

BOSS Your Future

Prison Release Guide



"Sometimes the right path isn't
always the easiest one."

Introduction

In prison, most of your decisions are made for you and it doesn't take long to settle into a routine; sleep, eat, workshops, go to the gym or watch television, an occasional visit and other people's stories. The punishment is repetition and not having the freedom to make choices.

You may have spent hours in your cell calculating and recalculating figures and second-guessing a release date. You may become obsessed with time, strategies for not thinking about it or marking every day as release gets closer.

You will have made detailed plans, but often these plans won't reflect the reality facing you.

Occasionally you will be stunned, as if hit by fear, at the enormity of being released.

Leaving prison can be a bewildering and overwhelming experience. Ultimately, whether you stay out will depend on your actions, your motivation, your discipline and determination. It also depends on the connections you make – because it doesn't have to be a journey you take alone.

In Wales, there are people and organisations who can help you. This guide has been put together by The Wallich BOSS Project. Our people have experienced prison or have experience helping others get back into work or training on release from prison.

Use the help that is available | Make connections |
Make bold choices | Stay free

"I won't be able to deal with it. I've forgotten what it's like on the outside. It'll all be changed anyway. I'll have to start all over again."

First steps checklist

Identification (ID)

Basic ID is needed for employment, bank accounts, tenancy agreements and applying for benefits. If you don't have ID on leaving prison, your probation officer can usually vouch for you and verify your identity on headed paper.



You can get your birth certificate from your local civic centre/registry office and online at **GOV.UK** - You will need an email address, know the area you were born and at least one parent's name to perform a search. It costs from £11 and can take 15+ days.



You need passport photos for most ID. You can do it yourself against a white background on a smartphone or go to a photobooth at a pharmacy or supermarket.



Driving, provisional and renewing your license can be applied for online through the DVLA or GOV.UK



Staying in touch

Get a basic Pay As You Go (PAYG) phone and free email address, such as **Gmail**.



Phone and email are essential for staying in touch with family, probation, potential employers, as well as for online applications such as benefits.



"Remember how far you have come, not how far you have to go."

Bank account

You can apply online for a free basic account with most banks. Most banks will ask for photo ID, but will accept other forms of identification - such as benefits letter or proof of National Insurance, P45 or P60.

If you have a smartphone and photo ID, Monzo or Starling Bank provide fuss free accounts.



CV

Keep your CV up to date, easy to read and sing your praises! Templates are available online if you are starting from scratch.



GP

Register with a GP by going to the nearest surgery and asking for a registration form.



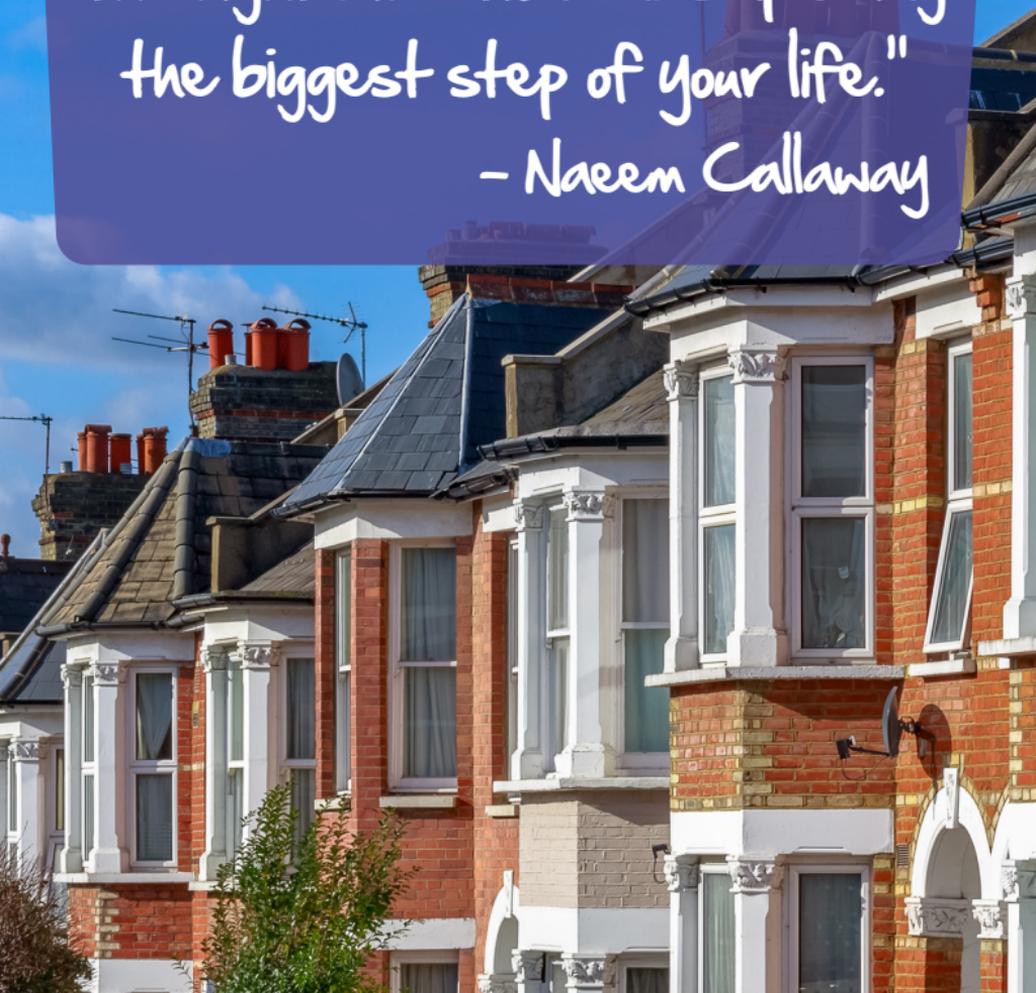
Food banks

For food bank vouchers in your local area, contact your local council, charities or try www.trusselltrust.org



"Sometimes the smallest step in
the right direction ends up being
the biggest step of your life."

- Na'eem Callaway



Housing, Finance & Probation

Housing

If you're homeless leaving custody, you will need to present as homeless to your local council (www.gov.uk/find-local-council) and they may be able to secure emergency / temporary accommodation for you.

Housing is assessed on a case by case basis and cannot be guaranteed. However, you will be placed onto the housing waiting list in your local area, if you are eligible.

You can also contact **Shelter Cymru** for expert housing advice: **08000 495 495**

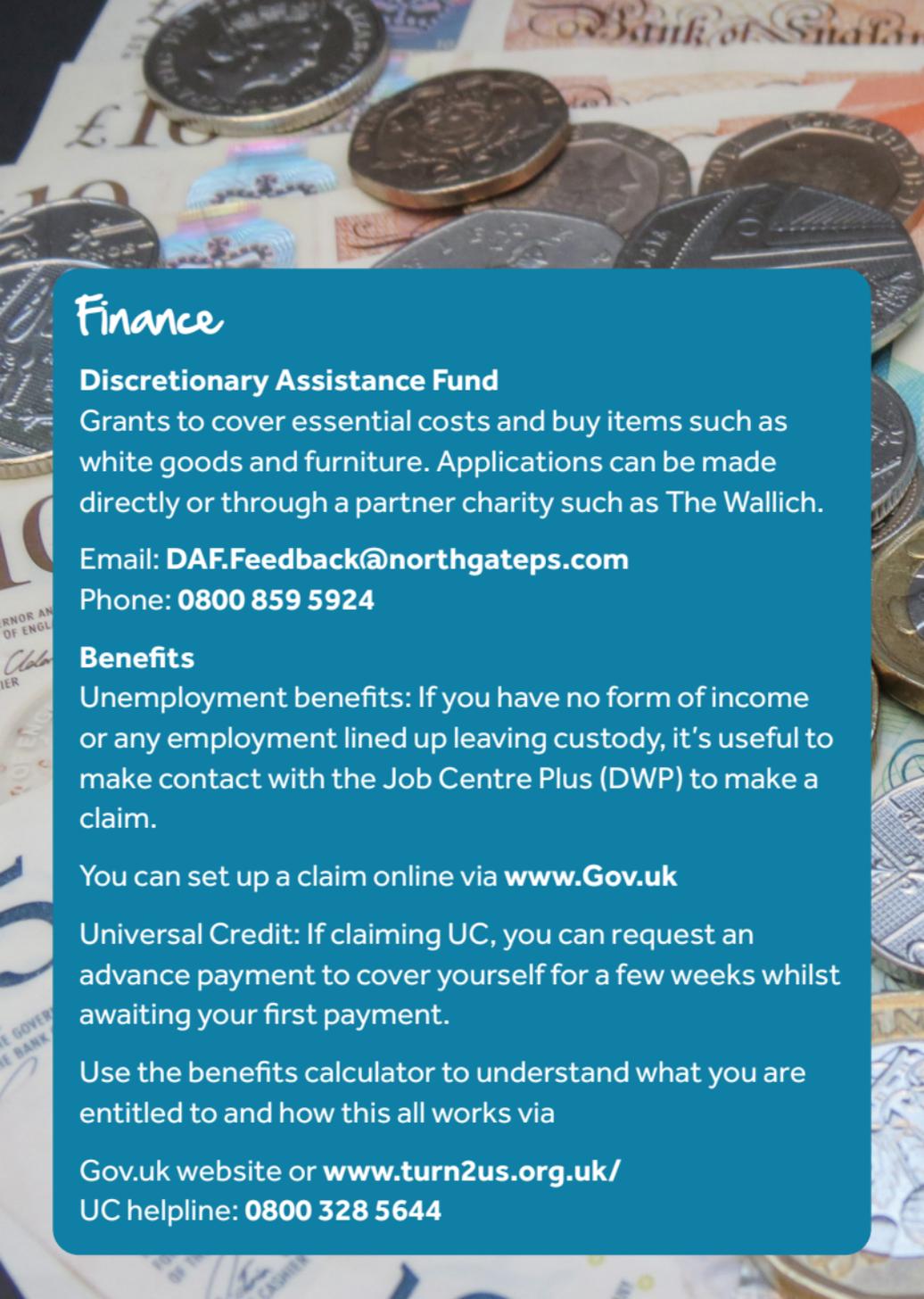
Private Rented Accommodation

Shared accommodation and landlords that accept DSS tenants can be found on:

www.gumtree.co.uk

www.dssmove.co.uk

It is worth contacting www.boomerangcardiff.org.uk, Facebook marketplace and www.toogoodtowaste.co.uk for donated or cheap items to furnish your new home.



Finance

Discretionary Assistance Fund

Grants to cover essential costs and buy items such as white goods and furniture. Applications can be made directly or through a partner charity such as The Wallich.

Email: DAF.Feedback@northgateps.com

Phone: **0800 859 5924**

Benefits

Unemployment benefits: If you have no form of income or any employment lined up leaving custody, it's useful to make contact with the Job Centre Plus (DWP) to make a claim.

You can set up a claim online via www.Gov.uk

Universal Credit: If claiming UC, you can request an advance payment to cover yourself for a few weeks whilst awaiting your first payment.

Use the benefits calculator to understand what you are entitled to and how this all works via

Gov.uk website or www.turn2us.org.uk/

UC helpline: **0800 328 5644**

Debt advice

If you are struggling with debt or managing your finances, there is help out there who can help set up a repayment plan with your creditors.

StepChange: **0800 138 1111**

Citizen Advice Bureau: **03444 77 20 20**

Probation

Probation is not a punishment, just remember that they are there to help you and find stability in life.

Take the time to understand your licence conditions, if you can work well with your probation officer by being open and honest and asking for help, the process will be so much easier. Take a look at **www.doingtime.co.uk** to understand how probation works and what support you can expect.

A list of local probation offices can be found at:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/probation-directory

"Don't let one bad chapter in your life define the rest of your life. The key is to learn from that chapter and re-write your own story."

Reconnecting & everyday life

Rebuilding and repairing relationships with family members, children, partners or friends/associates can be challenging. You may need specialist support with reconnecting or to address other issues.

Dewis Cymru

www.dewis.wales is a one-stop shop for finding local and national organisations and services that can help support you with everyday life. E.g. housing, addiction, or childcare services.

Social Services

Social services will sometimes be involved with individuals and their children and/or partners. Although this can cause frustration, they are there to help and protect. Use their knowledge and expertise to guide your behaviour and improve relationships.

PACT

The Prison Advice and Care Trust (Pact) is a charity supporting prisoners, people with convictions and their families to make a fresh start and minimise the harm.

Tel: **0808 808 2003**

Women's Aid

Welsh Women's Aid works to end domestic abuse and all forms of violence. Their network provides lifesaving services to survivors of violence and abuse – women, men, children, families – and deliver preventative services in local communities.

Tel: **0808 801 0800**

The Wallich

The Wallich is Wales's leading homelessness charity, helping to get people off the streets, keep people off the streets and create opportunities for people.

Tel: **02920 668 464**

Parenting and Childcare

The Welsh Government provide fully funded programmes supporting families, particularly those living in poverty, including Flying Start, Pace and Families First. The type of help you could get depends on your family's specific needs and is assessed by your local authority.

www.gov.wales/childcare-parenting

Dyfodol

Dyfodol provides support to people with drug and alcohol issues in the south Wales area, including those within the criminal justice system.

Tel: **01633 811950**

Wellbeing

Wellbeing is commonly thought to be about being comfortable, healthy or happy. But it's also about flourishing or thriving whilst engaging fully in what is going on around you.

Whilst in prison, you will have been cut off physically and emotionally from the rest of society so engaging fully will take time. The temptation is to make up for lost time and try to do everything at once, but a more realistic approach is to stop, think and make a plan.

- ✓ Decide what's important to improve your wellbeing, just one or two aims to begin with
- ✓ Don't set the bar too high
- ✓ Accept that not succeeding sometimes will be part of the journey
- ✓ Think about the things you've done well



"The best views come after the hardest climb."

Physical wellbeing

- If you were using the gym in prison, don't give it up. Enrol at a gym or try another type of exercise like swimming, yoga or taking part in your local Park Run.
- In prison, you may have eaten a lot of processed carbohydrate-based foods. Feel free to cut back on bread, potatoes and sugary foods and eat more fruit and vegetables.
- Avoid fast food and takeaways and learn to cook some healthy recipes. Try cookingonabootstrap.com for affordable, easy and healthy recipe ideas.

Social wellbeing

- Try not to fall back into the same friendship groups which contributed to your behaviour leading up to prison.
- Think carefully about who the positive and negative influences are.
- Talk to the people who you have hurt and listen to what they say.
- Try volunteering. It can give you valuable experience and is a good way of meeting people.

Psychological wellbeing

- Sometimes it is good to talk to a counsellor about your worries and anxieties. The BOSS Project, can put you in touch with professional counsellors through our Reflections Network
- Try Square Breathing to calm your nervous system, and decrease stress in your body:



inhale 2... 3... 4

rest 2... 3... 4

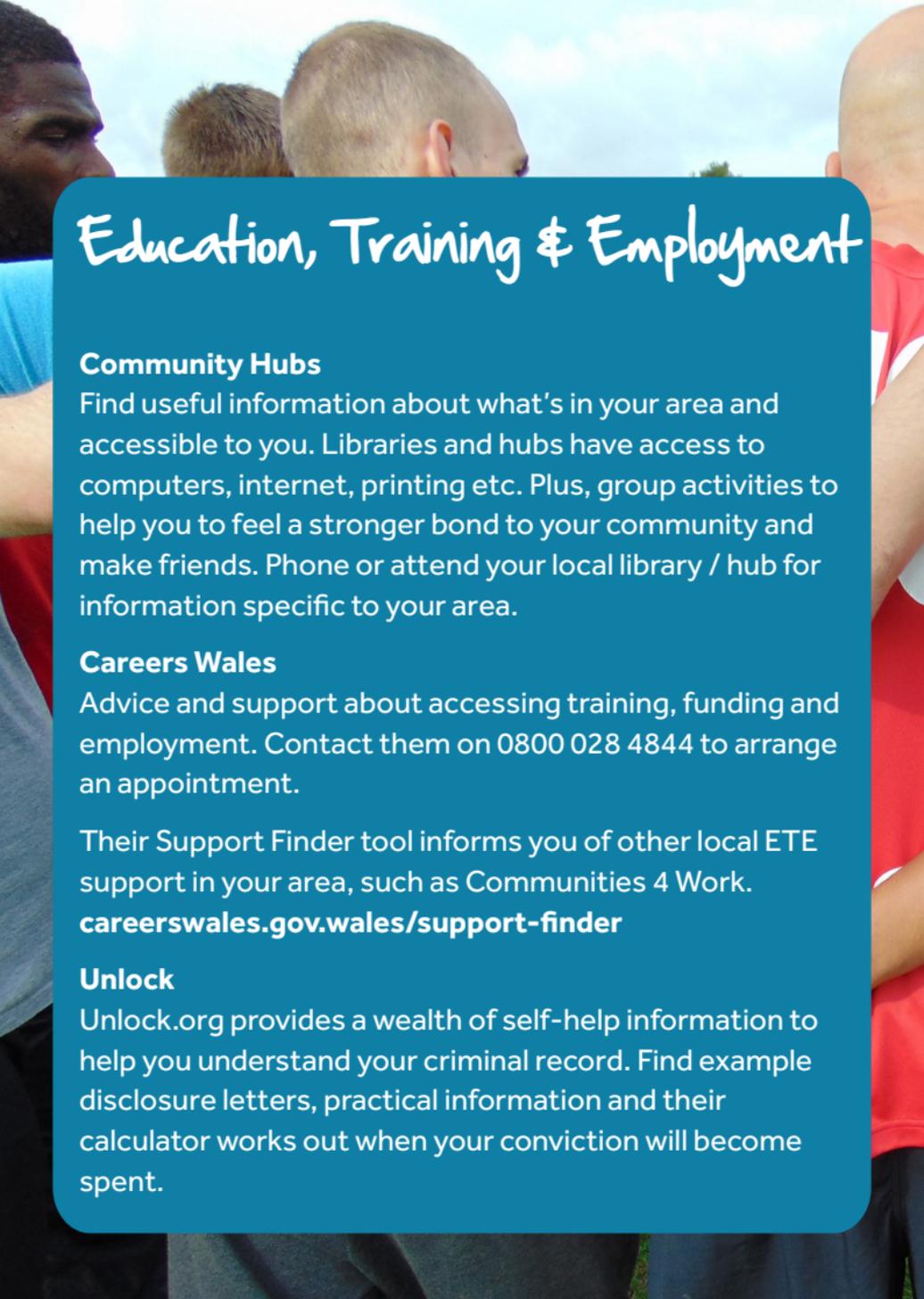
breathe



hold 2... 3... 4

exhale 2... 3... 4

 ZENCARE.CO



Education, Training & Employment

Community Hubs

Find useful information about what's in your area and accessible to you. Libraries and hubs have access to computers, internet, printing etc. Plus, group activities to help you to feel a stronger bond to your community and make friends. Phone or attend your local library / hub for information specific to your area.

Careers Wales

Advice and support about accessing training, funding and employment. Contact them on 0800 028 4844 to arrange an appointment.

Their Support Finder tool informs you of other local ETE support in your area, such as Communities 4 Work.

careerswales.gov.wales/support-finder

Unlock

Unlock.org provides a wealth of self-help information to help you understand your criminal record. Find example disclosure letters, practical information and their calculator works out when your conviction will become spent.



"In the end, we only regret the chances we didn't take."

The Wallich BOSS Project

An employability and wellbeing project working with individuals with a criminal record across south Wales. BOSS can help with access to training, qualifications, education, employment as well as wellbeing support such as counselling.

Tel: **02921 674381**

Email: **boss@thewallich.net**

Free Online Courses

www.theskillstoolkit.campaign.gov.uk provides a directory of free courses covering skills which are in demand by employers such as Google, Amazon and FutureLearn.

Better Jobs, Better Futures

Delivered by Gower College Swansea, Better Jobs, Better Futures supports people to gain, retain and progress within employment.

Tel: **01792 284450**

Email: **info@betterjobsbetterfutures.wales**

CSCS Card

Construction is a popular choice of employment for people released from prison. A CSCS card is now a requirement on the majority of sites.

To obtain one, you need to:

- Complete a RQF Level 1 Award in Health and Safety in a Construction Environment
- Pass the CITB Health, Safety & Environment Test

Apply for your card either online at www.cscs.uk.com or call **0344 99 44 777**

Once obtained, Acorn Recruitment have worked alongside HMMPS to place a number of prison leavers and are good starting point for job opportunities, contact them on:

01633 760 148

buildingfutures@acornpeople.com





Quick tips for your future

Follow your local Job Centre, Recruitment Agencies and Employment Support organisations on Facebook, Twitter etc for notifications of job vacancies.

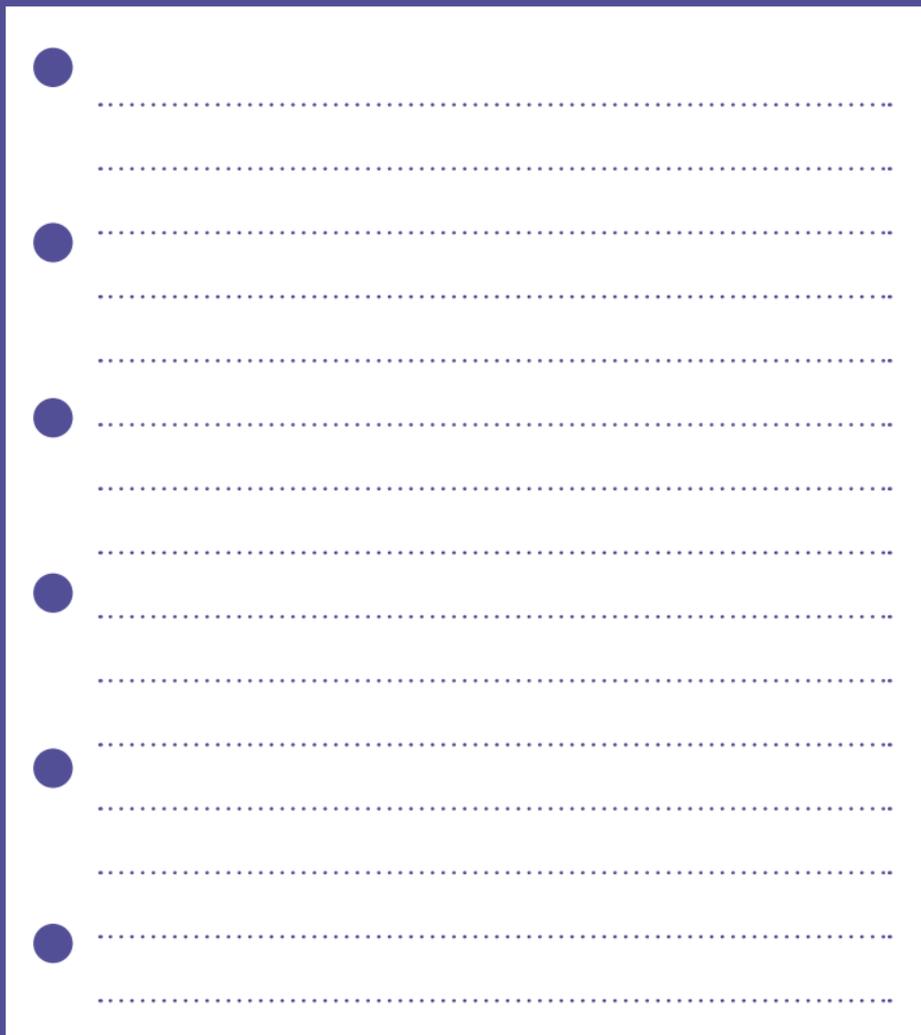
Careers Wales Access Programme can provide up to £1,500 towards training and qualifications for eligible individuals.

OpenLearn and Future Learn provides free courses to increase your digital skills, take accredited courses and improve your chances of getting a job.

Review your social media profiles – employers often check this so make sure there are no embarrassing photos or anything inappropriate.

Download the Calm app to your smartphone for free to help with sleep, meditation and relaxation.

Notes & scribbles



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www.thewallich.com

Registered Charity No: **1004103** / Registered in England and Wales

Company Limited by Guarantee No: **2642780**

The Wallich is the trading name of Wallich Clifford Community