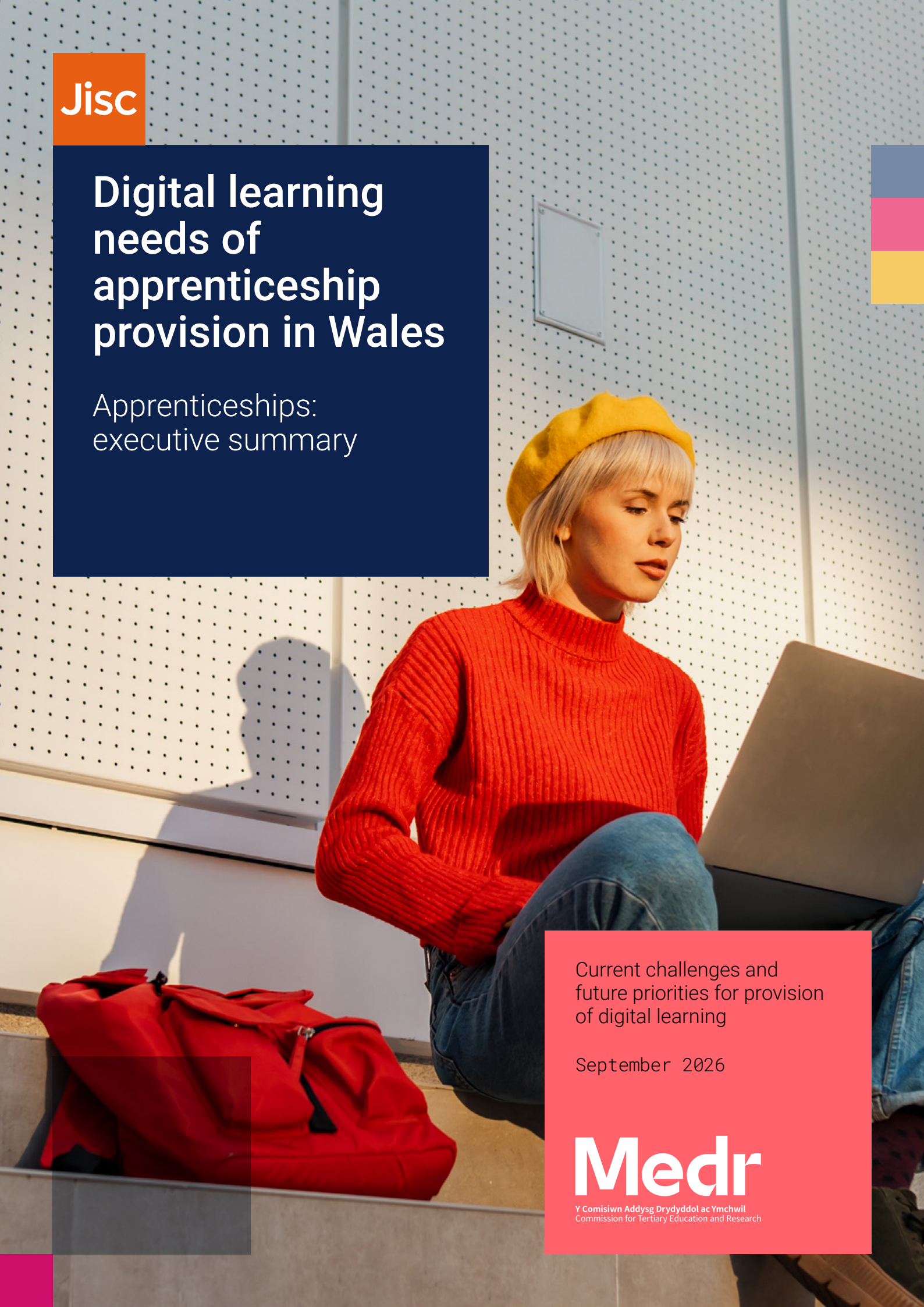


Jisc

Digital learning needs of apprenticeship provision in Wales

Apprenticeships: executive summary

Current challenges and future priorities for provision of digital learning

September 2026

Medr

Y Comisiwn Addysg Drydyddol ac Ymchwil
Commission for Tertiary Education and Research

Executive summary

Apprenticeships are workplace-based training programmes in which learners undertake paid employment while developing job-related skills and working towards recognised qualifications with support from an educational provider.

In Wales, apprenticeship provision is funded by Medr and provision at **Levels 2 to 5** is currently delivered through a national network of contracted training providers. This system is entering a period of change, with a reviewed approach to apprenticeship delivery expected from **August 2027**. This report therefore considers digital learning needs at a point when the programme is both an established part of Wales' skills system and preparing for future reform.

Apprenticeships play a critical role in delivering skills, productivity, and economic growth within Wales and across a multitude of industries. Because apprentices learn within very different workplace environments, their opportunities to develop and apply digital skills will not look the same across all programmes. As digital technologies become increasingly embedded within workplaces, apprenticeship providers face growing expectations to develop learners' vocational capabilities alongside the confidence and competence to engage with digital environments in ways that are relevant to their sector and role. This study explored the digital learning needs of Level 2 to Level 5 apprenticeship provision in Wales through interviews with the **ten contracted apprenticeship providers in 2025/26**, sector stakeholders, and analysis of existing evidence and data. Degree apprenticeship provision was not included in this study.

Apprenticeship provision in Wales has made significant progress in adopting digital approaches to delivery, assessment, communication, and learner support. However, digital capability across the system remains uneven. Learner and staff confidence is heavily influenced by industry context, workplace exposure to technology, and individual experience, with digital development often driven by compliance requirements rather than structured capability building. As a result, apprentices may successfully complete programmes without developing the broader digital skills increasingly required in modern workplaces, while providers continue to rely on individual staff confidence rather than consistently embedded digital capability.

Digital access, equity and inclusion remains a challenge across apprenticeship provision. While most learners can access digital services through smartphones, access to suitable devices, reliable connectivity, workplace systems, and inclusive support is less consistent. These barriers are particularly evident for learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), learners in rural areas, and those working in environments where workplace policies or operational requirements restrict the use of digital devices and tools. Although digital inequity, or "the inability to interact with the online world fully",[1] does not necessarily prevent participation, it can create additional burden, reduce engagement, and increase the risk of unequal learning experiences.

The sector's digital systems have evolved rapidly but remain highly fragmented. Providers often operate multiple disconnected platforms for learning, assessment, compliance, communication, and reporting, resulting in duplicated effort, administrative inefficiencies, and inconsistent experiences for learners, staff, and employers. Many commercial systems are designed primarily for the English apprenticeship market, requiring adaptation to meet Welsh requirements and limiting opportunities to create streamlined, user-centred digital experiences. While some successful approaches have been noted, more consistency across the sector is required.

1 **Digital Poverty Alliance – Together we can end digital poverty once and for all**



In relation to digital learning and pedagogy, providers increasingly recognise that successful digital delivery depends on effective learning design rather than technology alone. Blended learning is now embedded within apprenticeship provision, but learners continue to value face-to-face interaction, mentorship, and personalised support from both their workplace and provider. The most effective approaches are those that contextualise digital learning within vocational practice, while recognising differences in learner needs, programme levels, and industry expectations. However, opportunities remain to strengthen digital pedagogy and support staff in designing engaging and effective learning experiences.

Artificial intelligence and emerging technologies present significant opportunities to enhance productivity, learner engagement, and vocational relevance. Adoption is growing, but remains uneven and is constrained by uncertainty around assessment, policy, capability, and implementation. Similar challenges exist for immersive and other emerging technologies, where interest and access often exceed the capacity, confidence, and support required for sustainable integration into apprenticeship delivery. Realising the benefits of these technologies will require a shift from experimentation towards structured, evidence-based adoption.

Finally, a number of wider system conditions shaping digital learning sit within wider considerations around apprenticeship funding, delivery and framework reform in Wales. Funding uncertainty (which providers associated with historical arrangements for confirming allocations) restricts long-term planning and investment, although the funding model review by Medr may help address some of the constraints created by current system conditions.[2] Providers also face qualifications that struggle to keep pace with technological change, although the current apprenticeship framework review cycle provides an important opportunity to strengthen alignment with evolving workplace requirements.[3] While strong examples of collaboration exist, providers consistently identified a need for greater system-level coordination to address common digital challenges and support a more coherent approach to digital transformation across Welsh apprenticeship provision.

The evidence suggests that the next phase of digital development in Welsh apprenticeships is not primarily about technology adoption, but about achieving better alignment: between apprenticeship frameworks and workplace practice; between digital systems and the Welsh apprenticeship model; between compliance and learner experience; and between provider ambition and the conditions needed to deliver sustainable change. Addressing these priorities will require coordinated action from Medr, providers, employers, awarding bodies and sector partners and will help ensure that apprenticeships remain responsive to the needs of an increasingly digital Welsh economy.

2 Medr/2026/17: Apprenticeship funding model: consultation
3 Medr, Apprenticeships

Recommendations

The report identifies three primary goals for strengthening digital learning in Welsh apprenticeship provision:

01 **Embed digital capability within apprenticeship frameworks and vocational delivery**. Digital skills and assessment expectations should continue to be built more deliberately into apprenticeship frameworks, qualifications and workplace-supported learning, so that learners develop digital capabilities relevant to their industry and role.

02 **Improve digital access, participation and learner support**. The sector should develop clearer understanding and good practice guidance around digital device access, connectivity, accessibility, workplace constraints and learner support. Providers should strengthen their learner-centred checks on digital needs throughout the apprenticeship journey, review and improve user experiences of digital systems.

03 **Strengthen digital and blended learning design within apprenticeships provision**. Providers should be encouraged to design digital learning around learner, industry and programme needs and to support staff development. Providers should be supported with practical guidance focused on digital pedagogy, inclusive design, mobile-first delivery, low-bandwidth approaches and emerging technologies.

Delivering these goals will require coordinated action from Medr, apprenticeship providers, Jisc, awarding bodies, employers and sector partners. In particular, there are opportunities to collaborate on apprenticeship-specific system requirements, supplier engagement, shared guidance, digital pedagogy resources, emerging technology adoption and cross-provider coordination.

Conclusion

Wales has a significant opportunity to build on the progress already made in developing the digital provision and skills of apprenticeships, relevant to each apprentice's employment sector. The evidence suggests the greatest benefits will come not from further technology deployment alone, but from coordinated action to strengthen digital capability, improve inclusion, reduce system fragmentation, support effective learning design, and create the conditions for sustainable innovation. By acting collectively, Medr, providers, employers, and sector partners can help ensure apprenticeships remain relevant, accessible, and responsive to the needs of an increasingly digital Welsh economy.

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