



CANOLBWYNT CYFLOGAETH

**CONWY**

EMPLOYMENT HUB

CYMORTH HYFFORDDIANT GRYMUSO  
SUPPORT TRAINING EMPOWERMENT

FEBRUARY 2022

EDITION 1

# Hub News



## WELCOME

Welcome to the first edition of Hub News, the quarterly newsletter of the Conwy Employment Hub.

Conwy Employment Hub is the new brand for Conwy County Borough Council's employability team which reflects our development as a community-driven "one stop shop" for employability in the county.

Our role is to help Conwy residents find meaningful employment through Welsh Government Employability Programmes, and working in partnership with businesses and organisations is a crucial element of our success.

We hope you enjoy reading this first edition and that it gives you a flavour of what we do while highlighting our achievements and importantly how we can help businesses.

## Newsletter Highlights

**Covid's Impact on Conwy's Labour Market**

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**Pathway to Employment**

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**Filling those vacancies**

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**Taking to the air**

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**Welsh Government Support**

## COMMUNITY RENEWAL FUND SUCCESS



Libby Duo, Strategic Manager

We have won a UK Community Renewal Fund bid to fund five projects under Skills and Employability totalling £270,000.

As direct result of this success, we will be adding to our current employability programmes with projects which will be available to all residents in Conwy. This includes an extension of our effective Confidently You course, additional Pathway courses which you can read more about in the next article, as well as development courses for families accessing social care services.

Libby Duo, Strategic Manager of Conwy Employment Hub said: "We are thrilled to have been successful with our bid. It is an acknowledgement of the great work that we and the Council are already doing and it will help build on the Council's vision of becoming a progressive county that creates opportunities".

## FILLING THOSE VACANCIES

We have helped a large number of local employers fill vacancies by matching suitable participants that we are working with to various different roles in all kinds of sectors.

One of the businesses we've recently helped is World Care Environmental Services in Llandudno.

Lee Jones, director takes up the story; "As an employer I can spend a lot of time recruiting for new staff so to have all that work finding suitable people essentially taken on by the Conwy Employment Hub has been such a help.

"I recently had four job vacancies that I was struggling to fill, and the Hub was able to quickly fill all four posts, and I couldn't be happier with these new employees as they are a great addition to the team. They're all super keen to work, and to know that I am helping people who may face certain barriers into work is an added bonus."

We can also help employers with work experience placements and volunteer roles and as we are Government funded this business support is free, so if you would like to discuss any vacant positions you're looking to fill, please do get in touch with us.

## CONWY JOB EXPO

We are in the process of organising a large all-sector Job Fair for May this year.

As we are very much in the early planning stages, we can't give you any more details as yet, but if you would be interested in knowing more please do drop us an email and we will let you have the details as soon as we can.

## COVID'S IMPACT ON CONWY'S LABOUR MARKET

North Wales Regional Skills Partnership released a report at the end of October 2021 that went in to detail the impact Covid has had on the labour market across the whole of North Wales with county specific data.

While it is fair to say that Conwy has fared better than some counties in the region, the impact from Covid as well as post Brexit changes and supply chain disruptions have had an effect on all businesses.

Labour and skills shortages remain a substantial challenge across the region, and there are growing concerns around a miss-match between skills demand for vacancies and the skillset of those searching for new jobs. This has affected most sectors but especially in Hospitality and Tourism, Social Care, Food and Farming, Construction and Logistics.

Job vacancies/postings have increased dramatically. In September 2021, job postings were 98% above pre-pandemic levels (March 2020) with top occupations/postings in Health and Social Care and Tourism and Hospitality. 81% of employers surveyed said they are facing recruitment challenges and this was across all sectors and a variety of roles. This is leading to reports of employers offering competitive salaries and additional benefits to entice candidates.

There has been a small decrease in Universal Credit claimant figures, but an increase in Economically Inactive in the region and it is clear that job recovery hasn't yet reached the most disadvantaged in the region. Conwy and Gwynedd have seen the largest decrease in the number of Universal Credit claimants in North Wales, but both counties along with Denbighshire have the highest percentage of economically inactive people in the region.

Not surprisingly for women in Wales, the most common reason (27.7%) for economic inactivity was due to full-time caring responsibilities for their family, and this is where we can actively help both businesses and parents as our PaCE Programme is designed to support parents with solutions including childcare funding to help them back into employment.

The report reached out to businesses in various sectors to understand the areas that concern them:

### **Manufacturing**

The strength of recovery in this sector seems strong especially as COVID apparently made many people change their perception about engineering as a career and manufacturing generally. Businesses are working with FE Colleges to close existing skills gaps, while they also work with Schools and Colleges in order to inspire young people about the career opportunities.

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### **Construction**

This diverse sector offers an abundance of employment opportunities but its biggest concern is retaining skilled staff and upskilling, and it is experiencing difficulties in recruiting skilled workers especially joiners, roofers, bricklayers, carpenters and labourers.

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### **Energy and Environment**

The low carbon energy sector has been identified as one of the more resilient sectors regarding the impact of COVID, and the mid to long term prospects for job creation are good, as is the perception of this as a career with young people.

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### **Food and Farming**

Since the Hospitality industry reopened, this sector has showed recovery but there are still acute challenges including logistics, supply chains, exporting goods and a shortage of HGV drivers. Businesses are expecting to see an increased need for basic IT and computer literacy skills as the sector becomes more automated as a result of COVID.

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### **Health and Social Care**

Although this sector's importance was highlighted throughout the pandemic it is experiencing a significant challenge in recruiting and retaining employees. This is being addressed with enhanced and improved recruitment campaigns and web site activity but it will take time to bear fruit in terms of staff being recruited, trained and ready to take up roles in care. The mental health and wellbeing of staff in this sector is also a concern and long-term support is being developed.

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### **Creative and Digital Industries**

From TV and Film to gaming and software, to music and performing arts, creative jobs are highly skilled and COVID has had varying impact on industries in this sector. The digital, tech and gaming industry has seen an upturn in trade as people wanted home-based entertainment while the theatre productions, live music, festivals etc have seriously suffered.

Recruitment into local positions in the digital sector is suffering particularly since home working has become the norm resulting in people securing London based positions (and their associated salaries) while living further afield, and there is a skills shortage especially in the TV and Film industry.

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### **Tourism and Hospitality**

This industry is more important to the North Wales economy than for any other UK region, and in Conwy 25% of all employment is directly in tourism. The industry was one of the worst affected by COVID and because of acute recruitment challenges due to the pandemic as well as Brexit leading to the loss of the European workforce, it remains still one of the hardest hit.

It is expected that the industry is likely to face long-term implications as a result of the pandemic and also long-term difficulties with recruitment. Since lockdown restrictions have eased, the number of redundancies has decreased but there are still gaps in the workforce which are proving difficult to fill, particularly in roles that are deemed to be "low-skilled" such as administrative roles, waiters and housekeeping roles, and the ongoing shortage of chefs that's been an issue for a number of years continues.

Many employers are addressing the people shortage by taking on employees with little or no experience with the intention of training and upskilling staff as they work, or recruiting people with the skills and experience rather than formal qualifications as these can be achieved while working.

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### **Financial and Professional Services**

This was one of the least affected sectors in terms of staff and there are more opportunities for people to work in different areas/countries due to working from home. The key issue for this sector is the competition businesses have with large cities like Manchester, Liverpool and London where salaries are higher which could lead to a skills shortage long term.

This report is enabling the Regional Skills Partnership to work with a number of organisations to address the needs and requirements that will help North Wales make better use of the resources available and the opportunities it faces. Increasingly, employers are considering recruiting an apprentice to fill the employment gaps, and more so in Conwy with the highest increase of 176% across the region - if you are considering apprenticeships, please read the Filling those Vacancies article where you'll find further information and a link to the Business Wales Skills Gateway.

The report's findings have also confirmed that the Recruitment Pathways we're running will play a significant role in addressing many of the skills shortages in key sectors - you'll find more details on this in the [Pathway to Employment](#) article.

## WELSH GOVERNMENT SUPPORT



Did you know that the Welsh Government's Skills Gateway for Business online portal has a wealth of information and solutions to meet individual business needs?

To find out more, visit our Employer page on our website at <https://bit.ly/ConwyEmployer> where you'll find information on redundancy support, a range of skills and training programmes and employment products to help businesses grow and thrive.

## TAKING TO THE AIR

We have a regular weekly employability slot on Gary Carr's Drive Time Show on Sound Radio 103.1.

Steve Griffiths, one of our Employment Practitioner Managers can be heard every Monday afternoon giving employment advice and a round-up of some of the current available job opportunities from across the county, as well as helpful hints and tips for those that are actively seeking a job.

Guests regularly pop in to join Steve which has included Bangor University with advice for graduates struggling to reach graduate level employment, Menter Mon offering support to anyone that wants to set up their own business and the Council's Social Care department talking about the vital role played by social carers and the opportunities available within that sector.

This is a great opportunity for businesses to talk about their industry and any current job vacancies they have, so if you would be interested in joining Steve, please do get in touch with us.

In the meantime you can catch up on all our previous programmes at our Facebook page at <https://bit.ly/FacebookCEH>.



## DROP IN TO FIND OUT MORE

If you would like to find out more about us and how we might be able to help you, why not join us on our weekly Business Drop-In sessions.

These are held every Thursday from 2.00pm-2.30pm on Microsoft Teams and no appointment is needed.

Simply click this link - <https://bit.ly/HubEmployer>

Conwy Employment Hub

01492 575578, [ceh@conwy.gov.uk](mailto:ceh@conwy.gov.uk), <https://www.conwy.gov.uk/conwyemploymenthub>



## PATHWAY TO EMPLOYMENT

Both short term and long-term unemployment have risen in Conwy since 2018\* and to address this we have partnered with a number of businesses and organisations to run sector-specific training Recruitment Pathways that work on upskilling our participants to fulfil the needs of the local economy.

The Pathways are in key growth and priority sectors and they are designed to enable participants to take accredited qualifications, learn employability skills and benefit from work experience placements which supports the recruitment and retention of staff. The key sectors we have recently focused on are:

### HGV Drivers

The shortage of HGV drivers became one of the main media headlines last year. Working with Road to Logistics, a national training programme which encourages new talent into the transport and logistics industry, we have 14 participants currently on an HGV Recruitment Pathway.

This 5-week training programme enables participants to obtain the Driver CPC qualification, a health and safety qualification as well as undergo employability and sector awareness training. They are due to qualify in early 2022 and we will be working with Road to Logistics and our network of businesses to find them all employment.

### Hospitality

Tourism and hospitality is another industry that has been struggling to fill job vacancies, and we've been working with Hickory's Rhos-on-Sea Restaurant to run a 9-week Hospitality Training and Work Experience Course. The Southern Style, independent restaurant chain has an outstanding reputation for customer service and they've been giving participants a taste of working in hospitality while receiving training to provide them with the skills to start working in the sector.

This has been another successful programme with 33% of the participants securing employment before the course even finished, and we are confident that the remaining participants will quickly find their dream job.

### Construction

We've been working with a number of organisations in the construction sector to run training courses including Procure Plus which is a commercial, not for profit company that partners with organisations to improve local communities through the provision of jobs and training.

We've delivered a 2-week course that gives would-be builders the invaluable core skills and practical work experience on a building site to enable them to secure a job in construction. The course was so successful in November, that we've scheduled two more for the first quarter of 2022.

### Social Care

Social care workers have played a vital role in supporting our communities during the pandemic but the sector is experiencing an unprecedented shortage of care workers. Working with Conwy County Borough Council's social care department we have run three 2-day "Introduction to Social Care" training courses and we're delighted that 25% of the participants secured a job straight after the course.

Having secured the additional funding from the UK Community Renewal Fund we will be running extra Pathway courses this year. So as well repeating the Construction Pathway with Procure Plus, an SIA Door Supervisor Training Course, a Rural HGV Driving Course and more social care and hospitality courses, we will be looking at other key sectors including recycling/reuse, digital/creative, green energy/renewables, health, tourism and leisure.

If you would be interested in partnering with us to run a tailored training programme and have a unique opportunity to recruit from this pool of newly trained and skilled participants, please do get in touch.

\* <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Business-Economy-and-Labour-Market/People-and-Work/Employment/Persons-Employed/employmentrate-by-welshlocalarea-year-gender>

## OUR SUCCESS

2021 was another successful year for the Hub and the three programmes we run:

### Communities for Work

- Exceeded job outcomes for Adults by 77% in last quarter of 2021
- Exceeded job outcomes for Young People by 352% in last quarter of 2021

### Communities for Work Plus

- 134% increase on Engagement in 2020-2021
- Exceeded job outcomes by 140% in 2021

### PaCE

- Exceeded job outcomes by 46% in 2021

And while we're proud of these stats, we're also always delighted to hear about the difference we make to our participants' lives:

"The help that you gave me has completely turned my life around! I was really struggling just to be alive. So I suppose it is fair to say that all the help that I have received potentially saved my life! All the courses that I was given the opportunity to participate in were of immense help."

"I want to thank Conwy Employment Hub for not giving up even when we got knock backs due to my criminal record and for believing in me and making me feel valued. My life now has real sense of purpose and I look forward to going to work every day."

You can read more about our work with participants by visiting our case studies at <https://bit.ly/CEHCaseStudies>.

## GET IN TOUCH

We have a dedicated Employer Engagement Officer, Clare Kingscott, who has worked for the Hub for three years.

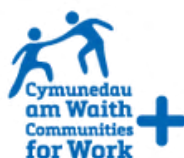
She is passionate about working with businesses to fill their vacancies while helping our participants find a job that is right for them. You can contact Clare direct on 01492 577202 or email her at [clare.kingscott2@conwy.gov.uk](mailto:clare.kingscott2@conwy.gov.uk).

Alternatively you can ring our hotline number on 01492 575578, email us at [CEH@conwy.gov.uk](mailto:CEH@conwy.gov.uk), or fill in our online form at <https://bit.ly/CEHEmployerForm> and we'll contact you.



If you would still like further information on the Hub, you can download our Engagement Toolkit at <https://bit.ly/ConwyToolkit>.

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WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH COMMUNITIES AND JOB CENTRE PLUS

