PARENT/CARER NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2026

Gyrfa Cymru
Careers Wales

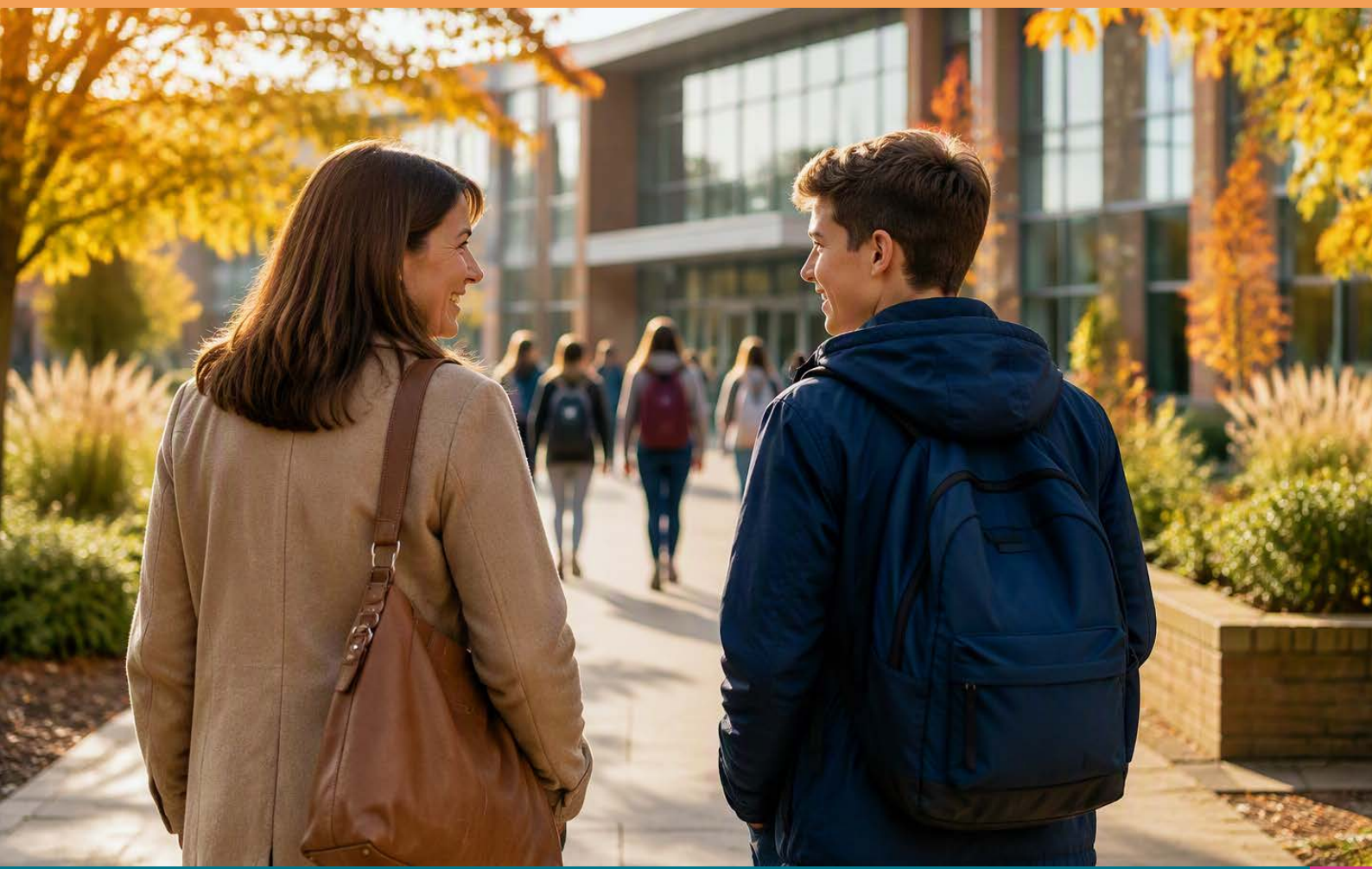
For parents and carers of young people with additional learning needs

Welcome

As a new academic year begins, it's a great time to start thinking about the opportunities and decisions that may lie ahead for your child. Whether they're settling into a new school year, exploring post-16 options or beginning to think about future careers, **Careers Wales** is here to support you every step of the way.

In this edition, you'll find practical guidance and useful resources to help you support your child throughout the autumn term.

Together, we can help your child take positive steps towards their future.



Supporting your child's future

Our careers advisers can:

- Give impartial careers information, advice and guidance.
- Help your child understand their strengths and reach their potential.
- Share information about options, including work and further learning.
- Help your child set short-term and long-term goals.
- Support your child if they face setbacks and challenges.



Our experienced careers advisers tailor their approach to your child's age and needs.

We have a careers adviser linked to each school but can also continue to support your child when they move on from school.

During the autumn term, careers advisers will be meeting young people who are preparing to leave schools in Wales helping them plan their next steps and attending many annual reviews.

If you would like to chat to the careers adviser working with your child before the annual review, please get in touch.

How we supported parents and carers last year

Over the last academic year, we continued to provide dedicated support to parents and carers of young people with **Additional Learning Needs (ALN)**, helping families make informed decisions about education, training and future career pathways.

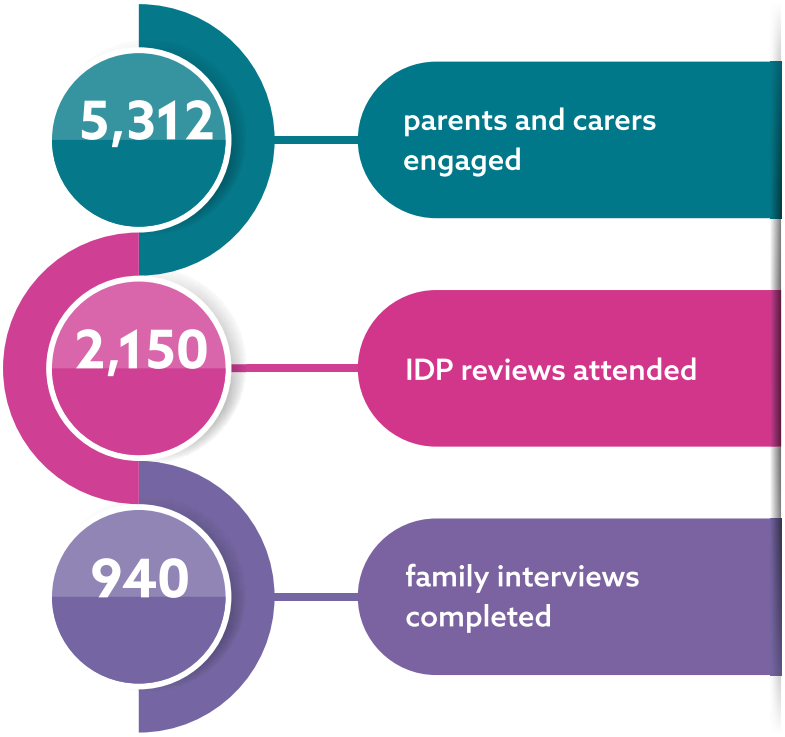
We directly engaged with **5,312 parents and carers of young people with ALN** by providing guidance and information about their child's next steps.

In addition to these interactions, we engaged with more families of young people with ALN by attending **2,150 Individual Development Plan (IDP) reviews where parents and carers were present**, creating opportunities to discuss options, answer questions and provide reassurance.

We also carried out **940 interviews with young people with ALN alongside their parents or carers**, ensuring families were involved in important conversations about aspirations, next steps and the support available to help young people achieve their goals.

These figures highlight the significant role you play in supporting your child and our ongoing commitment to providing families with the information, guidance and confidence they need to navigate key transition points successfully.







Moving on from school

Planning ahead

It's never too early to start thinking about your child's future.

Your child's Individual Development Plan (IDP) reviews are a good time to talk about what happens after school, ask questions and find out what support is available.



You might want to ask:

- **What are my child's options after school?**
- **How can we start preparing now?**
- **Who will help my child plan for the future?**
- **What support is available to help them choose the right path?**
- **What support do colleges or training providers offer?**
- **What happens if local options can't meet my child's needs?**
- **How will my child travel to their chosen provider?**

You can find more questions and information on the Individual Development Plan Review section of the Careers Wales website.

A careers adviser may attend your child's IDP review to explain the options available and answer any questions. If they are unable to attend, you can arrange to speak to them at another time.

If you'd like to know who your child's careers adviser is, ask the school, visit the school's website or contact Careers Wales directly.

The earlier you start the conversation, the more time you and your child will have to explore the options and plan with confidence.

There are more suggested questions on our website

Individual Development Plan review | Careers Wales

Options after school



There are different options open to your child after school.

Go to college

College offers a wide range of courses at different levels, from practical and vocational subjects to academic qualifications. Colleges can also provide additional learning support to help your child succeed.

Start work

Your child may choose to move straight into employment. Work can help them gain experience, develop new skills, build confidence and earn a wage.

Be a trainee

Traineeships can provide support for your child if they need extra help to prepare for work, further training, or an apprenticeship. They focus on developing skills, confidence, and workplace experience.

Be an apprentice

Apprenticeships combine paid work with learning. Your child can gain qualifications while working in a real job, developing practical skills and earning a salary.

Volunteer

Volunteering is a great way to gain experience, learn new skills, build confidence, and meet people. It can also help your child explore different career interests and strengthen future applications for jobs, training, or further education.

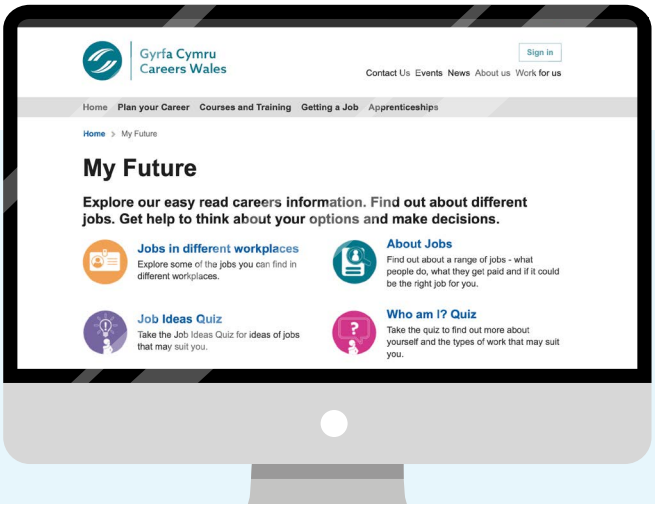
For more information visit

Find out about your options

My Future

Easy-read careers information for your child

As a parent or carer of a young person with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), understanding the options available after school can sometimes feel overwhelming.
That's why we have created My Future, a dedicated easy-read section of our website designed to help you and your child explore their future with confidence.



What is My Future?

My Future provides accessible careers information using clear language and easy-to-follow content. It has been designed to support you and your child as they learn about themselves, explore career ideas, and think about their next steps.

The section includes:

- Information about different jobs and workplaces.
- Career quizzes to help identify interests and strengths.
- Guidance on options available after school and beyond.
- Advice on finding and applying for jobs.
- Information about living independently as an adult.
- Details of organisations and people who can offer support.

Helping your child to make decisions

Making decisions about education, training, employment and future goals can be challenging. My Future breaks information into manageable sections, helping you and your child to understand their options and build confidence in making choices that are right for them.

You can use the resources alongside your child to start conversations about interests, strengths and next steps. The website can be useful when preparing for reviews, careers discussions or transition planning.

Support for you

My Future also includes information specifically for you, helping you understand how we can support your child as they move towards adulthood and make decisions about their future.

Whether your child is considering further education, training, employment or independent living options, the information is designed to help you navigate the journey together.

Explore My Future
My Future | Careers Wales

Common questions our careers advisers get asked



If your child is thinking of going to the local college when they leave school you may want to find out more. Here are some questions our advisers are regularly asked.

Your child's careers adviser can also support you with any questions you may have about your child's future plans.

Do young people get additional support in college?

Yes, all colleges offer support to young people with additional needs. The way they provide support may be different from the way it was provided in school, but the college will ask for your child's Individual Development Plan (IDP) and then talk to you about the support they can provide.

Wherever possible college staff will attend your child's final review in school so that they can meet you and your child and answer any questions you may have. You can also arrange to visit the college to look around and talk to the staff.

If your child goes on to an Independent Living Skills course or needs specific provision to meet their additional needs, then the college will continue with their IDP and will review this each year.

How will my child get to college?

Wherever possible your child will be expected to travel independently to college. They may need travel training for this so it may be a good idea to ask if this is available for your child.

Where independent travel is not possible there may be support from the Local Authority/social services. This varies across Wales so it's best to check on this during your child's Individual Development Plan (IDP) review.

When do we apply to college?

College courses generally start in September. Most colleges take applications from October or November of the previous year. Some courses are very popular and can fill up quickly so it's important to apply early. Applying early also allows more time for a smooth transition with time for visits and discussions with college staff. Some colleges also offer taster sessions so that young people can spend time seeing what it's like to be a college student before they leave school.

Is there any financial support while my child is in college?

Child Benefit can continue up to the age of 20 if your child is in a further education college and taking a course up to level 3 – Child Benefit when your child turns 16 - GOV.UK

It may be possible to claim the Education Maintenance Allowance if your child is 18 or under when they start college and you meet the eligibility criteria – Cymru Student Support | GOV.WALES

There is also a Welsh Government Learning Grant for Further Education (sometimes known as the Adult Learners Grant). This is for people over 19 provided they meet the eligibility criteria – Welsh Government Learning Grant, Further Education | Student Finance Wales

Colleges also have a Financial Contingency Fund. Where your child may not be able to attend college without financial support you may be able to apply for this. You would need to speak to the local college about this. Student finance: further education | GOV.WALES

What Next?

Choose Your Future

Helping your child explore life after school

We are pleased to announce that our series of What Next? Choose Your Future events will be taking place across Wales this academic year. These events give young people the opportunity to explore a wide range of career and education options in a welcoming, supportive and accessible environment. If your child's school attends, they can meet employers, colleges, training providers and Careers Wales advisers, take part in hands-on activities, and learn about courses, apprenticeships, training opportunities and different career pathways.

"Events like this are invaluable," said Rhian Thomas, Business Engagement Adviser at Careers Wales.

"Young people don't just need information, they need inspiration. Meeting someone doing a job they've never even heard of can completely change what they believe is possible for them."

How can you help?

Before your child attends the event, talk to your child about the careers, jobs or activities they find most interesting. Perhaps you can prepare some questions to ask potential exhibitors about what it's like to work in their organisation.

Head over to our events page to find out more as the events are confirmed this Autumn.

Explore events

careerswales.gov.wales/events



Real-life learner story

Support helped Tammi take the next step towards a future in creative media that she never thought was possible.

When Tammi was thinking about her future, she wasn't sure what options would be available to her. Tammi has learning and physical disabilities.

Exploring opportunities

Through one-to-one sessions, Alison helped Tammi explore future pathways, develop life skills, and build her confidence and independence.

"Alison talked to me about different pathways, starting college and learning life skills. She helped me think about what I need when I leave school," said Tammi.

Together, they explored career ideas, work experience opportunities and ways to gain new skills and experiences.

Building confidence and experience

Over the years, Tammi took part in group careers sessions, mock interviews, employer visits and Careers Wales' What Next? event.

These experiences helped her understand education, training, employability skills and the world of work.

She also completed a supported work experience placement in school before successfully moving on to an independent placement outside school.



Tammi's Story



"With a disability, I wasn't sure if I'd be able to do it, but Alison helped me understand the course and feel more confident about going to a mainstream college"

Tammi

Looking at college

Through college link activities, Tammi discovered a passion for creative media and began considering a full-time college course.

"With a disability, I wasn't sure if I'd be able to do it, but Alison helped me understand the course and feel more confident about going to a mainstream college," she said.

With Alison's support, Tammi successfully applied for and secured a place on a full-time Level 1 Media course.

"Without Alison, I just wasn't able to do it on my own."

Finding her voice

For Tammi's mum, Dawn, the support went far beyond career decisions. She saw a remarkable growth in her daughter's confidence and self-belief.

"Alison took the time to understand Tammi, her needs and what she wanted to do. Those one-to-one conversations helped Tammi realise what she was capable of."

Dawn believes that being listened to and understood has helped Tammi develop the confidence to speak up for herself and others through her role as a youth ambassador.

A bright future

Now studying Level 1 Media at college, Tammi is excited about the future but is keeping her options open.

"I don't have to decide on the spot. I can decide what I want to do."

For now, she is focused on her studies and continuing to support others.

"Representing people with learning disabilities, that's what I want to carry on doing."

Looking back, Tammi says the support she received helped her understand what was possible and gave her the confidence to make decisions about her future.

Dawn encourages other parents to explore the support available through Careers Wales.



> ***Alison has shown us all the different avenues available to young people. She's helped us believe anything is possible.***

If you'd like to explore your interests and opportunities with a Careers Wales adviser, contact us today.

Stephen Williams, Team Manager at Careers Wales, shares why it's never too late to change careers.

After 17 years in retail management, including roles as Deputy Store Manager with Tesco and Morrisons, Stephen realised the part of the job he enjoyed most was helping people develop and achieve their goals. Wanting to focus more on supporting individuals, he spoke to a careers adviser. That conversation helped him recognise the transferable skills he had gained through retail and opened his eyes to opportunities he had never previously considered.

Inspired by that guidance, Stephen applied for a careers adviser role with Careers Wales. The role was a natural fit, combining his passion for helping people with his experience of coaching, supporting and developing others.

Making the Change

Changing careers was not without its challenges. Taking a financial step back and leaving a familiar organisation after many years was a difficult decision. However, Stephen knew the move would bring greater long-term job satisfaction. He also had to adapt to a new workplace and build new professional relationships, but he quickly found support from colleagues.

To qualify as a careers adviser, Stephen completed Level 4 and Level 6 qualifications in Advice and Guidance while working. Much like an apprenticeship, the role combined practical experience with formal learning.

Many of the skills he developed in retail continue to help him today, including leadership, communication, organisation and relationship-building. One of the biggest surprises was discovering how specialised careers guidance is. Rather than simply giving advice, the role involves understanding people's motivations, challenges and aspirations, then helping them create a realistic plan for their future.



Stephen Williams

Job Title:

Team Manager at Careers Wales

From Careers Adviser to Team Manager

Stephen began his Careers Wales journey as an adult careers adviser before working with schools, further education colleges and specialist services. Along the way, he gained a broad understanding of the organisation and the different ways it supports people across Wales.

Although becoming a Team Manager was never part of his original plan, he embraced new opportunities when they arose. After gaining valuable experience in temporary management roles and specialist adviser positions, including supporting young people with Additional Learning Needs, he successfully secured a permanent Team Manager position.

Today, no two days are the same. His role includes supporting staff, reviewing performance, leading projects and helping improve services. What he enjoys most is helping colleagues overcome challenges, develop their skills and progress in their own careers. He also values Careers Wales' strong focus on staff wellbeing, allowing him to support both performance and people.

Stephen Williams

Job Title:
Team Manager at Careers Wales

Skills, Learning and Advice for Others

Stephen believes the skills gained in previous careers should never be underestimated. Leadership, problem-solving, coaching, communication and earning people's trust have all been essential throughout his career journey.

One of the biggest lessons he has learned is that there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Everyone has different goals, motivations and challenges, which is why understanding people and listening carefully is so important.

Looking back, Stephen is most proud of having the confidence to take a chance on something new. While changing careers was challenging, it allowed him to build a career that reflects his values and gives him the opportunity to make a positive difference every day.

His advice to anyone considering a career change is simple: think about the parts of your current role you enjoy most, recognise the value of your transferable skills, and seek professional careers advice. Speaking to a careers adviser helped him explore opportunities he had never considered and gave him the confidence to take the next step.

If you think you'd like to work for Careers Wales, keep an eye out for our vacancies here.

Asked to sum up his journey in three words, Stephen chose:

> "Challenging, rewarding and worthwhile."





Thank you for reading our newsletter. We hope you found it helpful. Remember, Careers Wales is here to support you and your child at every stage of their learning and career journey.

Working Wales

Cymru'n Gweithio
Working Wales

Parents/carers we can help you too.

Are you looking for work, planning a career change, or returning to work after a break? Get the support you need to move forward with confidence.



As well as supporting school and college leavers, our Working Wales service can provide free, impartial support for you, whatever your situation.

Our team of advisers can help you explore opportunities, develop your skills, access training, find work, progress in your career and achieve your goals.

So, if you are looking to get into work, fancy a career change, are facing redundancy or have been made redundant, Working Wales is here to help you take your next step with confidence. Whatever your circumstances, we'll support you in finding the right path forward.

You can access free support from Working Wales at a Careers Wales centre, in outreach venues, over the phone or digitally.

You can find out more at Working Wales or book an appointment here.

Contact us:

- You can contact a careers adviser at school or by phoning **0800 028 4844**
- We have a Wales-wide live chat facility available via www.careerswales.gov.wales
- Drop into one of our careers centres
- Email post@careerswales.gov.wales

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