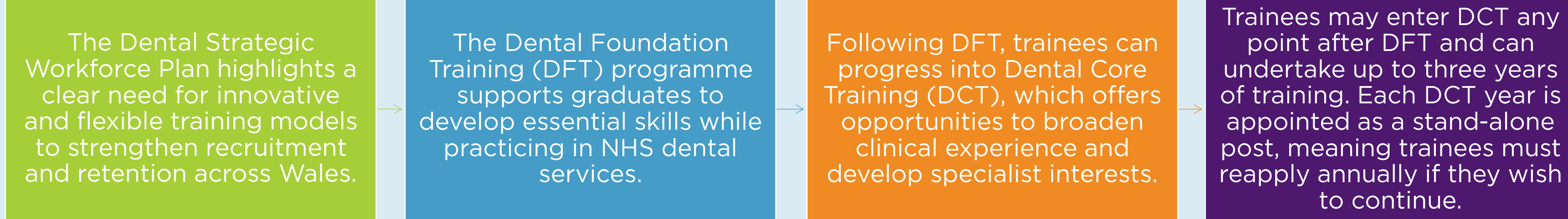


Shaping the Future Dental Workforce Through Innovative Training Offers

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Introduction & Background Information



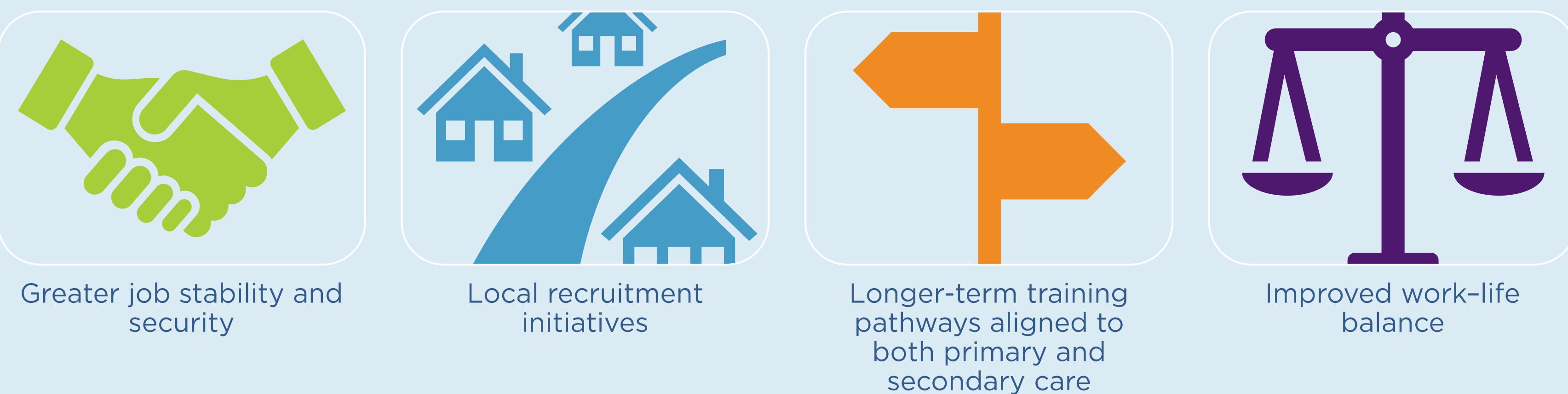
The Collaboration: Programme Development

HEIW has developed a suite of innovative postgraduate dental training opportunities which were shaped directly by trainee feedback and workforce trend analysis. These opportunities are designed to:

- Strengthen clinical experience
- Improve job security
- Enhance career development across DFT and DCT

What trainees told us:

Annual HEIW trainee surveys and research studies highlighted that trainees want:



What workforce trends showed us:

Many trainees prefer urban placements, leaving rural areas underserved. Some regions of Wales function as “dental deserts” with limited NHS provision. Strategically placing trainees in these areas increases access to NHS dental care.

Figure 1 shows GDP practice distribution across Wales and Figure 2 shows placement of rural DFT practices as part of the DFT WERO scheme. Placing trainees in underserved regions has directly improved service delivery, increasing appointment availability and stabilising local workforce capacity.

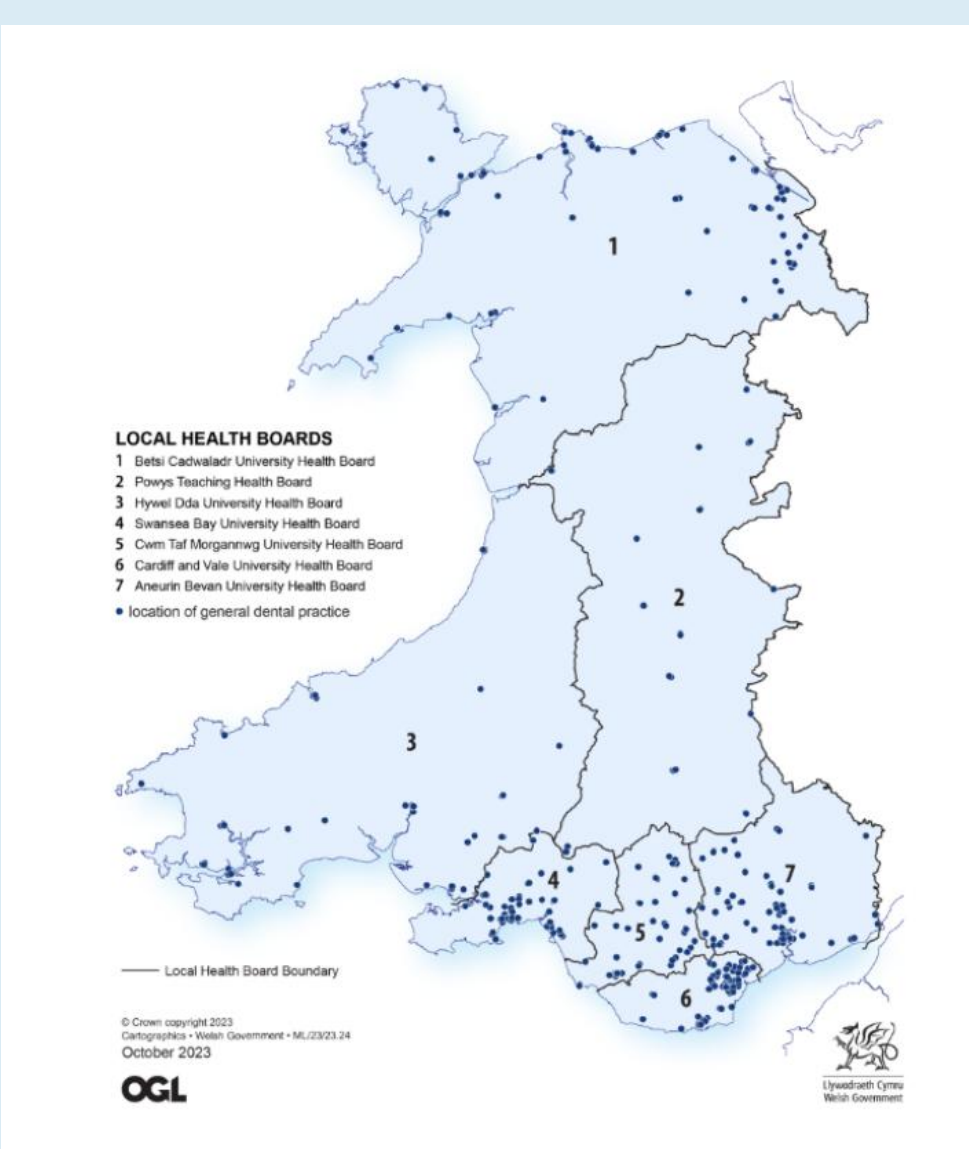


Figure 1: Locations of GDP practices in Wales (Welsh Government, 2023)

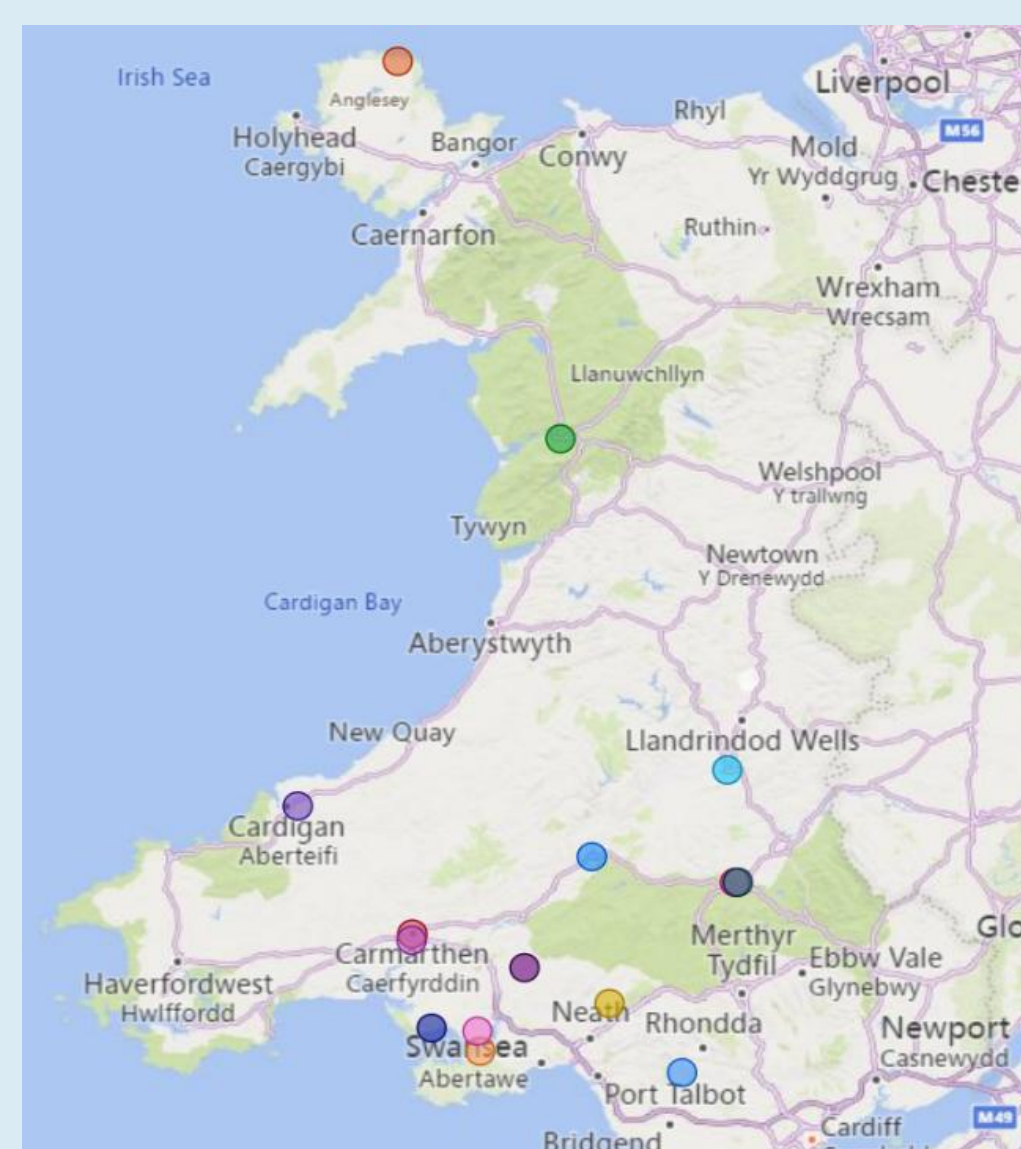
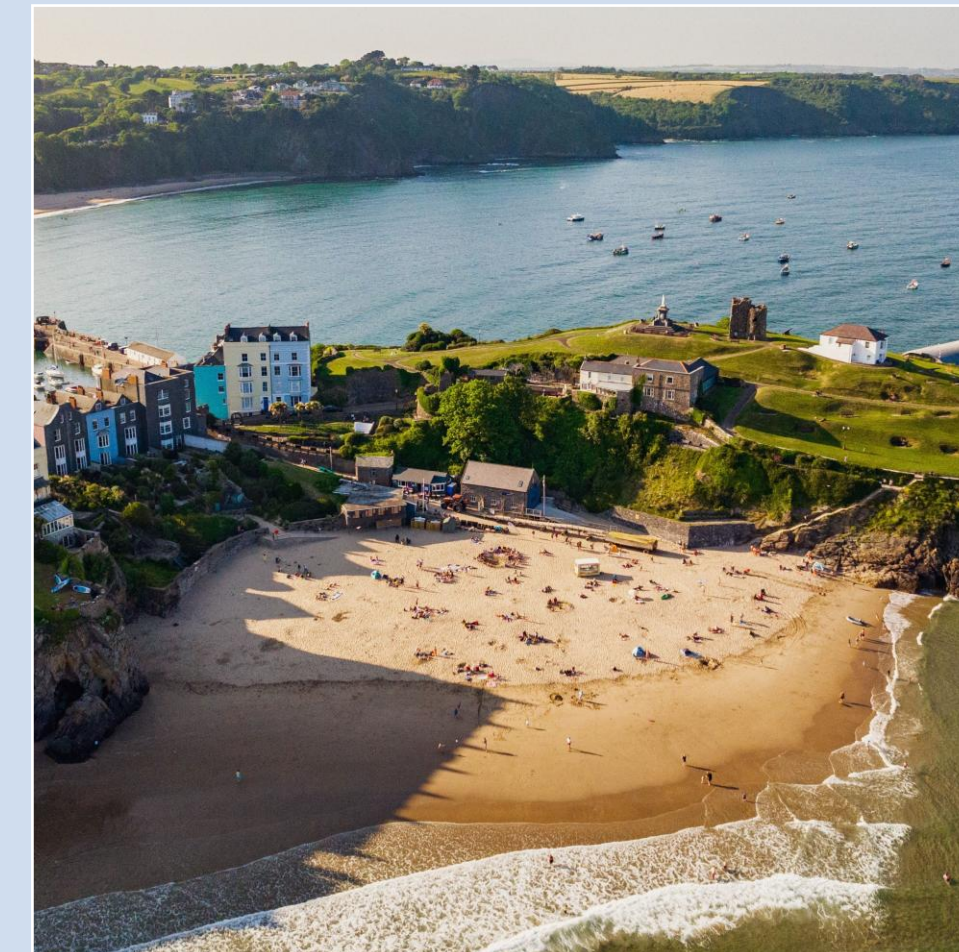


Figure 2: Locations of DFT WERO practices (2024 cohort)

The Innovation: Novel Training Offers



DFT WERO

The DFT Welsh Enhanced Recruitment Offer (WERO) flagship initiative addressing rural recruitment challenges by offering:

- Early job security through local recruitment
- Financial support via a rural living grant
- Weekly study days
- Subsidised exam (MFDS part 1)
- Excellent wellbeing support

DFT WERO + 1

DFT WERO + 1 was developed in response to strong trainee interest in staying in rural Wales beyond their DFT WERO year. The scheme:

- Provides Tier 2 oral surgery experience in primary care* (*to date, all DCT pathways in Wales have been in secondary or community-based care)
- Supports progression toward DCT equivalence
- Strengthens rural service delivery
- Delivered in partnership with Hywel Dda Local Health Board



Academic DFT

In collaboration with Cardiff University, this novel post is designed for trainees pursuing academic or portfolio careers. The post integrates:

- Supervised clinical practice as with conventional DFT
- Structured research & scholarship opportunities
- Leadership development

Longitudinal DFT & DCT Posts

A range of 24-month posts spanning DFT and DCT have been created to support job security and work-life balance. These posts:

- Reduce the annual burden of re-application
- Allow deeper skill development
- Provide stability for trainees and services
- Builds continuity, mentorship, and strong professional networks
- Have carefully paired posts for breadth and depth of experience

HEIW maintains a broad range of 12-month DCT posts for flexibility. The 24-month posts span DFT → DCT1 and DCT1 → DCT2.



The Transformation: Impact of the Programmes

By co-designing training pathways with trainees and aligning them with workforce needs, HEIW is creating a sustainable, future-ready dental workforce for Wales.

Case Example 1: DFT WERO

100% trainees rated the scheme positively, with 90% giving 5/5 rating

90% trainees remained in Wales after DFT in 2024

70% trainees stay in the same rural area where they trained, highlighting the impact on long-term retention of skilled practitioners

Most trainees consistently praise the local recruitment process, supportive and welcoming practice environments and variety in clinical experience.

Case Example 2: DFT WERO+1

Trainees in these posts have made significant impact to the service delivery in rural Wales:

- No Level 2a oral surgery referrals have been required from any practice site
- Reduced pressure on secondary care services
- Significantly improved urgent access via NHS 111 pathway
- Complex cases managed safely in primary care

Conclusion

Collaborate

Trainees expressed clear needs: stability, local opportunities, and balanced training pathways & rural Wales urgently needed sustainable recruitment and retention solutions.

Innovate

HEIW listened and designed training models directly shaped by trainee feedback and workforce trends.

Transform

Postgraduate dental training in Wales has been transformed, strengthening workforce distribution and improving patient care.

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