

Young people in Wales 'least optimistic' about job prospects

Young people in Wales are the least optimistic about their job prospects compared to other parts of the UK. A new study, looking into the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on young people, found that those aged between 10 and 25-years old in Wales were almost twice as likely (40%) to worry about job opportunities, compared to those in London (23%).

While just 60% of young Welsh residents believe they can achieve their dream job, below the national average of 67%. More than a quarter (26%) are now focused on getting a job that will make them "quick and easy" money.

The study, commissioned by the Co-op and children's charity Barnardo's, surveyed 5,000 10-25-year-olds across the UK. Nationally, the study found 250,000 fewer young people in 2023 aspire to go into higher education compared to two years ago. However, it identified a growing interest in apprenticeships among young people, up from 40% to 44%.

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Rebecca Birkbeck, Co-op's director of community, said: "The cost of living has had a seismic impact on young people, with many having to prioritise basic needs over long-term career goals and aspirations. We're seeing that many people are unable to make the financial compromises required to set themselves up for future success. Simply put, this isn't fair."

She added: "Apprenticeships are a key means by which we can promote social mobility, and business can play an important

role in ensuring everyone has an equal chance to fulfil their potential, no matter who they are or where they are from.

“We are calling on the government to amend the child benefit regulations so 16–19-year-olds who choose to take an apprenticeship can continue to receive child benefit, for those who have chosen a work-based training route, which may dissuade those from a lower socio-economic background. Businesses can play a part in that as well, offering and promoting apprenticeships that pay the national living wage, helping create a fairer future for young people.”

Barnardo’s chief executive Lynn Perry MBE said: “Covid widened the gap between what the most and least disadvantaged pupils in the UK achieve in school, and we must not let the cost-of-living crisis be a further barrier to young people pursuing their ambitions – whether that’s higher education or a work-based option.

“Apprenticeships can be a brilliant experience for young people – combining academic learning with practical work placements. But at a time when many young people live with their parents or carers well into their 20s, it’s deeply unfair that taking on an apprenticeship at 16 means your family faces a financial penalty. The government must look again at this policy and make sure young people don’t have to make choices based on fear that their family will lose essential support.”

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