

1. About Remploy Cymru

1.1. Remploy Cymru is committed to transforming the lives of disabled people and their families through sustainable employment in communities across Wales. Remploy Cymru delivers a wide range of specialised local and national services for disabled people and those with complex barriers to work and have supported over 18,000 people into employment since 2010. We are the largest provider of the Department of Work and Pensions' Work Choice programme and deliver a range of contracts for local authorities, devolved administrations, Jobcentre Plus, and private sector organisations across Wales.

2. Access to Apprenticeships for Disabled People in Wales

2.1. Disabled people are underrepresented in the take up of apprentices in Wales. According to the latest statistics, only 2.7% of learners in work-based learning provision and 1.3% of apprentices in Wales have a disability.¹ This compares to 9% in England.² This is despite 20% of working age people in Wales having a disability or long-term health condition, as defined by the Equality Act 2010.³

2.2. Given the discrepancy in the representation of disabled people in apprenticeships in Wales compared to non-disabled people, the Welsh Government, skills providers, colleges and disability specialists should work together to explore how apprenticeships can be better opened up to disabled people. In their 2015 report on barriers to apprenticeships in Wales, Estyn outlined the barriers that prevent learners with disabilities from engaging in apprenticeship programmes. These include:

- A lack of awareness of apprenticeships by parents, employers and learners;
- Difficulties in finding suitable work placements, especially where employers believe there will be a need to provide additional support for learners;
- Few apprenticeship role models for disabled people;
- The existence, and perception, of discrimination against disabled people;

¹ <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Post-16-Education-and-Training/Further-Education-and-Work-Based-Learning/Learners/Work-Based-Learning/uniquelearnersworkbasedlearning-by-age-gender-programmetype>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-apprenticeships>

³ <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/prevalence-disability/?lang=en>

- Existing support for learners not being accessed or fully utilised.⁴
- 2.3. Remploy believes that many of these barriers continue to play a significant role in preventing disabled learners from accessing apprenticeships. For example, there is a continued lack of interaction between employment support providers and work-based learning providers. This is despite the fact that an apprenticeship start is a claimable outcome under the Department for Work and Pension's Work Choice programme, which supports disabled people with complex barriers to employment to find, and stay in, work.
 - 2.4. This is something that Remploy Cymru has sought to rectify through a new apprenticeship project. This project links Remploy directly with work-based learning providers to marry up the existing Apprenticeship Matching Service (AMS) with a steady pool of disabled candidates. The project works by introducing a dedicated apprenticeship advisor into Remploy branches, whose role is to identify suitable, interested candidates for apprenticeships. The advisor also acts as a direct link between the candidate and the work-based learning provider, providing a warm handover for the candidate, increasing their chance of receiving an apprenticeship position.
 - 2.5. To date, this project has successfully supported 4 Work Choice candidates into an apprenticeship. Our experience delivering the project has found that one of the largest barriers disabled people face in entering an apprenticeship is the accessibility of the AMS. The AMS is currently very lengthy, meaning that many of our disabled candidates require extensive support to fill it in successfully.
 - 2.6. This project, whilst successful, is currently operated on a very informal basis requiring a commitment from work-based learning providers. As such, Remploy recommends that the Welsh Government could seek to formalise the fundamentals of the project's approach, through a pilot or new initiative, integrating existing provision to assist work-based learning providers to drive the number of disabled people achieving an apprenticeship outcome. Given that this approach links pre-existing support together, it would be a cost-neutral way for the Welsh Government to increase the number of disabled apprentices.
 - 2.7. Whilst linking up existing support could have some positive effect, a broader approach is needed to significantly increase the number of disabled people in apprenticeships in Wales. One measure that the Welsh Government could

consider is the introduction of a target for work-based learning providers for the percentage of disabled people starting and completing apprenticeships. A move such as this would encourage work-based learning providers to innovate to develop new measures to increase the number of disabled people entering apprenticeships.

- 2.8. Successfully moving disabled candidates into an apprenticeship takes a specific set of skills and expertise. As such, the Welsh Government could consider involving disability employment specialists through the launch of an apprenticeship support service to help meet this target. Similarly, Wales' Regional Skills Partnerships could be useful vehicle for the sharing of innovation on disability between providers, businesses, disability specialists and local authorities.

3. Alternative Routeways into Apprenticeships

- 3.1. As outlined in the Estyn report, entry level programmes are some of the most successful routes into employment for young people with disabilities.⁵ Whilst the recent drive to increase the number of higher level and STEM apprenticeships in Wales is positive, this should not be at the expense of opportunities for people with lower educational attainment. With the forthcoming abolition of traineeships, the Welsh Government should explore the introduction of alternative routes into apprenticeships for individuals who would otherwise fall short of the necessary qualifications to allow them to start an apprenticeship.
- 3.2. Supported internships are a good example of a successful alternative route into apprenticeships for disabled people. Supported internships are: *'personalised study programmes based primarily at an employer's premises. They are designed to better enable young people with learning disabilities to achieve sustainable paid employment by equipping them with the skills they need for the workplace [...] The structured study programme includes on-the-job training provided by expert job coaches, and the chance to study for relevant qualifications, where appropriate.'*⁶
- 3.3. Last year Remploy and Mencap produced a joint report 'Raising Aspiration: widening participation in supported internships' which sets out a model for scaling supported internships, involving simplified and longer-term funding;

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<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/default/files/documents/Breaking%20down%20barriers%20to%20a%20apprenticeship.pdf>

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https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/389411/Supported_Internship_Guidance_Dec_14.pdf

increased awareness and understanding among colleges of their obligations to students with special educational needs; and a marketing campaign to position supported internships as a valid and recognised alternative to, and feeder into, apprenticeships⁷. As part of the development of the all-age employability programme, the Welsh Government could consider the introduction of a guaranteed Supported Internship for young people with a statement of special educational needs. Remploy Cymru believes that this would also help to increase both the learning disability employment rate and the number of disabled apprenticeship starts in Wales.

⁷ http://www.remploy.co.uk/downloads/file/193/raising_aspiration_-_widening_participation_in_supported_internshipspdf