
- More training needed for additional staff groups, or more ASD-specific training needed in relation to specific areas such as communication, social groups, supporting young people with high levels of need or those who are a long way from the labour market.

Figure 7: Do ESPs have any competence gaps in terms of working with young people with ASD?⁴⁰

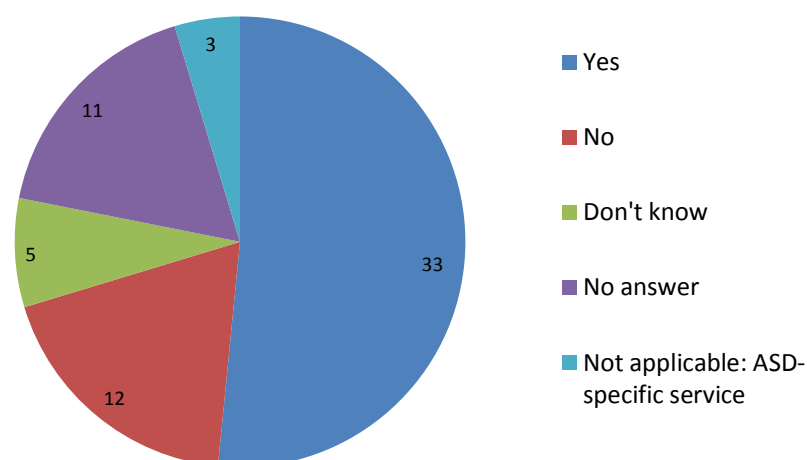


3.25 Several ESPs pointed out that as their referrals from young people with ASD were low, it was difficult to prioritise or fund specialist training. In addition, these providers explained that as so few young people with ASD accessed their services or programmes, staff had insufficient direct experience on which to build their confidence and knowledge base.

3.26 We also asked ESPs to indicate if they provided, or bought in, any training for its own staff on working with young people with ASD. For the ASD-specific services, this question was not relevant: as specialist services, they were themselves providers of specialist ASD training and advice to other organisations. Of the other ESPs who were already working with young people with ASD, just over half had bought in or had organised in-house training.

⁴⁰ Source: Online survey of employment support providers operating in Wales in October 2013. Base size for this figure is 64 employment support programmes or services.

Figure 8: Do employment support programmes provide or buy in training for their staff on working with young people with ASD? ⁴¹



3.27 The figure above shows the training available to individual services or programmes run by provider organisations. For example, an ESP might buy in training that would then be available to all staff working on all of its WBL contracts, or just to the staff working on one contract. So in all, 21 ESPs provided or bought in training for their staff across 33 different services or programmes.

3.28 Additional information provided by these 21 ESPs indicated that the main training provider was the National Autistic Society (n=4), with the Shaw Trust (n=2), Autism Cymru, Remploy, SNAP, The Dyscovery Centre and Crown Training Services (one mention each) also being used by some programmes or services. Three ESPs bought in training from their local authority, one from their local health board and three provided it themselves, in-house. The remaining ESPs could either not remember who had provided their ASD training or provided no answer.

⁴¹ Source: Online survey of employment support providers operating in Wales in October 2013. Base size for this figure is 64 employment support programmes or services.

- 3.29 Seven of the ESPs had organised training on basic autism awareness issues (including communication), whilst just six organisations had organised training which included a focus on employment issues and young people with ASD such as employability and working environments, potential barriers to employment, promoting potential and realistic work aspirations and supporting young people into sustainable employment. The remaining eight ESPs did not answer or could not remember what the training had covered. To put these figures into perspective, of the 43 separate ESPs who said they worked with young people with ASD, 16 per cent (n=7) had organised training on ASD awareness and just 14 per cent (n=6) on employment issues and ASD.
- 3.30 Most of the ESPs had received their training in the last three years (n=10), whilst some (n=6) explained that training was provided in-house, as needed, on a continuous basis. The remaining ESPs either could not remember (n=4) or provided no answer (n=1).
- 3.31 In terms of who received the training, most organisations (n=10) offered it primarily to delivery staff, who were working regularly and directly with young people with ASD, such as WBL tutors and assessors, DEAs and ESA advisers working in Jobcentre Plus services, job coaches, mentors, welfare officers and employment or careers advisers. However, in six cases, organisations had made the training available to a wider group of staff, including managers and others not working directly or regularly with young people with ASD.

Collecting data on the outcomes of working with young people with ASD

- 3.32 More than three-quarters (78 per cent) of employment support programmes or services were collecting data on employment

outcomes and other types of outcomes from the young people they worked with. A range of outcomes were being recorded and responses highlighted that most ESPs were using a broader definition of what counted as an 'employment outcome' than the current policy emphasis on paid work. ESPs gave the following examples of employment outcome-related data they collected:

- Entry into paid employment – full time, part time, number of hours worked, type of work, location of employment
- Retention in current employment
- Promotion or move to a different job role within current employment
- Entry into voluntary work
- Entry into work experience placement
- Attendance at interview, working interview or work place test
- Creating or updating a client's CV or vocational profile
- Improved awareness of the labour market
- Improved employability and/or work preparation skills.

3.33 In terms of other outcomes, ESPs explained that the following data were being collected:

- WBL placement
- Entry to the Work Programme or Work Choice
- Entry, or re-entry, to further education
- Gaining relevant FE or training qualifications
- Progression to a higher level of learning
- Improved literacy and numeracy
- Sign-posted to correct benefits
- Improved independence in using public transport
- Sign-posting and/or referral to other relevant organisations
- Increased confidence and motivation
- Improved behaviour and self-esteem
- Improved concentration
- Improved communication
- Improved autonomy
- Improved money and/or debt management
- Improved social networks

- Improved social interaction
- Integration with other young people or learners
- Development of coping strategies to better deal with life events
- Achievement of own personal goals
- Improved health and/or mental health.

3.34 Many ESPs were keen to make the link between the employment-related support they offered and the impact that this had on other areas of young people's lives.

We have had a number of clients come through the service with issues relating to other areas of their life. We work on confidence-building with our clients and very often find that the skills learnt and confidence gained transpire into other areas of individuals' lives. We measure soft outcomes through software called Soft Outcomes Monitoring and this provides data at different stages of a client's journey. (ASD-specific provider)

3.35 Sometimes outcomes were broader and impacted on the wider family. For example one ESP described how since a young man had started a Traineeship with them, his mother had been able to return to paid employment. This same ESP also referred to one young person's improved independence in using public transport had enabled him to spend more time with his grandfather.

3.36 Many responses from ESPs highlighted that their own definition of a successful 'employment outcome' was broader than full time paid work and that it was important to recognise that a range of meaningful outcomes are relevant for this group. In addition, these more diverse outcomes may be steps to the next stage of the employment pathway for a young person with ASD.

3.37 It was not possible to follow-up collection of these outcome data nor analyse them in a way that would provide a meaningful assessment of employment (or other) outcomes by provider types. ESPs told us that outcome data were collected using different methods/tools and time-frames, inputs varied widely, aims of services differed, and data on ASD were not always recorded separately, so it was rarely possible to easily extract

statistics relating to just young people with ASD. This area would benefit from further research attention. The evidence review highlighted that there is a lack of robust evidence on the impact of different types of employment support accessed by young people with ASD, either in terms of the difference it makes to people's lives, employment outcomes or in terms of its value for money.

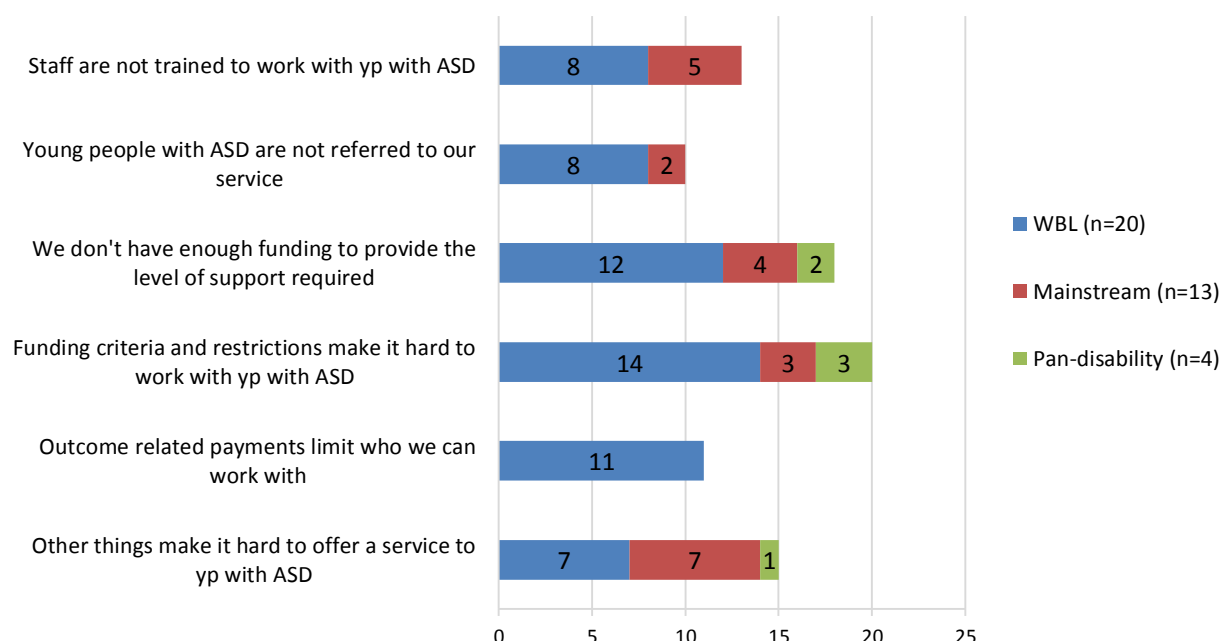
Barriers to working with young people with ASD

3.38 We asked if anything made it hard for ESPs to work with young people with ASD. Of the 99 programmes and services included in the survey data, 37 per cent said there were things that made it hard to do employment-related work with young people with ASD, 36 per cent said there were not (including all three of the ASD-specific services), and a quarter did not know or did not respond to this question. ESPs were asked to indicate, from a list of nine, the nature of the barriers they faced in working with young people with ASD. Their responses by provider type are shown in Figure 9.

3.39 These data illustrate how, for those WBL, mainstream and pan-disability providers responding to this question, insufficient funding, and funding criteria and restrictions, were the key issues that made it hard for them to provide the nature or extent of support they would have liked. However, other issues, such as young people not being referred and lack of staff training, were also barriers for significant numbers of mainstream ESPs.

The Traineeship programme we deliver for the Welsh Government and the Engagement Gateway programme we deliver for the WCVA could both be effective vehicles to support young people with ASD. It is frustrating that we are not used by the referral and other key agencies to do so. A better understanding of what we could offer by these agencies and a requirement of these agencies to look at these opportunities could offer more choice and opportunities for young people with ASD. As an organisation we would welcome doing far more for this client group. (WBL provider)

Figure 9: What makes it hard to work with young people with ASD?⁴²



3.40 Fifteen ESPs listed a number of other barriers which are summarised as follows:

- Variability of referral routes and joint working with referring agencies, particularly in terms of providing sufficient background information about young people's needs
- Variable levels of awareness, understanding and sign-posting of the service or programme and what it offers young people with ASD
- Not enough resources or time to meet individual needs in a personalised way
- Lack of access to ASD specialists who can provide advice or run training
- A need for increased and on-going awareness raising work with employers to support them to recognise the benefits of employees with ASD

⁴² Source: Online survey of employment support providers operating in Wales in October 2013. Base size for this figure is 37 employment support programmes or services.

- Difficulties in finding the right job and the right working environment for the individual young person
- Difficulties for young people with ASD who are on the Work Programme but want to access ESF-funded provision (this is not permissible under current DWP and ESF regulations).

Enablers to working with young people with ASD

3.41 We asked all ESPs responding to the survey to tell us if there was anything that would make it easier for their programme or service to work with young people with ASD. Of the 99 programmes and services included in the survey data, 52 per cent said there were things that would make it easier to do employment-related work with young people with ASD, 11 per cent said there were not, and 36 per cent did not know or did not respond to this question.

From the perspective of the ESPs who took part in the research, the key factors that they felt enabled (or would enable) them to provide effective support to young people with ASD included:

- Access to ASD specialists who can provide advice or run training
- Access to regular and on-going ASD-specific training that includes input on employment issues
- Experienced staff who can mentor new staff working with young people with ASD
- More funding to train and/or recruit direct delivery staff
- Confidence that the support model is evidence-based and appropriate for the client group
- Improved referral routes and joint working with referring agencies
- Increased awareness, better understanding and improved sign-posting of the service or programme and what it offers young people with ASD
- Improved availability of local employment support provision and/or funding to enable young people to travel to the nearest provider who can meet their employment support needs
- Improved and more appropriate use of relevant funding streams to (a) enable young people to access the service or

programme (e.g. Jobcentre Plus Flexible Support Fund; Welsh Government's 'additional learning support' funding system for young people with additional learning needs); and (b) support young people in work (e.g. Jobcentre Plus Access to Work grants)

- Personalised programmes and a focus on meeting individual needs not just external targets
- Regular collection of monitoring and outcome data
- More relevant and realistic outcome targets and contract conditions for working with young people with ASD, which recognise that:
 - positive progression may include outcomes other than paid work
 - potential outcomes for this group should be based on levels of need, not country-wide benchmarks
 - programme delivery needs to be flexible and personalised to meet individual employment support needs
 - the delivery of a programme of employment-related support, training and advice may take longer for young people with ASD and for some WBL programmes a duration of two years (up to age 19) rather than one year (up to age 18) may be more appropriate
- More opportunities for networking and/or partnership working with other organisations providing employment support to this group of young people
- Improved routes to project permanency – many programmes and services are reliant on short-term, grant funding
- Increased and on-going awareness raising work with employers to support them to (a) recognise the benefits of employees with ASD; and (b) recruit and employ young people with ASD
- Recognition when onwards referral is necessary and facilitating this successfully for the client and the organisation.

The nature and extent of employment support currently available to young people with ASD living in Wales

- 3.42 The evidence presented in this chapter is solely from the perspective of providers of employment-related support, advice and training (ESPs) themselves. Moreover, the data collected only provides information about the extent and nature of employment support available, not about the quality or effectiveness of this support, nor actual take-up of the support by young people with ASD.
- 3.43 This chapter has shown that 65 per cent of the 99 WBL, mainstream, pan-disability and ASD-specific services and programmes who responded to the survey said they worked with young people with ASD. Compared with other providers, fewer WBL providers (50 per cent) said they were working with young people with ASD. However this is likely to represent a very small number of young people overall. National statistics (see chapter two) show that just 30 young people with ASD completed WBL programmes in Wales for 2011/12; as a proportion of the general population, access for young people with ASD was just 0.2 per cent, which is well below the conservative estimate of 1 per cent for national ASD prevalence.
- 3.44 Analysis of the geographical distribution of employment support clarifies the lack of ASD-specific services outside of the south and west Wales areas. However, it also demonstrates that other provider types have a fairly even coverage of most areas of Wales. This may present an opportunity for providing more ASD-specific support and advice via the existing national infrastructure of WBL, mainstream and pan-disability providers. For example, as a national organisation, Careers Wales has recently offered ASD-specific training to its network of advisers – such training could be replicated across a wider breadth of the employment support provider network.

3.45 The survey results showed that most of the barriers to employment for young people with ASD highlighted by previous research were being tackled by some ESPs, although there were a number of areas where specific support was lacking. Key issues which were not well-addressed for this group of young people included:

- Benefits advice and 'better off in work' calculations
- Advice on self employment and/or to develop a business idea
- In-work support
- Support with literacy and numeracy
- Travel training
- Regular contact and communication with families
- Behavioural and counselling input
- Many of the key components of a supported employment model such as: vocational profiling, job matching, work place analysis, task analysis, services of a job coach and access to training in systematic instruction.

3.46 Given the short-term nature of many of the programmes, the employment support offered was unlikely to be on-going, or to provide the in-work mentoring that many young people with ASD need although a few services said they had found ways to meet young people's on-going needs.

3.47 Across all provider types, analysis showed that pan-disability and ASD-specific services were proportionally more likely to be offering a level of support sufficient to address the specific barriers to employment faced by young people with ASD. A few providers in Wales have developed ASD-specific, or ASD-aware support, designed to meet the individual needs for employment support that these young people have, and, in some cases, offered advice and training on ASD-related employment issues to other organisations (see Appendix D for more details about these initiatives). As 'hubs' of expertise and knowledge, it is important that these initiatives are publicised amongst the ESP network and

able to share good practice. The outcomes for young people, families and professionals also need to be evaluated and documented more consistently so that the benefits of these services can be more clearly understood in terms of impact on quality of life, employment outcomes and value for money. This is an area that would benefit from further research attention.

3.48 Many ESPs were keen and willing to work with young people with ASD, but felt that they lacked the skills, knowledge and training to do so with confidence. Organisational confidence about meeting the employment-support needs of young people with ASD was very mixed amongst WBL providers, mainstream providers and some pan-disability providers, and nearly half of all services/programmes reported at least one area where they were lacking in competence. Barriers to providing adequate employment support included insufficient funding; funding criteria and restrictions; variability of inward referral routes, and lack of access to ASD specialists who can provide advice or run training. However, the apparent willingness of many providers to engage with this group of young people, and the range of employment support they currently offer, provide an encouraging foundation on which WBL, mainstream and some pan-disability providers could be enabled and trained to expand and personalise their offer to better meet the needs of young people with ASD. Appendix D gives an example of a WBL provider who has done just that.

3.49 The survey results showed that provision and take-up of training are areas where improvement is needed. Of the 43 separate WBL, mainstream or pan-disability ESPs who said they worked with young people with ASD, 16 per cent (n=7) had received ASD-specific awareness training, whilst just 14 per cent (n=6) had received training on the ASD-specific employment needs of their potential clients. The research highlighted that low referral

patterns may make it difficult to prioritise or fund specialist training; and lack of confidence and expertise makes it difficult to provide a service which meets young people's needs, leading to low referrals. Up-front training, advice and input from ASD specialists, and sharing and publicising of existing good practice is key to breaking this deadlock and would enable more WBL, mainstream and pan-disability ESPs to feel confident about providing ASD-aware employment support as the rule, rather than the exception.

Summary

- 3.50 This chapter has examined the extent and nature of employment-related support currently available to young people with ASD living in Wales, and using data from the online survey of provider organisations, considered the extent to which current support appears to be addressing the barriers identified in chapter two.
- 3.51 In the next chapter, we change the focus of the report to the experiences of young people. Using data collected from 26 young people with ASD and their families from around Wales, we will document their pathways to employment, the support received, and the extent to which this helped them overcome specific barriers.

4 Pathways to employment for young people with ASD living in Wales

- 4.1 In this chapter, we present the findings from the data collected from young people with ASD and their families. We will document their current barriers to employment and explore how young people are experiencing the employment support currently on offer and how effective it is for them, from their perspective.

About the young people

- 4.2 Data were collected relating to the employment pathways of 26 young people with ASD, via questionnaire, telephone interview, face-to-face interview or a combination. For full details of the methodology, and demographic details of the young people, please see Appendix A.
- 4.3 Twenty-three of the young people included in the research were men, whilst three were women. Ten of the young people had Asperger syndrome, five had autism and the remaining eleven had learning disabilities and an ASD. With regard to their most recent education leaving point, thirteen of the young people were school leavers, eight were further education leavers, and five were higher education graduates.
- 4.4 The ages of participants ranged from 16 to 33, with 21 young people aged from 16 to 25, and five aged 26 or over. We had originally planned only to include data relating to those young people who were aged 25 or less, but when some older young people came forward to be interviewed we decided to include their data on the basis that:
- The literature tells us that it can take significantly longer for young people with ASD to find a successful pathway to employment than for most neuro-typical young people
 - None of the under-25s were in full time, paid work, and so including the older young people meant we were able to map

a wider range of experiences of employment and the associated support that people had received.

- 4.5 Twenty-two of the young people reported they had received some degree of formal support, however minimal, from an employment support provider, whilst four had accessed no support whatsoever, apart from via family or friends. In two cases, it was a personal choice not to access any employment support, but in the other two cases the young people were in day services and the issue of employment appeared to have been overlooked.

What were the young people doing?

- 4.6 Thirteen (half) of the young people had some form of employment in a paid or unpaid or capacity. Two had full time paid jobs, six had part time paid jobs and five were currently undertaking part time unpaid work, either on a long-term voluntary basis or a short term work experience placement. Of the remaining thirteen young people, one was doing a part time college course, two were accessing day services, one young person had returned to school (having left the previous year, but found nothing suitable to do), and four were taking part in a newly established ASD-specific Traineeship (engagement) programme. Five were at home with no meaningful day time activity of whom two were registered with a local provider of the Work Choice programme.

Barriers to considering employment

Was employment considered as a post-school option by the young people and their families?

- 4.7 The evidence review highlighted that employment may not be considered as a feasible option for young people with ASD (Beyer and Kaehne, 2010). The majority of the young people had some exposure to the world of work whilst they were at school, usually through work experience in Year 10 or 11. In addition, all but one of those 13 young people not currently in any form of paid or unpaid work, wanted to find employment.

To what extent were young people accessing, or eligible for, careers advice and support at transition?

- 4.8 Since Careers Wales is a universal service, we asked all of the young people to recall their experiences of contact with this service and/or one of its advisers. Fifteen of the young people recalled having received some one-to-one support from Careers Wales whilst still at school and/or since leaving school. In most cases, it was not clear as to whether they had seen a specialist, or generic adviser, however. This included nine of the 13 school leavers, five of the eight FEI leavers and one of the HEI leavers.
- 4.9 Three of the school leavers (one of whom had been living in England for his secondary education), and one of the FEI leavers, believed they had never accessed support from Careers Wales, whilst the remaining young people across all leaving points (n=7) could not remember, or chose not to answer this question.
- 4.10 Some young people had also made use of their college or university careers service, or the advice given on employment options by course tutors, but access and take-up of these services was variable and often down to the individual choices made by young people.

Did the young people have access to work experience placements?

- 4.11 Twenty-three of the 26 young people said they had accessed work experience whilst at school or elsewhere. For two of the three young people who missed any kind of work experience, they were not in school at the time it took place. The other was deemed (by his school) to need too much support for work experience to be appropriate.
- 4.12 Young people were overwhelmingly positive about their past work experience opportunities, as were the parents we spoke to. For many young people, work experience had helped them to define and/or refine their vocational focus. However several young

people and families raised issues which questioned the extent to which the work experiences offered linked to the young person's future career aspirations:

I did plumbing for a week's work experience whilst at school and I really liked it. It made me want to do it, but it turned out I would have had to go to college and get paper qualifications, do exams. That's not possible for me. (Young man with ASD)

If [my son] had wanted any old work experience then school would have arranged it for him. But if he or any of the students at the school wanted to do anything specific, or they knew what they wanted to do, then the school told them to arrange it themselves. And this is what we did and he got work experience with the council's sports development unit. (Parent)

- 4.13 In two cases, young people had had extensive unpaid work experience from months to years. The longest of these was three years (working around 21 hours per week) and continued voluntarily by the young person even though he was a reliable and regular member of the team. This did not materialise into a paid job, nor could he continue to volunteer because the company was making other workers redundant and he could not be seen to be working unpaid. Both him and his family reported being 'devastated' at losing this unpaid, regular job and since then he had not worked in any capacity.

To what extent did young people have a clear and realistic vocational focus?

- 4.14 All but one of the young people we interviewed were considering work or were working and the majority were highly motivated although seven still had an unclear idea of what work they would be best suited to. Although they sometimes had some real interests, they were unlikely to have considered what they might do as a paid job that was allied to those interests. We encountered only two young people whose ideas were unrealistic in terms of jobs because they required a high level of qualifications that they would struggle to acquire.

The things I want to do need qualifications but I find it hard to write. (Young man with ASD)

- 4.15 In both these cases, it appeared that no one had talked through why their ideas were unrealistic or what alternative options they might consider that would interest them. Both young people had the opportunity to do at least one work experience placement, but the choice of these experiences did not seem to relate to their personal interests, rather the opportunities that could be found locally. However, in both cases, they had received positive feedback about their performance from their placement employer.

Were young people accessing pre-vocational or vocational training?

- 4.16 There was some variability of access to local options for pre-vocational and vocational training. In some areas, college courses that had this type of provision were felt to not be suitable by families/young people or young people had been denied access to the courses they wanted.

He was offered a place at [local further education college] but it is open access and too big. We visited but S didn't like it. (Parent)

- 4.17 Similarly, some other mainstream or pan-disability providers offering vocational opportunities were not considered appropriate either because they were too far away or not geared up to needs of young people with ASD.

The Careers Wales adviser suggested a Pontypridd based training place but it sounded too big and we worried he would feel lost and be easily led. (Parent)

- 4.18 Some of the young people were accessing pre-vocational training from one WBL provider who had recently established an ASD-specific traineeship (engagement) programme. This provision was only available at one location in Wales but the parents/carers and young people who were accessing it were very positive about what it might, potentially, offer in terms of employment-related support:

There is nothing out there for young people with autism. They are expected to go through the usual training but there is not enough consistency or support so they end up on the dole queue. This traineeship is personal, they take account of his problems and he is enjoying interacting with others in the small group. (Foster carer)

- 4.19 Sometimes, parents and young people felt that the professionals they encountered were not aware of the full range of post-16 options that existed in the area so were not referring on to them. Some young people were passed from one provider to the next, before they found one that could meet their needs. This may have been in part because professionals were not sufficiently aware of the specific issues facing the young people such as the anxiety that travel can present, the importance of quiet spaces and supportive, ASD-aware people in the setting. However, the example of the newly established ASD-specific traineeship came about because professionals realised that the needs of this group were not being met by generic provision.

Did families have any concerns about employment as a realistic option for their son or daughter?

- 4.20 Two parents were worried about the financial implications of their son or daughter working but neither appeared to have been given access to 'better off in work' calculations and in one of these cases, the Jobcentre Plus adviser had suggested that given the young man's Asperger syndrome, he could be put on incapacity benefit. So whilst the parents said they wanted their young people to be happy and occupied, the financial fears associated with them taking a job might interfere with efforts to secure one.

We were only there [Jobcentre Plus] five minutes and I told them about his problems and they told me to get a letter from the GP to say what was wrong with him and bring it in and then he could have incapacity benefit rather than job seeker's allowance. (Parent)

I mean how will he support himself without benefits? I am on benefits myself and I can't afford to keep him without his benefits. (Parent)

- 4.21 One other family, whose son was attending a day centre, felt that work was not a feasible option giving the degree of his impairments. However, this young man had not had the opportunity to undertake work experience whilst at school so perhaps if he had, the family may have had a different view. For all of the other family members involved in the research, there

was an overwhelming degree of positivity about the potential for paid or unpaid work for their sons or daughters. As other research has noted (Beyer et al, 2013a; 2013b), there did seem to be a link between the positive work experience placements young people had and their families' perceptions of work as a realistic and potentially achievable possibility.

Barriers to seeking employment

What were young people's experiences of Jobcentre Plus services?

- 4.22 Statutory employment services have a duty to help young people with ASD find and keep work. Every Jobcentre Plus service in Wales has a Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) and it is the DEA's responsibility to record that an individual has an ASD and what reasonable adjustments need to be made (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010). Evidence from this research suggests that Jobcentres are confusing and intimidating places for many people with ASD and staff may not fully understand their employment-support needs:

Parent: He is currently on job-seekers and goes to the Jobcentre to sign on every two weeks. He doesn't get any support though.
Young man with ASD: It's rubbish, I don't like going, but mum and dad say I have to go. It's a waste of time. There's no help.

The Jobcentre keep suggesting I apply for jobs that either involve travelling to work by car when I can't drive or would involve me working with people. The limitations of my condition mean I can't work with the public or children. The GP has helped to direct them away from my having to apply for these sorts of jobs. (Young woman with ASD)

- 4.23 Sometimes, the label of autism meant that Jobcentre Plus staff did not encourage young people to consider work.

He goes and searches for jobs, tells the lady what he's been doing and then signs his card and leaves. The woman on reception told me that if I didn't want him to work because of his autism, then I should get him signed off on the sick- I was horrified. (Parent)

Parent: We were only there five minutes and I told them of [son's] problems and they told me to get a letter from the GP to say what was wrong with him and bring it in and then he could have incapacity benefit rather than job seeker's allowance.

Interviewer: Did you speak to a DEA?

Young man with ASD: Don't know.

Parent: No
 Interviewer: Did they know you have autism?
 Young man with ASD: Yes I think so.
 Parent: Yes because I told them
 Interviewer: Did the job centre understand your needs, interests and worries?
 Young man with ASD: No – well, I wasn't there long enough for them to ask me.

- 4.24 One of the families we spoke to had made an active decision not to engage with Jobcentre Plus or the benefits system as they felt it would be too stressful and unhelpful for their son. Another family had set up employment within their own family business for their son and had disengaged from the benefits system or access to formal support from ESPs. However, in both cases, the families may be missing out on a range of potentially useful support and entitlements.

Were perceptions about employer attitudes and discrimination an issue for young people seeking work?

- 4.25 Some young people were anxious that employers would not be sympathetic to them especially in a time of economic downturn. This had not put them off seeking employment altogether but had made them less confident about their chances of success.

They don't seem to take on anyone who has problems. (Parent)

People say they will help people with disabilities to your face but then give it to more able bodied or normal person. (Young man with ASD)

- 4.26 However, one of the problems facing many of the young people who wanted to work was what to tell prospective employers. For example, should they disclose their ASD and if so, at what point in the recruitment process? This was a real dilemma and particularly difficult to gauge if the process was through open competition such as online applications:

When the council asks you in an application form, 'do you consider yourself to have a disability?', do you say 'yes' or 'no'? If you say 'no' then you'll get found out and have no support. If you say 'yes' then you have to be able to qualify in some way. It is tricky to negotiate as you can't see if someone has Asperger's but the question is how it is perceived by employers if you disclose on your application. (Young man with ASD)

- 4.27 For those young people with access to an ASD-specific ESP, disclosure was an issue with which they could seek help, discussion and support. It was not evident if similar support was available from the mainstream or pan-disability providers with which young people were in contact.

Searching for a job

- 4.28 Seven young people were actively seeking paid work, to increase their hours or to change jobs and six of them were in contact with a pan-disability or ASD-specific supported employment provider. The remaining young person was trying to find work without any assistance but was worried about her emotional state and did not sound confident about her ability to work.

With my mental problems and anxiety, I find it hard doing day to day activities. I am not mentally stable at the moment- I lose my temper a lot. (Young woman with ASD)

- 4.29 Some young people talked about the difficulties they experienced in deciding what might be a suitable job for them.

I need help sifting the jobs so I only go for jobs that I am suited to. I don't want to set myself up to fail. (Young man with ASD)

- 4.30 Many of the young people, or their families, mentioned their difficulties associated with travelling or other social difficulties that meant seeking jobs was more restricted. Several of the active job seekers had also experienced a lack of understanding about this by people in mainstream and pan-disability services that might be expected to help them into the world of work.

[Mainstream ESP] provided work experience as an office junior but it was more than a bit of a drag travelling two hours each way to get to the job. I find it stressful finding my way around and going long distances. (Young man with ASD)

[Pan-disability Work Choice provider] said they could not help [my son] because he is not independent enough. They said he needs to be able to travel independently to get to interviews. We said we could take him but they said that wasn't good enough. We told Jobcentre Plus about this but they haven't followed it up. (Parent)

- 4.31 The last of the two quotes above relates to the young man mentioned in paragraph 4.13 who had recently been 'made

redundant' from an unpaid job. Quite clearly, the ESP concerned had asked insufficient questions of the young man and his family in order to understand the nature of his needs and capabilities.

The recruitment process

- 4.32 Twenty of the young people had received help to develop a CV. Two told us that they had not had support for this and the remaining individuals were sixteen years old and were just commencing traineeships that would help with this. However, it was not clear whether the CVs were well constructed, 'live' documents that aimed to build on work experiences and highlight individual key qualities that an employer would wish to see. This concern seemed particularly pertinent where young people were at school and parents or young people thought that school saw work experience as though it was just something that had to be done:

I think that work experience is just a tick box exercise for school. He had two work experiences but instead of finding him something else to do they just sent him back to the same place the next year. (Parent)

- 4.33 Those who were in contact with an ASD-specific employment support provider mentioned the benefit of having someone who could help them with the recruitment process including help understanding the requirements of the role, filling in the application forms, being able to do mock interviews, getting feedback and learning to cope with rejection:

They have helped me get the confidence to apply for and cope with the application process including the interviews. (Young man with ASD)

As it's all online now, it's not always clear what the job role is as they don't explain the work fully and how things are set up there. It's often too wordy and too formal so I struggle to tailor my CV. I need to talk to someone to find out what is involved and preferably to see the workplace too. If it's too formal then it won't suit me. (Young man with ASD)

- 4.34 Two young people who had been on an ASD-specific preparation for work course said that they had learnt more about their

condition and had found the drop in and one-to-one meetings around applying for work very helpful.

- 4.35 Quite a few of the young people had additional learning difficulties such as ADHD, dyslexia or dyspraxia and others mentioned the difficulty they had with being organised and staying focused on the task in hand. Time keeping and pacing themselves could be quite a challenge even in terms of staying focussed on job seeking:

They [pan-disability Work Choice provider] keep in touch with me by email and I nearly always forget to check because I get started on games and everything goes out of my head. (Young man with ASD)

- 4.36 From what young people told us, it was not clear how much the ESPs with whom they were working had helped them find strategies to overcome their organisational challenges. Other research (Allen et al, 2012; Gentry et al, 2012; Precin, 2010) suggests that the creative use of assistive technologies may provide the discreet prompts that are required.

- 4.37 Not all of the young people had received support from an ESP to search for work. In fact thirteen said one of their main sources of support at this stage was their family and in some cases, their friends. Whilst families can be very helpful and supportive, they are rarely in a position to be able to provide the structured job-seeking input and sensitive feedback that young people with ASD may need at this stage. In addition, formal support providers will be able to seek feedback from prospective employers in ways that families are unlikely to be able to do (for example in terms of getting feedback after an unsuccessful interview). The interview extract below gives a flavour of the issues involved when young people lacked access to formal support:

Interviewer: What types of jobs have you applied for?

Young man with ASD: In shops.

Parent: He has also applied for jobs in a recycling plant and as a cleaner. We have handed out lots of CVs. We haven't heard anything back though. We have been into some shops where they say that they won't accept CVs and they tell you they will just put the CVs in the bin.

Young man with ASD: There's no point trying – what's the point. I never hear anything.
 Parent: He's taken the negative responses badly. I mean who wouldn't.
 Interviewer: Have you had an interview or test for a job?
 Young man with ASD: Yes, two. They never phoned me back.
 Interviewer: How did it go? Did you get any feedback?
 Parent: I took him to the interviews and went into the building with him. He went in alone and sat with the manager. When I asked him how they went he said "Ok, we just chatted about me and what I like to do". He finds interviews difficult – he finds meeting new people difficult and talking to strangers hard. He has difficulty expressing himself. And for some questions he will just answer "yes" or "OK" as he likes to agree with people. The managers at both interviews say that they would phone him to let him know, but they never have.

Barriers to keeping a job

4.38 As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, thirteen young people had some form of paid or voluntary work. Two of the young people were working full time. The table below shows the types of role they were undertaking.

Table 9: Employment details of young people with ASD included in the research who were in paid or unpaid work

Work status	Job held	Hours per week
Full time paid	School teacher and p/t university lecturer	40+
	Bank worker	37
Part time paid	Retail worker	5-10
	Library assistant	12
	Freelance speaker/writer on autism	Variable
	Freelance speaker/writer on autism	Variable
	Freelance artist	Variable
	Stadium kiosk attendant	10
Unpaid	Dog walker/groomer	2-4
	Credit union assistant	10
	Primary school play-worker	4-6
	Youth club worker	12 (24 in school holidays)
	Sports coach	2

4.39 For six of these young people, work and volunteering opportunities had been found by family and friends rather than through ESPs, once again highlighting the central role that families play. None of the young people in employment (paid or unpaid) reported having found work via Jobcentre Plus. Two said they had found their current position via the internet and another

two quoted either a pan-disability or ASD-specific ESP who had helped.

Social barriers

- 4.40 Dealing with social aspects of a work place can be very difficult for many young people with ASD. Three people mentioned the difficulty they had in terms of communicating with people who are confrontational as the following quotation illustrates:

Confrontational or critical behaviour from colleagues causes me upset. I am very aware of boundaries and become concerned when I feel other people have crossed mine. (Young woman with ASD)

- 4.41 Worries about someone confronting them meant that some aspects of work were seen as particularly difficult:

I worry about asking customers for their ID [in relation to the sale of alcohol]. (Young man with ASD)

- 4.42 Using the phone also caused stress for several people, especially if calls were expected to be conducted in a set amount of time.

They tried to make it possible for me to take more time on the phone but then they decided they wanted consistency of customer experience [i.e. time limited] so that put pressure on me again and the feedback was that my communication suffered. (Young man with ASD)

- 4.43 This person had received a significant amount of help from a number of mainstream and specialist ESPs to help him get his needs understood in the workplace and for the business to make the reasonable adjustments required. He was appreciative of this support although it did not lead to the changes hoped for. At the time of the interview, he was receiving support from an ASD-specific provider that involved both advocacy around his existing job and help to think about future work options.

Cognitive barriers

- 4.44 Some of the same issues that affected people seeking work were also evident in the work place. For example, difficulties with keeping focused and organised meant that work was sometimes stressful:

I get stressed - I find it hard to multi-task. Sometimes I need to be reminded of what's needed. (Young woman with ASD)

- 4.45 Young people emphasised the need for clear, direct instructions and the importance of encouragement from others to see tasks through to the end.

It's a very relaxed environment [at work] which suits me. They explain things very clearly and demonstrate and talk things through. It's very sociable and people chat a lot which I like. (Young man with ASD)

I often get tired of practising a speech and don't want to keep on doing it. I need someone to encourage me to keep going. I don't always know how to answer people when they comment on the internet, my mum helps me but I would like to learn how to do it myself. (Young man with ASD)

Sensory barriers

- 4.46 A small number of young people or their families talked explicitly about sensory issues with noise, smells, dealing with the public, a fear of germs or a need for a lot of personal space. These are just a few quotes that give a sense of their concerns:

I don't like it if people move my stuff, borrow things or touch me. (Young woman with ASD)

I experience moderate to severe levels of OCD [stress triggered] which manifests itself as a phobia of germs so I find it very difficult to use the toilet. (Young woman with ASD)

His anxiety is at the core of his problems but it was not addressed or understood. For example, he travelled to school in a taxi and the drivers often smoked and talked loudly on a mobile and that caused him a huge amount of anxiety. (Parent)

Workplace stress and anxiety

- 4.47 We asked young people who were working or volunteering whether anything about work made them feel uncomfortable, worried, upset or cross: seven said 'yes', four said 'no' and two said 'don't know'. For those that said yes, their responses were summarised as follows:

- Confrontational or critical behaviour from colleagues
- Anxiety – generalised, and in relation to key triggers: noise, dealing with the public, hygiene/using toilets, using the phone
- Getting to and from work

- Unfamiliar or non-routine tasks
- Multi-tasking
- Keeping ASD a secret from work colleagues
- Having to keep explaining ASD to work colleagues
- Fatigue/tiredness.

4.48 Three young people had formal help in the form of counselling to deal with their anxieties; for two of these the support was offered by an ASD-specific service. In two cases, anxiety had led to physical problems such as headaches and necessitated therapies to deal with the symptoms. Where these interventions were available, they were appreciated. However, some young people were reliant on family or partners to help them learn to cope with their difficulties.

I know if something is wrong within a minute of her getting home. For example, she needs personal space and she will talk to me about it - we try to control the impact of her condition ourselves. (Husband of a young woman with ASD)

4.49 Other young people had devised their own strategies for coping with workplace stress and anxiety:

My colleagues are very helpful and supportive of everything. I can alternate floors of the building if it gets too busy on one floor. I can move to a quieter floor as and when it works for the team. When things get very busy and I am juggling 3 or 4 things at once, it can be a bit stressful. I do enjoy being on the front desk but if there are lots of customers with queries it can be too busy. I sometimes take myself off to the book store room for a breather - it's nice there if things are getting bothersome. Or you can take yourself off to do some quiet tasks like dealing with returns that need to go back to other libraries. (Young man with ASD)

Transport to and from work

4.50 As we have reported earlier, practical issues such as travelling to work could be a barrier to keeping a job and six young people were reliant on family members or a support worker to get them there because of their problems with using public transport. Three young people did however use the bus or train, one drove himself to work and three chose to walk. Several of the young people who were not currently working reported having received travel

training through a pan-disability or ASD-specific employment support programme or service.

Did the young people have anyone to support them at work?

4.51 For the thirteen young people who were in paid or unpaid work, nine said that they had someone in the work setting who could offer support. Two young people were not sure, and two said they had no support in the workplace. In one case, the young person had chosen not to disclose her diagnosis of Asperger syndrome to one of her employers (although the other was aware of her condition). Most of those who did have support were receiving help informally from relatives or co-workers (n=5), but three had job coach input and one young person had Access to Work funding to pay a support worker to help him with his freelance business. However, this was only partially successful because the support worker was not always available when needed owing to the role involving variable hours and the supporter having another job.

4.52 All of the young people who had support from job coaches were very positive about the difference it had made in terms of job success. ASD-specific providers offered two job coaches and one job coach was based at a pan-disability service which had developed ASD-specific support. Conversely, in one case, the lack of timely job coach support led to a work placement breaking down in the first two days.

I was put straight on the tills on day one in my first placement - it only lasted two days as it was too stressful without job coach input. (Young man with ASD)

4.53 Only two of the young people had employers who had made reasonable adjustments in the workplace and one said that it was difficult for employers to understand what such adjustments would look like given that ASD is a hidden disability:

Because my disability is unseen, they don't respond well, they constantly compare me to my non disabled peers. They promise the

earth [by way of support and adjustments] but never follow through.
(Young man with ASD)

- 4.54 Several of the young people who were in work valued the support they currently received from ASD-specific providers and were clear that they would need continued access to such support in the longer term.

I will always need a support worker or light touch mentor - someone to fall back on – a safety net. (Young man with ASD)

It's someone there to call on when needed, a point of contact, someone who is on your side. (Young man with ASD)

For the young people who were fortunate to access ASD-specific support, several talked about being taken 'under the wing' of the organisation and about the comfort and stability this degree of support provided to enable them to stay in work, despite numerous barriers. However, all of the three ASD-specific services in Wales are run on shoestring budgets, with no long-term certainty, and without their input, there would be no clear mechanism for providing future support to several of the young people who were holding down paid work. Indeed, we were only aware of one young person who had Access to Work funding despite three others being in work and having a job coach. No one had been encouraged to think about the use of direct payments for funding this long term support and we were only aware of one family who had been offered direct payments to set up a bespoke package for their son (which they had declined).

- 4.55 For those not receiving support from an ASD-specific ESP, the notion of on-going support was much less likely as services tended to be short-term interventions and any on-going support that might be available from Jobcentre Plus seems to have been variable. For those young people accessing Work Choice, there is the potential for follow up support once they start working but only two of the young people involved in this research had accessed Work Choice.

- 4.56 Several young people acknowledged that their families were pivotal to their working and indeed overall, the role of families in supporting their sons and daughter to consider, seek and keep employment was central, particularly where other support was lacking.

My mum is the driving force behind everything for me. From getting me diagnosed to helping me earn my own money and stopping me getting bored and depressed. Even when she retires in 2016, she has again created employment for me by setting up another business. (Young man with ASD)

My family have helped me a lot – without their help I would not have work. (Young man with ASD)

Self-employment as an alternative to being an employee

- 4.57 Three of the young people included in this research were self-employed. All of them had made an active choice to set up their own businesses as a means of achieving more flexibility in their working lives. Self-employment was seen as an attractive option because it allowed people to overcome some of the barriers they might experience in many work settings. One young man, for example, explained that he experiences anxiety about travel, has difficulty learning new things, lacks awareness of hazards, can be disinhibited in his behaviour and often sleeps badly. However, through self-employment, with support, he can work more at his own pace and in his own way. He said:

If I didn't have my own business, these difficulties would get in the way....It has been really good running my own business, I am learning a lot of new skills. I feel really good to have a job. (Young man with ASD)

- 4.58 For all three of the self-employed young people, family support was crucial to the success of their small businesses. None of them had received any direct access to enterprise support, although one young person had been referred, by an ASD-specific ESP, to an organisation (Business in Focus) that could help in this regard. The quotations below give a sense of the degree of support and input that families were providing:

I need small business support - help with the money side of things and to write a business plan. I need to apply for small grants. Mum is very involved and supportive at all levels and aware of the support I can access. (Young woman with ASD)

Access to Work pays for a support worker to take me to my speeches but my mum handles the backup, helps me prepare talks. I need support to manage phone calls and reply to some emails. My dad manages the money side of the business. (Young man with ASD)

What is helping young people with ASD to get jobs and stay in work?

4.59 The material presented in this chapter has given an overview of the barriers to considering, seeking and keeping employment experienced by the young people involved in the research. All individuals with ASD had a different pathway to employment and required variable levels of support. Some individual, anonymised case studies of different young people's pathways to employment are given in Appendix E. With reference to these case studies and the data presented in this chapter, it is possible to draw out some key themes about the sorts of support that was making a difference to the young people and families included in the research and these are now summarised below:

- Realistic, work-focussed careers advice at transition, from an adviser who understands the employment support needs of a young person with ASD and appreciates the likely barriers to positive progression
- Having access to work experience placements that were matched to young people's vocational interests or goals as a way of either ruling out certain jobs or motivating young people to pursue an allied career
- Support to make suitable job choices where an individual can play to personal strengths whilst avoiding things that are likely to be stressful - this is likely to be a local job in a not too pressured working environment
- Having supportive, understanding, colleagues including a line manager who understands ASD and who is prepared to make reasonable adjustments
- Being supported by a third party to disclose ASD to a sympathetic employer

- Travel training and support with travel as fear of using public transport could be a barrier to applying for and keeping jobs
- Being able to avoid situations that trigger anxiety and having a place at work to escape to when things overwhelm
- Having access to counselling for work-related anxiety/depression– this may be needed at all stages of the process from considering work to being in work
- Self-employment offered some people the flexibility they needed and avoids some of the key barriers to working
- Having a family that is keen for the young person to work and who is able to give advice and support
- On-going support and contact with an ASD-aware ESP who could provide access to a job coach, mentoring, counselling and a ‘safety net’ – this may be relatively ‘light-touch’ (via text contact or one-off meetings) or more intensive (via focussed training, or in-work support)
- Having in-work benefits advice for the whole family not just the young person so that it is clear what the impact of a particular job would be on the household income
- The importance of young people being encouraged to ‘think positive’ rather than feel a failure as it may take some time to find a vocational focus and paid employment. Arguably, this may be because the support they receive is not sufficiently focused but some families and young people were clear that a slower, less pressured pace often worked better for them.

It’s taken a long time, but I’m glad I can say I’m finally there. It’s a good place to be. (Young person, aged 28, who has recently been appointed to a part time paid job in an area of work he enjoys)

Summary

- 4.60 This research has identified that young people had mixed experiences of support from mainstream and pan-disability providers, except when the support has been specialised to meet their ASD-specific needs. In contrast, the young people receiving support from ASD-specific providers were consistently positive about their experiences and interactions with these specialist providers.

4.61 Many young people were still experiencing a range of barriers to employment, including:

- Lack of follow-up to work experience placements, or linking of these to vocational discussions and development of CVs or personal profiles
- Variable access to pre-vocational and vocational training that met their ASD-specific needs
- Lack of benefits or 'better off in work' advice for the whole family leading to concerns for family financial well-being if the young person took up employment
- Variable access to and quality of Jobcentre Plus services, including DEAs
- Concerns about employer attitudes and discrimination
- Unresolved issues relating to the job seeking and recruitment process
- Unresolved issues relating to social, cognitive and sensory barriers in the workplace
- Workplace stress and anxiety
- Variation in access to job coaching or in-work mentoring for all those in work
- Lack of support, advice and information for those young people who were self-employed
- Variation in access to on-going support for employment-related needs.

4.62 The importance of disclosing an ASD appeared to be key to meeting individual support needs, both in terms of accessing appropriate support to consider and seek work, and also in terms of keeping a job. However, the comments from young people highlighted that disclosure is a sensitive issue which must be carefully supported on an individual level. For those young people with access to an ASD-specific ESP, disclosure was an issue with which they could seek help, discussion and support. It was not evident if similar support was available from the mainstream or pan-disability providers with which young people were in contact.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 The aim of the research was to investigate the extent and nature of employment outcomes and barriers to employment for young people with ASD living in Wales. The key objectives were:

- To map the extent to which young people with ASD living in Wales secure employment
- To identify the barriers to employment faced by this group of young people
- To document which of these barriers are being reduced or overcome in Wales currently and which are not
- To identify and document initiatives in Wales and elsewhere which are working effectively to overcome or reduce barriers to employment for young people with ASD
- To consider how any un-addressed barriers might realistically be reduced or overcome.

Conclusions: responses to the research objectives

To map the extent to which young people with ASD living in Wales secure employment

5.2 The data presented in this report suggest that employment rates⁴³ for young people with ASD, three to nine months after leaving formal education in Wales, are currently in the region of:

- **0.4 per cent for school leavers aged 16**
(based on a total cohort size of 275)
- **0 per cent for school leavers aged 18**
(based on a total cohort size of 115)
- **8 per cent for FE college leavers aged 16 to 24**
(based on a total cohort size of 125)
- **35 per cent for HEI leavers aged 18 and over**
(based on a total aggregated cohort size of less than 50).

⁴³ Full time, part time or self-employed.

5.3 These figures contrast with employment rates for the general population as follows:

- **1.6 per cent for all school leavers aged 16**
(based on a total cohort size of 34,935)
- **9.8 per cent for all school leavers aged 18**
(based on a total cohort size of 13,075)
- **18 per cent for all FE college leavers aged 16 to 24**
(based on a total cohort size of 28,205)
- **62 per cent for all HEI leavers aged 18 and over**
(cohort size not available).

5.4 It is important to be mindful of the completeness and quality of the LLWR data, in particular. Nor is it clear if young people with ASD in Wales are more or less likely to be employed than other groups of young disabled people: investigation of this issue was outside the scope of this research.

To identify the barriers to employment faced by this group of young people

5.5 Young people with ASD living in Wales face the same, significant and specific, range of barriers as those identified by the literature review which include wide-ranging barriers to considering, seeking and keeping employment. Providers of employment support thus have a duty to (a) identify young people with ASD as clients; and (b) tailor their services to meet young people's ASD-specific employment needs.

To document which of these barriers are being reduced or overcome in Wales currently and which are not

5.6 The research confirmed that, even for those young people who had access to support from an ESP (WBL, mainstream, pan-disability or ASD-specific), many were still experiencing a range of barriers to employment, including:

- Lack of follow-up to work experience placements, or linking of these to vocational discussions and development of CVs or personal profiles

- Variable access to pre-vocational and vocational training that met their ASD-specific needs
- Lack of benefits or 'better off in work' advice for the whole family leading to concerns for family financial well-being if the young person took up employment
- Variable access to and quality of Jobcentre Plus services, including DEAs
- Concerns about employer attitudes and discrimination
- Unresolved issues relating to the job seeking and recruitment process
- Unresolved issues relating to social, cognitive and sensory barriers in the workplace
- Workplace stress and anxiety
- Variation in access to job coaching or in-work mentoring for all those in work
- Lack of support, advice and information for those young people who were self-employed
- Variation in access to **on-going** support for employment-related needs.

5.7 The importance of disclosing an ASD appeared to be key to meeting individual support needs, both in terms of accessing appropriate support to consider and seek work, and also in terms of keeping a job. For those young people with access to an ASD-specific ESP, disclosure was an issue with which they could seek help, discussion and support. It was not evident if similar support was available from the WBL, mainstream or pan-disability providers with which young people were in contact.

To identify and document initiatives in Wales and elsewhere which are working effectively to overcome or reduce barriers to employment for young people with ASD

5.8 Analysis from the online survey and published evidence from the evidence review showed that pan-disability and ASD-specific services were more likely to be offering a level of support sufficient to address the specific barriers to employment faced by young people with ASD

5.9 A few providers in Wales (and elsewhere) have developed ASD-specific, or ASD-aware support, designed to meet the individual needs for employment support that these young people have, and, in some cases, to offer advice and training on ASD-related employment issues to other organisations⁴⁴. Common features of these initiatives include:

- Employment support which is personalised to the needs of the young person
- Vocational profiling and careful job analysis and placement
- Help with job searching, personal presentation and interview skills
- On-going (light-touch and more intensive as needed, in-work training and mentoring from support workers and job coaches who have a good understanding of the specific needs of people with ASD and who are able to advise and educate employers and supervisors.

5.10 Overall, there were mixed experiences of support from WBL, mainstream and some pan-disability providers, except when (in the case of one provider) the support has been specialised to meet their ASD-specific needs. In contrast, the young people receiving support from ASD-specific providers were consistently positive about their experiences and interactions with these specialist providers. These points highlight the need for ASD-aware employment support, whoever the provider.

5.11 Many ESPs were keen and willing to work with young people with ASD, but felt that they lacked the skills, knowledge and training to do so with confidence. This apparent willingness, and the range of employment support they currently offer, provides an encouraging foundation on which WBL, mainstream and some pan-disability providers could be enabled and trained to expand

⁴⁴ See Appendix D for more details about the initiatives in Wales; details about initiatives outside of Wales are in the separately published evidence review.

and personalise their offer to better meet the needs of young people with ASD.

How might un-addressed barriers to employment for young people with ASD be reduced or overcome?

Recommendation 1: Secure, support and evaluate the few ASD-specific employment providers currently operating in Wales and explore how best to ensure wider access to ASD-specific and ASD-aware employment support

5.12 Findings from this research highlighted the need for wider access to ASD-specific and/or ASD-aware employment support. Some examples of such services are given in Appendix D. As ‘hubs’ of expertise and knowledge, and regular providers of training and advice to mainstream services, it is important that these initiatives are publicised amongst the employment support provider network and enabled to share their good practice more widely. The outcomes for young people, families and professionals also need to be evaluated and documented more consistently so that the benefits of these services can be more clearly understood in terms of impact on quality of life, employment outcomes and value for money. This area would benefit from further research attention.

5.13 As part of its commitment to improving employment opportunities for young people with ASD, the Welsh Government should take an invest-to-save approach to ensure that the good practice, knowledge and experience held by the few ASD-specific ESPs currently operating in Wales is, at the very least, safely secured and not left prone to the vagaries of short-term, project-based funding. There may be various routes and options for achieving this in practice, which would benefit from further discussion and exploration with the organisations concerned. There may also be possibilities for developing and extending the reach and scope of ASD-specific and/or ASD-aware employment provision across Wales, but clearly this will be dependent on the extent and nature

of resources available. At the very least, WBL, mainstream and pan-disability providers already working with young people with ASD should be enabled, through appropriate training and input from ASD specialists, to feel confident about providing ASD-aware employment support as part of their existing offer.

Recommendation 2: Explore how best to enhance the potential of WBL programmes and other mainstream providers to offer employment-related support and training to young people with ASD

- 5.14 Mainstream WBL programmes offer un-tapped potential for young people (particularly school leavers) with ASD. Providers of WBL programmes may claim ‘additional learning support’ funding from the Welsh Government to assist them with the costs of making their provision accessible to young people with additional learning needs (including ASD). Additionally, the Traineeships and Steps to Employment/Work-Ready programmes have recently been able to extend the maximum amount of time a learner can spend on the programme and to link activities to experience in work, rather than formal qualifications. Jobs Growth Wales includes a ‘supported strand’ that is delivered through third sector providers to assist those young people who need a more supported employment environment. There is currently no information available about the extent to which any of these options are being used to enable young people with ASD to access WBL programmes, and routes for accessing additional funding and support appear not to be well-understood by providers.
- 5.15 The research has highlighted that many providers are keen to extend their provision to those with ASD but may lack the skills and knowledge to do so effectively; and/or may be unsure about how best to mitigate the risks inherent when attracting a group whose outcomes may not meet targets. There is evidence from this research, and from Estyn’s review of Traineeships and Steps to Employment (2013) that (a) not all learners disclose issues which affect the identification of barriers; (b) some referring

agencies do not pass on sufficient information about clients' support needs to WBL providers; (c) referring agencies do not always have clear information about what WBL programmes offer and which are most suitable. These issues will need exploration and discussion with relevant Welsh Government officers, DWP representatives, mainstream providers and their representative bodies (National Training Federation for Wales, Colleges Wales and the Wales Council for Voluntary Action) and ASD-specific providers (as potential providers of advice and training).

Recommendation 3: Explore how best to facilitate and implement an ideal pathway to employment for young people with ASD, from Year 9, through transition and onwards into adulthood

5.16 The research has confirmed and clarified the key barriers to employment and how these can be overcome effectively through on-going, careers focussed, ASD-specific support, from Year 9 of schooling onwards into adulthood.

5.17 The 'ideal pathway to employment for young people with ASD' (see Appendix F) represents a mechanism whereby many of the core issues highlighted by this research could be addressed, including those listed in paragraph 5.6. It should also be linked to the Welsh Government's new plans for a 'Pathway to Work' for 16-17 year olds as part of the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (Welsh Government, 2013). The precise ways in which such a pathway for young people with ASD could be implemented and monitored need further discussion and exploration, but options might include:

- Ensuring that all young people diagnosed or recognised as having an ASD have access to a named transition key worker⁴⁵ who themselves (a) is ASD-aware; and (b) can work in partnership with an ESP who has the necessary skills in this area

⁴⁵ New proposals as part of the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework include the offer of a lead worker to young people most at risk of becoming NEET.

- Considering how best to facilitate the provision of job coaching for young people with ASD undertaking work experience placements at school, at college and post-education
- Ensuring on-going, regular training on ASD-specific employment issues continues to be available to all Careers Wales advisers and all Jobcentre Plus advisers
- Ensuring that all Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus advisers have access to adequate information about local options and pathways to employment for young people with ASD, including all relevant WBL options, other mainstream, pan-disability and ASD-specific programmes and services, and relevant benefits to support disabled young people in and out of work (see Appendix C)
- Creating a clear system for keyworkers to 'refer on' to local authority social services, or ASD community mentoring and support services, once a young person has reached age 25 or earlier if appropriate and for any employment-support needs to be documented with forward action planning agreed
- Ensuring that any ESPs contracted to deliver government or ESF funded programmes/projects (where there is a remit to support disabled young people into employment), have an adequate skill-set and funding model by which to facilitate inclusion of young people with ASD. This includes current, and future, contracted providers of the Work Programme and Work Choice
- Establishing mechanisms for ASD-specific ESPs to provide regular training, advice and consultancy to mainstream and pan-disability ESPs to ensure that delivery staff remain up-skilled and up-dated and that ASD-specific support is replicated more widely
- Considering the possibility of a requirement to sub-contract, where the skill-set of a provider organisation is not deemed adequate to deliver appropriate employment support to clients with ASD – this would also ensure that the expertise of ASD-specific services remains available to those who need it
- Considering the use of direct payments to fund employment support for those who are eligible for this type of support –

the proposed Social Services and Well-being Bill (Wales) is advocating the extended use of direct payments across a range of support possibilities and there may still be scope to feed into the consultation process for the Bill.

Recommendation 4: Maintain a focus on improving and monitoring employment outcomes for young people with ASD

- 5.18 There is a need to maintain the current momentum centred on the issue of improving employment outcomes for young people with ASD. It may be helpful for a Welsh Government officer to take lead responsibility for co-ordinating ASD-related employment actions at national level and to ensure active communication and collaboration between key stakeholders and partners, of which there are many. Many opportunities exist for positive and fruitful partnerships at local and national levels, but these will need supporting and directing to ensure they are working together to meet nationally agreed objectives.
- 5.19 The existing ASD infrastructure presents many opportunities: local employment leads might be one option, for instance. The two new websites created as a result of actions from the ASD Strategic Action Plan (www.asdinfowales.co.uk and www.autismrpphub.com) offer structured hubs for sharing information and resources about national and local services, policies and good practice. It may also be helpful to share case studies of successful pathways to employment, in order to support the Wales Autism Employment Ambassador's on-going work with employers, and to show-case what is possible and achievable for individual young people with ASD, given access to the right support.

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Appendix A Research design and methodology

A.1 The research was conducted from November 2012 to October 2013 and involved three main phases:

- A scoping stage which involved informal interviews with key stakeholder; secondary analysis of national statistics on employment outcomes for young people with ASD; and an evidence review to highlight barriers to employment for young people with ASD and how these might be addressed
- A practice survey and follow-up research with mainstream, pan-disability and ASD-specific employment support services currently operating in Wales in order to understand the extent to which they are able to address the key barriers to employment for young people with ASD
- Interviews and survey work with young people with ASD and their families to understand more about the lived experience of securing, or trying to secure, employment after leaving formal education, the nature of support received and the different this made to any employment outcomes achieved.

Scoping work

A.2 The purpose of the scoping work was to talk to key individuals and organisations involved in research, practice and policy relating to employment support and/or young people. We conducted 14 informal, non-attributable interviews with stakeholders from government, statutory, third sector and private sector organisations, as well as with organisations representing young people with ASD and their families. Scoping interviews were not audio-recorded, although extensive written notes were taken. Through the interviews, we sought to scope the availability of relevant datasets, understand policy and practice issues, and highlight formal and grey literature and initiatives for inclusion in the evidence review. Questions and topics covered in the scoping interviews included:

- Details of the work or initiative in which the informant is involved and how it is delivered to young people with ASD.
- How young people are referred to the project, or how they find about it. For research, how the sample was identified.
- The informant's perceptions of the main barriers experienced by young people with ASD who are seeking employment. Once in work, what continued problems and barriers do young people with ASD face?
- Their thoughts on how these barriers might be overcome, or reduced. If relevant, how their work, project or research is tackling these. Are there any key things that are particularly effective for this group of young people (i.e.: what is working best)?
- Their thoughts on any other initiatives/research of which we should be aware.

A.3 The scoping interviews outlined above took part at the beginning of the research. Towards the end of the research, we conducted five additional scoping interviews with relevant staff working in the further education and higher education sectors, in order to understand better the role played by FEI and HEIs in supporting young people with ASD into employment.

Evidence review

A.4 The purpose of the evidence review was to:

- Establish the context for the current study in terms of past research and current/recent policy in Wales
- Document the factors that make transition to employment difficult for young people with ASD and the continued barriers that they face once in work
- Identify specific initiatives which have, to date, proven to be effective in helping to reduce/overcome these barriers
- Map the current status of provision available within Wales to support young people with ASD to make the transition to employment and to retain their jobs.

A.5 There were two strands to the search strategy for the evidence review:

- Systematic search of key bibliographic databases
- Search for grey literature, web-based resources and other unpublished material including policy documents which are relevant to this study.

Systematic search of key bibliographic databases

A.6 We ran searches for all publications relating to employment and young people with ASD, since 2001, in English only (to include all English using countries, not just the UK), using the following databases:

- International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS) – includes ERIC, Sociological Abstracts, Social Services Abstracts and British Periodicals
- Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) on Web of Science
- Autism Data
- PsychINFO.

A.7 We conducted systematic searches using the following search string:

autis* OR asperger* OR ASD OR ASC
AND
employ* OR work* OR job*

A.8 Inclusion criteria for tagging search records included:

- English language version available
- Reference dated between 2001 and 2012
- The study should specifically state that it included people with ASD.

A.9 Hits per search were recorded and summarised in Table 10 below and those assessed suitable for inclusion were tagged and the abstracts read in full. Publications identified for inclusion in the evidence review were obtained electronically via Metalib's 'Get it!' service which covers the majority of the journals covered

by the databases above. Due to the timescale and budget for this research, it was not possible to obtain material that was not available electronically, or which had to be paid for over and above access via Metalib.

Table 10: Summary of systematic searches conducted relating to employment and young people with ASD

Name of database	Number of hits	Number tagged and abstract read	Number read in full Includes duplicates	Number included in review Includes duplicates
IBSS	122	24	14	14
SSCI	1,294	33	23	23
Autism Data	323	19	19	24
PsychINFO	4,208	353 2012 publications only	7	7

A.10 An additional nine articles were obtained as a result of scanning the reference lists of items read in full. Once duplicate items had been taken into account (i.e.: items which were tagged in two or more databases) 59 publications were read in full. Of these, 56 were included in the review as three were not relevant.

A.11 For each article, key data were extracted relating to:

- Type of research study or programme/initiative
- Its aims and objectives
- Research or delivery methods and geographical location
- Date the study or programme/initiative took place
- Sample details – numbers, age, gender, ethnicity, location, etc
- How was the sample selected or how were participants identified?
- Nature of barriers to employment documented by the study/initiative

- If relevant, how these were reduced/overcome for young people with ASD
- Other outcomes and benefits for young people with ASD
- Stated limitations or gaps in evidence
- Any other gaps or limitations noted by reviewer.

Search for grey literature, web-based resources, other unpublished material and relevant policy documents

A.12 In addition to the systematic search and review of formal literature, we also searched for ‘grey’ material, held in reports, on websites, or unpublished form to ensure that recent UK wide policy and practice developments were considered and explored. In practice, this involved searching the websites of relevant UK government departments, relevant statutory and voluntary organisations and networks, and Google searches using free-text search terms. We also drew on the team’s existing networks in this field and followed up leads from scoping interviews.

Secondary analysis of national statistics

A.13 We conducted work to establish and source statistical data needed to inform the research. Data sources included: Pupil Level Annual Schools Census (PLASC), Independent Schools Census, Children in Need Census, Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR), Higher Education Statistics Agency’s Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education survey (DLHE) and the Careers Wales Destinations Survey. We received the datasets by mid-April 2013.

Table 11: Summary of data requests submitted

Name of dataset	Data held by	Detail of data requests
Pupil Level Annual Schools Census (PLASC)	WG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of pupils with ASD as their primary recorded major special educational need (Statemented, School Action and School Action Plus), by year from Year 11 to 14, at January 2012, in maintained schools in Wales. • Number of pupils with ASD as their secondary recorded major special educational need (Statemented, School Action and School Action Plus), in Years 11 to 14, at January 2012, in maintained schools in Wales. • School-level analysis for the two queries above – i.e.: number of pupils with ASD listed per school, with names of schools provided.
Independent Schools Census	WG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of statemented pupils with ASD as their primary recorded major special educational need, aged 16+, or by year group where possible, at January 2012, in non-maintained schools in Wales. • Number of statemented pupils with ASD as their secondary recorded major special educational need, aged 16+, or by year group where possible, at January 2012, in non-maintained schools in Wales. • School-level analysis for the two queries above – i.e.: number of pupils with ASD listed per school, with names of schools provided.
Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR)	WG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of learners with ASD as their primary type of disability and/or learning difficulty who had completed or terminated a learning programme by 31st July 2012, and their destination within three months of leaving • Number of learners with ASD as their secondary type of disability and/or learning difficulty who had completed or terminated a learning programme by 31st July 2012, and their destination within three months of leaving. • FEI-level analysis for the two queries above – i.e.: number of learners with ASD listed per FEI, plus destinations (where available), with names of FEIs provided.
Children In Need (CIN) Census	WG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of children with ASD, by gender, by local authority and by age, from age 16 upwards, at 31st March 2012.
Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education' (DLHE) survey	WG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Welsh domiciled leavers 2010/11 with ASD or a social/ communication impairment such as Asperger syndrome/other autistic spectrum disorder, BY: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Institution attended - Employment circumstances - Location of employment (UK by county/ Non-UK total)

Name of dataset	Data held by	Detail of data requests
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Standard Occupational Classification – 5 digit - Duration of employment - Salary – 5k bands (for those only with a first degree qualification entering full time paid employment) - How found job - April or January survey (April/ January) - Mode of qualification obtained (full time/ part time) - Level of qualification obtained (Postgraduate research/ Postgraduate taught/ First degree/ Other undergraduate) - Subject area
Pupil Destination Survey	Careers Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total cohort data on the destinations of Year 11, 12 and 13 learners with ASD.

Interviews and survey work with young people with ASD and their families

A.14 The purpose of this phase of the research was to collect qualitative data directly from up to 25 young people with ASD and family members in order to understand more about the lived experience of trying to secure employment after leaving school, college, university or elsewhere and the support provided. We were advised by the project steering group that young people with ASD may wish to provide information in a variety of formats and not necessarily face-to-face. With this in mind we designed a research approach that enabled young people to respond via a paper questionnaire, email, telephone, or face-to-face interview.

A.15 Our goal was to collect data about the individual experiences of up to 25 young people who had left education and were considering, seeking or were already in employment. We recognised that every young person would have a different pathway since leaving formal education and that their experiences of, and access to, employment support would vary. We thus sought to map the experiences of young people of different ages, different geographical locations, with different educational experiences and from different points on the autism

spectrum. With this mind, we approached potential participants by a number of routes:

- Via a sample of education leaving points (schools, FE colleges, ISCs and Universities)
- By targeting contacts through existing professional networks
- Via a sample of providers of employment support.

A.16 The education leaving point organisations approached were sampled with reference to the secondary analysis of these education sectors. Taking into account geographical distribution across Wales, we targeted those institutions that appeared to have the greatest number of leavers with ASD.

A.17 This sample included seven schools (three special, three secondary and one independent), six FEIs (four FE colleges, two ISCs), and three HEIs. We received positive responses from 13 of these organisations and our sample therefore included:

- Six schools (two special, three secondary and one independent)
- Six FEIs (four FE colleges, two ISCs)
- One HEI.

A.18 We contacted relevant staff at each of these 13 organisations and asked if they would be willing to (a) identify the number of leavers for the end of the academic year 2011/12; and (b) pass on an information pack about taking part in the research to each of these young people on our behalf. By the end of July 2013, 98 information packs (in Welsh and/or English) had been sent out to targeted young people. Each pack contained a freepost return envelope, an easy read questionnaire for the young person and a consent form to take part in a follow-up interview, and a letter and consent form for the young person's family inviting them to take part in an interview. We offered a £10 shopping voucher to both young people and families who were willing to take part in an interview. All participant research materials were translated into

Welsh and the options of conducting the interview in Welsh was offered to all participants.

- A.19 By the first week of September 2013, nine responses from young people and/or families were received, of which seven subsequently led to an interview with the young person, their family, or both. Six of these young people and/or families had also fully completed a questionnaire. In addition, one young person fully completed a questionnaire, but declined to take part in a follow-up interview. In early September 2013, the 13 education leaving points were re-contacted and asked to forward a short, reminder letter and freepost envelope to the targeted young people. They were asked to (a) complete the questionnaire if they still had it; (b) contact us if they had lost it and wanted another one; (c) return a contact form if they wanted to do an interview but not complete a questionnaire. An additional 92 reminder letters were issued, resulting in two questionnaires being returned and one additional interview with a young person and his parents.
- A.20 The second stage of the approach process involved making contact with targeted young people and families via existing professional networks. We drew on the contacts and expertise of the ASD adviser to the project who had previously worked as Head of Policy for Autism Cymru and led their Deis Cyfle project on employment for people with ASD. This identified a small sample of young people with ASD and families known to her, who met the project criteria and passed on information to them and their networks. As a result, four additional young people and families came forward to take part in interviews. We also worked with a special school teacher, previously known to us, who was conducting her own research with a group of school leavers with ASD. She agreed to pass on our project information to these five

young people, but despite a reminder, none of them consented to take part in the employment research.

A.21 The third stage of the approach process involved contacting a purposive sample of employment support providers responding to the survey who indicated that they were providing specific and targeted support to young people with ASD. Three ASD-specific providers of employment support, one pan-disability provider and one statutory mainstream provider were approached about the possibility of contacting young people with ASD with whom they worked, or had recently worked with. Four organisations responded positively and packs were forwarded to young people meeting the project criteria on our behalf. This exercise resulted in interviews with an additional 13 young people and/or families.

A.22 The easy read questionnaire was used by young people and families to return data to us directly, or as the basis for a topic guide for structured interviews, by telephone or face-to-face. We designed two versions of the questionnaire - text only, and text with pictures. Interviews with young people and families were informal, concrete and focused, and supported by the pictorial version of the questionnaire, as a topic guide, if needed. Interviews typically lasted 30 to 40 minutes and were audio recorded (with consent), or detailed notes were taken. The questionnaire/topic guide covered the following questions and topic areas:

- Demographical details– age, gender, post-code, place on autism spectrum
- Current situation – in FE, in HE, trying to find a job, doing WBL, doing a government programme, doing unpaid work, an internship or voluntary job, in a part time paid job, in a full time paid job, looking for extra work, self-employed/freelance, at an adult day centre, other situation
- Details of any paid or unpaid work currently being undertaken – place of work, job role, hours, how things are going, how

the work was obtained, whether the employer had made any reasonable adjustments, support at work, anything that makes working difficult, transport arrangements

- Details of desired employment if not in work
- Details of formal education and any employment-related support received whilst at school, college or university
- Details of job seeking activities and employment-related support, advice and training received since leaving formal education
- Support to find work – the best thing, the worst thing
- What was the hardest thing about finding work
- What other kinds of help were needed
- Any other comments.

A.23 By the end of October 2013 we had collected data on the employment pathways of 26 young people with ASD via questionnaire, telephone interview, face-to-face interview or a combination. This included data collected via ten fully completed questionnaires, 21 interviews with young people with ASD and 17 interviews with family members.

- For seven young people – we collected questionnaire data; young person interview data and family interview data
- For one young person – we have questionnaire data and family interview data
- For two young people – we have questionnaire data only
- For seven young people – we have young person interview data and family interview data
- For two young people – we have family interview data only
- For seven young people – we have young person interview data only.

A.24 Twenty-three of the young people included in the research were men, whilst three were women. The following tables provide some additional demographic details collected detailed data as part of this study.

Table 12: Education leaving points of young people with ASD included in the research

Leaving point	School	FEI	HEI	Total
Number of young people with ASD	13	8	5	26

Table 13: Geographical location of young people with ASD included in the research

Geographical location	South East Wales	Central and South Wales	South, West and Mid Wales	North Wales	Total
Number of young people with ASD	2	9	9	6	26

Table 14: Ages of the young people with ASD included in the research

Age band	16-17	18-19	20-22	23-25	26-28	29-33
Number of young people with ASD	6	8	5	2	2	3

Table 15: Place on autism spectrum of young people with ASD included in the research

Place on autism spectrum	Asperger syndrome	Autism	Autism or Asperger syndrome and learning disabilities	Total
Number of young people with ASD	10	5	11	26

Practice survey and follow-up research with providers of employment support to young people

A.25 The purpose of this phase was to conduct an online practice survey of post-education mainstream, generic disability and specialist ASD employment support services, in order to capture data on:

- The accessibility of the service or programme to young people with autism
- Numbers of young people with autism who have benefitted from the service
- The nature of the provision offered
- The types of barriers to employment addressed
- Where possible, an indication of the employment outcomes and other outcomes, for young people with ASD.

A.26 The survey was launched on 18th September 2013 and ran until the end of October 2013. The survey tool was designed to be quick and easy to complete, in either Welsh or English. Before entering any data, respondents were asked to read a short information sheet and to complete a compulsory consent form to indicate they understood the nature of the survey, the uses of the data, and their rights under the Data Protection Act. They were also able to click on a link to an endorsement letter for the study from the Welsh Government. The survey covered the following questions and topic areas:

- Name and type of organisation responding

- If different, name of employment-related programme or service offered to young people (organisations were asked to complete separate survey responses for each different programme or service they offered)
- Whether the programme or service worked with young people with ASD
- The nature of support, advice or training offered
- Details of the specific efforts made to help young people with ASD overcome barriers to employment
- Factors that make it hard and things that would make it easier to work with young people with ASD
- Numbers of young people with ASD accessing the service or programme
- Whether there were any staff with a specific role/responsibility for ASD
- Whether ASD-related training was provided or bought in for staff – when was this provided, by whom, what did it cover, who received it?
- Level of confidence in meeting the employment support needs of the young people with ASD worked with
- Whether the programme or service has any competence gaps in terms of working with young people with ASD?
- Whether the programme or service collected data on the employment outcomes, and other outcomes of young people it worked with
- Examples of the sorts of outcomes that young people with ASD achieve
- Any other comments.

A.27 An explanatory email with a link to the online tool was sent to 20 mainstream (including Careers Wales), 12 pan-disability and three ASD-specific providers of employment-related support, training and advice in Wales. It was also sent to 2012/13 contracted providers of Traineeships, Steps to Employment (now Work Ready), Apprenticeships and Jobs Growth Wales (n=40). In addition, it was cascaded to all Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) and Work Psychologists (n=45) by

the Welsh Government DWP lead for DEAs. Two targeted reminders were issued⁴⁶, and by the end of October 2013, 65 of the 120 separate organisations responded, giving an overall response rate to the survey of 54 per cent⁴⁷. The research targeted **post-education** providers of employment support only. Some further education institutions (FEIs) and higher education institutions (HEIs) were included as providers of work based learning and/or other mainstream employment support programmes. However, it was outside of the scope of this research to survey all FEIs, HEIs or schools with regard to their provision of careers advice and/or vocational and employment support and learning programmes for young people with ASD.

A.28 Many of the individual organisations we contacted were themselves providers of more than one service or programme. In these cases, we sent separate email links relating to each service or programme to try to encourage organisations to provide separate responses for each different type of provision. However, only a few did so; the majority provided information relating to the different programmes or services within one survey response. Once the data were cleaned and organised, this resulted in a set of 99 separate ‘ESP records’ relating to responses from 65 organisations. Each of the 99 records represented a separate response from an ESP in relation to a specific programme or service. A summary of the responses received, by provider type, and the number of separate programmes or services that were included in the analysis of the survey data is set out in the table below.

⁴⁶ We were unable to issue reminders to Jobcentre Plus respondents as we did not have direct access to their email addresses.

⁴⁷ Not including Jobcentre Plus respondents, for whom we had no direct contact information, the overall response rate for other respondents was much higher at 69 per cent.

Table 16: Overview of practice survey data collected and included in analysis

Type of employment support provider	Number of organisations invited to complete the survey	Number of individual organisations completing a survey	Number of organisations providing more than one programme or service	Number of separate programmes or services included in the analysis as records
Work based learning providers	40	28	13	60
Careers Wales	1	1	0	1
Work Programme	5	3	1	3
JCP	45	13	0	13
Non-statutory mainstream	14	8	3	10
Pan-disability and Work Choice providers	12	9	1	9
ASD-specific	3	3	0	3
Total	120	65	18	99

A.29 We also conducted some follow-up work (via telephone and face to face interviews) with a purposive sample of providers who responded to the survey that they were providing specific and targeted support to young people with ASD. Staff at six ESPs were interviewed about the support their service or programme offered, in order to clarify issues or gain supplementary information.

Data inputting and analysis

A.30 Interviews with young people and families were audio recorded (with consent) or detailed notes were taken. Anonymised data from interviews, and questionnaires that individual young people had completed, were then entered into a database, saved securely and backed up to a cloud server. Once all interviews

were completed and inputted, the data were downloaded as Excel files for quantitative and qualitative analysis.

- A.31 Respondents to the practice survey entered their own data, using the survey tool designed for this purpose. Once entered, survey data were uploaded automatically to a secure cloud server where they were stored for data analysis. When the survey closed, the data were downloaded as Excel files for quantitative and qualitative analysis. Any additional interviews conducted with ESPs to supplement their survey responses, were recorded digitally and transcribed, or by taking written notes. Qualitative material from interviews and the practice survey were analysed thematically using qualitative content analysis. Quantitative data were downloaded to Excel files for analysis of frequencies and descriptive statistics.

Appendix B Employment support programmes or services potentially available to young people with ASD in Wales in 2013

Table 17: Work based learning programmes available in Wales in 2013

Name of service or programme	Provider organisation	Area of Wales covered by the programme or service	Target client group	Services offered
Pathways to Apprenticeships	Welsh Government contracts to 16 FE colleges	All	Young people aged 16-25 not ready for a full apprenticeship.	This programme offers 2,000 one year work experience training programmes, based at 16 FE colleges throughout Wales and covering 10 employment pathways. Aims to equip young people with sector specific skills to enable them to progress onto a full apprenticeship.
Apprenticeships: 1. Foundation Apprenticeships 2. Apprenticeships 3. Higher Apprenticeships	Welsh Government contracts to 26 providers	All	Unemployed 16-24 year olds. Higher apprenticeships demand evidence of training and sector specific skills.	Jobs with training. Over 150 different work types available. Careers Wales website has vacancies and job matching service – the Apprenticeship Matching Service (AMS).
Young Recruits Programme	Welsh Government contracts to approx 2,000 companies	All	Unemployed 16-24 year olds and employers who can offer a high quality apprenticeship programme to additional young apprentices.	The programme is aimed at employers who would not normally be able to recruit and support an apprenticeship. The delivery of the apprenticeship is fully funded by WG with a wage subsidy to the employer of £50 per week for apprentice for 52 weeks. 2,000 places were available for the year 2012/13.

Name of service or programme	Provider organisation	Area of Wales covered by the programme or service	Target client group	Services offered
Traineeships: 1. Engagement 2. Level 1 3. Level 2 – Bridge to Employment	Welsh Government contracts to 16 providers	All	Unemployed 16-17 year olds (but can be up to 25) who have left school and are not in work or college.	A Traineeship is for young people aged 16-17 in Wales; although if you are aged 18 and have left school or college you could also apply. You will gain the skills you need to get a job or progress to further learning at a higher level such as an Apprenticeship or Further Education. Traineeships have three different levels to make sure that you get the support and backing you need to progress: 'Engagement', 'Level 1' and 'Level 2 - Bridge to Employment'. Areas covered: animal welfare, building, business administration, catering, child care, engineering, hairdressing, IT.
Jobs Growth Wales	Welsh Government contracts to 24 providers	All	Young people aged 16-24 who are job ready but have had difficulty securing employment.	This programme provides unemployed young people with a six month period paid a national minimum wage for a minimum of 25 hours a week. 4,000 jobs per year will be available under the scheme. Job vacancies are advertised through CV website. Includes supporting community-based job opportunities for young people who require a more intensive support in the work place.
Steps to Employment Programme (now known as Work Ready)	Welsh Government contracts to 14 providers	All	Unemployed adult learners aged 18 and over.	Aims to help unemployed adults access purposeful training and work experience opportunities in preparation for employment or further learning. It offers two strands of learning which focus on the requirements of the learner: (1) Work Focussed Learning, and (2) Routeways to Work.
Jobs Growth Wales Bursary	Welsh Government	All	Young people 16-24 looking to start their own business.	Provides a bursary of £6,000 and offers targeted activities and events to stimulate interest and participation in entrepreneurship.

Table 18: Mainstream employment support available in Wales in 2013

Name of service or programme	Provider organisation	Area of Wales covered by the service, support or initiative	Target client group	Services offered
Jobcentre Plus	Department for Work and Pensions	All	All	Disability Employment Advisers can offer one-to-one, work-related and benefits assessment and advice. They can help with benefits claims, job seeking, signpost to other organisations and refer on to government programmes such as Work Choice and the Work Programme. Work Psychologists are available in some Jobcentre Plus services who can offer in-work advice and support.
Careers Wales	Welsh Government	All	All young people aged 16 to 19. For young people with ASD: from age 14 to 25	Specialist advisers work with clients with learning difficulties and disabilities to provide careers information, advice and guidance, signposting careers pathways and support with applications for FE and HE courses and WBL. They also provide appropriate referral to other organisations and opportunities.
The Work Programme	Working Links Rehab JobFit (through a network of 10 local providers)	All	Unemployed working age adults.	The Work Programme provides tailored support for claimants who need more help to undertake active and effective job seeking. Participants receive support to overcome barriers that prevent them from finding and staying in work.

Name of service or programme	Provider organisation	Area of Wales covered by the service, support or initiative	Target client group	Services offered
Want 2 Work project	Jobcentre Plus	Want2Work currently covers 143 wards of the following LA areas: Torfaen; Caerphilly; RCT; Bridgend; NPT; Swansea, Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion; Isle of Anglesey; Gwynedd; Conwy; Denbighshire; Cardiff; Vale of Glamorgan; Newport	People claiming health-related benefits, lone parents, homemakers and those working less than 16 hours a week.	Joint project between Jobcentre Plus and WG, designed to help people overcome barriers finding work. Support from an adviser – includes awareness raising of benefits available and job seeking support, including access to training and funding. Aims to 'plug gaps' in mainstream employment programmes by creating additional labour market support opportunities in community locations (not Job Centres).
Bridges Into Work	Torfaen LA	Torfaen; Caerphilly; RCT; Bridgend; Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil	People aged 16-65 who are economically inactive, including those who are unemployed or on incapacity benefit, and not already on Work Choice or the Work Programme.	Offers free courses and access to advice and guidance form a team of Learner Support Officers. Also job related training, confidence building, IT courses, basic skills, etc Also work clubs offering careers advice, support with job searches, CV writing, personal presentation skills for interviews, etc. Additional support for people facing barriers to work such as work limiting health conditions_and childcare needs.

Name of service or programme	Provider organisation	Area of Wales covered by the service, support or initiative	Target client group	Services offered
Potensial	Gwynedd LA	North West Wales	Young people aged 11-19 who are facing difficulties or are at risk of dropping out of education.	Individual support including vocational training, one to one intensive support and activities to raise self-esteem. Specialist support for people with disabilities.
QWEST for Employment	University of Wales, Newport	Torfaen; Caerphilly; RCT; Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil	People aged 16-65 who are not working, or working less than 16 hours a week and not already on the Work Programme.	Free learning and training; support from a one to one buddy; CV writing; help with application forms; work experience placements; confidence building; interview preparation; help with job searching; career planning and advice.
Building the Future Together	RCT LA	RCT	Young people aged 11-19	To equip young people with skills required for employment and/or HE and address barriers to employment. YP access the programme through school or college, via youth clubs, youth workers or community groups.
Pre-VENT 14-19	Bridgend LA	Torfaen; Caerphilly; Bridgend; Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil	Young people aged 14-19 at risk of becoming NEET.	To deliver activities aimed at supporting young people to address their individual needs and to overcome barriers in relation to education, employment and training. Lots of focus on support from individual Learning Coaches. Support includes: basic skills, work skills, confidence raising, advice and guidance, careers information, mentoring and coaching support for independent learning; Work and Enterprise education.

Name of service or programme	Provider organisation	Area of Wales covered by the service, support or initiative	Target client group	Services offered
COASTAL project	Swansea LA	SW Wales: Bridgend, NPT, Swansea, Carmarthenshire, Pembro, Ceredigion	People who are economically inactive as a result of illness, disability, substance misuse and/or serious social disadvantage	Individual support programme designed for each person to overcome identified barriers to learning, training and employment. Project staff will provide, or organise access to support to meet participants' needs including access to education/skills training, supported employment or work experience, support with job applications, CV writing, interview skills, etc. Support will continue p to 12 months post employment. Project also offers support, advice and guidance to employers to raise awareness of illness and disability issues.
Go Wales	Welsh Government	All	Welsh domiciled HE graduates	For students and graduates that live and/or study in Wales. Services available include 6 - 10 week project-based placements, currently attracting a wage of £230 per week. They also offer work tasters. These are unpaid, temporary placements designed to allow students and graduates to gain a little experience in a particular career or job.
Prince's Trust Enterprise Programme	Prince's Trust	All Wales	Unemployed (or working less than 16 hours per week) young people aged 18-30 who have a business idea	Support to test a business idea. Advice on employment options. Business skills training Access to specialist support including legal advice

Name of service or programme	Provider organisation	Area of Wales covered by the service, support or initiative	Target client group	Services offered
Prince's Trust Team Programme	Prince's Trust	Programme runs at different times in different areas of Wales. See link for more info: www.princes-trust.org.uk/need_the_ip/regions_and_countries/wales/team_courses.aspx	Young people aged 16-30 who are unemployed and seeking direction for the future. Especially those who want to improve their confidence and whose qualifications are holding them back	Twelve week programme which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being part of a team with 15 people - Taking on a community project of your choosing - One week residential - Two weeks work experience - Qualification - Career advice and help with job-hunting and your CV
South West Workways	Neath Port Talbot LA	NPT, Pems, Carmarthenshire, Swansea	Anyone who is economically inactive and looking for work. Aim is to tackle barriers that prevent people from findings employment.	Provides local support, via outreach and job search sessions at numerous community venues across the 4 LA areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide a personal mentor - Job search support - Help with CVs and applications - Access to training - Confidence building - Website resources
Cyrenians Employment Support Agency and Cyrenians Employment and Training Ltd	Cyrenians Cymru	Swansea Bay	Anyone 16+ who is economically inactive and disengaged from the labour market.	Offer lifelong learning courses to anyone over the age of 16 at three learning centres in Swansea and dedicated individually tailored package of practical support and advice to job seekers across the Swansea Bay area. This includes access to computers and free access to the internet for job searchers, help with CV writing and application forms, careers information and advice on training and interview preparation.

Name of service or programme	Provider organisation	Area of Wales covered by the service, support or initiative	Target client group	Services offered
STRIDES Alliance	NSA (New Sandfields Aberavon)	Neath and Port Talbot	Anyone who is unemployed in Neath and Port Talbot Community.	STRIDES Alliance offers pre-employment workshops, engaging with the unemployed of the Neath and Port Talbot Community. It is an engagement, mentoring and support programme offering free workshops in Business Administration, ICT, Hair and Beauty, Construction/DIY as well as Literacy and/or Numeracy. It offers support in progression into employment by creating/updating CVs, interview techniques, on-line and paper based applications and developing job searching techniques. Job search sessions provide one-to-one support in identifying transferable skills and matching job vacancies with the potential, skills and experience of each individual.
Wellbeing through Work	Remploy Limited and ABM (Abertawe Bro Morgannwg Health Board)	Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea	Anyone in work who needs health and wellbeing support to stay in their job.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims to help people overcome barriers and concerns and keep their jobs. Telephone and one-to-one support and advice to help with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dealing with a health condition or work issue - Pain, anxiety and stress - Building confidence - Talking to your manager or employer - Access to other advice - Putting together a return to work plan
New Work Connections (Taithiwaith)	Denbighshire, Conwy, Gwynedd, Anglesey LAs	Denbighshire, Conwy, Gwynedd, Anglesey	People who are economically inactive or unemployed including: people who have a learning disability, learning difficulty or autistic spectrum disorder and many others...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building confidence, motivation, self esteem - Providing training or education opportunities - Basic skills support/IT support - Intensive job finding and job preparation support - Improving work skills, interview techniques, creating CV's - Support to access benefit checks/better off calculations - Organise work placements/volunteering/training opportunities - Allowances (where applicable/available) financial assistance - Continued support, mentoring and review of progress - Advice on healthier lifestyle initiatives - Childcare support - Community based informal support

Table 19: Pan-disability employment support available in Wales in 2013

Name of service or programme	Provider organisation	Area of Wales covered by the service, support or initiative	Target client group	Services offered
Work Choice	Working Links Shaw Trust	North & Mid Wales, South East Wales South West Wales, South Wales Valleys	Disabled people whose needs cannot be met through other work programmes, Access to Work or workplace adjustments.	The Work Choice programme is delivered through 3 modules: 1) Work Entry Support - This module lasts for up to six months. Individuals receive help with personal skills and work-related advice to get them into supported or unsupported work. 2) Short to Medium Term In-Work Support - Once a participant has found paid supported employment (or self-employment) supported by Work Choice of 16 hours or more a week, the provider will work with the employer and participant to identify the support required for the participant to start work and stay in their job. This module lasts for up to two years. 3) Longer-term In-Work Support - Individuals receive help to progress in their job and where appropriate, help them move into unsupported work. This module is not time limited.
Regional SEN Transition to Employment Initiative (Real Opportunities project)	Bridgend, Caerphilly, Carmarthenshire Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Swansea, Torfaen LAs	South and West Wales: Bridgend, Caerphilly, Carmarthenshire, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Swansea, Torfaen	Young people aged 14 – 19 years who have severe and complex needs, a learning disability, those with an autistic spectrum disorder, and their families/carers.	The Real Opportunities project works closely with young people, their families and their schools to develop a transition plan for each young person that is person centred, and provides specific inputs to help young people achieve their goals. A key aim of the project is to address key barriers to employment through working together with young people, their families/carers, professionals from organisations including social services, health education, training providers and employers. Work preparation and supported employment components of the Real Opportunities project are contracted to Elite, Mencap, NAS and Remploy. They work across all 9 LAs to offer: - Accredited vocational training. - One-to-one supported work experience placements. - Job searching activity. - Development of employability skills. - Travel training. - On-going support and advice for families. Elite and Mencap take first stage referrals, then if a young person needs specific ASD related input, they are referred onto NAS and Remploy.

Name of service or programme	Provider organisation	Area of Wales covered by the service, support or initiative	Target client group	Services offered
Elite SEA	Elite	South Wales – RCT, Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil and Caerphilly	All disabled people of working age.	Elite Supported Employment Agency enables people with disabilities or at a disadvantage to access, obtain and maintain employment: via appropriate support. Services offered include: vocational profiling, guidance and counselling, action planning, travel training, job finding/job matching, interview support and advocacy, work preparation, benefits assistance, supported work placements/job tasters, supported self deterministic job tasters, accredited work awareness courses, job search clubs, employer visits, one-to-one work in the workplace, careers development, employment co-ordination, and more.
Quest Employment Agency	Innovate Trust	Cardiff	People with learning disabilities, autistic spectrum disorders and mental health conditions aged 16-25.	Support to gain paid employment of over 16 hours per week. They provide work experience, volunteering through to support into paid jobs. They also offer work tasters, mock interviews, telephone and travel training. They use a standard Supported Employment approach and try to adhere to all elements of it. Discovery, work place analysis, job match, employer negotiation, job coaching in the work place, phased withdrawal to the lowest possible input to sustain the individual in the job. Ongoing support to both employee and employer.
Mencap Cymru	Mencap	South Wales	People with learning disabilities	Mencap Cymru provides support to individuals to participate in work placements of their choice, and aims to identify and work to overcome any barriers to employment individuals may encounter.
Remploy	Remploy	All of Wales	Disabled people and people with health conditions	Remploy offers one-to-one and group employment support via its branches and offices across Wales. Advisers work with clients to develop their skills, find a career path, become more confident, find work experience, practice for interviews, complete applications and write CVs. Remploy has provided ASD-specific support, with the NAS, to young people with ASD referred from the Real Opportunities project.

Name of service or programme	Provider organisation	Area of Wales covered by the service, support or initiative	Target client group	Services offered
Agoriad Cyf		North	All disabled and disadvantaged people	Supported Employment Agency. Specialist provider of recruitment, employment and training services. Offers support workers and job coach input to individuals. Also support to employers. The 'Walkways' project is aimed at people with SLD who often have a physical disability, medical condition, challenging behaviour and/or autism. PEER and REAL programmes are designed to support people with SLD into work – with access to job preparation skills, job coaching, etc.
Vision 21		Cardiff, Newport and Vale of Glamorgan	Adults with learning needs	Vision 21 offers people with learning needs the opportunity to undertake vocational training and work experience with a view to employment. There are currently 18 projects which run as emerging social enterprises and are located in community based settings and include information and communication technology; retail; woodworking; horticulture; catering; ceramics; card making; training and mentoring; holiday workshops; animal care and essential skills. They provide small group and one-to-one training which is tailored to individual need and provision is aimed at helping each individual to progress at their own pace.
Arena Supported Employment	Cardemathenshire LA	Cardemathenshire	People with learning disabilities	Arena is a specialist employment agency for people with a learning disability. Arena aims to establish employment opportunities for people with high support needs in valued work settings, either paid or voluntary.

Table 20: ASD-specific employment support available in Wales in 2013

Name of service or programme	Provider organisation	Area of Wales covered by the service, support or initiative	Target client group	Services offered
National Autistic Society Prospects Employment Service	NAS	Cardiff and south east Wales	People with ASD of working age	<p>NAS runs employment workshops from its Cardiff based office. There are currently two work-focussed courses available: 'Access to Employment' (10 weeks) is aimed at people who are interested in working, but do not yet feel ready to start seeking employment; 'Preparation for Employment (28 weeks) is for people who are ready to start job seeking and includes structured learning and discussion alongside work experience and one-to-one support. Clients can access ah-hoc, on-going support from NAS after the programmes end and for those in-work, NAS offers one-to-one work place support.</p> <p>NAS Prospects also offers consultancy, training and advice for other providers of employment support and for employers and colleagues.</p> <p>The NAS has provided ASD-specific support, with Remploy, to young people with ASD referred from the Real Opportunities project.</p>
Autism Employment Project	Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Councils	Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan	People with ASD of working age	<p>The Autism Employment Project is a collaborative project between Adult Autism Advice (run by Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan local authorities) and Autism Cymru. The aim of the project is to provide employment assistance to clients with ASD who want to work. Its goals are to improve job readiness, build confidence in people's ability to find and keep work, and build confidence in work place social skills. Clients can choose to be involved through a series of interactive workshops and/or up to seven personalised one-to-one employment sessions to assist with the development of a career portfolio.</p> <p>There is no on-going support to individuals once their involvement in the project is over, although they will be signposted to other relevant programmes and services as needed.</p>

Name of service or programme	Provider organisation	Area of Wales covered by the service, support or initiative	Target client group	Services offered
ASDES (ASD Employment Support)		Swansea and local area	People with ASD of working age	<p>ASDES is a community interest (not for profit) company based in central Swansea which aims to place people with ASD into paid employment and to keep them in work as long as they wish. ASDES provides a one-stop specialist assessment, training and placement service to meet all the employment-support needs of referred clients who are capable of paid work.</p> <p>The service offered is tailor-made for each individual client and depending on needs, can include: psychometric and occupational profiling; counseling and stress reduction; travel training; benefits advice and 'better off in work' assessments; job coaching; mentoring and advocacy. An ASDES adviser will work with the client and where appropriate, their family and other agencies, to devise an action plan to meet the client's identified needs and wishes in relation to employment. Currently ASDES is able to offer a service with no time limits, so clients can receive on-going support for as long as it is needed.</p>

Appendix C Some financial entitlements for disabled young people wishing to work⁴⁸

Type of financial support	Description
Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) https://www.gov.uk/employment-support-allowance	<p>ESA is the replacement for Incapacity Benefit. It also replaces Income Support provided on the basis of disability. ESA came into force in October 2008. Anyone who was already on Incapacity Benefit or Income Support on the basis of disability will have been transferred to ESA. It is designed to provide financial support for people unable to work and personalised help to allow people to work if they can. People who are employed, self-employed or unemployed can apply.</p> <p>The majority of people on ESA must attend work-focused interviews which will draw up 'action plans' requiring them to take part in activities that will help get them back into the workplace. Those required to take part may be required to carry out around one activity per month.</p> <p>There is a lower rate of payment for under 25s and for the first 13 weeks of a claim.</p>
Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) https://www.gov.uk/jobseekers-allowance	<p>JSA is available to people aged between 18 and 64 who are not in full time education, who live in Great Britain, are actively seeking work, are available for work, or who work on average less than 16 hours a week</p> <p>For couples, the claimant's partner must usually work less than 24 hours a week and have £16,000 or less in savings</p> <p>For 18 to 19 year olds JSA is not payable to those in full time education or if their parents receive Child Benefit for them. Weekly payments start at £56.80 for 16-24 year olds.</p>
Personal Independence Payment (PIP) https://www.gov.uk/pip	<p>PIP replaced Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for eligible people aged 16 to 64 from 8 April 2013. It is intended to help towards some of the extra costs arising from a long term ill-health conditions or disability and is based on how a person's condition affects them, not the condition they have. It is not means-tested or subject to tax and it is payable to people who are both in and out of work.</p> <p>Claims will be assessed according the extent to which a person's condition affects the ability to do tasks associated with daily living. Claims will be looked at by an independent health professional. The payments are banded as either standard or enhanced and are awarded in two parts. One is the daily living component and the other is the mobility component.</p>
Working Tax Credit https://www.gov.uk/working-tax-credit	<p>Working Tax Credits are intended to top up low incomes. Workers can get Working Tax Credit if they are aged 16 or over, working a certain number of hours a week, are being paid for their work and their income is below a certain level. The basic amount of Working Tax Credit is up to £1,920 a year but more or less can be paid depending on personal circumstances and income.</p>

⁴⁸ Information correct November 2013.

<p>Universal Credit https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit</p>	<p>Universal Credit is a new benefit that has started to replace six existing benefits with a single monthly payment. Universal Credit is intended to help people be better off in work, start a new job or work more hours.</p> <p>Universal Credit will eventually replace: income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Housing Benefit. At present, it is being rolled out by region. Transformation started in the North West and London.</p> <p>There are no limits to the number of hours a person can work a week. Universal Credit payments will reduce gradually as an individual earns more. Benefits will not be lost all at once for those on a low income.</p> <p>The amount paid depends on personal circumstances. Universal Credit will be paid on a monthly basis directly into a bank account, and will include any support for housing costs to which the person is entitled.</p> <p>Claimants must agree to fulfil the requirements of a 'Claimant Commitment' that involves completing certain tasks in order to claim Universal Credit. A 'work coach' will decide what goes in the personal Claimant Commitment. This is likely to be: what the claimant needs to do to look for work and how many hours must be spent looking for work each week. The commitment should reflect personal circumstances such as work history, health and family or caring responsibilities.</p> <p>Universal Credit might be cut if claimants do not do what is in their Claimant Commitment.</p>
<p>Access to Work https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work</p>	<p>Access to Work is a Government Scheme. It is designed to provide help to disabled people who have or are about to start a paid job and are experiencing disability related challenges within work and need to overcome them. It is provided where the employee requires support or adaptations beyond those 'reasonable adjustments' which an employer is legally obliged to provide under the Equality Act 2010. It gives them and their employer support with extra costs which may arise because of their needs. It can provide funding for equipment, travel, training, and job coaching for up to 26 weeks, a support worker, disability awareness training and a communicator at job interviews. The Access to Work scheme now also covers extra support needed by young people undertaking Traineeships, Apprenticeships and some other types of work based learning.</p>
<p>Jobcentre Plus Flexible Support Fund http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN06079</p>	<p>From April 2011 a number of schemes operated by Jobcentre Plus – including the Deprived Areas Fund, the Adviser Discretion Fund and the Travel to Interview Scheme – were abolished and replaced by the Flexible Support Fund (FSF).</p> <p>The FSF gives Jobcentre Plus districts greater freedom to tailor back-to-work support to individual and local need. Working within local guidelines and priorities, Jobcentre Plus advisers have discretion to decide how to help individuals move closer to or into work. The FSF also includes a grant funding mechanism, enabling Jobcentre Plus District Managers to award funding to local 'partnerships' to address barriers to work. There is no exhaustive list of needs that may be met by the FSF, but examples could include travel costs, tools, clothing for interviews or training.</p>

Appendix D ASD-specific support for young people with ASD in Wales: current initiatives

D.1 This section includes more detailed information about each of the ASD-specific employment support services or programmes (ESPs) currently operating in Wales. We are grateful to each of the following ESPs for giving permission for information about their provision to be made available in this report:

- The National Autistic Society's Prospects Employment Services – Cardiff (ASD-specific ESP)
- Autistic Spectrum Disorder Employment Support – Swansea (ASD-specific ESP)
- Autism Employment Project – Cardiff, Bridgend and Vale of Glamorgan (ASD-specific ESP)
- ITEC Training Solutions Ltd's pilot Traineeship (enhanced engagement) programme for young people with ASD - Rhondda Cynon Taf (mainstream ESP with ASD-specific component)
- The Regional SEN Transition to Employment Initiative (Real Opportunities project) ASD-specific support to 14-19 year olds via NAS and Remploy - south and west Wales (pan-disability ESP, with ASD-specific contracting out arrangements).

The National Autistic Society's Prospects Employment Service

D.2 Prospects is the National Autistic Society's (NAS) specialist employment service. Its aim is to ensure that adults with autism, including Asperger syndrome, are given opportunities to learn work-related skills and to access and retain meaningful employment. NAS Prospects currently runs small group workshops from its office base in central Cardiff. There are two work-focused courses currently available to any working-age adult with ASD: 'Preparation for Employment' and 'Access to Employment'. Currently these courses are being offered free of charge to adults with ASD, through financial support from the Waterloo Foundation, which at present lasts until March 2015.

- D.3 Access to Employment is a 10-week programme aimed at people who are interested in working, but do not yet feel ready to start seeking employment. The programme has an intake of six clients per cohort and is designed to enable people with ASD to work together to discuss and learn about the world of work. During the programme they explore some of the barriers that might present issues and find ways to overcome these. Topics covered include: understanding disability, self-advocacy and positive thinking, occupational choice, communication skills, dealing with emotion and anxiety, social skills, independence skills, work, attitude and behaviour, culture and diversity and introduction to finding a job. Once completed, clients can move straight onto job seeking, with continued low-key input from NAS on an as-needed basis, or they can choose to undertake a more intensive programme, Preparation for Employment.
- D.4 Preparation for Employment is a 28-week programme, with an intake of six clients per cohort. It is structured into three stages. The first stage involves weekly one-to-one meetings with a Prospects mentor/job coach for personalised support and advice on all stages of considering and seeking employment. At this stage there is also the option to attend weekly workshops with other clients which focus on workplace skills. Topics covered include: disability awareness, communication skills at work, social skills at work, anxiety management at work planning for employment (organising time, budgeting and travel planning) and interview skills. Time is also allocated each week for clients to explore work experience options. The second stage of the programme involves an eight-week supported work experience placement for each client, in a role of their choice, with job coach and mentoring input for the employer and client from a Prospects adviser. Employers are asked to provide feedback and a review is undertaken to determine whether the client is ready to progress to stage three, job finding. If not, the client is signposted to

additional provision, either from Prospects or externally. Stage three involves 14 weeks of supported job finding, with fortnightly one-to-one advice and guidance from a Prospects adviser. Once a job has been secured, Prospects can continue to provide ongoing work place support to the client and the employer, for up to two years. All clients undertake a final review at the end of the programme and receive a written report assessing their progress over the course. For those who have not found jobs, Prospects provides an action plan with signposting to other opportunities and can continue to provide ad-hoc job seeking support if needed.

- D.5 Since the two programmes started in June 2013, 35 people with ASD have received support, either through participating in the 'Access to Employment' course (n=12), the 'Preparation for Employment' course (n=14), or by receiving one-to-one work place support (n=9).
- D.6 In addition to direct work with people with ASD, NAS Prospects also offers consultancy, training and advice for other providers of employment support and for employers and colleagues. This takes the form of tailor-made training and consultancy, and/or regular, open-access training courses open to individuals. NAS also offers work place support for existing employees and employers (who have not taken part in one of the above programmes) charged on an hourly rate basis. In some cases, NAS have also designed tailor-made training materials for and supporting information for organisations working directly with young people with ASD (such as one of the current Work Choice providers).
- D.7 The NAS Prospects service operates on a minimal budget from very basic, community-based premises in central Cardiff. It employs two full-time, salaried staff and three sessional support workers on 'zero-hours' contracts. The funding of the service, in

its current form, is only assured until 2015 and is dependent on external funding from charitable sources to continue beyond that date. The service manager is taking steps to procure a mix of additional funding streams from external training and consultancy but there are no guarantees that this will be sufficient to sustain the service as a viable enterprise in the longer term.

Autistic Spectrum Disorder Employment Support (ASDES)

- D.8 ASDES is a community interest (not for profit) company based in central Swansea which aims to place people with ASD into paid employment and to keep them in work as long as they wish. ASDES provides a one-stop specialist assessment, training and placement service to meet all the employment-support needs of referred clients who are capable of paid work.
- D.9 ASDES works with anyone with an ASD of working age who needs support to seek work, or who is currently employed and needs support to keep working. The service offered is tailor-made for each individual client and depending on needs, can include: psychometric and occupational profiling, counseling and stress reduction, travel training, benefits advice and 'better off in work' assessments, job coaching, mentoring and advocacy. An ASDES adviser will work with the client and where appropriate, their family and other agencies, to devise an action plan to meet the client's identified needs and wishes in relation to employment. Currently ASDES is able to offer a service with no time limits, so clients can receive on-going support for as long as it is needed.
- D.10 Clients can refer themselves to ASDES and can access the support free of charge. However, where appropriate, ASDES will explore with individuals whether any relevant benefits or entitlements can be accessed to meet some of the costs of the support (e.g. Access to Work funding). In some cases, other agencies and employment support providers refer clients on to ASDES on an individual sub-contracting arrangement. For

example, ASDES has supported some Work Choice and COASTAL clients who have needed ASD-specific input.

- D.11 Since ASDES started, in 2010, staff have supported 22 people with ASD to find work, to stay in their current job, to undertake work experience or a voluntary placement or to return to education or training. Many of these people have also received social and personal support and family support.
- D.12 ASDES operates on a shoe-string budget. The client coordinator/assessor (manager) undertakes his role in voluntary capacity, with no payment. Other staff are employed on 'zero hours' contracts, as sessional, hourly-paid workers; this includes the psychologist, counsellor, job coaches/advocates, and a specialist ASD/ADHD consultant. ASDES does not own or rent premises or office space, but instead makes use of community buildings that offer space on an hourly-paid basis, or room space available in offices where its staff have other, paid roles. For example, the manager also works as a DEA in Swansea Jobcentre Plus service and is able to make use of surplus space in that building from time to time. As a community interest company, ASDES is overseen by a board of trustees, whose expertise in various fields, including fund-raising, is also utilised to the benefit of the service. For example, a large fund-raising event was recently undertaken by one of the trustees on behalf of ASDES, which raised funds for on-going work.

Autism Employment Project

- D.13 The Autism Employment Project is a collaborative project run by Adult Autism Advice, the Community Monitoring and Support project of Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan local authorities. The project has worked collaboratively with several other organisations including Autism Cymru, the National Autistic Society, Careers Wales, Job Centre Plus and COASTAL. It is being supported for two years until March 2014, by the Welsh

Government, as one of the funded actions from the ASD Strategic Action Plan. It is managed by the ASD lead/project manager for Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan local authorities. The Welsh Government funding covers the costs of running training, paying external speakers, providing materials and minor administrative costs as well as full time staff input from a community support worker who is running the project as a whole and providing one-to-one support to clients.

- D.14 The aim of the project is to provide employment assistance to clients with ASD who want to work. Its goals are to improve job readiness, build confidence in people's ability to find and keep work, and build confidence in work place social skills. Clients can choose to be involved through a series of interactive workshops and/or up to seven personalised one-to-one employment sessions to assist with the development of a career portfolio. The eight-week programme of workshops covers: finding the right job for you, CVs and cover letters, job searching, disclosure, applications, interviews, social skills in the workplace, and developing a career plan. There is no on-going support to individuals once their involvement in the project is over, although they will be signposted to other relevant programmes and services as needed. The project is currently available at community venues in Cardiff and Bridgend and to date has worked with 27 people, ten of whom completed the programme in February 2014. People have been referred via the local Adult Autism Advice service (part of the community mentoring and support network), Careers Wales, the NAS, COASTAL, the local library and via other existing contacts.
- D.15 An important feature of the project is its underlying purpose to create and pilot a set of materials for working with people with ASD that could potentially be used by other non-specialist employment support providers.

ITEC Training Solutions Ltd.'s pilot Traineeship (enhanced engagement) programme for young people with ASD

- D.16 ITEC Training Solutions Ltd. is an independent provider of employment and training services and currently offers a variety of training and employability programmes, both in the workplace, and from its training centres in Cardiff, Llwynypia, Newport, Caerphilly, Cwmbran and Bridgend. ITEC is a contracted provider for Apprenticeships, Young Recruits Programme, Work-Ready (previously known as Steps to Employment), Jobs Growth Wales and Traineeships. It has recently established a pilot Traineeship aimed at young people with ASD which has been customised to meet their ASD-specific learning and employment support needs. This enhanced engagement programme, based at its Llwynypia resource and training centre in Rhondda Cynon Taf, is a pilot project which started in October 2013 and is currently providing part time learning opportunities to four young people with ASD aged 16.
- D.17 ITEC already had a mainstream engagement model which was enhanced and personalised for this specific client group. The format and content of the enhanced programme was developed in collaboration with families, Careers Wales and the NAS, and was supported by a small grant from Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority, which identified that this type of specialised provision for young people with ASD was needed in the local area and more widely.
- D.18 The purpose of the programme is to gauge the individual needs and barriers of young people with ASD and to support teaching and learning in a vocationally-led environment. The engagement programme lasts for up to 12 months, but is flexible to the needs and progress of the individual learners. Learners start with an eight week personal development curriculum (with in-house accreditation) to develop their individual Learning Plan and

personalised timetable. They also receive basic skills input, work tasters every week using ITEC's in-house training facilities, and access to a counsellor (if needed). After eight weeks, learners are introduced to the world of work curriculum (with in-house accreditation) and can take part in an external work experience placement. The programme continues for up to 12 months with continued work taster and external placement opportunities available as part of each young person's individualised timetable. At the end of the programme (or earlier if appropriate) possibilities for progression include: a part time or full time mainstream Traineeship, paid employment, voluntary work, college, an Apprenticeship or independent living. Young people receive £30 per week for attendance plus additional incentives linked to agreed goals at key point throughout the programme.

D.19 The programme is currently staffed by a specialist SEN tutor and an additional learning and support worker (the latter is funded by the Welsh Government's 'additional learning support' scheme) and managed by ITEC's stakeholder engagement officer. The tutor and stakeholder engagement officer have received training from the NAS on supporting young people with ASD into sustainable employment. Although the ASD programme has its own dedicated teaching room, and a separate chill-out room for the young people to use, a large part of the curriculum is delivered as part of the mainstream engagement programme with the mainstream learners. Families are seen as key partners and they are involved in the induction programme, are invited to provide feedback whenever they wish, and have the opportunity to attend eight-weekly parents' evenings.

D.20 It must be stressed that this enhanced engagement programme is very much a pilot project at present and in its very early stages. As a large, private, independent provider, ITEC Training Solutions Ltd is willing and able to mitigate the financial and performance

outcomes for a small group of learners whose positive progressions may be more idiosyncratic than the progression routes against which mainstream learners are monitored. This is a risk which ITEC is prepared to take, despite the possibility that it may have an impact on their overall learner outcomes report against which, as a contracted provider, they are assessed by the Welsh Government.

The Regional SEN Transition to Employment Initiative (Real Opportunities project) – sub-contracted ASD-specific support

D.21 The SEN Transition to Employment (Real Opportunities) Project has been working with young people aged 14-19 with a learning disability, severe and complex needs or an ASD to help them become as independent as possible in their adult lives. The project operates within nine local authorities in central south and south-west Wales and is currently funded until September 2014 by the European Social Fund (ESF). The project has worked closely with young people, their families and their schools to develop a transition plan for each young person that is person centred, and provides specific inputs to help young people achieve their goals. A key aim of the project is to address key barriers to employment through working together with young people, their families/carers, professionals from organisations including social services, health education, training providers and employers.

D.22 Real Opportunities has offered employment support to all young people included in the project, provided via sub-contracting arrangements with four employment support services: Elite Supported Employment Agency, Mencap, Remploy and the NAS. The project provides ASD-specific employment support, via the NAS and Remploy, to most young people with ASD who have been referred. In some areas, Elite or Mencap will provide employment support to local young people with ASD.

- D.23 Employment support is tailored to the specific, individual needs of each young person, in line with their person centred transition plan. However, key elements include: accredited vocational training, one-to-one supported work experience placements, job searching support, development of employability skills, travel training and on-going advice and support for families. Two peripatetic specialist ASD employment advisers (one from Remploy and one from the NAS) were engaged to accept referrals and work directly with young people with ASD. The advisers have also delivered ASD-specific training sessions for project staff in each local authority area on the employment-related support needs of young people with ASD. In addition, they have engaged with families/carers through open evenings and coffee mornings and with local employers to offer advice, training and staff mentoring schemes.
- D.24 By February 2014 (42 months into the project), ASD-specific employment support had been provided to 62 young people with ASD, of whom 49 had received work experience placements. This involved close working with local employers to facilitate appropriate placements, following vocational profiling and job matching. By the end of February 2014, 38 young people had also gained a qualification in Developing Skills for Employment accredited by the National Open College Network (NOCN).

Appendix E Pathways to employment: case studies of a sample of the young people included in the research

E.1 Through the presentation of a sample of employment pathways, this section illustrates the breadth and range of individual situations regarding employment aspirations and support amongst the young people included in this research. It presents employment pathways for the following young people:

- Ben
- Tom
- Reg
- Elin
- Owen
- Dafydd

E.2 All names are pseudonyms and some details of individual circumstances have been changed to protect anonymity.

Figure 10: Ben's pathway to employment

Ben is 18 and has ASD and learning disabilities. He is currently doing unpaid work experience.

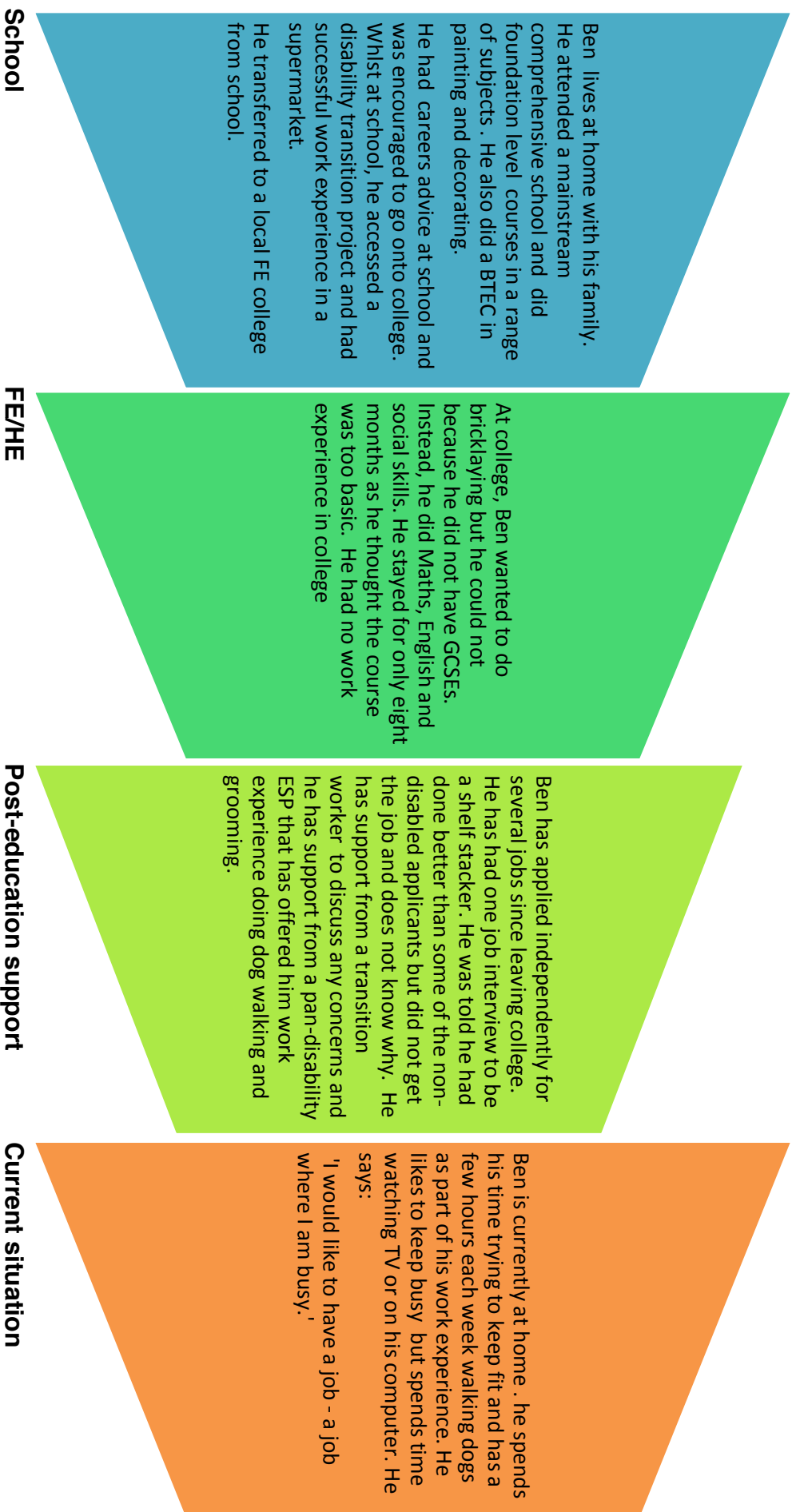


Figure 11 : Tom's pathway to employment

Tom is 28 and has Asperger syndrome. After six years of seeking employment, he is now working part time for a supportive employer, in a job he enjoys.

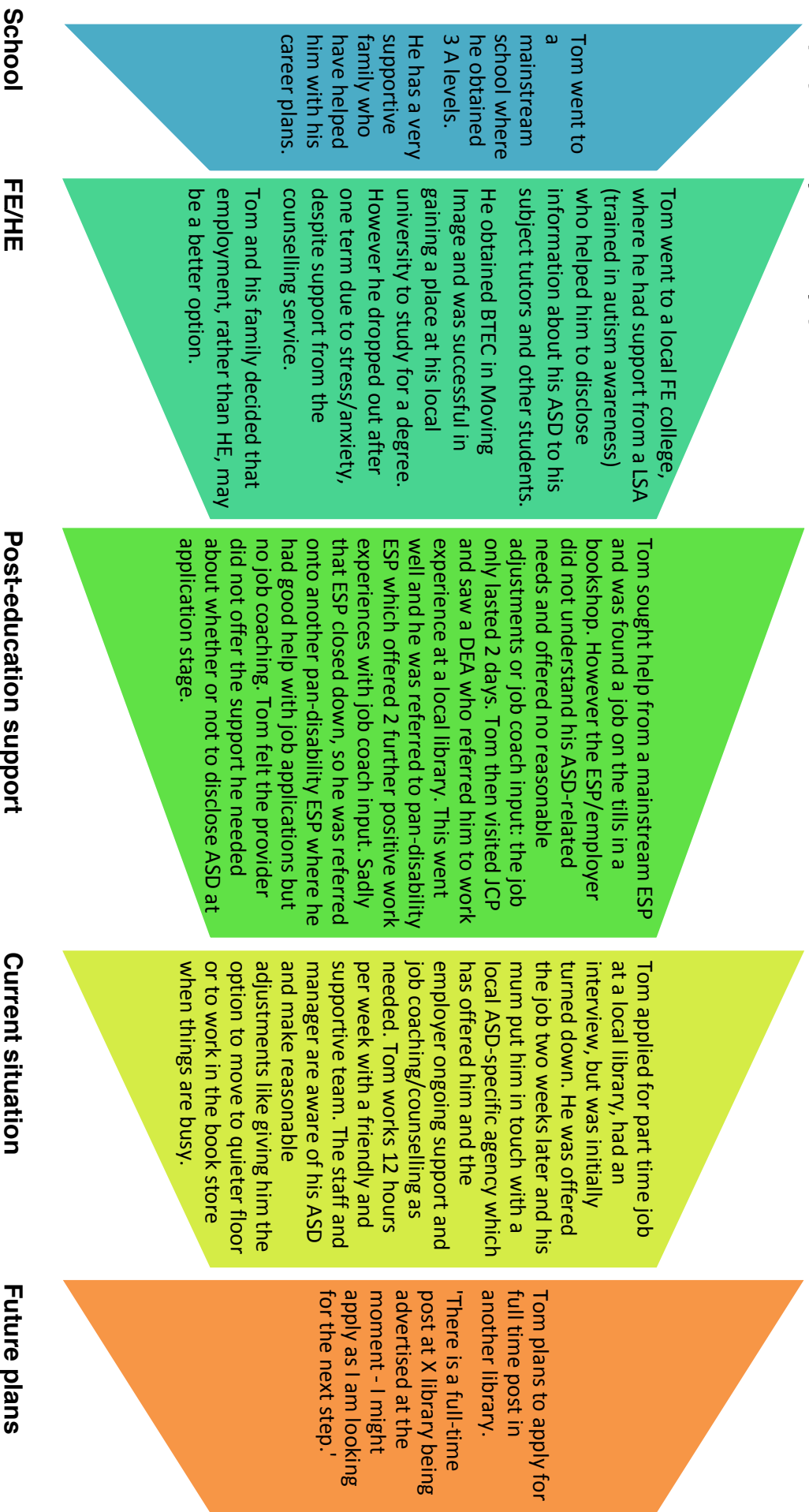


Figure 12: Reg's pathway to employment

Reg is 20 and he has ASD and learning disabilities. He did work experience at school, but has had no employment advice or support since.

Reg lives at home with his mum. He has 3 siblings all of whom work. He wants to do a job with horses or woodwork where he is fully occupied. He attended 3 secondary schools for children with moderate to severe learning disabilities and/or autism. He was excluded from one of these because of his behaviour. At the last one, he had work experience at a heritage park and mowed and trimmed lawns. His behaviour improved dramatically there because he was busy all the time. He had a social worker allocated to him 2 weeks before he was 18 and he had careers advice before he left school but the service was closed and he has had no contact since.

Social work support did not help Reg with his career planning and the family were offered a five days a week placement in a day centre organised by a specialist autism service. The family think the service is not personalised enough and fear Reg will fail there. He is supposed to do vocational things but there is little evidence of this. The family complained and were told that they could have direct payments and buy a service they want but do not know where to start and think there is nothing suitable for him locally. The family have not contacted JCP and Reg has no CV. Mum thinks he needs help to find a job: 'He, like everyone else needs a purpose in life and in the world and he still has nothing to aim for which breaks my heart.'

School

Post-education support

Figure 13: Elin's pathway to employment

Elin is 20, has Asperger syndrome and is working freelance. She is seeking extra paid work to top up her freelance earnings.

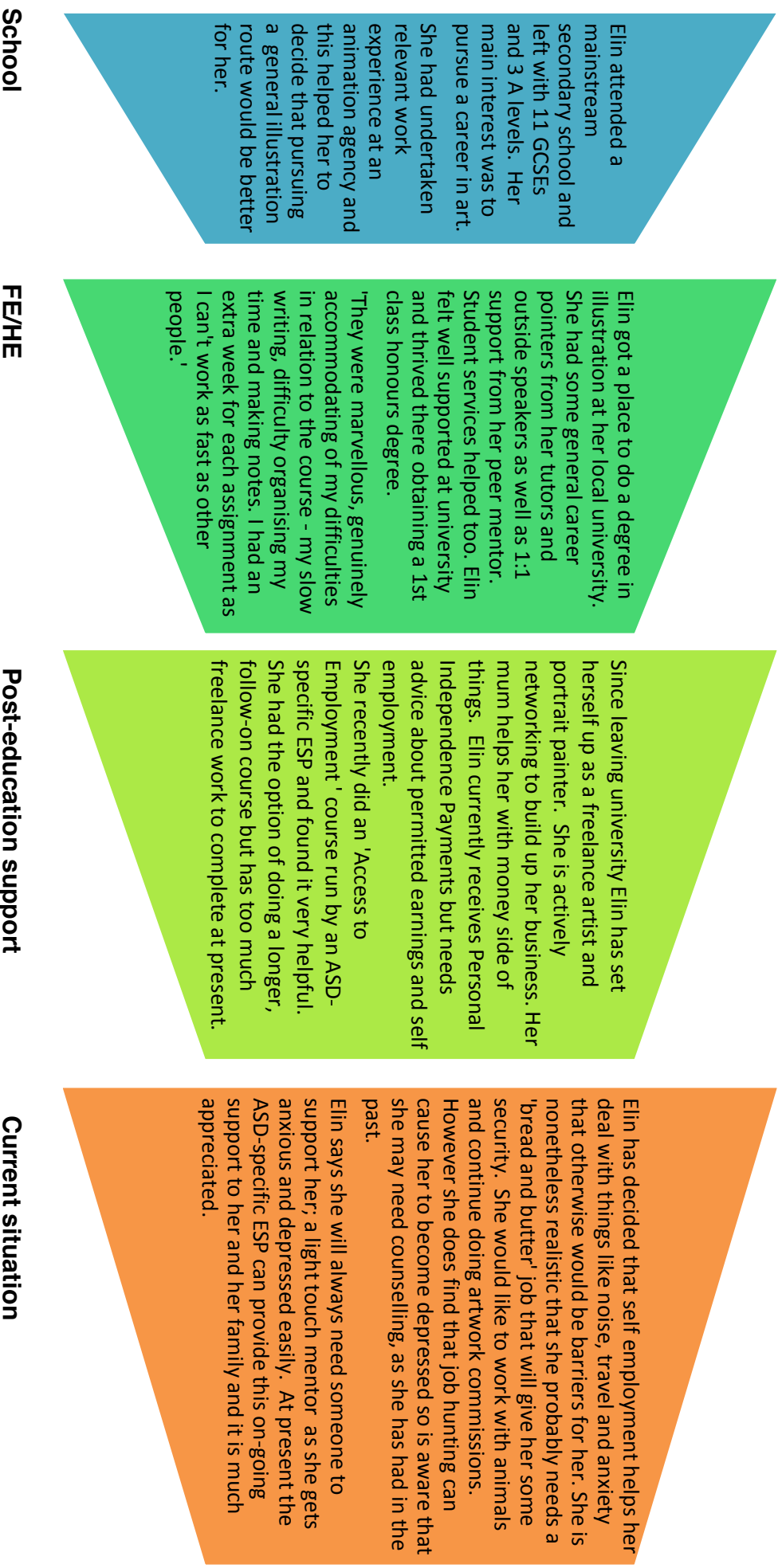


Figure 14: Owen's pathway to employment

Owen is 21 and has ASD. He is currently unemployed, seeking work, but receiving no support to do so as he was told he was insufficiently independent to benefit from the Work Choice programme. He previously worked for three years in an unpaid capacity doing 21 hours a week, in a job he enjoyed, with no ESP support.

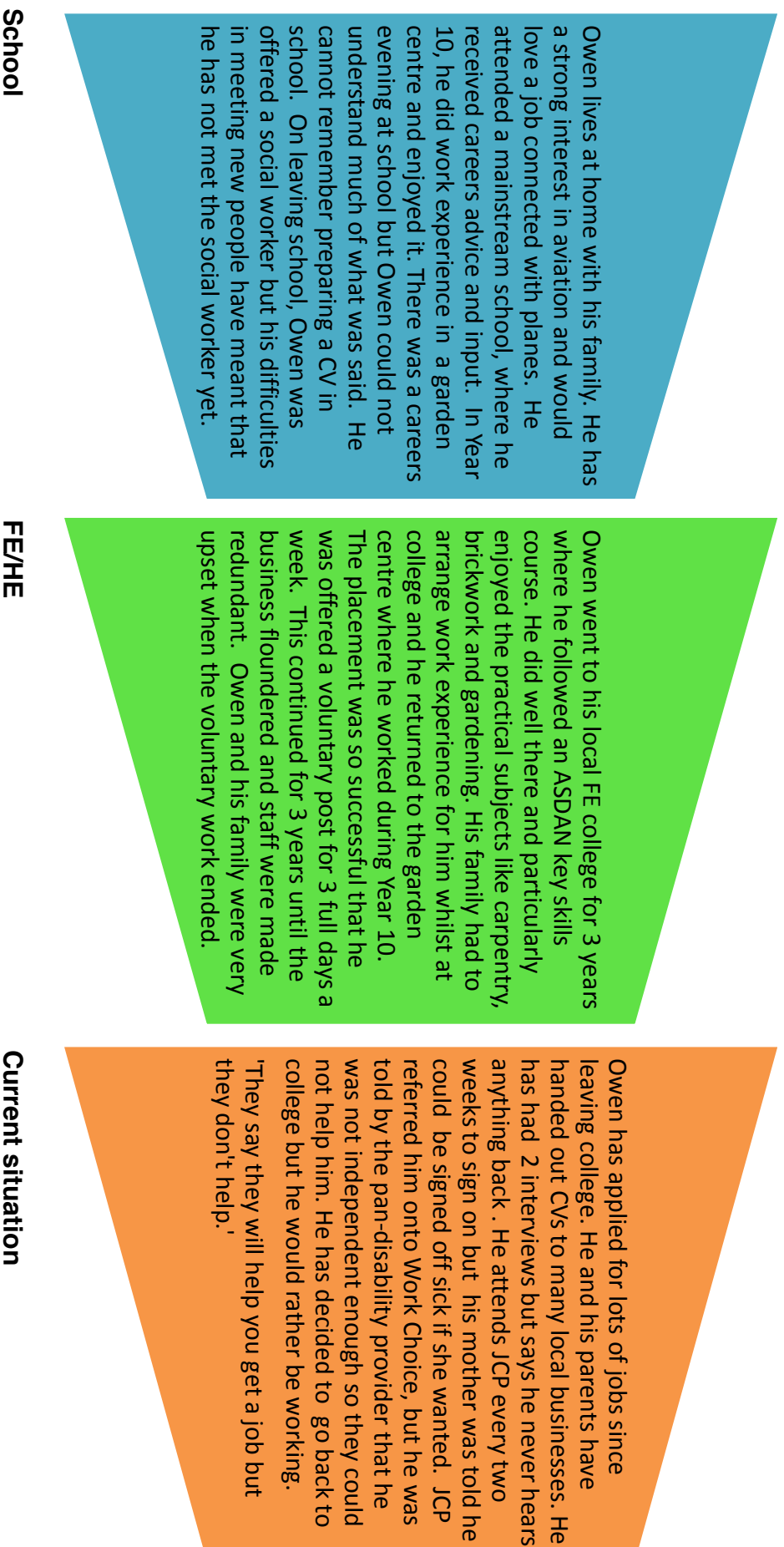
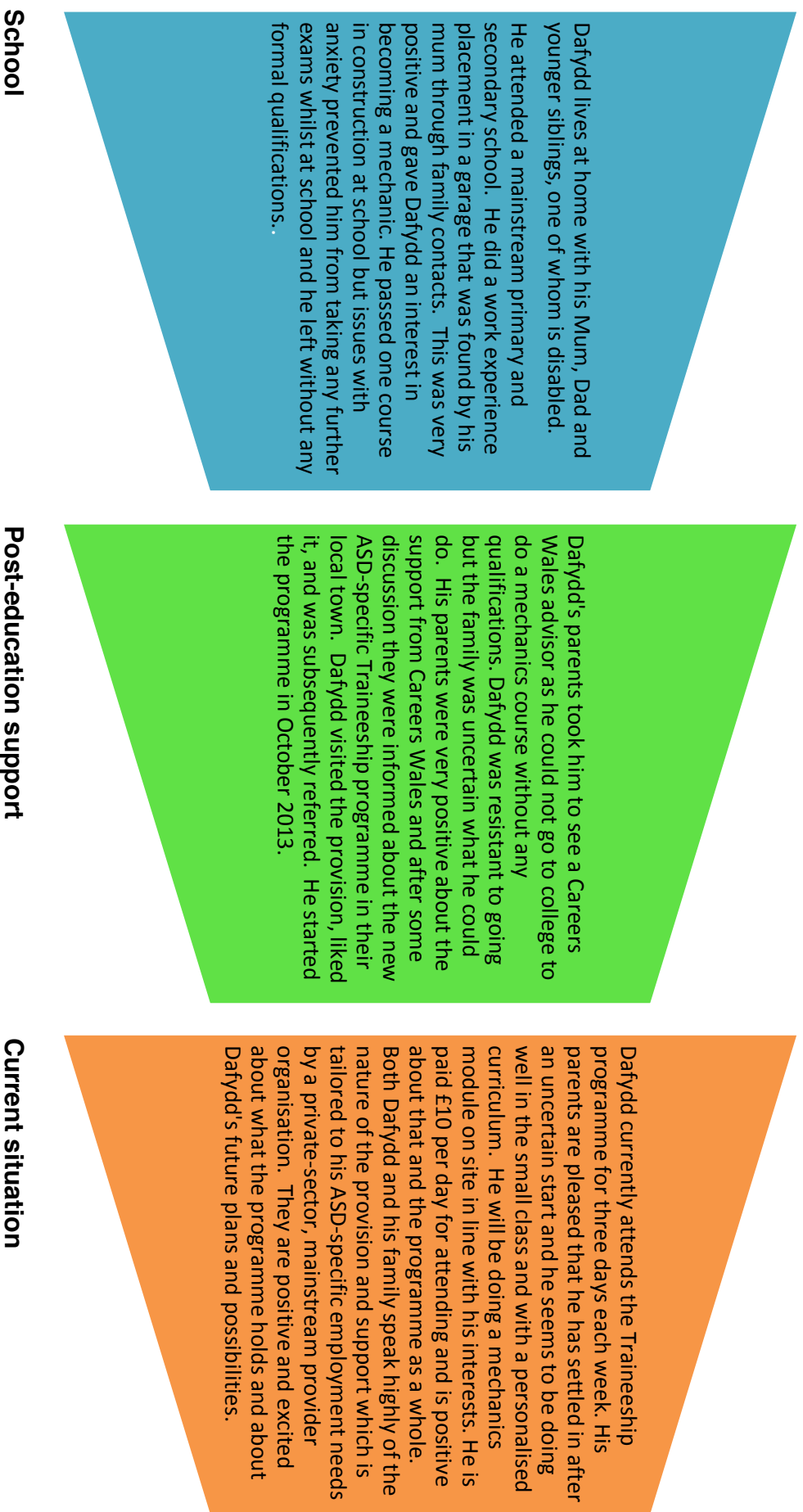


Figure 15: Dafydd's pathway to employment

Dafydd is 16 and has Asperger syndrome. He is doing an ASD-specific Traineeship with a private-sector, mainstream provider in his local town.



Appendix F The ideal pathway to employment for young people with ASD

This pathway to employment chart has been written with the current school leaving age in mind. The pathway assumes a smooth progression through education with vocational elements built into the curriculum, person centred planning (as part of an IDP) and partnership working between agencies. It does not assume that direct payments will be in place for employment support but does assume local authorities will adopt an invest-to-save approach to securing appropriate employment support for young people. Discussion about jobs should start in primary school to raise children's aspirations, but detailed planning should start with the first transition review (in Year 9) in mind. Speech and language therapy and occupational therapy should be utilised to help young people thrive in the workplace. The pathway below picks up the detailed elements of support from Year 9 onwards.

School	Year 9
	Discussions at school about work, exposure to different jobs, opportunities to practice presentational skills, communication, etc. needed at work. Discussions begin on pros and cons of disclosing an ASD to employers. Work tasters are provided. Identify pupil's interests and skills. Start developing a CV. Family encouraged to add to the CV and to highlight any new skills learnt at home. Careers adviser plans for the transition review with young person, the ALNCoS and parents. At transition review, work is part of the IDP and planning begins for work experience involving parents. Young person introduced to employment support provider (ESP) who has understanding of autism. Identify who will coordinate employment and career planning in support of arrangements through Careers Wales. Information given to young person and family about entitlements, support and benefits.
	Year 10
	In partnership with an ESP, school identifies a work experience placement that links to young person's interests and goals. ESP discovers employer needs and helps young person understand them. Discussions continue on pros and cons of disclosing an ASD to employers. Introduction made to employer with pupil's ASD disclosed (if agreed with young person). ESP makes request for feedback and a written reference at outset. Job coach support given in work place through employment coordination actions, if required. Feedback to young person and family. Feeds into CV to inform next vocational stage. Careers adviser has access to CV. Young person does a Saturday and holiday job to enhance CV.

	<p>Year 11/12</p> <p>Second work experience, which builds on last one and is in line with career goals, etc. Supported by job coach if needed. Feedback informs choices and develops CV. Person centred transition review - proper consideration of all options with student and family for post-16: work based learning, traineeship/apprenticeship/social enterprises/self employment/college/6th Form. ESP should be present. Clear actions should inform the IDP. Careers advice continues. Preparation of the Learning and Skills Plan takes place if the young person is continuing in education or training.</p>
Post-16	<p>Post-16</p> <p>There are colleges, schools and suitable work based learning settings available locally to meet demand. Information is readily available on all the allowances that can be used to support work based learning. All have staff who are ASD aware and offer flexible and non stressful environments. Person centred support tailored to the young person's vocational aspirations is available whatever level of course the person is undertaking. Travel training is made available to anyone who needs it along with basic skills training. This is bought in where organisations lack in-house expertise. Work based learning settings offer relevant qualifications but these are not required and young people are not pressured to acquire them until ready. Work experience is available in community settings and towards the end of any programme, the expectation is that work placements are likely to lead to paid work, provided the agreed business need has been met. Post-16 funding models finance the support needed to deliver these options and relevant professionals have a good understanding of them.</p>
Post-education	<p>Post-education</p> <p>Careers advice is available to anyone who needs it up to age 25 if they have an IDP or have been looked after by the local authority. Careers Wales advisers have up to date information on current labour market opportunities and support available. Local authority ASD Community Mentoring and Support Officers are well publicised and they can sign-post to all relevant local provision. In ESPs and all welfare organisations, there are staff who have knowledge of ASD, ability to meet specific needs and/or to refer on to other specialist organisations. Open access to job clubs is available in all localities. JCP DEAs are accessible to all young people with ASD and these professionals can refer onto other partner organisations for employment support. Each area of Wales has a specialist agency that can advise on provision and referrals to many of the pan-disability and mainstream ESP providers. Support is given with all aspects of job seeking, recruitment and retention. DEA refers people for in-work benefits calculations and for those on JSA locates potential job openings. Access to Work is considered routinely prior to a person commencing work.</p>
In-work	

	In-work In-work support is available on a long term basis. This may be very low level support to both employee and employer depending on need.
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