October 2026 in review

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This is the Third in our monthly WeShare series. Each month we read what is being said nationally about young people, and ask what it means where we work: Wrexham, Flintshire, and Cheshire West and Chester.

On 28 October the Chancellor, John Healey, delivered his first Budget. It contained few measures aimed specifically at young people, but several will shape their pay, their household bills and the jobs market they are trying to enter. The decisions that will matter most to them have not yet been made, and we encourage young people to engage with and help to steer those decisions.

From April 2027 every minimum wage rate will rise by 3.9%. As LBC and FE Week reported, that takes the rate for those aged 21 and over to around £13.20 an hour, the 18 to 20 rate to £11.27 and the apprentice rate to £8.31. For the first time in several years, younger workers' pay will not rise faster than adults' pay. Personnel Today notes that youth rates had risen by around 44% over three years and were increasingly cited as a barrier to hiring. The government's hope is that cheaper entry-level pay will encourage employers to take a chance on young people. Whether it does will depend less on wage rates than on whether employers have the confidence, and the capacity, to train and support someone in their first job.

Households will also see some relief on energy costs. VAT on electricity is cut until July, gas standing charges will be removed from next year, and around 20 million homes in England in council tax bands A to D will receive a one-off £100 payment this winter. We welcome the Welsh Government's confirmation, reported by Nation.Cymru and Wrexham.com, that households in the same bands in Wales will receive the same payment. A new First Time Buyer ISA will also replace the Lifetime ISA.



On employment, the most significant measures for our region are local.
The Budget names car and aerospace engineering in Wrexham and Flintshire among the industries that will benefit from a 25% cut in electricity costs for energy-intensive manufacturers from April. As Wrexham.com noted, these firms are among the region's most important employers of apprentices.
FE News reported £100 million to help young people in parts of England find apprenticeships through their mayoral authorities, and a requirement that at least 3% of the workforce on large government construction projects are apprentices. Small retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in England, where many young people find their first job, will pay less in business rates. The £3,000 Youth Jobs Grant and the extension of the Jobs Guarantee to 22 to 24 year olds were both confirmed. As in August, much of this applies in England only, and young people in Wales will depend on how the Welsh Government chooses to use its share of the funding.

These measures arrive against a difficult outlook. City AM reported that the Office for Budget Responsibility now expects growth of 1% next year, down from 1.6%. It expects unemployment to peak at 5.1%, and household incomes to fall once rising prices are taken into account. One of its economists described "a pretty grim picture". The Resolution Foundation estimates that household incomes are £420 lower than two years ago and will not recover until 2029.

Young people feel this first. The House of Commons Library puts the number of unemployed 16 to 24 year olds at 715,000, and the Office for National Statistics counts 981,000 young people not in education, employment or training. Excluding the pandemic, job vacancies have fallen to their lowest level since 2014. In Wales, 17% of 16 to 24 year olds were outside education, employment or training in 2025. The North Wales Tertiary Alliance reports that North Wales has the highest estimated rate of any Welsh region. The Learning and Work Institute summed up the position in four words: "the clock is ticking".



The decisions that will matter most were deferred. Alan Milburn's review of young people and work is due to publish its final report in November. The Timms Review of Personal Independence Payment, which found claims growing fastest among 16 to 19 year olds, particularly for mental health conditions, autism and ADHD, will report to ministers this autumn. The government has committed to respond to both before the end of the year, with legislation to follow in 2027. Together they will shape how young people are supported into work, and how benefits work for those with health conditions. Nothing changes for anyone receiving Universal Credit or PIP in the meantime.

Any young person we work with who is worried should speak to a WeMindTheGap staff member. That leaves a window, and young people should be heard in it. We are encouraging the young people we work with to contact their MP and MS, which they can do easily through WriteToThem.com, and to register to vote from the age of 16. In Wales, 16 and 17 year olds can already vote in Senedd and council elections, and Full Fact reports that legislation to extend this to UK general elections is progressing. Local forums offer another route. They include the Welsh Youth Parliament for those aged 11 to 17, Senedd yr Ifainc Wrecsam for those aged 11 to 25, Young Flintshire, and the youth service in Cheshire West and Chester. Youth Employment UK's Youth Voice Census remains the largest national survey of young people's experience of work and learning. Separately, the Department for Education is seeking views on school exclusion in England until 19 November. Our own Big Conversations exist for the same purpose. What young people tell us about job hunting, travel and waiting for support is evidence, and we will continue to put it in front of the people making these decisions, as well as using these findings to inform our approach to delivery and village building. This Budget left the most important questions about young people unanswered. The answers will come over the next few months, and we intend to make sure the young people we work with help shape them.

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