



**Report following monitoring  
Level of follow-up: Estyn monitoring**

**Cardiff and Vale ACL Partnership**

**Date of visit: January 2015**

**by**

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and  
Training in Wales**

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## Outcome of monitoring visit

Following the core inspections of Cardiff Adult Community Learning Partnership in January 2013 and the Vale of Glamorgan Adult Community Learning Partnership in February 2013, the two partnerships amalgamated to form the Cardiff and Vale Adult Community Learning Partnership.

The Cardiff and Vale Adult Learning Partnership is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations from their separate core inspections. As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing the Cardiff and Vale Adult Community Learning Partnership from any further follow-up activity. Estyn will monitor progress against the recommendations during link visits to the partnership.

## Progress since the last inspection

### Recommendation 1:

#### **Cardiff Recommendation1: Improve success rates for all learners**

#### **Vale of Glamorgan Recommendation 1: Improve success rates and accreditation for all learners**

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

Most partners' data in the new Cardiff and Vale Adult Community Learning Partnership shows a trend of increasing success rates over the last three years of published data (2010-2013). In the most recent published year (2012-2013) and, although still slightly below the national comparator of 84% for 2012-2013, learners across the partnership as a whole achieved a success rate of 80% - a significant rise of 12 percentage points from the previous year.

All partners share data regularly and the Quality and Data Group provides effective challenge and target setting to each of the partners. As a result, the partnership's unpublished data for 2013-2014 is robust and it indicates a continued upward trend, which is consistent across all partners.

The partnership's strategy of reducing the number learners enrolled on state funded leisure courses and focusing its resources on priority groups has led to a reduction in the overall number of enrolments and individual learners. However, the proportion of learners taking accredited courses has increased and learners on accredited courses are succeeding at higher rates.

Since 2011-2012, the proportion of learners enrolled from the most deprived areas has increased. Learners from the lowest two deprivation deciles now account for 31% of the partnership's learners (2013-2014 unpublished data). Learners from more these more deprived areas are succeeding at rates comparable to the national averages.

Learners across the partnership generally enjoy their courses and make good progress. Learners on leisure programmes are able to focus their attention on aspects of their chosen subjects without the concern of formal assessments. In general, these learners make good progress over time and they develop their skills and interests appropriately. For example, learners with disabilities on dance and movement classes maintain their wellbeing through participating and socialising with friends. They develop and maintain their fitness, co-ordination and flexibility well.

Learners taking accredited ESOL classes have an opportunity to receive regular accreditation of their progress. Learners on creative writing programmes enjoy their courses. They are developing increasing confidence in their own writing skills and their ability to critique the work of other writers.

## **Recommendation 2:**

**Cardiff Recommendation 2: Improve the strategic leadership, management and co-ordination of adult community-based learning in Cardiff to make sure that provision is better aligned to local and national priorities and that all operational managers understand their roles and priorities**

**Vale of Glamorgan Recommendation 4: Improve the strategic leadership, management and co-ordination of adult community-based learning in the Vale of Glamorgan to make sure that provision is better aligned to local and national priorities and set targets that challenge performance**

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

The most senior leaders across the partnership have improved significantly the quality and effectiveness of strategic leadership, management, and the co-ordination of adult community learning. They have taken strong ownership of the issues raised in both inspections and are tackling them in a robust and systematic way.

The partnership's strategic plan provides a good context for planning adult community learning. The plan takes good account of key national datasets to identify priority areas of work. The plan identifies clear strategic aims for the partnership and it sets out measurable objectives for each aim. The partnership makes appropriate use of measurable targets where it can in order to monitor progress. It makes good use of targets to identify its desired outcomes. It has built in review dates to check progress as work gathers momentum. As a result, staff at all levels have a good understanding of the work of the partnership and their respective roles and responsibilities in achieving the aims of the strategic plan.

The partnership has aligned its work very well to national priorities for adult community learning. It makes very good use of contextual information and data and learner performance data to set challenging targets for delivery and for improving outcomes. The partnership has a clear focus on raising learners' standards of achievement.

All providers have combined to provide resources to fund the co-ordination and management of the partnership. As a result, the partnership utilises effectively the expertise of individual organisations to improve the quality of its work.

The partnership has set up robust arrangements for managing its work. The strategic management group reports on its performance to a joint local service board. The partnership has set up curriculum planning groups in both Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan, and a range of task and finish groups that address different aspects of its work. As a result, the partnership is able to implement, monitor, and report on its work efficiently.

The partnership has secured good support from local councillors and senior elected members in both local authorities. It has worked well with scrutiny committees in both local authorities to report on progress and make recommendations for change. The scrutiny committees have also given good support and challenge to the partnership. As a result, the partnership has been able to implement changes to the delivery of learning to adults effectively.

The partnership has secured strong support from all key stakeholders, including higher education providers, Job Centre Plus, Community First, Welsh language centre and third sector organisations. Consequently, it delivers effectively its work with priority groups of learners and it organises learning that supports learners to improve their health and wellbeing and to develop their interests.

### **Recommendation 3:**

**Cardiff Recommendation 3: Improve the quality of the curriculum and provision offered to learners, especially in the most deprived areas and to priority groups of learners**

**Vale of Glamorgan Recommendation 6: Review and revise the curriculum to ensure that all learners have equal access to appropriate learning opportunities**

**Vale of Glamorgan Recommendation 2: Improve the provision for developing learners' literacy and numeracy skills, particularly to ensure that ABE learners have access to higher level courses**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The partnerships' curriculum and progression groups have worked together effectively to break down barriers and to develop a better-focused curriculum.

The curriculum and progression groups send questionnaires to stakeholders to assess need and they consult learners termly to ensure that provision is focused and targeted. The benefits of this increased co-operation include better awareness of the range of provision offered across the partnership, which leads to better signposting and the reduction of duplication. It has improved shared ownership with stakeholders leading to better engagement and attendance. The partnership's curriculum and progression groups have put in place a number of common curricular themes, which they monitor carefully. The outcomes of monitoring have led to a useful unified needs' assessment.

There has been a significant increase in the level of accreditation, which has proved very popular with learners. ABE learners are encouraged to take Essential Skills Wales (ESW) qualifications up to and including Level 2. The partnership makes effective use of Agored Cymru units at Levels 1 and 2 to enhance learner motivation and achievement. However, the partnership has yet to embed Essential Skills fully across the skills for work agenda for priority learners.

The partnership is aware of the challenges that this collaborative approach to planning has generated: for example, the level of demand for ESOL within Cardiff continues to challenge the partnership. However, there is an evolving process within the curriculum and progression groups, which is resulting in providers developing a more flexible curriculum, offering shorter, more responsive courses according to identified need, some of which act as engagement activities before learners commit to longer and higher levels.

The separating out of the more traditional leisure-based courses and making them full cost-recovery has allowed for the move towards a curriculum that is directly focused on priority learning groups in areas of deprivation. Learners following leisure and wellbeing courses have welcomed the new arrangements, and enrolments on these programmes remain high. A series of attractive course brochures clearly distinguishing between the free and the full cost-recovery courses show the range of provision on offer and identify progression opportunities clearly for learners.

The partnership monitors the delivery of current provision carefully. It plans to extend the monitoring process to include additional success criteria to further improve the curriculum.

The partnership has worked well to remodel the delivery of the curriculum to establish substantial full cost recovery programmes for adult learners. This has released resources to increase provision that supports learners in priority areas. The partnership has improved its understanding of the total resources available for adult learning and is developing value for money indicators. However, it is yet to apply the outcomes of this work fully to how it deploys its resources.

#### **Recommendation 4:**

**Cardiff Recommendation 4: Improve arrangements for self-assessment and subsequent improvements by the partnership at a faster pace**

**Vale of Glamorgan Recommendation 5: Analyse data robustly and improve quality processes to monitor and evaluate performance effectively to bring about improvement for learners**

Very good progress in addressing the recommendation

The partnership has submitted a robust self-assessment report (SAR), which provides a realistic evaluation of the progress made by the partnership since the core inspections. It provides clear actions for further improvement. The SAR is complemented by an effective Strategic Plan and Quality Development Plan. Strong partnership working and the active involvement of all providers underpin the self-assessment processes effectively.

The partnership has developed a good system for collecting data at individual provider and partnership level through one central provider. This allows managers within the partnership to have relevant data readily available to track progress. The partnership has made good use of the available data to inform the SAR and to make improvements in outcomes for learners. The partnership makes good use of a wide range of sources, such as contextual information about labour market trends, learner voice responses and enrolments from areas of deprivation to best target the provision to further strengthen its analysis. Plans are in place to undertake a Course Performance Initiative to provide a mechanism for the partnership to monitor and manage underperforming courses.

The partnership Quality and Data Group has worked well together to provide a supportive, yet challenging, environment to make improvements in learner outcomes. The group has membership of a sufficiently senior level and it is well attended. The group provides a good degree of scrutiny and challenge. Members of the group demonstrate trust in each other and they have developed an effective collaborative ethos. Providers with greater experience in quality processes have supported those with lesser experience.

Members from across the partnership have contributed effectively to writing the partnership SAR. It is evidence of the development of partnership working and improvement in the confidence and the ability of managers from across individual providers.

The partnership has significantly improved the quality processes underpinning the production of the SAR. Managers at an operational level are more effectively engaged in processes around data collection and analysis. As a result, they are more active in improving the quality of teaching and learning and support for learners. Managers show a better understanding of their role in ensuring better outcomes for learners in accredited and non-accredited classes. However, as yet, the partnership has yet to develop fully the processes through which it involves learners and tutors systematically in the self-assessment process.

There is evidence to show that the scrutiny and monitoring of the work at the most senior levels of the partnership is effective and that leaders across the range of providers have a good awareness of priorities and the progress being made to address recommendations.

The partnership has developed a useful Quality Charter. This is currently being considered as the basis for setting out the quality requirements expected from existing partners and any new providers joining the partnership.

## **Recommendation 5:**

**Cardiff Recommendation 5: Improve the quality of teaching and make sure that all tutors fully understand their professional role**

**Vale of Glamorgan Recommendation 3: Improve the quality of teaching across the partnership**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

Following the formation of the Cardiff and Vale Adult Community Learning Partnership, there has been a clearer focus on improving teaching and learning across the partnership area. This has been co-ordinated effectively by the Learning and Development Task and Finish (T&F) Group. This group has effective representation from all the main providers. With the active support of the partnership leaders, the group established their terms of reference and their learning and development strategy up to 2016. The group carried out an initial training needs analysis across the partnership. This identified the need to provide initial training to improve tutors' abilities in identifying learning needs and in improving support for learners. It has resulted in a series of professional development events to help tutors improve the quality of teaching and learning and their support for all learners, but specifically those with additional learning needs.

The group has established an effective cross-partnership process of lesson observation, which has included training for both observers and those being observed. All partners now use the same documentation for lesson observations, enabling observers to observe tutors delivering in other partners' provision. As a result, the quality process in relation to teaching and learning is more robust and effective. Observers use their shared understanding well to make more accurate judgements about learners' standards, the quality of teaching and learner support. Estyn-trained members of the Learning and Development Task and Finish group moderate observations across the partnership effectively, thereby ensuring more consistent judgements and outcomes.

A wide range of professional development events based on cross-partnership themes derived from observations help tutors to improve their performance and learners' outcomes. The partnership organises these events usefully across all areas of the partnership at a range of different times to encourage as wide as possible tutor attendance. Recent professional development events have included sessions on learner support awareness, digital literacy, and differentiation, mental health, training for observations, learner involvement agenda and managing stress.

Tutors are now beginning to make better use of technology in lesson preparation and delivery and to support their learners. In particular, they are beginning to make effective use of the partnership website's tutor resource area.

The monthly tutor newsletter is an important vehicle in communicating information on professional development events and effective practice. It is making a valuable contribution to developing a shared understanding between tutors. A few tutors make good use of the monthly learners' newsletter as a focus for learning activities during classes, particularly in ICT sessions.



Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in the sample of sessions inspectors observed is good. This represents an improvement from the observed sessions on the previous inspections.

### **Recommendation 6:**

**Cardiff Recommendation 6: Improve the identification, early assessment and support for learners with additional learning needs and subsequent monitoring of the impact of this support**

**Cardiff Recommendation 7: Improve the support available for learners with health and persona issues that hamper their progress**

Strong progress in addressing the recommendation

The partnership has taken an appropriately staged approach to improving the identification and early assessment of learners with additional learning needs, health and personal issues.

It has developed a well-articulated Learner Support Strategy 2014-2016. The strategy sets out clearly the partnership's definition of additional learning needs, its shared principles and actions for learner support. The associated action plan defines appropriately specific and time-related targets to develop a co-ordinated approach across the partnership.

The partnership has completed a useful audit of the range support available for specific learning needs across the partnership. Partnership members are now clear where they can access resources and expertise. The partnership has also reviewed the numbers of learners requesting additional support and how different members of the partnership record and track the delivery of support. These actions have allowed the partnership to have a clear overview of the number of learners needing additional support and the nature of their needs.

To help record, track and monitor learners' requests for, up-take and the impact of additional learning need support, Cardiff Council is piloting a MIS system to record and track learners with additional learning needs. The partnership intends to extend this model to the Vale Council across the partnership, if it is successful.

To ensure that tutors can assess, identify and support learners' needs confidently, the partnership has provided professional development sessions open to all tutors in the partnership. These sessions range across topics, such as dissolving barriers and enabling engagement, planning differentiated sessions, embedding essential skills and mental health awareness. The partnership has worked effectively with the college to develop tutors' understanding and skills in additional learning needs. Tutors have welcomed the training sessions and rates of attendance at training sessions have risen substantially. A new partnership website provides further useful information for tutors to access at a distance.

To identify how well tutors apply the training they receive, the partnership has included a focus on how well tutors identify and meet learners' additional needs in its observation programme. This has provided baseline data that, with data from other

sources, helps the partnership to identify clearly its strengths and areas for improvement in meeting learners' needs. Case studies showing how learners with additional learning needs have progressed help the partnership to share effective practice among tutors.

The partnership provides learners and tutors with monthly newsletters in Welsh and English. The tutors' newsletters provide effective additional support through well-focused articles about aspects of learning difficulties. The newsletters aimed at learners provide useful information about classes and progression and about learner support.

In the time since the inspection, the partnership has made good progress in developing the vehicles through which to improve the learning of those with additional learning needs. However, due to time constraints, it has yet to embed the system fully.

### **Recommendations**

In order to maintain and improve on this progress, the adult community learning partnership should continue to work towards meeting the inspection recommendations that have not yet been fully addressed.