



# Estyn

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a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales

A REPORT ON THE CAREERS SERVICES IN WALES

# Supporting Learning Pathways

The additional services Careers Wales  
provides to support learners in making choices  
within 14-19 Learning Pathways

July 2008



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



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- ▲ youth support services;
- ▲ youth and community work training;
- ▲ LAs;
- ▲ teacher education and training;
- ▲ work-based learning;
- ▲ careers companies;
- ▲ offender learning; and
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## Introduction

- 1 Estyn produced this report at the request of the National Assembly for Wales. The report focuses on the additional services that Careers Wales provides, or has helped strategic partners to provide that support learners in making choices within 14-19 Learning Pathways. The report also makes recommendations for the Careers Wales companies to build on and extend the good practice inspectors identified.
- 2 In April 2001 the careers companies in Wales came together under a common brand, Careers Wales. This term is used within the remit report when referring to all careers companies across Wales. Careers Wales is made up of six individual companies:
  - Careers Wales Cardiff and Vale;
  - Careers Wales Gwent;
  - Careers Wales Mid Glamorgan and Powys;
  - Careers Wales North East;
  - Careers Wales North West; and
  - Careers Wales West.
- 3 Careers Wales Association is a company set up by the individual Careers Wales companies to provide them with support in developing pan-Wales services and initiatives, such the Careers Wales website.
- 4 The Welsh Assembly Government contracts with Careers Wales companies to provide advice, guidance, placement and other services to:
  - those in full-time education in schools and colleges of further education;
  - those in part-time education in order to fit them for employment;
  - any people aged under 21 who have left education (other than higher education) or full-time training, up to two years earlier;
  - those with disabilities (including those with learning difficulties), until they are settled in their career intentions;
  - education institutions;
  - employers;
  - training providers; and
  - parents and carers.
- 5 They also provide:
  - guidance services to adults;

- Youth Gateway<sup>1</sup>; and
  - Education Business Links (EBL), including supporting institutions with the provision of work experience placements for young people in education.
- 6 Estyn inspectors visited five of the six Careers Wales companies and the Careers Wales Association. They talked with Careers Wales staff and partners and examined documentary evidence. The visits took place during February 2008. Careers Wales North West was subject to a full company inspection in September/October 2007, so Estyn inspectors did not visit this company.
- 7 This report took account of the main findings of recent Estyn reports, including:
- A report on the progress and effectiveness of Careers Wales Online<sup>2</sup> (March 2006);
  - Current qualifications and the 14-19 Learning Pathways initiative<sup>3</sup>; (Remit report 2006); and
  - Choice and flexibility for 14-19 learners<sup>4</sup> (March 2008).

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<sup>1</sup> Youth Gateway is a programme run by careers companies to support young people as they move into the job market, training or further education.

<sup>2</sup> <http://new.wales.gov.uk/docrepos/40382/4038232/403829/4038291/403829/estyn-careers-wales-online-1.pdf?lang=en>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.estyn.gov.uk/publications/Remit\\_17\\_14to19\\_Learning\\_pathways\\_2005\\_2006.pdf](http://www.estyn.gov.uk/publications/Remit_17_14to19_Learning_pathways_2005_2006.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.estyn.gov.uk/publications/Learning\\_Pathways\\_Report.pdf](http://www.estyn.gov.uk/publications/Learning_Pathways_Report.pdf)

## Background

- 8 The Welsh Assembly Government describes Learning Pathways as the learning experiences of each individual 14-19 year old. The learners are entitled to a Learning Pathway, which includes formal learning, a wider choice and flexibility of options, support to meet their individual needs and a Learning Core of skills, knowledge and experience that prepares learners for life.
- 9 In its 'Learning Pathways 14-19 Guidance'<sup>5</sup> and 'Learning Pathways 14-19 Guidance II'<sup>6</sup>, the Welsh Assembly Government declares its aim to use Learning Pathways as a way of reaching its goal of "95 per cent of young people by the age of 25 to be ready for high skilled employment or higher education by 2015".
- 10 The Welsh Assembly Government proposes that Learning Pathways 14-19 will allow more young people to achieve their potential so they are better equipped for the world of work, better informed and more active citizens. It intends that Learning Pathways 14-19 will widen learners' choice and encourage more 16 year olds to progress to further learning in education and training.
- 11 There are six key elements in a Learning Pathway. Three of the key elements enable learners to receive the support and guidance they need. The six key elements are set out below in an extract from 'Learning Pathways 14-19 Guidance':

<i>Learning Pathway</i>		
1	INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PATHWAY	Individually tailored Learning Pathway (which recognises statutory requirements) leading to approved qualifications and awards of credit, appropriate learning at the right level(s) at the right time for the learner to meet needs, aptitudes and interests and running from 14-19 and beyond
2	WIDER CHOICE AND FLEXIBILITY	Wider choice of relevant options from a range of domains, and greater flexibility to vary speed and direction of pathway
3	THE LEARNING CORE	Wider learning consisting of the skills, knowledge, understanding, values and experiences that all 14-19 year olds will need, whatever their Learning Pathway
<i>Support for Learners</i>		
4	LEARNING COACH	Entitlement to learning support: opportunity to discuss learning and progress on a regular basis
5	PERSONAL SUPPORT	Access to personal support when needed: self-referral or by agreement with learner, referral by someone else
6	CAREERS ADVICE AND GUIDANCE	Impartial careers advice and guidance to inform the individual's Learning Pathway

- 12 Each local authority area has established a 14-19 Learning Network. Networks' membership comprise key partners involved in the delivery of education, training and employment. Each network has a representative from its local Careers Wales company.

<sup>5</sup> National Assembly for Wales Circular Number:37/2004, July 2004

<sup>6</sup> National Assembly for Wales Circular Number:17/2006, April 2006

## Main findings

- 13 Careers Wales companies contribute well to strategic partnerships with other organisations to enhance the local planning of 14-19 Learning Pathways. Local Learning Networks value the fact that careers companies' representatives are senior managers who have the capacity to make strategic decisions.
- 14 Careers Wales companies provide an appropriate level of staffing and resources that help the Learning Networks to meet their aims. All Careers Wales companies support local Learning Networks well to address the local priorities the networks identify to help learners make informed career decisions.
- 15 All Careers Wales companies play a useful role in drawing Welsh Assembly Government's attention to shortfalls in the availability of work-based learning places.
- 16 All companies make a good contribution to extending the provision and enhancing the quality of work-focused education, including alternative methods to traditional work experience and activities that develop entrepreneurship.
- 17 Careers Wales companies have worked with Careers Wales Association very well to further develop the Careers Wales website. The site's enhanced features are very helpful and enable learners to search for 14+ options, 16+ options and work experience placements.
- 18 All Careers Wales companies have helpful strategies in place, such as Education Gateway, that give additional personal support to learners identified by schools and colleges as needing extra help to succeed. Youth Gateway provides good support for learners who have left education.
- 19 All Careers Wales companies produce good quality information about the local labour market and provide helpful analyses of pupil destinations. However, a few 14-19 Learning Networks do not routinely use destination statistics and local labour market information well to inform planning.
- 20 A few Learning Networks are uncertain about what services careers companies' core funding covers.
- 21 Overall, Careers Wales supports the development of learning coaches well across Wales. However, the role of learning coaches is not yet consistent or advanced enough. Partners' staff and learners are not clear enough about overlaps between the roles of learning coaches and those of careers advisers.
- 22 Careers Wales companies have not yet evaluated and shared best practice enough to identify and agree how business plans and strategies for allocating resources can best respond to the impact of Learning Pathways on learners' guidance needs.



## Recommendations

- 23 In order to build on existing good practice and enhance services to learners within 14-19 Learning Pathways, Careers Wales companies should:
- R1 ensure that Learning Networks are clear about the services that Careers Wales companies provide within their core funding;
  - R2 improve partners' understanding of the boundaries between the roles of learning coaches and careers advisers; and
  - R3 review, at a strategic level, how business plans and resource models can better respond to the developments of Learning Pathways.
- 24 Learning Networks should:
- R4 make best use of labour market information and the information on learners' destinations that Careers Wales companies produce in order to plan provision.
- 25 The Welsh Assembly Government should:
- R5 ensure there is an appropriate match between learners' needs and the availability of suitable work based learning; and
  - R6 establish clear guidelines to clarify the role of learning coaches and improve the consistency of provision.

## Supporting Learning Pathways

### Strategic partnerships that enhance the planning of Learning Pathways

- 26 Careers Wales companies work well with strategic partners to support local planning of the development of Learning Pathways. They make a good contribution to local Learning Networks at a strategic level. Networks value the fact that careers companies representatives are senior managers who have the capacity to make strategic decisions. Where a Learning Network's boundaries cover more than one Careers Wales company, the companies collaborate well to support the network's strategic planning. Where Careers Wales companies' boundaries cover a large number of Learning Networks, all companies work well to ensure they contribute effectively to all networks. Company managers have responded very well to the extensive demands on their time so that they can give attention to all networks.

#### **Good practice in Careers Wales companies' local collaboration to support Learning Networks**

In Denbighshire, the chief executive of Careers Wales North East is chair of the 14-19 Support Group. This group focuses on Learning Pathways elements 4/5/6. A senior manager from Careers Wales North West is chair of the Curriculum Group which focuses on Learning Pathways elements 1/2/3. The good communication between managers of both careers companies ensures that each company's views and planning priorities are represented in the Network's strategic planning, whilst the sharing of leadership roles reduces the impact on the companies' resources.

- 27 Learning Networks benefit from the fact that careers companies are involved in more than one network as careers companies help to inform networks of good practice that they have encountered in neighbouring networks in which they are involved.
- 28 Most networks feel that Careers Wales companies' impartial role has helped to break down barriers and improve dialogue between schools and colleges. This has helped to promote collaborative planning within networks.
- 29 All careers companies respond well to local priorities by tailoring their contribution to suit individual networks' identified needs. This has improved networks' abilities to plan.

### **Good practice in supporting local networks**

Careers Wales Gwent uses its involvement with networks well to gain additional funding for a wide range of initiatives. For example, in 2007-08, it secured over £300k to deliver activities that local networks identified as priorities, such as the development of a programme to provide extended work experience for learners. In addition, Careers Wales Gwent's representation on five different Learning Networks has enabled the company to lead on developing a few useful cross-Gwent services, using funding pooled from its member networks. For example, the company used this funding to identify employers where learners could use the Welsh language during their work experience placements.

Careers Wales West undertook a useful research study for Pembrokeshire Learning Network. The company investigated influences on pupils' choices at 16 and reported that some young people in the Year 12 focus groups who had not achieved the grades for entry into AS level courses felt limited by the vocational courses available in their sixth form. As a result, they had taken a course that was of limited interest in order that they could stay at school. The study also identified dissatisfaction among AS students who had been unable to combine the subjects they wanted. This study contributed to the network's review of provision.

Careers Wales Mid Glamorgan and Powys played a useful role in helping Bridgend's Learning Network to successfully identify gaps in the key stage 4 options menu. This informed the network's overall planning of provision.

Careers Wales companies have worked with Careers Wales Association very well to further develop the Careers Wales website. This development, which has been tested in 84 schools across Wales, enables school pupils to choose their key stage 4 options on-line. Careers Wales staff have developed detailed service level agreements with schools and colleges to ensure that these institutions continue to update the information in the database. Careers Wales Association staff have created helpful software to ensure that schools can upload information quickly and easily. The database gives learners, parents and carers good information about course choices, including vocational options. Schools, colleges and Learning Networks also gain useful early information about the choices learners are making and to improve their ability to plan. There are a few emerging examples of networks adapting timetables and introducing new provision to take account of learners' choices.

### **Good practice in helping schools to plan options**

In its preparation of data for the Careers Wales website, one Cardiff school identified that its options timetable was too complicated. This prompted them to make option groupings simpler for learners. One school identified that the software gives its staff advance information about the popularity of each option choice, which helps the school to plan its resources. The database will be available to all schools in Autumn 2008.

- 30 A few networks, such as Newport, remain unclear about the range of services Careers Wales companies deliver within their core budget and which require supplementary external funding. This impedes their ability to plan how to best allocate the resources available within a network.

#### **Widening choice and flexibility**

- 31 All Careers Wales companies produce good quality information about the local labour market and provide helpful analyses of pupil destinations.

#### **Good practice in using data to plan provision**

Careers Wales Gwent produced a useful labour market information report that Newport 14-19 Learning Network used to inform planning of provision. As a result of this report, the network increased its provision of construction training opportunities by 30%.

- 32 Pembrokeshire Learning Network made good use of Careers Wales West's labour market information in developing its annual network development plan and in planning the range of vocational provision it offers. However, while there are similar examples in other networks across Wales, 14-19 Learning Networks do not routinely use destination statistics and local labour market information well enough to inform planning.
- 33 All Careers Wales companies routinely notify the Welsh Assembly Government of the number of learners for whom there are no suitable work based learning places available. This advocacy role helps to highlight where local shortfalls of opportunity exist and regional shortfalls in the provision of particular vocational opportunities. However, all companies report that shortfalls in the availability of suitable work based learning provision continue to limit the progress of a few learners in each area.
- 34 Careers Wales has developed its website to include a valuable database that learners can explore to find a work experience placement. They can search opportunities on line, according to vocational area, Welsh language use or location. This is currently being tested by learners in a selection of schools across Wales, prior to being made available to all in April 2008. Across Wales, this facility increases the range of experiences from which learners can choose.

#### **Supporting delivery of the learning core**

- 35 Careers Wales has made a good contribution to the Welsh Assembly Government advisory group for the Careers and the World of Work framework and Supplementary Guidance. This contribution has meant that good practice developed from the Careers Wales Quality Award has influenced the national guidance.
- 36 All companies make a good contribution to enhancing the provision of work focused education. Education Business Links teams from all companies have developed a wide range of activities and programmes, which they offer to schools. These activities give learners good opportunities to extend their understanding of the world of work and to gain experience of entrepreneurship.

- 37 A very high proportion of learners now go out on work experience during key stage 4. In the north east, learners receive useful accreditation for their work experience, which takes good account of informal and non-formal learning.
- 38 Careers Wales West has developed useful alternatives to block work experience placements in sectors where placements are limited or not feasible due to issues such as confidentiality or health and safety restrictions. These alternatives include 'Masterclasses' where groups of learners participate in sessions delivered by occupational representatives. This strategy increases learners' access to popular occupational routes, such as the police.
- 39 In Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan, the two 14-19 networks fund Careers Wales Cardiff and Vale to run extended work experience programmes for learners who are not performing well in school. This has helped to ensure that the monitoring of health and safety in placements is thorough and systematic. The company agreed protocols with schools and responds well to requests for placements.
- 40 The company has also developed a useful Year 12 work experience record which documents learners' work-focused education activities, including part time work. Learners use this document to gain a certificate from the network.
- 41 The Bridgend Learning Network identified that Year 12 and 13 learners needed greater opportunities to work with employers to develop leadership skills. In response, Careers Wales Mid Glamorgan and Powys developed a successful Young Leaders Programme which enabled targeted groups of sixth former pupils to gain leadership and enterprise skills via a work shadowing programme with major local employers.

**Good practice in the use of the Careers Wales website**

Careers Wales has further developed its website to enable all learners to identify and record formal, non-formal and informal learning within the e-Progress File and a useful work-experience blog. This section of the site uses innovative and helpful video clips that ensure learners understand terminology such as 'non-formal'. This refinement is very recent and it is too early to fully evaluate take-up. However it offers good potential to strengthen the value and role of the e-Progress File in learners' recording of achievement and career planning.

## Support for learners

### The role of learning coaches

- 42 Overall, Careers Wales supports the development of learning coaches well. In all areas across Wales, Careers Wales companies have delivered good quality training to equip learning coaches for their role. In all companies, a few careers advisers have undertaken learning coach training to help advisers fully understand the role that learning coaches play. However, the impact of this support varies considerably between networks.
- 43 Careers Wales North East has developed clear protocols and referral systems between careers advisers and learning coaches, who meet each term to discuss the progress of referrals. Company staff record this arrangement in the Partnership Agreement review, which provides a good focus for monitoring the effectiveness of the relationship between the two roles. The company has also seconded a learning coach co-ordinator to the Denbighshire learning coach pilot programme.

### Good practice in developing learning coaches

The co-ordinator of the Denbighshire learning coach pilot programme has influenced the development of learning coaches in Denbighshire and helped to bring cohesion between learning coaches and Careers Wales North East. The impact of this cohesion is that Denbighshire learning coaches have made 43 referrals to careers advisers and advisers have made 11 referrals to learning coaches. This referral rate is higher than in the other districts covered by the company, despite containing the smallest number of school. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this good collaborative working on learners' achievement and career planning.

- 44 In Careers Wales Mid Glamorgan and Powys, the 14-19 Development Officer works well in collaboration with the Education and School Improvements Service. This has enabled the company to take a lead role in delivering Learning Coach pilot projects in Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Bridgend. The company has delivered useful training to learning coaches across the three areas.
- 45 In one school, Careers Wales Mid Glamorgan and Powys careers adviser also works as a learning coach. Whilst this has helped a few learners to improve their career planning, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this model of learning coach support.
- 46 Careers Wales Cardiff and Vale, in collaboration with its local Learning Networks, has secured funding to develop a role for a learning coach to work with learners who are hard to reach as they are not engaging with other agencies. The initiative provides flexible support for 45 learners who are not in education, employment or training to improve their progression into opportunities. In a few cases, learners and their families have been more willing to engage with project staff as they regard them as being independent from statutory services. A few learners make rapid progress into further learning or work opportunities. For example, project staff paid for one learner

to access nail technician training, which gave her the skills to gain employment. Whilst it is too early to fully evaluate the project's effectiveness, staff engagement with learners, such as those who are housebound, is enabling them to begin to address barriers to progression for these learners.

- 47 Across Wales, the development of learning coaches is not yet consistent enough. In the north east, most schools and colleges have learning coaches in place. However, this position is not as good across the country. Where they are in place, such as in Caerphilly, learning coaches carry out different functions in different schools. This inhibits the early evaluation of different approaches, as the nature of the support, and the types of learners targeted varies. There is still not enough clarity about overlaps between the roles of learning coaches and those of careers advisers.
- 48 Most Careers Wales companies do not monitor the effectiveness of collaboration between learning coaches and careers advisers or track the referral rates between these staff. This inhibits companies' evaluation of careers advisers and learning coaches in working together to support learners.

### **Personal support**

- 49 All Careers Wales companies have helpful strategies in place, such as Education Gateway, that give additional support to learners identified by schools and colleges as needing additional help. Youth Gateway also provides good support for learners who have left education.
- 50 Careers Wales North East developed a basic skills test, which the Basic Skills Agency approved. Staff use this test with education leavers to identify their basic skills needs and to offer appropriate support. As a result, between March and December 2007, 12% (43) of all starters to Youth Gateway accepted this support and are progressing towards City and Guilds Basic Skills qualifications.
- 51 In Torfaen there is good collaborative work between a mentor for learners with additional learning needs and Careers Wales Gwent Youth Gateway staff. This has helped learners succeed in their work placements.
- 52 All Careers Wales companies are effective in collaborating with Youth Support Services and Learning Networks to develop strategies to keep in touch with learners who are 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET).
- 53 Careers Wales North East seconded a staff member to the Flintshire Personal Support Project. As a result of this project, there is good collaborative work between the company and the youth service to re-engage young people who are NEET. This project has re-engaged 12 young people and helped them to progress into education, employment or training. However, in relation to its outcomes achieved, the financial costs of the project are high.
- 54 In three of Careers Wales West's five Learning Network areas (Swansea, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire), the company has recruited Keeping In Touch managers/officers to work with other agencies to reduce the number of NEETs and identify gaps in provision of support for young people. This approach has been effective in reducing the number of learners who are NEET in these areas.

- 55 In partnership with local young people's partnerships and 14-19 networks, Careers Wales Cardiff and Vale commissioned research into NEET young people. This research informed the company's strategy to develop their useful Learning Coach model for hard to reach young people.
- 56 The company has also made a good contribution to Cardiff's 14-19 Learning Coach sub group. The sub group has developed a learner support framework, incorporating the entitlements laid out in Learning Pathways elements 4, 5 and 6. This framework is helpful in enabling organisations to assess whether or not they are delivering learners' entitlement to support.
- 57 Careers Wales Mid Glamorgan and Powys has employed a careers adviser to work in Parc Prison and has improved the support available to learners who are leaving prison. This is helpful in reducing the numbers of young offenders who leave prison without entering education, employment or training.

### **Careers advice and guidance**

- 58 All Careers Wales companies have supported local Learning Networks well where the networks have identified the need to strengthen learners' abilities to make informed career decisions. They have made good contributions to helping networks plan how to respond to these needs.
- 59 Careers Wales Gwent ran a careers event on behalf of the Newport Learning Network to introduce Year 9 pupils to their Learning Pathways options. A total of 1,500 pupils from seven schools attended half day sessions. Most pupils found the event helpful in finding out about career ideas and what different jobs involved. Three quarters felt that they had a better understanding of the world of work after they had attended the event.
- 60 This company also produced a useful CD containing a prospectus of the 14-19 options available for learners in the Newport Learning Network area. The prospectus outlined progression routes that options could open for learners.
- 61 Careers Wales Mid Glamorgan and Powys supported Bridgend's Learning Network in organising a useful Learning Pathways/Careers Convention. The event helped learners in key stage 4 to explore opportunities available to them in their local area.
- 62 Careers Wales West used local labour market information well to identify the need to raise learners' awareness of opportunities in the energy industry. The company organised a useful event to give 14-19 learners information and opportunities to meet a wide range of employers from the industry.
- 63 All Careers Wales companies offer learners good support to plan their option choices for key stage 4 and beyond. In almost all schools, careers advisers deliver useful group sessions to discuss option choices. They supplement these with helpful guidance interviews during key stages 3 and 4.
- 64 There are good examples of local planning within Careers Wales companies to take account of the impact that Learning Pathways may have on learners' advice and



guidance needs. Careers Wales Cardiff and Vale noted that in 2006-07 there was a 14% increase in the numbers of Year 9 learners seeking an individual guidance interview compared with 2005-06 and a 32% increase in the numbers who agreed moving forward plans. In its 2007-08 business plan, Careers Wales Mid Glamorgan and Powys increased the amount of time it allocated to 14+ options related guidance interviews in anticipation of the more complex decisions some young people needed to make within Learning Pathways. The company has not yet evaluated the impact of this reallocation of resources.

- 65 However, Careers Wales companies have not yet evaluated and shared best practice enough to identify and agree how business plans and strategies for allocating resources can best respond to the impact of Learning Pathways on learners' guidance needs.

**Glossary of terms**

14-19 Learning Networks	A strategic group of providers of education and training in a local area, set up as part of 'Learning Pathways 14-19'
Additional learning needs	This term cover a very wide range of needs. We use the term in relation to learners who have needs besides those of most of their classmates, for a number of different reasons, including learners who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have special education needs (SEN), as defined within the SEN Code of Practices for Wales (2002);</li> <li>• are disabled, as defined within the Disability Discrimination Act 1995;</li> <li>• have medical needs;</li> <li>• have emotional, social and behavioural difficulties;</li> <li>• are more able and talented than most of their classmates; and</li> <li>• are learning English as an additional language.</li> </ul>
AS level	General Certificate of Education at advanced subsidiary level
Basic skills	The ability to speak, read and write in Welsh or English and to use mathematics at a level needed to function at work and in society
Keeping in Touch (KIT)	The Welsh Assembly Government has asked youth support services to be more co-ordinated in how they support young people who are not in education, employment or training. This is generally known as the 'Keeping in Touch' strategy, or KIT. This strategy is about helping organisations share information more effectively in order to help young people get into and remain in education, employment or training.
Key stages	The National Curriculum divides the period of compulsory education into the following four key stages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• key stage 1 for pupils aged five to seven;</li> <li>• key stage 2 for pupils aged seven to 11;</li> <li>• key stage 3 for pupils aged 11 to 14; and</li> <li>• key stage 4 for pupils aged 14 to 16.</li> </ul>
Learning Pathways 14-19	The National Assembly's strategies for developing and improving education and training opportunities for 14 to 19 year olds referred to in the 'The Learning Country' (2001) and 'Learning Country: Learning Pathways 14-19' (2002)
Local authority	An authority or council responsible for providing a wide range of public services, including education for pupils of school age, in a particular area