



## Welcome

Welcome to the Summer 2025 edition of the Cardiff Capital Region Skills Partnership (CCRSP) newsletter.

As we reflect on the past few months, it's clear that collaboration and innovation continue to drive progress across our region. From the success of our Employment & Skills Stakeholder Conference at ICC Wales to the inspiring voices of young people captured through our Youth Voice Roadshows, this edition highlights the strength of our partnerships and the shared ambition to build a more inclusive, responsive, and future-ready skills system.

We've seen first-hand how creative apprenticeships are opening doors for new talent, and we're proud to celebrate the achievements of individuals like Morgan Powell, whose journey into the screen industry is a testament to the power of opportunity and support.

We also take a moment to recognise the outstanding contribution of Allison Dowzell, recently awarded an OBE for her leadership in the creative sector.

This edition also brings you updates on the refreshed Flexible Skills Programme, which continues to offer vital support for employers investing in their workforce, and a look back at the Welsh Government's regional engagement events on employability support—where your voices helped shape future provision.

As always, I'd like to thank our Board members, cluster groups, and stakeholders for their continued commitment to the region's skills agenda. I hope you enjoy reading this edition and feel as energised as we do about the work ahead.

Wishing you all a productive and positive summer.

**Leigh Hughes**

**Chair, CCRSP Employment and Skills Board**



# »» Collaboration and skills at the heart of CCRSP Stakeholder Conference

On 15 May 2025, the Cardiff Capital Region Skills Partnership (CCRSP) hosted its Employment and Skills Stakeholder Conference at ICC Wales. The event brought together professionals from across Southeast Wales to explore the future of skills, employability, and collaboration in the region.

Held at this highly regarded venue, the conference was well received for its smooth organisation, engaging agenda, and valuable networking opportunities.

Attendees included representatives from local authorities, education providers, employers, and regional partners, all contributing to a shared vision for a more inclusive and responsive skills system.

## ***A dynamic and insightful programme***

The day began with a welcome from Leader of Newport City Council, councillor Dimitri Batrouni. It was followed by key contributions from Welsh Government's Neil Surman and Simon Pirotte, who spoke on the importance of building an inclusive skills system. A standout session on the employer-led skills landscape featured insights from CCR, FSB, and DEXECM - highlighting the value of employer engagement and regional collaboration.

Workshops throughout the day focused on vocational qualifications, Net Zero, and apprenticeships offering practical discussions and real-world examples of innovation in action. The afternoon concluded with a presentation of the CCRSP Plan and Skills Supply Solutions, led by Leigh Hughes and partners.

## ***Positive feedback and key themes***

Sessions on the employer-led skills landscape and skills supply solutions were particularly well received, with attendees also valuing the inclusive skills system discussion and the morning workshops.

The afternoon workshop generated useful insights and sparked further interest in continued dialogue and collaboration.

Participants highlighted several key themes:

- The importance of collaboration and partnership working.
- The value of clear communication and shared goals.
- Opportunities to enhance employer awareness of funding and support.
- A growing focus on AI, digital skills, and net zero as future priorities.

## ***Looking ahead***

Feedback from the day reflected a strong appetite for continued engagement.

Attendees expressed interest in more interactive sessions, broader representation from SMEs and the voluntary sector, and a continued focus on real-world case studies and employer-led insights.

The conference concluded with a clear sense of momentum and a shared commitment to strengthening partnerships and ensuring the region's skills agenda remains inclusive, agile, and aligned with the needs of both learners and employers.





# »»» Youth Voice Roadshows: listening to the future workforce

This summer, the Cardiff Capital Region Skills Partnership embarked on a series of Youth Voice Roadshows, engaging with over 90 young people across four colleges - Merthyr College, Cardiff and Vale College, Coleg y Cymoedd, and Bridgend College.

These sessions provided a valuable opportunity to hear directly from students about their career ambitions, the challenges they face, and the support they need to thrive in the world of work.

The feedback, gathered through interactive Mentimeter surveys, paints a vivid picture of a generation that is ambitious, thoughtful, and eager to contribute.

From aspiring electricians and chefs to future creatives, entrepreneurs, and public servants, young people across the region are clear about what they want and what they need.

## ***Ambitions and aspirations***

Students expressed a wide range of career interests, with strong representation in the creative industries, construction and trades, hospitality and catering, health and social care, and freelance or entrepreneurial paths.

The most popular sectors included creative industries, construction, digital and tech, hospitality and tourism, and finance and business.

## ***Skills that matter***

When asked about the skills most important to their future, young people consistently highlighted communication, confidence, teamwork, problem-solving, resilience, and creativity.

These responses reflect a strong emphasis on interpersonal and practical capabilities - skills that are essential in today's evolving job market.

## ***Barriers and challenges***

Despite their enthusiasm, many students identified significant barriers to progression. The most common included lack of experience, financial constraints, limited job opportunities, transport costs, and a lack of access to training or networking opportunities.

These challenges underline the importance of targeted support and inclusive pathways into employment.

## ***Support and learning preferences***

Young people expressed a clear preference for learning through experience.

Work placements, internships, and hands-on workshops were seen as the most valuable forms of preparation. Mentoring, career coaching, and access to industry professionals were also frequently mentioned as key enablers of success.

## ***Influences and expectations***

Salary, job satisfaction, location, flexibility, and company values were the top factors influencing career decisions. While many students feel "somewhat confident" about the skills and qualifications they need, only around half feel fully "work ready." This highlights the need for earlier, more tailored guidance and support.

## ***Digital skills and apprenticeships***

Views on digital skills were mixed. While many see them as essential, others - particularly those pursuing creative or manual careers - felt they were less critical.

Apprenticeships remain a popular route, but students called for better pay, greater visibility, and more flexible, respectful opportunities.

## ***What young people want***

Above all, young people want to be treated with respect, offered fair opportunities, and supported in building their confidence and skills. They are asking for clear pathways into work, inclusive environments, and a system that recognises their potential—regardless of background or circumstance.



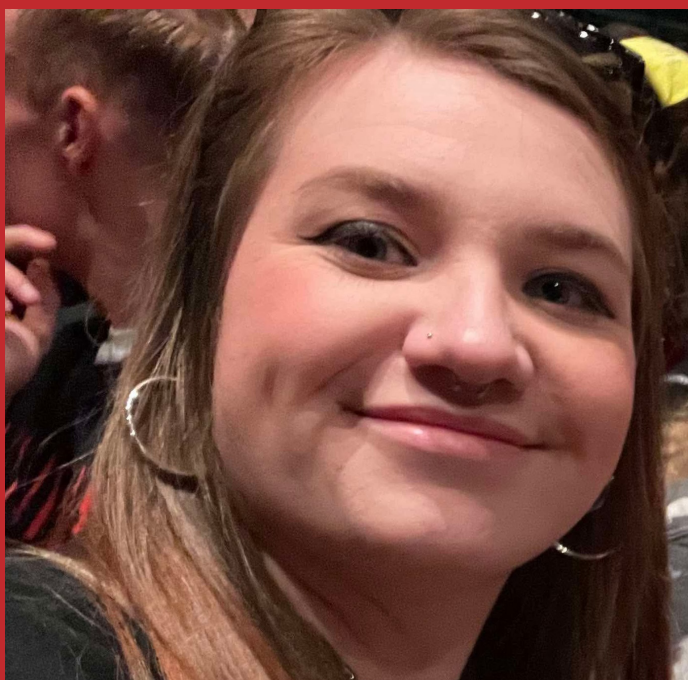
# »» Creative apprenticeship spotlight: Morgan Powell's journey from classroom to set

The creative industries are thriving in Southeast Wales, and thanks to initiatives like the CRIW Apprenticeship Programme, more young people are finding their way into exciting careers in film and television.

One such success story is Morgan Powell, a 2024–25 art department apprentice with Sgil Cymru. Her journey exemplifies the power of opportunity, support, and determination.

Before joining the apprenticeship, Morgan was working in a Cardiff high school supporting ALN pupils with their art GCSEs. With a background in therapeutic arts and facilitation, she had long been fascinated by the world of TV and film but, like many, she wasn't sure how to break into the industry.

Morgan said: "I almost didn't apply. Leaving a full-time job in my late 20s to become an apprentice was daunting. But the structure of the CRIW programme gave me the confidence to take the leap - while learning made it possible."



## Learning the ropes

During her time with Sgil Cymru, Morgan gained hands-on experience in two major productions.

Her first placement was on series two of *The Change*, where she worked as a trainee in the art department. From crafting props and supporting set decoration, to managing petty cash and working on set, Morgan quickly became a trusted member of the team.

Her second placement, *Under Salt Marsh for Sky*, offered a different pace and scale. Initially slower to start, the production soon gave Morgan the chance to shine - especially when she began supporting the graphics team. Teaching herself Adobe Illustrator, she took on responsibility for key visual elements, demonstrating adaptability and initiative.

## Building a career

Since completing her apprenticeship, Morgan has continued to thrive. She's worked on *Falling with Forge* Entertainment and is now preparing to join *Dead Point* as a petty cash coordinator - reuniting with colleagues from her earlier placements.

Morgan says that: "The network I built during my apprenticeship has opened so many doors, I'm now working as a freelancer on productions I could only have dreamed of a year ago."

## Advice for future apprentices

Morgan's advice to others considering a CRIW apprenticeship is simple: "Be present, be helpful, and listen. Use your skills, speak up when it's right, and always support your team - even if it's just making a cup of tea."

Morgan's story is a powerful reminder of how creative apprenticeships can unlock potential, build confidence, and launch careers in one of Wales' most dynamic sectors.

*"When wrap was called on The Change Series two, I was overwhelmed with pride. I had helped create something brilliant and worked with a skilled team who supported me every step of the way."*

**Morgan Powell, CRIW Art Department  
Apprentice 2024–25**

**Read Morgan's full case study**





# Celebrating a well-deserved honour: Allison Dowzell awarded OBE

Morgan's journey is just one example of the incredible talent emerging from Wales's creative industries—talent that is nurtured through strong partnerships, hands-on training, and visionary leadership.

At the heart of this thriving sector are individuals like Allison Dowzell, whose dedication and influence continue to shape opportunities for the next generation.

We're delighted to share that Allison Dowzell—CCRSF Board member and Chair of our Creative Cluster Group—has been awarded an OBE in His Majesty The King's Birthday Honours.

This prestigious recognition reflects Allison's decades of dedication to Wales's film and television industry. Her unwavering commitment to removing barriers, championing emerging talent, and creating opportunities for young people has helped shape a more inclusive and dynamic screen sector.

As managing director of Screen Alliance Wales, Allison

has played a pivotal role in building a legacy of skills, training, and collaboration that continues to benefit the entire creative ecosystem.

This honour is richly deserved, and we're thrilled to see her leadership and impact recognised at the highest level.

Congratulations, Allison - and thank you for your continued inspiration and contribution to the region's creative future.



## Flexible skills funding: helping Welsh employers upskill for the future

As industries across Wales continue to evolve, the need for a skilled, adaptable workforce has never been more important. That's why the Welsh Government's **Flexible Skills Programme (FSP)** is a vital opportunity for employers looking to invest in their people and future-proof their business.

The FSP offers **up to 50 per cent funding** towards eligible accredited training costs (up to a maximum of **£50,000 per application**) to support the upskilling and reskilling of employees across all sectors in Wales.

### What's new?

The programme has been refreshed for 2025 with a sharper focus on priority sectors and a streamlined application process.

Employers can now benefit from:

- **Simplified application steps** with support from Business Wales relationship managers.
- **Faster decision-making**, typically within 10 working days.
- **Flexible training options**, including leadership, digital, creative, and technical skills.

### Who can apply?

The programme is open to **Wales-based employers** from any industry, including private and third-sector organisations.

To be eligible, businesses must:

- Be financially solvent.
- Commit to completing training by **31 March 2026**.
- Use third-party training providers offering accredited or industry-recognised courses.

### Target sectors

FSP is designed to address skills gaps in key areas of the Welsh economy, including:

- Advanced digital
- Creative industries
- Engineering and manufacturing
- Net zero
- Leadership and management
- Export
- Forestry and timber supply chain
- Tourism and hospitality





## What training is supported?

Eligible training includes:

- Technical skills (e.g. robotics, CAD/CAM, AI, automation).
- Leadership and management (e.g. ILM/CMI qualifications, communication, resilience).
- Industry-specific upskilling aligned with business needs.

Training must be delivered by a third-party provider and completed within the financial year. Statutory training, coaching, and conferences are not eligible.

## How to apply

1. Submit an expression of interest via the business Wales website
2. Eligibility check by Welsh government
3. Full application if invited
4. Approval and grant award letter
5. Training and claim submission upon completion

## Real impact: what employers are saying

“The Flexible Skills Programme has been absolutely pivotal in enabling us to move forward with a vast array of different programmes at Ogi. I couldn’t recommend it enough.”

**Louise Mumford, Learning & Development Manager, Ogi**

“It has been instrumental in helping IQ Endoscopes plug critical skill gaps within our business. It’s enabled our team to grow and adapt swiftly.”

**Gemma Banks, HR Manager, IQ Endoscopes**

If your organisation is planning training in the next 12–18 months, now is the time to explore how the Flexible Skills Programme can support your goals.

Search “flexible skills programme” on the [Business Wales website](https://www.businesswales.gov.uk) to get started.

## Shaping the future of employability support in Wales

Earlier this year, the Welsh government undertook a comprehensive review of its employability programmes, inviting frontline professionals and service providers to help shape the future of support in Wales.

As part of this review, a series of regional engagement events were held across Wales between April and June 2025. These sessions gathered valuable insights, experiences and ideas from those delivering employability support every day - helping to inform the design of a more inclusive, integrated, and effective future programme.

### Why it mattered

Professionals working directly with individuals seeking employment brought unique perspectives to the table. These events provided an opportunity to:

- share what had worked well in current programmes

- identify areas for improvement
- explore how services could be better integrated
- highlight what clients truly needed to succeed

Events took place in Cardiff (29 April), Abergele (8 May), Llandrindod Wells (22 May) and Llanelli (4 June) and each session featured interactive discussions and networking opportunities. It also provided a platform for providers to influence the future of employability support in Wales.

### What’s next

The feedback gathered from these events is now being reviewed by the Welsh government to help shape the next phase of employability support. The voices of those who participated will play a key role in ensuring future provision is responsive, inclusive, and effective.