



Entrant company name: **Golley Slater**

Entry title: **Inspiring Genius Decisions During Apprenticeship Week Wales**

Category: **Best Long-term Campaign**

COVID-19 significantly reduced apprenticeship uptake in Wales, disproportionately impacting under 25s who represented three in five job losses.

Between 2021 and 2025, we were briefed to use Apprenticeship Week Wales to reposition apprenticeships as a compelling employment route for young people (16–24 year olds), boosting awareness and participation.

Working to an average budget of £50k per campaign for Earned, Shared and Owned activity, our objectives were to:

- Increase awareness of apprenticeships amongst young people in Wales by 25%. In 2020, awareness levels were 33%.
- Increase propensity to become an apprentice amongst young people in Wales by 10%. In 2020 propensity levels were 27%.
- Increase the number of apprenticeship programmes starting in Wales by 5%.

Idea, Research & Planning

Data from the Youth Census Report 2020 helped us understand our young audience and informed our strategy:

- Family and teachers are most influential when making decisions about their future.
- 56% stated that coronavirus had impacted their mental health ‘a lot’ or ‘a great deal’.
- 42% said their motivation to apply for opportunities had been impacted ‘a lot’ or ‘a great deal’.
- Only 9.9% are confident they will find a good quality job where they live.

Additional insight showed that apprenticeships were often not held in as high regard as other higher education options amongst young people at the time.

Recognising the key role teachers and families play, we considered them as another key audience to reach.

We needed a creative platform that gave us the flexibility and longevity to promote the range of benefits of becoming an apprentice to both audiences.

So, we launched the “Genius Decision” campaign to showcase how becoming an apprentice was a genius decision for young people’s current and future employment prospects.

Strategy, Creativity & Innovation

Our campaign activity was centred around three strategic communications pillars aimed at tackling the barriers preventing young people from applying for apprenticeships.

Clarity: Uncertainty following the pandemic combined with missing key periods of education or career progression left pupils confused. We needed to educate people on the long and short-term benefits of apprenticeships and why they’re a Genius Decision.

Confidence: Post-pandemic mental health issues, particularly among young people, affected their confidence. We aimed to reassure them of the support available to them during the application process and throughout their apprenticeship.

Connection: Young people didn’t believe high quality opportunities existed where they lived. We needed to shift that perception by raising awareness of the wide range of local apprenticeship pathways and making the campaign feel relevant to their motivations, needs and ambitions.

Each year, we analysed previous campaign, audience and contextual employment data to evolve our strategy, and identify new ways to engage our audiences:

For example, since launching the Welsh Government’s Young Person’s Guarantee (YPG) in late 2021, we have coordinated messages between both campaigns to share Apprenticeship content at relevant times and expand our audience reach.

In 2022, data indicated that ethnic minorities, women, and disabled people were less likely to consider apprenticeships. To address this, we targeted efforts to challenge stereotypes and raise awareness, relevance, and understanding among these groups.

In 2024, research revealed half of 16–24-year-olds didn’t think the Welsh Government was doing enough to help when it comes to employment, skills and education in Wales, so we offset pessimism by delivering positive messages and real-life success stories through trusted and diverse voices on social media.

In 2025, widespread media coverage of funding cuts created the impression that apprenticeships were not viable for most young people. Our campaign responded with positive stories and endorsements from former apprentices to shift the narrative.

Implementation

Below is a snapshot of campaign activity delivered between 2021 – 2025.

Clarity:

- With classroom learning moving online, in 2021 we provided teachers with engaging video content for use in planning. We partnered with Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru to

create a bilingual interactive lesson around apprenticeships, challenging stereotypes and encouraging peer-to-peer conversations about different career pathways available to them.

- Partnered with 18 influencers to co create content that raised awareness of apprenticeships through trusted, alternative voices. By tapping into youth driven social trends, we increased reach and engagement while authentically embedding both the short and long term benefits of becoming an apprentice. Highlight activity saw us collaborate with past Love Island contestant and former apprentice Liam Reardon through our YPG activity to talk authentically about his apprenticeship experience. The content delivered 983k views, and over 10k positive engagements from our young target audience.

Confidence:

- Secured a partnership with influential business leaders across Wales who championed the value of hiring apprentices, reinforcing apprenticeships as a credible pathway to successful careers. We amplified this partnership across PR, earned and owned social media platforms.
- Created a bilingual suite of engaging social assets that equipped 16–24 year olds with clear, compelling information about becoming an apprentice, guiding them from interest to application. Partnered with trusted Welsh youth organisations, including National Youth Advocacy Service, Urdd and Colleges Wales, using an accessible toolkit that enabled them to share our content through their credible voices and established networks, amplifying reach and driving genuine engagement.

Connection:

- Created impactful real-life case studies highlighting young apprentices in priority Welsh Government sectors, including an award-winning female engineer challenging STEM stereotypes and a dedicated social care apprentice who had been inspired by caring for a relative in the pandemic. This narrative led regional PR activity cut through a crowded media landscape and gained strong media coverage in outlets like The Sun, BBC, and WalesOnline, boosting public awareness.
- Promoted success stories through powerful videos, amplified via owned and stakeholder channels such as S4C, Social Care Wales and WRU. Videos were boosted to reach young people in areas in Wales with highest start rates for apprenticeships according to StatWales on social channels.

Outputs:

Between 2021 – 2025 our campaign delivered:

- 281 pieces of coverage. Reach: 25,369,056.
- Organic social reach: 5,564,525.
- 842 stakeholder posts. Reach: 7,565,010
- 18 influencers engaged. Reach: 1.29m
- 500+ teachers opened interactive lesson, used in hundreds of classes across Wales.

Outtakes:

- Amongst 16-24 yos:
 - o Awareness levels of apprenticeships increased by 36% - from 33% in 2020 to 45% in

2024 (vs 25% increase target)

- o Maintained average 42% awareness between 2021 and 2025.

Outcomes

- Amongst 16-24 yos:

- o Propensity to become an apprentice increased by 67% - from 27% in 2020 to 45% in 2024 (vs 10% increase target).

- o Maintained average 40% propensity

Impact:

- Since the campaign launched in 2021, it's helped contribute to more than 100,000 apprenticeship opportunities, giving individuals practical work skills and recognised qualifications.