

## Medr statistics

### Quality and Methodology: Consistent performance measures for post-16 learning: Learner destinations, August 2021 to July 2023 (official statistics in development)

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**Date:** 10 December 2025

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**Summary:** **Quality and methodology information on the production of the statistics contained in the Consistent performance measures for post-16 learning: Learner destinations statistical release**

**Theme:** Further education, sixth forms, work-based learning

**Source:** Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) Study  
Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR)  
Post-16 Data Collection  
Matched Education Data (MED)  
Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC)  
Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)  
P45 and P14 employment data

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## Context

### Background to the release

In December 2017, the Welsh Government published the statistical article [Educational Destinations of Key Stage 4 and Post-16 Learners, 2014/15](#), stating that a separate project was being carried out to determine the employment destinations of learners in Wales. That project is the [Longitudinal Education Outcomes \(LEO\) Study](#), which has allowed the linking of data from the [Lifelong Learning Wales Record \(LLWR\)](#) and [Post-16 Data Collection](#) with employment data from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). See [Data Sources](#) for more information.

This has allowed the development of a more complete picture of the destinations of learners in further education, sixth forms, and work-based learning, be it continuing in education, employment, both or neither. In September 2018, the first publication in this series was published; [Consistent performance measures for post 16-learning: learner destinations, 2015/16](#).

Feedback following the first release in this series indicated that use of the word 'positive' in the measure categories could overlook outcomes that are positive for an individual, such as volunteering or parenthood, but conversely, could capture less favourable outcomes (such as employment on a zero hours contract). Therefore the word 'positive' has been removed from our terminology. However, the methodology for the learning and sustained employment measure as above remains the same as for the positive destination measure presented in the [first release](#) in this series.

### Official statistics in development

[Official statistics in development](#) may be new or existing statistics, and will be tested with users, in line with the standards of trustworthiness, quality, and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics. Previously these statistics have been called 'experimental statistics'.

Medr's use of datasets used to create these measures is still evolving and Medr will continue to consider the best ways to measure learner progressions and destinations. We welcome and value any feedback on the methodology or contents of this output. Please contact us at [statistics@medr.cymru](mailto:statistics@medr.cymru).

### Learners covered by these measures

The learner cohorts presented in this release include all post-16 learners who terminated an eligible learning programme in Wales in the academic year. Post-16 learners are those studying in further education institutions, school sixth forms and in work-based learning (apprenticeships, Jobs Growth Wales+/traineeships and other employability programmes), but excludes the adult community learning sector. Finishing a learning programme does not necessarily constitute 'a leaver'. For example, many learners completing programmes of AS level study will remain with their learning provider to pursue an A2 programme.

The article does not include information on the destinations of learners who undertook:

- Learning delivered in independent schools

- Higher education learning in higher education providers
- Privately-funded training at FE organisations and independent training organisations

In the previous iteration of this release, following a review of the methodology, a number of learning programme types were removed from the cohorts, including cohorts for previous years. This aimed to improve comparability and coherence across the time series.

- Higher education (HE) programmes - from 2016/17 onwards, all HE programmes funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) moved from being reported through LLWR to being reported through the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). (See below) As a result the number of HE programmes at FEIs dropped between 2015/16 and 2016/17 as the destination of HE level learners from HESA are not available to be analysed and so not included in this release. This change mainly affects the 2014/15 and 2015/16 learner cohorts.
- Junior Apprenticeships – removed as this is pre-16 provision not within the scope of these performance measures.
- Creative Solutions and Independent Living Skills, Professional Learning Accounts (PLAs) – these programmes are not currently included in the post-16 consistent measures.
- Programmes where the reason for termination was the death of the learner – removed for consistency with how such programmes are handled in the achievement measure.

This resulted in the removal of between 2,000 and 4,000 learning programmes from cohorts published in previous editions of this release. The main impact was an increase in sustained employment rates of around one percentage point for the 2014/15 to 2018/19 cohorts, an increase of one percentage point in sustained learning for the 2014/15 and 2015/16 cohorts, and an increase in sustained destination of one percentage point for the 2014/15 to 2016/17 cohorts. Sustained employment for the 2019/20 cohort increased by two percentage points, whilst the sustained destination rate went up by one percentage points. Some of this change will also be the effect of updated employment data from LEO.

Post-16 learners in school sixth forms and further education institutions and those in work-based learning all undertake a [programme of study](#), consisting of a combination of qualifications. There are a range of programmes covering AS/A levels and the wide range of vocational qualifications offered. Eligible learning is identified using the LLWR and Post-16 Data Collection, in particular the learning programme start and end dates. The measures reported here cover learners terminating a learning programme in an academic year (1 September to 31 August for school sixth forms, 1 August to 31 July for other providers), whether or not the learning programme was recorded as ‘completed’. Learning programme start and end dates in the Post-16 Data Collection have not been used due to data quality issues. Early drop outs (learners enrolled on a learning programme for fewer than 8 weeks) are excluded.

Learners age 16+ are those that are at least age 16 at the beginning of the year they terminate their learning or training, i.e. in the case of learners terminating in 2022/23 this covers learners aged 16 or older on 31 August 2022. Destinations are reported on a learner basis and learners appear once for each provider where they have terminated an eligible programme. In the case where a learner terminates multiple eligible programmes

within the academic year, destinations are reported against their most recently started programme.

## Data Sources

### Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) Study

This publication uses data from the Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) Study, which has been brought together by different government departments and is being used to improve the information available on a range of topics across different policy areas.

The LEO study links information about individuals, including:

- Personal characteristics such as gender, ethnic group, and age
- Education, including schools, colleges and higher education institution attended, courses taken, and qualifications achieved
- Employment and income
- Benefits claimed

The privacy statement explaining how personal data in this project is shared and used is published on the [Gov.UK website: Longitudinal education outcomes study: how we use and share data](#).

Our involvement in this project has allowed us to link learning data from the [Lifelong Learning Wales Record \(LLWR\)](#) and [Post-16 Data Collection](#) with benefits, employment and earnings data from DWP and HMRC.

This publication also uses data from the Welsh Government's [Pupil Level Annual School Census \(PLASC\)](#), utilising the Matched Education Dataset to obtain additional learner characteristics such as Special Educational Need/ Additional Learning Need provision in school, and Free School Meal eligibility.

### Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR)

Contains data on further education, work based learning and adult community learning. It is collected on a 'rolling' basis throughout the year with regular statistical freezes and is the official source of statistics on learners in further education institutions (colleges) in Wales.

All data for further education institutions comes from [LLWR](#).

### Post-16 Data Collection

Every October, all maintained schools with sixth forms and middle schools with pupils in years 12, 13 and/or 14, are required to report all learning programmes and activities undertaken by pupils in the previous academic year.

### Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

An annual collection of a range of UK-wide data from universities, higher education colleges and other differently funded providers of higher education; this data is then provided to UK governments and higher education funding bodies to support their work in

regulating and funding higher education providers. Providers submit data to HESA via either the Student record or the Student alternative record. HESA now reports using both these combined records to provide a more complete picture of higher education. Data from the Student alternative record is included in our learning destination calculations.

### **P45 and P14 Employment Data (held by HMRC)**

An administrative dataset covering those who pay tax through PAYE through employer submission of P45 and P14, or through completing a self-assessment tax form. The core purpose of this process is to collect tax from those who are eligible to pay it through this mechanism and so there is not complete coverage. Employers are not required to supply information to HMRC for individuals who earn below the tax threshold, although for large employers these individuals are thought to be included due to methods of data transfer.

Further, HMRC started to implement Real Time Information (RTI) in April 2013 which includes nearly all such individuals. RTI offers substantial improvements to the P45 system in terms of data coverage since employers must now provide information on all their employees if even one employee of the company is paid above the Lower Earnings Limit. The move to RTI will mean that data coverage is higher for the most recent financial years.

### **Time lags**

All data used in this process are drawn from administrative sources, which take time to process and collate. The time lags between the reference period and availability of the dataset for analysis are as follows:

- LLWR data is collated from returns by colleges with the provisional data collected to date generally published on a quarterly basis. Returns are not generally complete until up to six months after the end of the academic year, which runs from 1st August to 31st July.
- Post-16 Data Collection is collated from returns by maintained schools with sixth forms and middle schools with pupils in years 12, 13 and/or 14 in October, and are generally complete by December. Data is collected retrospectively for the full previous academic year.
- HESA data is collated from returns by institutions and data for the full academic year is available approximately six months after the end of the academic year.
- Employment data is matched to DWP data on a regular basis. There are cleaning rules applied to the data, which identify old records when updated with new information. As new information can come through about a job after it has ended, this is a source of constant change and historically the data has been considered complete after approximately six months. The most recent matched data is used in this publication, so data presented for previous years may not match to those presented in previous publications in this series.

## Matching process

Employment destinations have been produced using a matched dataset of person level administrative data sources from Welsh Government, DWP and HMRC. Learners from the LLWR and Post-16 Data Collection are matched to DWP benefit records and HMRC P45 and P14 income tax returns using a mixture of National Insurance Number and matching on other personal details. The matching algorithm relies on several fields being accurately populated across both datasets and additionally, not all learners will necessarily have any record of employment or benefits for legitimate reasons.

Once the match is established, the next step is to merge the different data files (employment, benefits, and learners) based on the person level record linkage defined by the matching. The DWP and HMRC datasets provide a record of those receiving benefits and those paying tax through the self-assessment and Pay As You Earn (PAYE) systems. Processing rules are then applied to transform the data into useable information on employment and benefit receipt to support all analysis.

Learning destinations have been produced using the 'Matched Education Dataset' referenced earlier. In earlier releases of this analysis, the data linking exercise was undertaken by London Economics (LE) under contract by the Welsh Government. The linking process is now produced by the Welsh Government. The data linking exercise attaches a common anonymised identifier to records from multiple education data collections, so that the various datasets could be linked for statistical and research purposes. For this analysis, the cohort of LLWR and Post-16 Data Collection learners are matched to LLWR, Post-16 Data Collection and HESA data for the next academic year to observe learning outcomes in further and higher education.

## Destination measures

A learner's destination relates to their activity the following academic year. So, for the 2022/23 cohort, destinations are reported for 2023/24.

### Sustained employment

The sustained employment measure aims to count the proportion of learners in sustained employment following termination of their course. Employment destinations are produced by matching the LLWR and Post-16 Data Collection to HMRC tax records (further details are provided later).

The definition of sustained employment looks at the employment activity in the six month October to March period, following the end of the academic year in which the learning aim took place. For 2022/23 learners to be counted as in sustained employment:

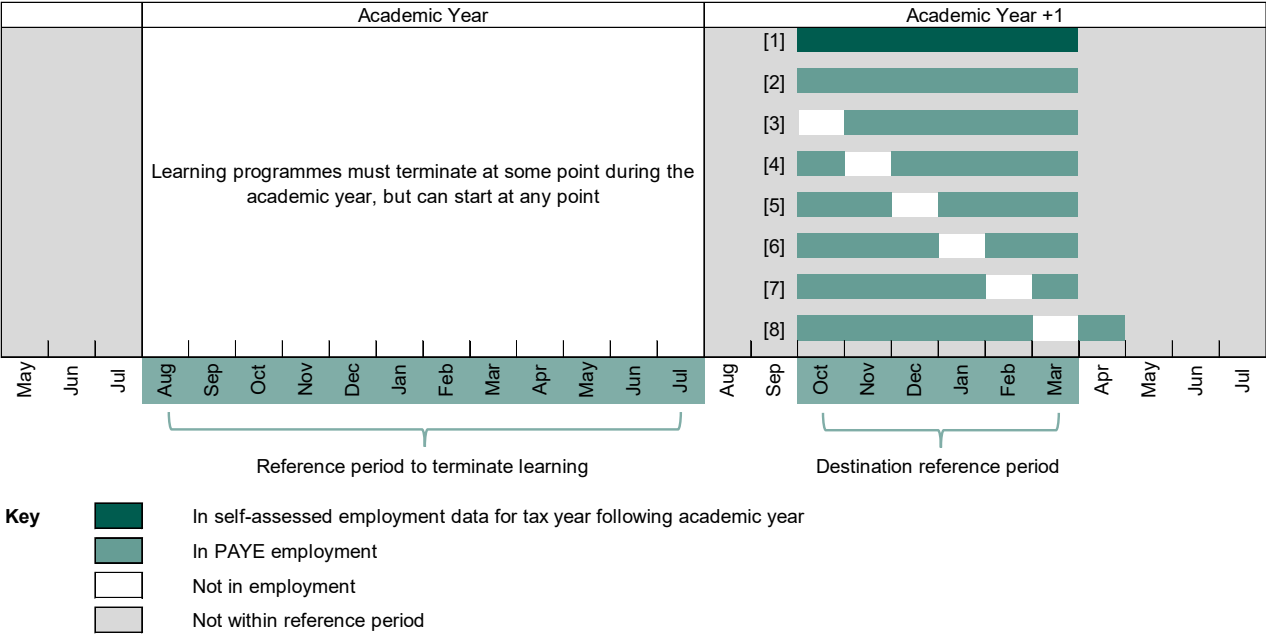
- A learner must have completed a self-assessed return for tax year 2023-24, or
- A learner must be in paid PAYE employment for at least one day in five out of the six months between October 2023 and March 2024

If a learner is employed in the five months between October 2023 and February 2024, but not in March 2024, then they must also be employed in April 2024.



The measure allows for a one month pause in PAYE employment to reflect that there may be more volatility in initial employment post learning. Where the pause is in March, activity in April is checked to see if it is a short pause or a more substantial break.

**Figure 1: The eight possible scenarios that lead to a learner being classified as in sustained employment**



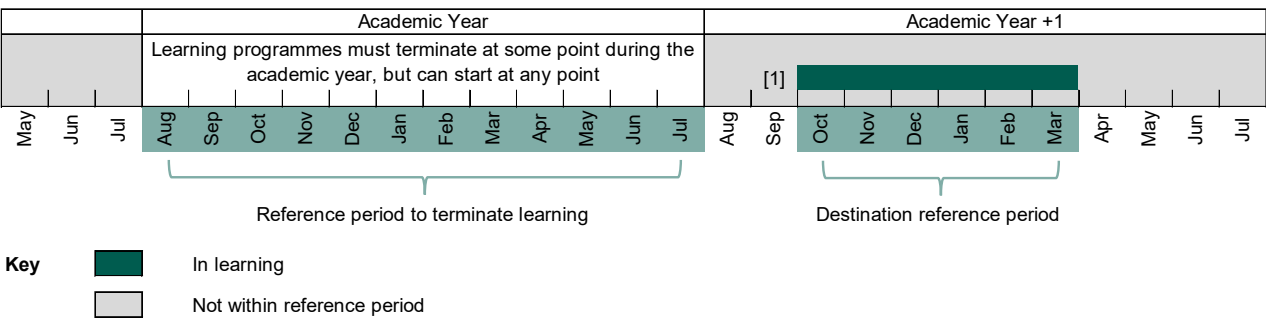
## Sustained learning

The sustained learning measure aims to count the proportion of learners in sustained learning, regardless of economic activity, following the termination of their course. The 2022/23 cohort of LLWR and Post-16 Data Collection learners are matched to LLWR, Post-16 Data Collection and HESA data for the next academic year to observe learning outcomes in further and higher education.

The definition of sustained learning looks at learning activity in the six month October to March period, following the end of the academic year in which the learning programme took place. For 2022/23 learners to be counted as in sustained learning:

- A learner must be in learning or training for at least one day in each of the six months between October 2023 and March 2024

**Figure 2: The single scenario that leads to a learner being classified as in sustained learning**





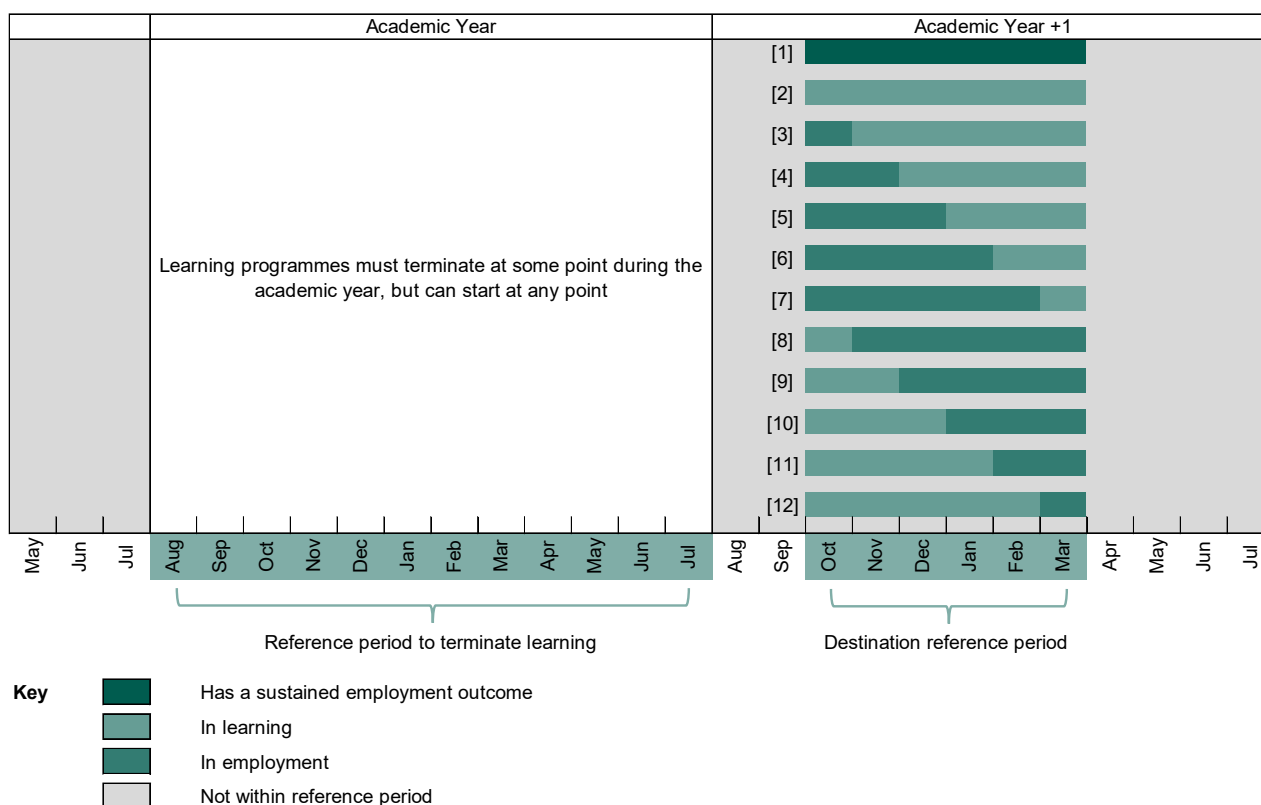
## Sustained destination

The sustained destination measure aims to count the proportion of learners with a sustained outcome, either into learning or employment (or both). For 2022/23 learners to be counted as having a sustained destination, a learner must either:

- Have a sustained employment outcome, or
- Have a sustained learning outcome, or
- Be engaged in either learning, training or paid employment in each of the six months between October 2023 and March 2024

Under the final scenario, learners may only 'switch' between learning and employment once. For example, if they are in learning for 2 months, then employment for 4 months they are counted as having a sustained destination. However if they are in learning for 2 months, then employment for 2 months, then learning 2 months, they are not counted as having a sustained destination.

**Figure 3: The twelve possible scenarios that lead to a learner being classified as having a sustained destination**

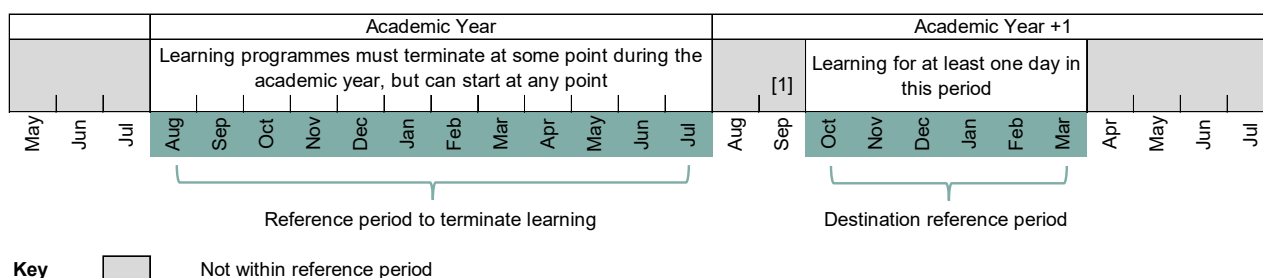


## Learning (non-sustained)

The learning measure aims to count the proportion of learners who are in any learning, regardless of economic activity, following the termination of their course. This uses the same data sources and reference period as the sustained learning measure, but to be counted as in learning:

- A learner must be in learning or training for at least one day in any of the six months between October 2023 and March 2024

**Figure 4: The single scenario that leads to a learner being classified as in learning**



## Learning or sustained employment destination

The learning and sustained employment destination measure aims to count the proportion of learners with an outcome into learning or sustained employment. For 2022/23 learners to be counted as having a destination, a learner must:

- Have a sustained employment outcome, or
- Have a learning outcome (does not need to be sustained)

## Limitations of the data

At present, we haven't included information on employment sector or earnings, and do not have any data on hours worked. It is important to note that the sustained employment measure also captures part-time workers, such as those with a part-time job alongside their learning. It is not currently possible to use the matched data we hold to identify whether a learner has progressed into a destination that is related to their programme of study. We hope to include further information on sector of employment in the future.

## Equalities data

In April 2022, a section on destinations by learner characteristics was included in the release for the first time. Previous analysis on age, gender and multiple deprivation was included as well as new analysis on destinations by ethnicity, Special Education Needs (SEN) and free school meal (FSM) eligibility. Furthermore, following changes to special educational needs data resulting from the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018; data on Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision has been included alongside the SEN data.

There are challenges to producing these statistics due to differences in the way this information is recorded across the various data sources for different learning providers.

Ethnicity data was taken from the existing Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) and Post-16 Data Collections. Each dataset had different category breakdowns for type of ethnicity which have been aggregated up into broad ethnic groups to enable comparison.

For the SEN/ALN and FSM analysis we utilised our Matched Education Dataset (MED) which links education datasets from Key Stage 4 through to Higher Education. The MED enabled the linking of students in the LEO dataset with their Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) record to add further equality characteristics analysis to this release.

Information on match rates and the impact of this approach is included in the respective sections in this release.

PLASC is collected annually from all maintained schools in Wales. All pupils on roll on the census date must be included in the return and it includes information about pupil characteristics such as special educational need, additional learning need and, free school meal eligibility.

Matched education data is available from 2010/11 onwards. As such, only students we were able to match to school data after that date are included in the SEN/ALN and FSM analysis. This means that the cohorts of students in those analyses are younger and may have different outcomes to the rest of the learner cohort. The breakdowns in these charts relating to SEN/ALN and FSM should therefore not be compared with the overall totals in this release.

## Availability of data for equality dimensions

Equality dimension	Collected	Included in release
Race/ Ethnicity	Yes	Yes
Age groups	Yes	Yes
Gender	Yes	Yes
Impairments and disability	Yes	Analysis by Special Educational Needs (SEN)/ Additional Learning Needs (ALN) is included due to differences in how data on disability, impairments and SEN/ALN is captured across sectors – see above.
Sexual orientation	No	No
Religion or belief	No	No
Marriage and civil partnership	No	No
Pregnancy and maternity	No	No
Gender identity	In LLWR only – ‘Other’ gender category available for learners who do not identify as male or female.	No

## Rounding

All figures are rounded to the nearest 5. Numbers less than 5 are suppressed. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Percentages based on a denominator of less than 23 are suppressed.

Differences between values are calculated using unrounded values, so there may be small discrepancies when compared with the rounded figures.

## 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 and Coherence.

### Relevance

The measures set out in this publication are used:

- by Medr to monitor providers' performance;
- by Estyn, to inform inspection judgements on standards; and
- by providers themselves, as a management tool to measure their own performance and benchmark themselves against sector averages, as part of their self-assessment cycles.

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

- officials in Medr;
- Cabinet Secretaries, Ministers and officials in the Welsh Government;
- Members of the Senedd and researchers in the Senedd;
- other government departments;
- local authorities and regional education consortia;
- students, researchers, and academics;
- schools and further education institutions;
- citizens, private companies, and the media.

### Accuracy

Statisticians within the Medr undertake quality assurance processes ahead of publishing this release. The notes section provides an overview of methodological/data quality issues that relate specifically to the data in this output.

### Timeliness and punctuality

Data for a given academic year is derived and published subject to availability of the data-sources and completion of the external data matching process. See ['Time lags'](#) for further information.

### Accessibility and clarity

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

The release is published as an accessible format PDF (PDF/A), alongside a spreadsheet available in an open data format (ODS). Both the release and the spreadsheet follow accessibility guidelines.

## Comparability and coherence

The Department for Education (DfE) has released analysis detailing the destinations of FE learners in England which can be found via the following link: [Further Education: Outcomes, 2021 to 2022](#).

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

- DfE figures are based on all age apprenticeships, all age traineeships and adult (19+) FE and Skills learners, whereas these figures also include 16-18 year old FE and WBL learners and those in school sixth forms;
- DfE figures are based on completed eligible learning aims, whereas these figures are based on terminated learning programmes, excluding early dropouts (learners enrolled on a learning programme for fewer than 8 weeks);
- where a learner completes multiple eligible learning aims within the academic year, DfE reports outcomes against their highest level, whereas this report looks at the most recently terminated programme; and

DfE include any level of learning as a learning destination (i.e. a learner completing a level 3 programme who then went on to a level 2 programme the following academic year would be counted as in learning), whereas these figures only count a learner as in learning if the programme they go on to in the following academic year is at an equal or higher level to the programme they terminated.

Previously published destination rates are recalculated using the latest matched data available at the time of publication as it may result in a higher match rate. The effect on the rates are minimal but figures may differ slightly from those previously presented.

In December 2017, the Welsh Government published the statistical article Educational Destinations of Key Stage 4 and Post-16 Learners, 2014/15, which looks at the educational destinations of Key Stage 4 and 5 leavers.

The statistical article [Outcomes for learners in post-16 education affected by the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic: August 2020 to July 2021](#) included a one-off analysis of the progression of Year 11 learners into post-16 education.

Information is also published by Careers Wales, through the [Pupil Destinations Survey](#), on the destinations of Year 11, 12 and 13 school leavers.

In July 2022, the statistical article [Post-16 learning statistics by learners' ethnic group: August 2017 to July 2021](#) included destinations analysis by detailed ethnic group and committed to make the data available in regular publications in future. The ethnicity charts in this release now include more detailed breakdowns.

## Future work

Official statistics in development may be new or existing statistics, and will be tested with users, in line with the standards of trustworthiness, quality, and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics. In some previous publications, these statistics have been called ‘experimental statistics’. We are continuing to review the methodology used to produce these statistics and more generally consider the best way to measure progression and learner destinations within, and out of, tertiary education.

You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards. Feedback can be provided by email to [statistics@medr.cymru](mailto:statistics@medr.cymru). Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing [regulation@statistics.gov.uk](mailto:regulation@statistics.gov.uk) or via the OSR website.

## Further details

This release is available at: [medr.cymru](https://medr.cymru)

For the glossary, please refer to the main report.

## Other statistical outputs using the LLWR underlying the release

- [Further education, work-based learning and community learning](#) - Statistics on enrolled learners and their activities.
- [Learner outcome measures for apprenticeships](#) – Statistics on the success and completion of apprenticeships by level of study, type of learning aim, sector, and learning characteristics.
- [Consistent performance measures post-16 learning \(achievement\), August 2023 to July 2024](#) – Statistics on the outcomes for further education and sixth forms .
- [Apprenticeship learning programme started](#)
- [Progression from Year 11 to tertiary education, August 2017 to January 2025](#)

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