

Medr statistics

Quality and Methodology: Apprenticeships and Adult Community Learning

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Summary: **Quality and methodology information on the production of statistics for the Apprenticeship and Adult Learning Learner Outcome Report**

Theme: Apprenticeships, Adult Community Learning

Source: Lifelong Learning Record Wales (LLWR), Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC), Matched Education Dataset (MED)

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Removal and restoration of adult community learning statistics

A local authority provider made us aware on 25 February 2025 of substantial errors in their data submitted to the Lifelong Learning Record Wales (LLWR) for 2023/24, prior to the final freeze of data in December 2024.

Due to the potential scale of the issue, Adult Community Learning statistics were removed from this report, pending further investigations into the scale of the issue and any similar issues in the data submitted by other local authority providers.

The local authority had been submitting learning to the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) which should not have been included. The correct data for the 2023/24 academic year has been manually identified by the local authority, and we have removed the incorrect data from our statistics. The investigation revealed that these data quality issues also existed in previous years, these have not been corrected. Comparisons of national adult learning statistics with previous years can be made, but the impact of the data quality issue should be kept in mind.

The effect of the change reduces the number of terminated learning activities delivered from 53,165 to 48,885. It reduced the number of assessable terminated learning activities from 26,185 to 25,955. The overall national attainment rate increased from 90% to 91%, and the success rate from 86% to 87%. There was no change to the completion rate. Within the local authority, the changes decreased the completion rate by 13 percentage points, and increased the success rate by 2 percentage points.

We investigated whether the issue raised may affect other local authorities. The number of learning activities delivered by each provider was compared to funding levels, and local authorities with anomalous patterns were approached. No issues were found.

Local Authority Community Learning is funded by the Community Learning Grant. Historically the grant has been a relatively small source of funding. Unlike other types of learning, the LLWR data collection is not used for allocating or validating the learning delivered by this grant. As a result, there is more potential for data quality issues that would not affect apprenticeships.

Moving forward, with the start of the next funding period, Medr will be transitioning to using the Lifelong Learning Wales Record to report and monitor against the delivery of the Community Learning Grant. This should lead to improvements in the data quality. We will be working with providers to ensure the data is recorded correctly on LLWR by providing further guidance and support.

We intend to use data collected in winter 2025 to further assess the quality of local authority community learning data.

Data sources

Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR)

All the data in this report comes from the [Lifelong Learning Record Wales \(LLWR\)](#). This data is used for funding, monitoring performance and outcomes, and to inform strategy development. It is the official source of statistics on learners in work based learning Wales.

Learning providers submit the data to Welsh Government. It is collected on a rolling basis. The data used for official statistics is taken in the December after the end of the relevant academic year.

Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC)

The PLASC is an annual collection of pupil and school level data. It is provided by all maintained schools in Wales in January each year.

Matched Education Dataset (MED)

The MED links datasets to trace a learner's progression through the education system in Wales. It matches records going back to 2010/11. It is updated annually.

The PLASC and MED are used to match learners to their free school meals history during secondary school.

Definitions and methods

Academic Year

The academic year is 1 August to 31 July.

Age

A learner's age is calculated from the 31 August in the academic year they started learning.

Apprenticeship/apprenticeship framework

Apprenticeships combine practical training in a job with study. In Wales an apprentice will follow an approved apprenticeship framework, which includes a set of mandatory qualifications. The framework ensures an apprentice has the relevant knowledge, skills, and qualifications.

Attainment rate

The attainment rate is the percentage of completed activities where the qualification was achieved.

Completion

Completion is the number of activities or apprenticeship programmes that are finished, whether or not the qualification or framework was achieved.

Early dropouts

Learners are defined as early dropouts if they:

- end their learning within 8 weeks of their start date
- and did not complete that learning
- and the learning had an expected length of 24 weeks or greater

Early dropouts are excluded from learner outcomes measures.

Ethnic background

Ethnic categories are presented according to the [Government Analysis Function harmonised standards](#). The information is self-reported by the learner.

Free School Meals

Learners are eligible for free school meals if their families are in receipt of certain benefits/support payments, or are on universal credit. Learners are only recorded as eligible if they have applied for free school meals to their local authority. A learner is defined in this report as “ever eligible for Free School Meals” if they were eligible for free school meals at any point during secondary school in Wales. If they were not eligible in any year of secondary school in Wales they are described as ‘never eligible for Free

School Meals'. Learners who could not be matched to a secondary school record in Wales are categorised as Free School Meals eligibility unknown.

Home neighbourhood

The small area called the Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) which contains the learner's address.

Learning activity

Learning activities refer to a specific qualification pursued by a learner, for example, an A level or Essential Skill.

Programme

A programme is a collection of learning activities that a learner will study. For example, an apprenticeship programme may include several supporting learning activities.

Success rate

The success rate is the percentage of assessable activities or apprenticeship programmes ended (completed or withdrawn) that were achieved.

White unknown (detailed ethnic category)

Before 2019/20, there was only an overall "White" category for learners with White background. Some learners in this report were recorded under this system, and have been listed as "White unknown" in these statistics.

Rounding

Figures are rounded to the nearest 5 and there may be apparent slight discrepancies between the sum of the constituent items and the total. Percentages are rounded to the nearest digit.

Percentages are also calculated using the unrounded figures; therefore, it may not be possible to recreate the percentages quoted throughout this release from the information included in the tables.

A [c] represents a number greater than 0 and less than 5, or a percentage with a denominator less than 23 or a numerator less than 5.

A [k] refers to a percentage that rounds to 0 but is not 0.

A [z] stands for “not applicable”.

Key Quality Information

This section provides a summary of information on this output against five dimensions of quality: Relevance, Accuracy, Timeliness and Punctuality, Accessibility and Clarity, and Comparability.

Relevance

The measures set out in this publication are primarily used:

- by the Welsh Government to monitor providers' performance and as baseline information
- by Estyn, who may use national data as context when considering inspection judgements and in thematic reports
- by providers themselves, as a management tool to measure their own performance and benchmark themselves against sector averages, as part of their annual self-assessment cycles

The Welsh Government and Estyn have a commitment to share data to minimise bureaucracy for providers and ensure consistent definitions of performance wherever possible and have worked together closely to develop these measures and a standard format for presenting data.

The measures are also used both within and outside the Welsh Government to monitor educational trends and as a baseline for further analysis of the underlying data. Some of the key users are:

- Welsh Ministers;
- Members of the Senedd and the Research Service in the Senedd; officials in the Welsh Government;
- other government departments;
- students, researchers, and academics;
- individual citizens, private companies, and the media.

These statistics are used in a variety of ways. Some examples of these are:

- general background and research;
- inclusion in reports and briefings;
- advice to Ministers;
- to inform and evaluate the education policy-making process in Wales.

Accuracy

Statisticians within the Welsh Government undertake a process of data reconciliation ahead of publishing this release. Monthly reconciliation reports detailing provisional learner outcomes figures are issued to further education institutions, work based learning providers and local authorities. Data quality issues are then followed up and resolved in liaison with Welsh Government officials.

The Welsh Government developed a set of data management principles for providers. These principles provided clarification on several data management issues, particularly the circumstances in which LLWR records can be deleted as well as on matters such as recording transfers.

Both the deletion of LLWR records and the incorrect recording of transfers can contribute to an undercount of ended learning activities and/or learning programmes and therefore potentially inflate the success rates detailed within this output.

Figure 1: Proportion of apprenticeship programmes recorded as transferred, by programme type and academic year

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Foundation Apprenticeship	3	3	2	2	3	2	2
Apprenticeship	3	2	2	2	2	1	1
Higher Apprenticeship	4	2	2	2	1	1	1
All Apprenticeships	3	2	2	2	2	2	1

Description: The proportion of all apprenticeships recorded as transferred has decreased in 2023/24.

Analysis is undertaken annually to determine the impact of transfers.

Figure 2: Proportion of apprenticeship programmes excluded from measures, by reason for exclusion and academic year

Reason for exclusion	2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		2021/22		2022/23		2023/24	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Early drop-out	2,435	12	3,380	13	2,975	10	2,085	12	1,830	10	1,795	10
Transferred learning programme	505	2	500	2	510	2	390	2	310	2	295	2
Learner redundancy	245	1	305	1	225	1	100	1	115	1	130	1
Learner death	10	[c]	10	[c]	10	[c]	15	[c]	15	[c]	10	[c]
Total exclusions	3,200	15	4,195	16	3,720	13	2,570	15	2,570	14	2,225	13
Total ended learning programmes	20,755	100	26,365	100	28,455	100	17,280	100	17,770	100	17,706	100

Description: The proportion of total excluded learners has decreased from 2022/23 to 2023/24.

Analysis is undertaken annually to monitor the numbers of exclusions from the outcome measures calculations to determine whether they fall within acceptable thresholds.

Free School Meals History

The free school meals eligibility history of a learner is found by matching apprenticeship records to historical school records. This uses the Matched Education Dataset. The Matched Education Dataset links datasets to trace a learner's progression through the education system in Wales. It matches records going back to 2010/11. Not all learners are able to be matched. The match rate is higher for younger apprentices.

FSM eligibility history is not available for learners who attended school before 2010/11 or attended school outside of Wales.

Figure 3: Proportion of apprentices where free school meals history during secondary school was known, by academic year

<u>2016/17</u>	<u>2017/18</u>	<u>2018/19</u>	<u>2021/22</u>	<u>2022/23</u>	<u>2023/24</u>
38%	32%	33%	45%	49%	46%

Description: The match rate has decreased by three percentage points from 2022/23 to 2023/24

Timeliness and punctuality

The annual timescale for the production of final learner outcomes data balances timeliness against the need for accurate data quality to underpin robust sector benchmarks. Statistics are drawn from a database based on the LLWR in December, (previously February until 2016/17 for work based learning). This report is then produced and published as soon as possible.

Accessibility and clarity

This statistical release is pre-announced and then published on the [Statistics and Research section of the Welsh Government website](#).

The release is published as an accessible format PDF (PDF/A). The data in the report is available on [StatsWales](#) or in an accompanying spreadsheet available in an open data format (ODS).

Comparability and coherence

Due to the changes in how grades were awarded in 2020 and the disruption to learning caused by the pandemic, the Welsh Government did not produce any of its usual performance measures for schools or post-16 learning in 2019/20 or 2020/21. Instead, special reports were produced on [Outcomes for learners in post-16 education affected by the coronavirus \(Covid-19\) pandemic](#). Those statistics are calculated using different methodologies and cannot be compared with this report.

Past releases can be accessed on the [Learner outcome measures for further education, work-based learning and adult community learning](#) page on gov.wales.

Releases before 2018/19 contain information on further education provision. This has now been replaced by the [consistent performance measures for post-16 learning](#). Please note that these figures are not directly comparable.

Equivalent data on post-16 learner outcomes in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland can be found via the following links:

[Skills Funding Agency / Department for Education - Statistics: further education and skills](#)

[Scottish Funding Council - Staff and Student Performance Indicators for FE Colleges](#)

[Department for the Economy Northern Ireland - Further Education Performance Statistics](#)

However, due to differences in methodology and data collection, caution should be exercised in making direct comparisons with the figures contained within this release.

Statistics on further education and sixth forms in schools are available in the [consistent performance measures for post-16 learning](#) reports. These statistics have been designed to compare learners across different education settings, and to give a picture of the whole learner journey. The methodology is not directly comparable with the statistics in this article.

Apprenticeship learning programmes

From September 2022, all construction apprenticeships start at level 3 instead of level 2. Of the programmes started in 2022/23, 93% were started by males. This has caused a large fall in the number of level 2 apprenticeship starts and an increase in level 3 apprenticeships in this sector compared with previous figures for males.

New work-based learning contract arrangements came into effect on 1 August 2021. This resulted in the transfer of around 4,800 existing apprentices to new providers with new programme records created on the Lifelong Learning Wales Record. New programme records resulting from a transfer are usually included in the statistics on apprenticeship starts with the exception of the target measure. For 2021/22, however, we excluded the records as so many learners were transferred that the statistics would have presented a misleading picture of apprenticeship starts in that quarter had they been left in.

Traineeships and Jobs Growth Wales+

This release included traineeships in figures for work-based learning up to and including the 2021/22 academic year. The traineeships programme ended in March 2022 and was replaced by Jobs Growth Wales+.

Statistics for Jobs Growth Wales+ are reported separately in the quarterly [Jobs Growth Wales+](#) reports published by the Welsh Government, on a financial year basis. Any 2022/23 statistics for work-based learning provision as a whole are therefore not

comparable to previous years. Furthermore, there will be some impact on figures for 2021/22 as the traineeships programme ended part way through that academic year.

Since their introduction in 2011/12, traineeships accounted for between 10% and 20% of all in learning WBL programmes.

This issue will also have a smaller impact on any statistics presented for all three sectors (further education, local authority community learning and work based learning) combined, for example overall counts of unique learners.

Data for previous years

The following changes were made to the data collection for 2017/18.

- **Unfunded learning:**

From 1 August 2017, information relating to learning activities not publicly funded is no longer collected through the LLWR; whilst the change is at individual activity level it will have an impact on the overall number of learners recorded. Because funding is recorded at activity rather than learner level, it is difficult to give a firm assessment of impact, as the change may also affect the way providers code their data.

- **Learn Welsh sector:**

From 1 August 2017, information relating to Learn Welsh/Welsh for Adults provision in Further Education institutions is no longer collected through the LLWR. The [National Centre for Learning Welsh](#) has been responsible for providing leadership to the Welsh for Adults programme and co-ordinating provision across Wales on behalf of Welsh Government from 2015.

These two changes mean that, particularly for part-time further education and community learning, it is not possible to draw any conclusions around trends in the number of learners compared with the years prior to 2017/18. The decrease seen may be fully accounted for by the changes to the data collection. For completeness the following charts show the time series – but indicate the break in the series and that figures for 2017/18 are not comparable with earlier years.

Statement of compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

All of our statistics are produced and published in accordance with a number of statements and protocols to enhance trustworthiness, quality and value. These are set out in Medr's [Statement of Compliance](#) with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

These official statistics demonstrate the standards expected around trustworthiness, quality and value in the following ways.

Trustworthiness

These statistics have been published according to Medr's [Statement of Compliance](#) and [pre-release access to official statistics policy](#).

Quality

The data is sourced from the Lifelong Learning Record Wales which is submitted by learning providers. This data is also used to determine funding for learning providers and is subject to audit.

When the data is submitted it must meet certain validation rules. When the statistics are being produced quality checks are undertaken by the statisticians.

Value

These statistics are produced to provide an insight in the learning being delivered in Wales. They are used for monitoring and evaluating the work-based learning sector.

Change in accredited statistics status

These statistics were previously published by the Welsh Government as National Statistics (now known as Accredited Official Statistics). As the statistics are now published by a new organisation, the Accredited Official Statistics status has been temporarily removed.

Medr has continued the systems and processes for producing the statistics from Welsh Government, and the statisticians producing the statistics include statisticians who produced further education, work-based learning and community learning statistics at Welsh Government.

The OSR will assess the processes in place at Medr as an official statistics producer. The OSR will assess whether the statistics meet the requirements for Accredited Official Statistics.

Further details

This release is available at: medr.cymru

StatsWales

Additional tables supplying greater detail, including analysis by programme and qualification type, subject, age, disability status and ethnicity, are available via the Welsh Government's online dissemination service StatsWales.

Other statistical outputs using the LLWR data underlying this release

- [‘Further education, work-based learning and community learning’](#) - Statistics on enrolled learners and their activities.
- [‘Consistent performance measures for post-16 learning \(achievement\)’](#) – Statistics on the achievement of learners in FE institutions (derived from LLWR data) and school sixth forms (derived from school data sources).
- [‘Consistent performance measures for post-16 learning \(learner destinations\)’](#) – Statistics on the destinations of post-16 learners in the year following their post-16 learning programme.
- [Apprenticeship learning programme started.](#)
- [‘Outcomes for learners in post-16 education affected by the coronavirus \(Covid-19\) pandemic’](#) – reports on the learning outcomes for learners who were on vocational programmes, general education programmes (including A Levels), apprenticeships or community learning courses.

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