Quality and Standards in Education and Training in Wales

A Report on the Quality of Adult Community-Based Learning

in

Vale of Glamorgan

March 2007

by

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

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Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

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- secondary schools;
- special schools;
- pupil referral units;
- independent schools;
- further education;
- adult community-based learning;
- youth support services;
- youth and community work training;
- LEAs;
- teacher education and training;
- work-based learning;
- careers companies;
- offender learning; and
- the education, guidance and training elements of Jobcentre plus.

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- provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others; and
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Introduction

Adult community-based learning is defined as educational provision for adults made by:

- local authorities;
- voluntary organisations including the WEAs and YMCA;
- further education colleges; and
- higher education institutions.

The provision is funded by the local authority and/or the National Assembly for Wales. It includes learning which is funded by the National Assembly for Wales through the local authority, but delivered by a further education institution. It also includes learning which is funded by the National Assembly for Wales through the further education college, but delivered by the local authority.

Estyn considers provision from a learner's perspective. In line with this approach, the adult community-based learning inspections are conducted on the basis of the learning provision available to learners within a 'travel to learn' area. In most cases, this is single local authority or CCET area. The inspection takes into account the developing network of adult community-based learning provision in the area. Some providers delivering adult community-based learning in the inspection area may also operate on a regional basis, providing a wide range of education and training. This activity remains outside the scope of the immediate inspection.

The adult community-based learning in the Vale of Glamorgan was inspected as part of a six-year (2004-2010) national programme of inspections. The purpose of the programme is to identify good features and shortcomings of adult community-based learning in order that the providers may improve the quality of education and training offered and raise the standards achieved by learners. The outcomes of the inspection are intended to give learners more information about the quality of providers of adult community-based learning.

All inspections conducted under the arrangements apply the following principles:

- the use of a common inspection framework which is common to all sectors of education and training in Wales;
- an emphasis on the providers' evaluations of their work;
- the involvement of a provider nominee who works with the inspection team; and
- the inspection of a sample of provision.

Adult community-based learning inspections are conducted using an approach largely based on Estyn's area inspection protocols. This approach considers provision from a learner's perspective and also takes into account the network of provision available in an area.

This inspection took place from 12 March 2007 to 22 March 2007. A team led by Her Majesty's Inspectors from Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the Welsh Assembly Government, undertook the inspection. The team included additional inspectors and peer assessors released from other adult community-based learning providers in Wales.

The team has reported on standards achieved by learners, the quality of education and training provided, the quality of leadership and management and whether the providers deliver value for money.

The report was produced in accordance with Section 77 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

The adult community-based learning inspection areas include:

- Adult Basic Education (ABE), including Family Learning;
- Welsh for Adults;
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL);
- Adult Learning; and
- Community Development.

Adult Learning encompasses all classes for adults delivered in the community. These include information communications technology, languages and art and design.

Community Development includes community projects such as Communities First and Learning Community Accounts.

For Key Question 1 of the Common Inspection Framework, an overall grade is awarded across all providers. An overall grade is awarded also across the providers for each learning area. Individual providers are awarded a grade for this Key Question, for each learning area they deliver.

Each of Key Questions 2-7 is awarded an overall grade across all providers.

Grade descriptors

The five-point scale used to represent all inspection judgements in this report is as follows:

Grade 1	good with outstanding features
Grade 2	good features and no important shortcomings
Grade 3	good features outweigh shortcomings
Grade 4	some good features but shortcomings in important areas
Grade 5	many important shortcomings

The Learning and Skills Act 2000 requires the providers to prepare written statements of the actions that they propose to take to address the recommendations in the inspection report and the timescales for completing the proposed actions.

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Context

Geographic and demographic profile of the Vale of Glamorgan

1 This section draws on the information from the Learning and Labour Market Intelligence for Wales August 2006[1] and documents produced by DELLS for this inspection.

Population	In the 10 years to 2004, the population of the Vale of Glamorgan has grown by 4.6% (5,400) people, bringing the resident population to just over 122,300. Most of increase in population (4,500) is among those who are of broadly working age, the majority of people being 45 or over. The number of children in the area has decreased slightly (by 600), while the retirement age population gained a further 1,400.
Main centres of population	The Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council (Vale Council) is the most southern unitary authority in Wales. The main centres of population are Barry, Penarth, Cowbridge, Llantwit Major and Dinas Powys.
Language	The 2001 census shows that over 83% of the Vale's population say they have no knowledge of Welsh and on all measurements of the ability to use the Welsh language (speaking, reading and writing) residents' skills are below the average for the rest of Wales.
Economic activity	Seventy nine percent of the area's population of working age is economically active. More than four out of 10 (45%) of the employed population are in managerial, professional and related occupations. Male activity rates are above the equivalent Welsh average by 5%, while activity rates for women are 2% higher. The unemployment rate within the Vale for January 2005 was 2.4% which was the same rate as March 2004. Barry has the highest rates of unemployment, particularly in Castleland (6.9%) and Gibbonsdown (4.7%) wards. Just over 2% of the working age population are Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants, which is the same as the all Wales rate.
Education	Overall, the Vale of Glamorgan has a highly qualified workforce. However, just over 25% of the adult population have poor literacy skills, while 26% of the population have poor numeracy skills. This compares very favourably to other areas in Wales where the percentage of the population with poor basic skills is much higher.
Index of Deprivation	The Index of Multiple Deprivation for Wales shows several particularly deprived wards in the Vale of Glamorgan. The most deprived of these are Court (ranked 132) which is in the top 10% of most deprived wards in Wales and Gibbonsdown (ranked 204) which is in the next decile. Three further wards, Castleland, Buttrills and Cadoc, also appear well up on this index. There are two designated Communities First[2] areas of the Vale within the wards of Gibbonsdown and Castleland.

[1] Learning and Labour Market Intelligence for Wales, Vale of Glamorgan, August 2006
[2] Community First is a Welsh Assembly Government programme which targets the most deprived wards in Wales. It helps people living in those wards to find solutions to local problems.

2 The South East Regional Statement of Needs and Priorities (RSNP)[3] and the Vale Learning Network have defined the priorities for community-based learning in the area to be:

- raising levels of literacy and numeracy;
- widening participation;
- providing a comprehensive ICT programme; and
- providing Welsh language learning.

The nature of the providers

3 The main providers of DELLS funded adult community-based learning in the area of the Vale of Glamorgan are:

- Barry College;
- Vale Council;
- Workers' Education Association South [WEA(S)];
- Cardiff University;
- Vale Plus; and
- YMCA, Wales Community College.[4]

4 The Vale Learning Network (VLN) brings together Vale of Glamorgan learning providers, referral and guidance agencies and interested parties from other sectors to form a partnership that plans, develops and implements a co-ordinated and integrated network of community-based learning centres across the Vale. All of the providers listed above are members of this group.

5 During the inspection, providers offered about 436 adult community-based learning classes in the Vale of Glamorgan.

6 The Vale Council provides 56% of all adult community-based learning activities in the Vale of Glamorgan[5]. The Council works with Barry College through a franchise arrangement to deliver all the provision for English for Speakers of Other Languages and the majority of the provision for Adult Basic Education, including Family Learning, Welsh for Adults and Adult Learning. Much of the franchised adult learning provision is made up of information and communication technology classes and classes for people with additional learning needs.

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[3] South East Regional Statement of Needs and Priorities – an annual statement prepared by the DELLS division of the Welsh Assembly Government, setting out the priorities for education and training in the four regions of Wales

[4] The YMCA provision was inspected in November – December 2006. The number of sessions seen in the Vale of Glamorgan is too small to be graded separately. However, inspectors have taken the provision into consideration in Key Questions 3 and 5.

[5] Statistics taken from the LLWR (Lifelong Learning Record) compiled by DELLS

7 Barry College provides 13% of the provision directly. This includes classes in Adult Basic Education and Adult Learning. It also provides a very small number of classes in Welsh for Adults and Community Development.

8 The WEA(S) provides 12% of the provision in the Vale of Glamorgan for Welsh for Adults, Adult Learning and Community Development. The WEA(S) in partnership with the Amy Evans Centre provides community arts for mental health service users. The WEA(S) offers a liberal arts programme which includes learning programmes in languages, history and another for Welsh language learners.

9 Cardiff University provides nearly a quarter of Welsh for Adults classes in the Vale of Glamorgan.

10 Vale Plus is an independent charity that provides educational, social and recreational opportunities for people with learning disabilities. Vale Plus' services are available to people over the age of sixteen primarily from the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff. At the time of the inspection, Vale Plus had 67 service users of its weekday service and 18 users of its Saturday service. Almost half the service users are from Barry, 15% come from Penarth and Dinas Powys, 12% come from the rural Vale and 17% come from Cardiff.

11 The YMCA, Wales Community College provides 6% of adult community-based learning in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Learning areas

12 We inspected the provision in the following learning areas:

- Adult Basic Education (ABE), including Family Learning;
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL);
- Welsh for Adults;
- Adult Learning; and
- Community Development.

13 Range of provision per provider by learning area:

Provider	ABE	ESOL	Welsh for Adults	Adult Learning	Community Development
Barry College	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vale Council				✓	✓
WEA(S)			✓	✓	✓
Cardiff University			✓		
Vale Plus					✓

14 DELLs report that in 2004-2005 the total number of enrolments in all learning areas was 5,280.

Summary

Table of grades awarded

15 The inspection team judged the providers' work as follows:

Key Question	Inspection grade
1 How well do learners achieve?	3
2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	3
3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	2
4 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2
5 How effective are leadership and strategic management?	2
6 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	2
7 How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	2

Summary of overall grades by learning areas

Learning area inspected	Inspection grade
Adult Basic Education (including Family Learning)	3
English for Speakers of Other Languages	3
Welsh for Adults	2
Adult Learning	2
Community Development	2

Summary of provider grades by learning areas

Provider	ABE	ESOL	Welsh for Adults	Adult Learning	Community Development
Barry College	**3**	**3**	**3**	**2**	*****
Vale Council				**2**	**2**
WEA(S)			**2**	**2**	**2**
Cardiff University			**2**		
Vale Plus					**3**

- indicates that the provision has been inspected, but that the sample seen was not large enough to grade the individual provider. Judgements are included in the text and have informed the overall grade for the learning area.

Standards

16 The standards that learners achieve are satisfactory or better. The majority of learners make good progress and achieve their learning goals. Overall, learner attainment rates are good or very good in Welsh for Adults and Adult Learning. They are at best satisfactory in ABE and ESOL. Completion rates are good or better in Welsh for Adults, Adult Learning and Community Development. However, in ABE nearly half of the learners did not complete their courses in 2005-2006. In ESOL, completion rates are poor. Most learners who attend are well motivated, enthusiastic and help each other to learn. Many learners work well independently and apply their new skills in their everyday lives. However, in around half of Family Learning and ABE workshop sessions, learners do not make progress because they do not practise extended writing skills enough. In a few cases in Welsh for Adults, learners are enrolled on courses that are not of an appropriate level. Most learners in Welsh for Adults, Adult Learning and Community Development attend classes regularly. However, in ABE and ESOL attendance rates are below the average attendance (71%) seen in other adult community-based inspections.

The quality of education and training

17 Overall, the quality of teaching and training is satisfactory. Many tutors prepare their courses well and plan well to meet the learning needs of the class. However, in all providers a minority of tutors do not use an appropriate variety of teaching methods to meet learners' needs. In ESOL, this hinders learners' progress in speaking and listening, while in ABE, learners do not have enough opportunities to practise their extended writing skills. In a few cases, tutors provide very effective learning experiences. Most tutors have very good knowledge of their subject. They use their knowledge and experience well to motivate learners. How tutors record learners' achievements varies too much. The majority of tutors only record individual learners' achievements against key learning outcomes for a unit. These are often not detailed enough to help tutors plan in a detailed way for learners' needs. Where Individual Learning Plans (ILP) are used, only a minority of tutors use them effectively to help learners improve.

18 There is a wide range of adult and community learning opportunities throughout the Vale of Glamorgan, which effectively addresses the needs of local communities, promotes health and well being and provides opportunities for new careers and community regeneration. However, there are a limited number of opportunities for learners of Welsh to attend intensive courses and the ESOL provision does not fully meet the needs of the rapidly increasing number of learners. The Vale Learning Network (VLN) provides an effective forum for the systematic planning and marketing of courses across all providers. The network responds well to national and regional economic and social priorities.

19 The quality of providers' support for learners in the Vale of Glamorgan is good. All providers produce a range of good quality leaflets and newsletters for learners. In the majority of courses, tutors monitor learners' punctuality and attendance well. Many tutors provide good support to learners who cannot attend classes regularly. There is a wide range of good support for learners with additional needs. However, providers do not work well enough together to monitor and review how frequently

learners with additional needs take up this support. The VLN provides good training for staff in basic advice and guidance. However, the training does not lead to a recognised qualification.

Leadership and management

20 Senior managers of VLN provide good strategic direction for the provision. They communicate the strategy well to most staff in all providers. Providers plan provision well and they promote effective collaborative working. The quality of self-assessment reports vary, but most make clear, accurate judgements about good features. The VLN has produced a good joint self-assessment report and quality development plan based on the self-assessment reports of the four main providers. Smaller organisations have benefited well from sharing the practices and materials of the larger provider members. However, Barry College and the Vale Council do not work effectively enough together to agree the data relating to the franchise provision. This makes it difficult to monitor learners' progress accurately.

21 The VLN gives good value for money. The VLN has fostered a strong commitment to partnership working between a wide variety of agencies and organisations. Members work well together to make good use of their resources to support adult community-based learning.

Standards achieved by learners in the learning areas inspected

22 In **Adult Basic Education (including Family Learning)**, the majority of learners acquire knowledge and skills in reading and number work. However, in around half of Family Learning and ABE workshop sessions, learners do not make progress with extended writing skills because they do not practise these enough. In numeracy classes, many learners understand their own progress well. In Family Learning, learners develop good social and interpersonal skills. Too few learners progress onto more challenging learning. Attainment rates are satisfactory, but completion and attendance rates are poor.

23 In **English for Speakers of Other Languages**, attainment rates are satisfactory. The majority of learners gain at least one unit of accreditation. They become more confident users of the English language. However, the majority of learners do not make enough progress in developing their pronunciation and their ability to use English freely. The majority of learners are not involved enough in planning their own learning. As a result, they cannot fully understand and measure their own progress. A minority of learners progress onto mainstream courses. Overall, there is poor attendance and punctuality. Course completion rates are poor, showing a downward trend from 2003. This is partly because many learners are migrant workers and they move on to seek work elsewhere and leave classes in the Vale of Glamorgan.

24 In **Welsh for Adults**, most learners make good progress. Many attain their learning goals. Overall, learners develop good oral and listening skills. They use these skills well with each other, their tutor and with visitors to their class. Learners are highly motivated and enthusiastic about their learning. They benefit from attending a wide range of additional learning activities.

25 In **Adult Learning**, completion rates are at least good in most courses and in a few, they are very good. Learner attainment on many courses is good and learners generally make good progress. Learners in IT courses and British Sign Language courses make good progress from one accredited level to the next. Many learners develop skills to enhance their career prospects and to enrich their everyday lives. However, in a few classes, learners do not record their achievements or their goals. Therefore, they are not aware enough of the progress they make. Learners are very well motivated and enthusiastic and support one another well to make good progress. Attendance rates are good in many courses.

26 In **Community Development**, learners come from throughout the community and include learners with additional learning needs, learners who are disadvantaged through social or economic exclusion and learners who are supported by mental health services. Most learners make generally good progress towards appropriate learning goals and often achieve them. Most learners demonstrate good practical skills and theoretical knowledge. They engage well with their tasks and are well motivated. Many learners are able to make choices as a result of attending classes. A few learners use their new skills and competencies in their day-to-day lives in their communities.

Recommendations

27 In order to improve providers need to:

R1 carry out through the VLN a detailed review of Welsh for Adults and ESOL courses to ensure the delivery of an appropriate balance and spread of courses;

R2 ensure tutors use a wide range of teaching methods, particularly in ABE and ESOL, to help learners develop a full range of skills;

R3 improve the way in which tutors record and use information about learners' achievements so that they can help learners progress more quickly;

R4 introduce systems to review the take up of learning support by those learners with additional learning needs to find out how frequently they use the support; and

R5 improve the way that Barry College and the Vale Council work together to agree the data relating to the franchised provision in order to be able to monitor learners' progress more effectively.

Standards

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

28 Overall, learners' standards of achievement in the sessions inspected are as follows:

Learners' standards of achievement	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
	10%	62%	24%	3%	1%

29 The standards achieved in each of the learning areas inspected are as follows:

Learning area inspected	Inspection grade
Adult Basic Education (including Family Learning)	**3**
English for Speakers of Other Languages	**3**
Welsh for Adults	**2**
Adult Learning	**2**
Community Development	**2**

30 Overall, learner attainment rates are good or satisfactory. The majority of learners achieve their learning goals. In Welsh for Adults and Adult Learning, attainment rates are above or well above the national comparator and in Community Development learners attain well on accredited courses. However, attainment rates in ABE and ESOL are at best satisfactory.

31 Completion rates are good or better in Welsh for Adults, Adult Learning and Community Development. However, in ABE nearly half of learners did not complete their courses in 2005-2006. In many cases, this is because learners only started their courses late in the academic year and then completed them in the next. In ESOL, completion rates are poor. They show a downward trend while enrolments are rising. In many cases, this is because many learners are migrant workers and they often move to other areas to find work part way through their course.

32 Most learners in Welsh for Adults, Adult Learning and Community Development attend classes regularly. However, in ABE and ESOL attendance rates are below the average attendance (71%) seen in other adult community-based inspections. This hinders the progress of many of these learners.

33 The majority of learners make good, and in a few cases very good, progress in their learning. The pace of learning is good overall and in Adult Learning classes, such as digital photography, very good. In Welsh for Adults, learners make good progress in their oral and listening skills. In Adult Learning learners on practical and craft courses develop good manual skills. In Community Development learners are increasingly able to make choices and influence events in their lives. However, in nearly half of ABE and Family Learning sessions, learners are reluctant to practise their extended writing skills and they do not make enough progress in these skills. In ESOL, a few learners do not make good progress in acquiring new language skills. This is because they are not working at a level suitable to their ability.

34 Many learners understand well the progress they are making. They often take the opportunity to attend extra sessions, for example Saturday Welsh classes, exhibitions and theatre trips. However, the majority of learners in ESOL classes are often not involved enough in planning their own learning. As a result, they often do not progress as quickly as they should.

35 Across all providers there are good relationships between learners. Most learners are well motivated. Many learners work well independently and develop their work at home. They work well with each other and often help each other to learn. Many learners develop good communication skills and grow in confidence. For example, in Family Learning, learners develop good social and interpersonal skills. As a result, they develop better relationships with school staff.

The quality of education and training

Key Question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

The quality of teaching in the learning areas inspected	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
	14%	45%	35%	6%	0%

36 Overall, the quality of teaching and assessment in many adult community-based learning courses in the Vale of Glamorgan is satisfactory.

37 Many tutors prepare their courses well. They develop good quality schemes of work. IT tutors across the providers work well together to produce and share good quality resources to give learners good opportunities for more varied practice. However, in all providers a minority of tutors do not always use an appropriate variety of teaching methods to meet learners' needs. In ESOL and in ABE, a majority of tutors rely too much on the use of worksheets. Therefore, these learners do not practise speaking and listening skills enough to progress in these skills.

38 Many tutors are well informed about the learning needs of their learners and they respond to these needs well. Many tutors use one-to-one teaching effectively to address the needs of learners. The majority of tutors in Community Development and in Cardiff University's and Barry College's Welsh for Adults provision match their teaching well to learners' needs. However, in a few cases, tutors do not set challenging enough targets to help learners progress at a good pace. In particular, in ABE and ESOL a minority of tutors set work at too low a level. In a few Adult Learning sessions, tutors do not extend learners' skills and knowledge enough.

39 In a few best cases, tutors provide very effective learning experiences. In all the providers of Welsh for Adults, a few tutors extend learners' understanding through very good use of the target language. A few Welsh for Adults tutors provide learners with good opportunities to practise their language skills through varied repetition exercises and a few tutors have very effective strategies to encourage learners to use only Welsh during lessons.

40 Most tutors use their knowledge and practical experience of their subject area well to motivate learners. Almost all tutors have good relationships with their learners. They create a supportive friendly environment. This helps learners build confidence to achieve their personal learning goals.

41 How tutors record learners' achievements varies too much. A majority of tutors in all providers encourage learners to keep examples of their work in well-ordered portfolios, including photographs of craft work. This helps learners to monitor their own progress effectively. Most WEA(S) tutors and tutors of ECDL keep detailed records of how learners progress from one step to another. However, the majority of tutors only record individual learners' achievements against key learning outcomes for a unit. These are often not detailed enough to help tutors plan in a detailed way for a learner's needs.

42 Where tutors use Individual Learning Plans (ILP), only a minority of tutors use them effectively to track learners' progress or to inform their teaching strategies. In these cases, it is difficult for learners to measure their own progress so learners are not clear about what they need to do to improve.

Key Question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

43 There is a wide range of adult and community-learning opportunities throughout the Vale of Glamorgan. The diverse range of courses effectively addresses the needs of local communities, promotes health and well-being and provides opportunities for learners to develop new careers and take part in community regeneration.

44 There are good opportunities for learners in all learning areas to gain accreditation for their work. In Adult Learning, the main accreditation opportunities are on courses which develop information technology skills. This is appropriate as these courses are a key economic priority for the Vale of Glamorgan.

45 All learning providers in the Vale of Glamorgan have joined together to form the Vale Learning Network. The mission of the VLN is to develop, promote, plan and monitor a coherent, strategic, lifelong learning programme to respond to the needs of learners and the wider community in the Vale of Glamorgan. The network provides an effective platform for the systematic planning and marketing of courses across all providers. This work maximises local peoples' awareness of the available learning opportunities and makes sure that learners have a good choice of provision.

46 Providers work well in a non-competitive way by using the outcomes of an audit of courses to reduce duplication and to fill identified gaps in the overall provision. The Quality Group of the VLN has made a good start on analysing the curriculum in a co-ordinated and strategic way. It is currently reviewing the range of information technology courses to ensure that there is an appropriate balance and geographical spread of provision. As a result, the YMCA is moving away from providing IT classes as this need is adequately covered by other providers in the network. The YMCA plans provision to focus more on specialist training, such as Youth Work, so that they do not duplicate courses delivered by other providers.

47 There are good purposeful links between providers in the Vale of Glamorgan and other statutory agencies, including health authorities, and a wide variety of voluntary and community organisations. This helps to re-engage learners in learning and in their communities. In Communities First areas, there is very good involvement of the community in course provision and planning.

48 The VLN makes very good use of feedback from local people to establish a range of taster courses in response to learners' needs and interests. Many learners develop good levels of confidence on these taster courses. For example, learners on an eight week taster course in website design gain the skills to create a website which meets commercial standards. A few of these learners intend using the skills in their existing or future employment.

49 In the majority of courses, there are good progression opportunities available from one level to another, both within and across providers. The VLN has used the results of the audit to produce a progression routes document. This document is providing useful information to help tutors advise learners who want to continue their learning at a higher level. Individual providers promote learning opportunities available through other provision as well as their own. However, there are a few tutors who are not yet fully aware of how to use this information with learners.

50 The provision in the Vale of Glamorgan responds well to national and regional economic and social priorities. The VLN has successfully obtained European Social Funding to deliver a number of projects which focus on widening the participation of under-represented groups and improving the basic skills of specific groups within the community. These projects provide the basis for a number of specialist courses which encourage people into learning. For example, the 'Extending Entitlement' project was able to continue after the initial funding ran out through the 'Learning for Life' project delivered by the Llamau Housing Association. The project successfully engages reluctant learners, some of whom are homeless or clients of the Youth Offending Team. The 'Partnership for Young Parents' project helps to keep teenage mothers in learning. Many of the learners involved in these and other projects have low aspirations and they are often initially reluctant to learn. Their learning experiences on the projects increase their confidence and self-worth.

51 The learning network makes good use of community profiling to accurately plan and deliver its basic skills provision to areas with the highest numbers of people with basic skills needs. Providers of ABE and Family Learning provision effectively target wards such as the Communities First wards of Gibbonsdown and Castleland. This focus helps to improve the basic skills of people in these communities. Learners working in the care industry benefit from basic skills provision at their place of work. The skills they gain help them to become more effective in their role at work and they make good progress in working towards National Vocational Qualifications in Care. Overall, the basic skills provision provides good opportunities for people to improve their lives, increase their skills for employment and take an active part in community life.

52 Providers undertake a significant amount of work with specialist partners to reach individuals and communities who generally do not participate in education. For example, the network's partnership work with MIND, SCOPE and the Vale NHS Trust successfully brings people with considerable health issues into learning. Recent community working with a mosque has led to an IT course specifically for Muslim women who would be reluctant to engage in learning together with people in the wider community.

53 There is a good overall range of courses at different levels for learning Welsh. However, within the overall provision there are currently a limited number of opportunities for learners to attend intensive courses. The Welsh for Adults courses provide very good opportunities for accreditation and for learners to use and extend their Welsh language skills. For example, the monthly 'Sadwrn Siarad' provision and other Welsh for Adults classes develop learners' knowledge and understanding of Wales and Welsh culture. In a few cases, learners have gained employment as a consequence of learning Welsh.

54 In all the other learning areas, providers are working hard to increase the use of the Welsh language, themes and culture across the curriculum. For example, there is Welsh medium provision in yoga and IT courses. Other examples include providers raising the profile of the Welsh language and culture through activities in sugar craft, art and craft and ESOL classes.

55 The network provides courses for ESOL learners at two community venues in Barry and one in Penarth. In Barry, learners are able to select classes at various times on differing days, or an evening class. However, in Penarth learners only have the choice of a class on Tuesday evening. As a result, the class size in Penarth is too large to give learners a good level of individual support. At present ESOL learners only have two accreditation opportunities per year. As a result, a few learners miss the opportunity to gain a qualification.

Key Question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

56 Overall, the quality of support for learners in the Vale of Glamorgan is good. All providers have a good range of policies and procedures in place to support learning well. These policies focus on equal opportunities, anti-harassment and bullying, complaints and comments and the protection of vulnerable adults. Most staff know how to implement these policies. All providers have procedures in place to undertake CRB checks. Across all providers 94% of staff have current CRB checks.

57 All providers produce a useful range of leaflets and newsletters about courses. This literature is informative in helping many learners to enrol on courses throughout the year. The VLN does not always make good use of its website to attract new learners. This is because the website does not have links to all of the network providers' websites to advertise course and guidance information to a wider audience.

58 In the majority of courses tutors monitor learners' punctuality and attendance well. Many tutors know why learners are absent and maintain contact with them during those absences. In many cases tutors make sure that learners catch up when they miss sessions. In a minority of cases, tutors in the Vale Council and tutors in Cardiff University's, Barry College's and WEA(S)'s Welsh for Adults provision use email and postcards to give further support to their learners out of class. This extra contact allows learners to improve their work at home.

59 All tutors in all providers give good informal personal support to learners in class. Tutors in Vale Plus give good levels of support to learners with specific and very complex needs and they extend their support well to learners in their shop 'Nova'. The college, WEA(S), MIND and the Cardiff and the Vale Health Care Trust work together well to help learners with mental health problems to return to learning.

60 There are a few good examples of learners accessing a range of additional learning support. In one case a workbench has been adapted for a learner with a disability. Good links with Vale social services department mean that carers give good support to learners in bricklaying classes. Volunteers also attend classes and give good

support to less confident learners in basic skills, IT and BSL courses. Free crèches are available in the Palmerston Centre, the Open Learning Centre, the Hive, Trinity Church, and the Gibbonsdown Project.

61 The college uses its financial contingency fund well to support adult community-based learners. For example the crèche in the Palmerston Centre in Barry receives an annual grant. Adult community-based learners also get support from Assembly Learning Grants and Individual Learning Accounts. This helps them take up a wide range of level 1 to level 3 courses. The WEA(S) also uses its Financial Contingency Fund well to support learners. It helps learners with travel, book purchase and with crèche costs.

62 Staff in centres undertake basic sign posting and information-giving training provided by the VLN. This helps workers give effective support to learners who are making initial enquiries about learning opportunities available in the county borough. However, the training does not give staff a recognised qualification in advice and guidance to help with their own career development.

63 A majority of providers use taster sessions well to demonstrate to potential learners the content, level and style of learning of a course. The taster sessions are popular and they help less confident learners to return to learning.

64 Tutors in the majority of courses complete initial assessment with learners. In the best cases, these assessments identify learners' aspirations for the course along with their support needs. This enables providers to plan well and provide necessary learner support effectively. However, there are no systems in place across VLN to monitor the take-up of additional learning support offered to learners. Therefore providers are not always aware whether learners with additional learning needs are taking advantage of support on offer.

Leadership and management

Key Question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

65 Senior managers within the VLN provide good strategic direction for the provision. The network takes good account of the Welsh Assembly Government's regional statement of needs and priorities and major strategies, such as the Health and Well Being and the Older Person's Strategies. Senior managers have a good, clear vision which they convey well to most staff across providers in the Vale of Glamorgan.

66 The VLN has effectively brought adult community-based learning providers in the Vale together to plan provision and promote collaborative working. The voluntary sector and statutory agencies, including Job Centre Plus and Careers Wales, are well represented and they are fully involved in setting the direction of the network.

67 Managers work well together to produce strategic documentation across providers. The VLN has produced good strategic documents, for example for IT, which set the direction of the service. These documents also help to make sure that staff are aware of opportunities for learners offered by other providers. The VLN has collected a good range of data on, for example, learner enrolment and the courses available. The network has mapped provision well across most providers and therefore they have a good overview of provision.

68 Most providers show good commitment to staff development. There are appropriate staffing structures and management processes in place for strategic and operational planning within individual providers. There are effective processes to improve the performance of individual staff and teams.

69 There are strong effective working relationships between staff at all levels across the VLN, within individual providers, and with external bodies which benefit learners. Staff at all levels work well together. They communicate well both formally and informally. This good communication includes between tutors in subject areas. However, staff do not always have enough formal opportunities to discuss their work and targets with managers.

70 Operational managers and tutors of all VLN partners collaborate closely during the year to jointly publicise and market provision to learners, provide advice and guidance about course provision and encourage new learners into lifelong learning. Examples of these joint activities include an annual Learning Festival, Adult Learners' week, Sign Up Now season, family events, market stalls, road shows and fun days.

71 There has been good, creative planning between the local authority and schools, working in non-competitive federations, to implement the community focused schools strategy. This benefits learners of all ages. This federated approach is at an early stage of development. The VLN is effectively involved in the planning stages to meet

the challenges of the St Athan Metrix project[6]. These challenges include equipping people with the skills they needs to meet the demands of the planned workforce for the new training base. The appointment of a Learning Librarian by the Vale Council, to deliver a pilot project to engage potential learners, is already having a significant impact on improving the IT skills of many people, thereby improving their chances for employment.

Key Question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve standards?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

72 The quality of Self Assessment Reports (SARs) varies between providers. Most providers make clear accurate judgements about the strengths of their provision. The joint Barry College and Vale Council SAR, the WEA(S) and the VLN use the Estyn Common Inspection Framework well to identify the good features of their provision. The quality group of the VLN compared the SARs of the four main providers looking at commonalities and substantial differences. Using these findings, the quality group worked to develop a network SAR and a Quality Development Plan (QDP) that is of good quality overall. However, the inspection team identified a small number of shortcomings that providers had not noted in their SARs.

73 The documents produced by the Quality Group of the Vale Learning Network are available as a toolkit for other members to help them in developing their quality procedures. Small and voluntary organisations have benefited well from sharing the good practices of larger providers. All members of the VLN are working well towards the standardisation of procedures and a planning cycle document helps to ensure that all providers work to a common timescale.

74 Providers produce effective Quality Development Plans/Improvement Action Plans as a result of the self assessment process. The plans are good working documents and they match the findings and issues of the SARs well. Most plans have measurable outcomes which are realistic. The plans state who is responsible for taking the action and they record target timescales.

75 Most providers use objective information well to help them to monitor their performance. They consult attainment data, retention records, internal verification details, external moderation reports, observation records, questionnaires and surveys. The satisfaction survey provides useful information about each major learning area.

76 Managers are well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of non-accredited courses. They obtain information about learners' ability to develop their social skills and their learning skills from learners, tutors and development officers. Managers also consult effectively with a broad range of external groups and organisations from whom they obtain useful advice and feedback relating to their provision. They use this information well in future planning.

[6] This refers to the Ministry of Defence project to site a training facility for all three defence services at St Athan.

77 Managers monitor the performance of their provision well on a regular basis and they feed the information into the self assessment process and Quality Development Plans. Barry College and the Vale Council produce performance indicators on a quarterly basis. Other providers discuss and record performance on a quarterly basis and VLN quality managers discuss this information at regular Quality Meetings.

78 All managers support the sharing of good practice both across learning areas and across providers. For example, ICT managers work well to bring together all providers to share information and materials that will improve the quality of IT in the area. Staff from Barry College, Cardiff University, the Vale Council and the WEA(S) work well together to improve the Welsh for Adults provision.

79 Many managers work together well to ensure that tutors across the network are well informed regarding the quality processes. Most tutors are aware of their course targets regarding attainment, achievement and retention. Many tutors use the information well to improve the quality of their programmes. Barry College and the Vale Council do not work effectively enough together to agree the data available so that they can monitor learners' progress accurately. Tutors' files across most providers are well organised and they contain all the necessary documentation. The VLN has produced useful templates showing the basic requirements for documents. These templates help managers to share good practice, prevent duplication and promote collaboration.

80 Managers have put effective systems in place to observe classroom sessions. They have made a good start in observing tutors' classes and they have provided helpful oral and written feedback. In a few cases, issues are not clearly identified and recorded. In a small number of other cases, where issues have been raised, appropriate action has not been taken to help improve the tutors' teaching.

Key Question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

81 Overall, the VLN partners employ enough teaching staff to deliver the provision effectively. The staffing levels ensure that the majority of learners are in appropriate class sizes. There are clear job descriptions for all staff. These reflect their work roles and responsibilities. Staff to work well together and they carry out their job roles to at least a satisfactory standard.

82 The majority of tutors have a recognised teaching qualification. However, in the classroom observations during the inspection 81% of full-time staff seen were qualified compared with an average of 91% of full-time staff seen in other ACL inspections. In this inspection 72% of part-time staff seen were qualified compared with an average of 80% of part-time staff seen across other ACL inspections. In addition to teaching qualifications, many staff have good professional or industrial experience. For example, a few tutors are professional artists and website designers. They use this experience well to enrich experiences for learners.

83 All managers give staff good support to improve their professional knowledge and qualifications. Through its training consortium the VLN plans and delivers good

quality training to share specialist skills from individual providers across the learning network. For example, the quality manager from the college has delivered quality management training to all VLN managers to help them achieve the best possible outcome for their learners. In addition, the WEA(S) has provided training to staff of other partners on introducing a Welsh dimension to their programme deliver. This approach is cost effective. It helps small providers to obtain training they could not otherwise afford. However, there is not enough training for tutors about different types of teaching and assessment methods.

84 The training consortium also provides a good range of staff development opportunities for tutors and other staff from all providers. Many staff take up these opportunities to extend their skills. For example, they take part in training in counselling, basic skills, working with vulnerable adults and quality management.

85 Senior managers within the VLN work hard to gain extra funding to support their priorities. For example, the network has been successful in accessing financial support from the Learning Challenge fund.

86 The VLN has fostered a strong commitment to partnership working between a wide variety of agencies and organisations. These include SureStart, the Chamber of Commerce on behalf of the business community. These relationships have led to joint bids for funding to benefit learners and provision.

87 The VLN has been very active in obtaining ESF and Creative Communities funding to upgrade many rural venues to improve the environment for learners. The VLN has carried out a comprehensive audit of its centres. It has used the results of this audit well to identify strategic priorities for improvement or change in accommodation and facilities. For example, the upgrading of existing centres, such as the Castleland Community Centre and the opening of the Bonvilston reading room has given people access to learning in pleasant environments. However, in a few cases venues for classes are too small for the number of learners. Managers across the network work well together to make sure that learners can take part in learning at a wide range of centres.

88 Overall, learning resources are good. There are numerous examples of tutors designing good quality custom-made learning materials to meet the needs of individual learners. These resources help learners to make good progress. Learners at Barry College are able to use the modern and well-resourced Learning Resources Centre. In the new Barry library, learners have access to a very good range of high quality computers and software. The Open Learning Centre gives learners good access to ICT based learning technologies through ‘drop-in’ workshops which run throughout the week. This workshop provides many learners with their first taste of computer technology. However, in a few community settings, learners have limited access to the internet which hinders the development of their independent research skills.

89 Most providers across the VLN have delegated budgets to managers to deliver learning. Managers allocate money carefully to make sure that they prioritise resources to support effective learning. For example, the work of the VLN ICT group has been effective in prioritising the Vale of Glamorgan’s key strategic priority to

improve people's skills in new technologies. This has resulted in most learners being able to use to a wide range of up-to-date technology-based equipment. On the website design taster course learners are able to use specialist computer software to design professional standard websites. On the digital photography course learners have access to a very good range of tutor-developed digitally recorded tutorials.

90 All the providers across the VLN work well together to make the best use of their resources. The network is reviewing and improving the sharing of resources across all partners. All partners identify opportunities to share accommodation and improve the range of opportunities available to learners.

91 The VLN partners use their membership of 'Value Wales', the pan Wales purchasing website, effectively to reduce the cost of resources. In addition, the Vale Council works well with the library service to access specialist ICT equipment for learners with disabilities or particular learning needs.

92 The network has achieved savings due to its joint marketing strategy. It has also been successful in attracting funding, particularly from NIACE Dysgu Cymru, for these events.

93 The strategy enables smaller partners to access marketing skills they would not be able to buy independently.

94 Overall, the rates of attainment for learners in the areas inspected are at least satisfactory. Members of the VLN work well together to make good use of their resources to support adult community-based learning. The VLN targets a good range of national priorities and provides well for vulnerable learners. Therefore, the VLN gives good value for money.

Standards achieved by learners in learning areas

Learning area: Adult Basic Education (including Family Learning)

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Provider	Grade
Barry College	3

95 The majority of learners in ABE and Family Learning acquire new knowledge and skills in reading for meaning and purpose, number work, and measure, shape and space. In numeracy classes, many learners understand and can explain the progress they are making well. However, in around half of Family Learning and ABE workshop sessions, learners do not make enough progress in extended writing skills because they are reluctant to practise these skills.

96 A minority of learners progress into more challenging learning environments. For example, in an ABE session held at Job Shop Extra, a few learners progress from Entry Level to Level 2 Literacy and a few learners move from Level 1 Literacy to GCSE English. In Family Learning, a few learners have progressed onto a teaching assistant course at the college.

97 Overall, attainment rates are satisfactory. However, 93% of learners who attempt accreditation in the Vale of Glamorgan franchise achieve a qualification.

98 Completion rates are too variable. In 2005-2006, 50% of learners on Entry Level Adult Numeracy and Entry Level Certificate in English did not complete the course. This was 28 percentage points lower than the previous year.

99 Most learners participate well in the learning process. They enjoy learning new things and contribute well to sessions. They are supportive of each other and they make good use of their time in class. A few learners complete additional work at home. This helps them to progress more quickly. In Family Learning, many learners develop good social and interpersonal skills. They become better able to help their children with school work. They are more confident and they have improved relationships with school staff.

100 However, attendance rates across courses are poor. Only 58% of learners were present during the sessions seen during the inspection. Attendance at Barry College provision was 32% and at the Vale of Glamorgan franchise provision it was 70%. Overall, this attendance rate is 12 percentage points lower than the average attendance rates for Adult Basic Education seen in other adult community-based inspections.

Learning area: English for Speakers of Other Languages

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Provider	Grade
Barry College	3

101 Attainment on ESOL courses is satisfactory. The majority of learners gain at least one unit of accreditation from the three modules of reading; writing; speaking and listening which make up a full certificate. At present, the centre only runs a maximum of two examination sessions per year; this results in a minority of learners missing an opportunity to take part in exams.

102 The majority of learners make adequate progress in developing their skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking. They use dictionaries to good effect to improve their vocabulary. They increase their understanding and use of the English language and the wider social aspects of living in Wales. However, the majority of learners do not make enough progress in developing their pronunciation and their ability to use the language freely.

103 The majority of learners are not involved enough in planning their own learning. They are not aware of their goals which are frequently expressed too broadly to be meaningful. It is difficult for them to understand and measure their own progress against very general learning goals such as ‘to improve my English’ or ‘to speak at Entry 3’.

104 A few learners are not acquiring new language skills. This is because they are not working at a suitable level for their ability. The more able learners are, in a few cases, repeating work which they can already do.

105 Not enough learners progress onto other courses. Of the few learners that do, one learner who joined the provision at entry level is now working at level 2 and intends to apply to university. Another learner, who started the course at entry level, has increased her language skills and confidence enough to enrol on a college NVQ course.

106 Overall, completion rates are poor. They show a downward trend from 2003-2004 while the number of learners enrolling on ESOL courses is steadily rising. For example, the number of enrolments on ESOL courses in 2003-2004 was 76, growing to 148 in 2005-2006. The greatest growth in enrolments has been from migrant workers. These people frequently do not complete their course because they move away from the area when new job opportunities arise.

107 Nearly all learners who attend classes are highly motivated. They complete their homework and participate well in class.

108 Learners respect each other and they work well together. They improve their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills through such social activities as producing a display for the Open Learning Centre with recipes and artefacts from their home countries.

109 However, overall learners' attendance and punctuality is poor. This is because many learners work shift hours. To better meet the needs of learners working patterns, the Open Learning Centre runs classes at various times of the day. In spite of this, learners are not achieving high levels of attendance and punctuality and this hinders their progress.

Learning area: Welsh for Adults

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Provider	Grade
Barry College	3
WEA(S)	2
Cardiff University	2

110 Most learners make good progress towards the learning aims set for their course. They achieve a good standard of work.

111 Many learners work well towards WJEC examinations. Where learners sit these examinations, they achieve well. However, a very few learners who make good progress on nationally recognised level 2 courses enter inappropriately for lower level examinations. Therefore, learners' examination achievements are not a true reflection of learners' progress.

112 In most cases, across all providers, learner attainment rates are above or well above the national comparator. In the majority of cases, course completion rates are above or well above the national comparator.

113 Overall, most learners make good progress in their learning. In particular, they develop good oral and listening skills. However, in a few cases across all levels, learners are not able to structure sentences using basic language patterns accurately.

114 Many learners develop good pronunciation. They can read simple texts with meaning and good intonation.

115 Learners at all levels develop a good and appropriate vocabulary for the level of their course. They use this vocabulary well to help them sustain conversations about their daily lives. They ask extended questions with confidence. Many learners in the classes observed use the language well with each other, their tutor and visitors to the class without prompts from their tutor.

116 Many learners on higher level courses develop good discussion skills. They discuss the outcomes of simulated interviews with each other with confidence. They use previously learnt work alongside new vocabulary well to extend their responses. In a few cases, learners discuss Welsh literature at a high level using good and appropriate syntax.

117 However, a few learners use too much English in sessions. This means that they do not practise their Welsh language skills well enough.

118 In most cases, learners support each other well. In a very few cases, learners provide each other with sensitive and constructive criticism. The learners are highly motivated and enjoy using their skills in classes and community activities. A few learners attend other adult community-based learning activities through the medium of Welsh such as Yoga. This helps them to apply their learning well in everyday contexts.

119 In many cases learners take responsibility for the pace of their learning. They attend the good range of additional learning opportunities made available to them. These include monthly Saturday schools, visits to St Fagan's Welsh Folk Museum and residential courses.

120 The average attendance in classes observed during the inspection at 68% is near the average attendance for Welsh for Adults seen in other adult community-based learning inspections to date (71%). However, attendance in Barry College sessions at 60% is well below this average.

Learning area: Adult Learning

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Provider	Grade
Barry College	2
Vale Council	2
WEA(S)	2

121 Learner attainment on many courses is good. Recruitment and completion rates are at least good in both accredited and non-accredited courses. In a few courses, completion rates are very good.

122 Learners on practical and craft courses develop a good range of 'making' skills. They are able to use a range of tools accurately and use technical terminology well. In many classes learners build their skills and understanding step by step to achieve good outcomes. For example, in a quilt making class, learners make samples of different textile techniques to create larger pieces. In digital photography, learners experiment with specialist software to develop their knowledge about how they can achieve different effects.

123 In many courses there is a good pace of learning and development of skills. For example, in a web design class, learners progress quickly to create websites using specialist software.

124 Learners in IT courses have well presented class files and use their individual learning plans (ILPs) to identify personal learning goals. Learners in many courses such as Welsh cookery and art and craft negotiate their future learning well with their tutors.

125 Learners on many courses make good progress. Learners on IT and British Sign Language courses progress well from one level to the next. They assess their own progress well and have confidence to move on to the next stage of accreditation.

126 Many learners on Adult Learning courses use their accreditation to improve their chances of finding work and to make progress in their careers. Learners in IT increase their confidence to explore new features of the software and to use their newly acquired knowledge in their everyday lives.

127 In classes such as music appreciation, creative writing and digital photography, learners develop their critical thinking skills well. They are able to judge the quality of their own work and they develop a good understanding of what to do to improve.

128 In a few classes, learners do not record their achievements or specify their goals. This means that they are not fully aware of the progress they are making.

129 Learners are very well motivated and enthusiastic, and they support one another well to make good progress. In craft classes and in IT, for example, learners assist each other well by looking at each other's work and making helpful suggestions about how they can improve their work further.

130 Many learners attend well. They are prompt, often arrive early for their classes, and make good use of their time. Learners work productively and show good commitment to their learning.

131 Learners in classes such as family history and digital photography make good progress in their skills in IT to extend their research and improve their work.

132 Many learners make good progress in maintaining and improving their health and well-being by attending classes such as Pilates, Yoga and Aromatherapy. In many cases learners show a commitment to learning new techniques and many older learners enjoy the increased health benefits of attending these classes. In a yoga class run through the medium of Welsh, learners enjoy extending their vocabulary in an informal setting.

133 Learners on many courses organise activities outside their classes, such as fundraising events and visits to exhibitions and places of interest. These activities develop learners' social skills successfully and contribute to their wider learning.

134 Many learners work independently in and outside of classes, especially in IT and art and craft classes. Many learners are confident about learning new skills, especially those returning to learning after a period away, and enjoy the challenge of solving problems. They complete homework enthusiastically and many commit to buying materials and tools so that they can complete their work at home.

Learning area: Community Development

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Provider	Grade
Vale Council	2
WEA(S)	2
Vale Plus	3

135 Learners in Community Development come from throughout the community and include learners with additional learning needs, learners who are disadvantaged through social or economic exclusion and learners who are supported by mental health services. Overall, learners in all providers make good progress towards, and achieve, appropriate learning goals. In a Vale Council food safety class, learners made good progress in understanding food storage procedures. In Vale Plus classes learners with moderate disabilities reach a good level of competence in word processing and databases. In a WEA(S) art class learners supported by the mental health service make good progress in learning and applying new textile processes.

136 In all providers, most learners demonstrate good practical skills and theoretical knowledge in achieving their learning goals. Most learners engage well with their tasks and are well motivated. For example, in a WEA(S) art and craft class learners show good practical skills in using water-based paints and demonstrate good levels of achievement by the end of the class. However, a few learners, particularly in Vale Plus, do not always make sufficient progress in their learning against specific and measurable targets.

137 In accredited courses learners from all providers attain well and most gain their qualifications. This includes learners with specific learning, emotional and physical needs.

138 Learners in all providers become increasingly able to make choices and influence events in their own lives. A few learners use newly gained skills and competencies to benefit themselves and their communities. For example, in a Vale Council ICT class, learners produce posters for their individual community groups. In a risk assessment course, learners improve their understanding of health and safety to apply in different community groups.

139 In all providers many learners develop improved communication skills, self-esteem and self-confidence. Most learners demonstrate good relationships with tutors, support workers and each other. Learners demonstrate a positive regard for others, regardless of their race, culture, disability or age. They develop improved social skills and work well together when opportunities arise. They support each other well in achieving learning outcomes. For example, in a Vale Council catering class learners communicate well with each other and take turns to act as a reporter for their group to the rest of the class.

Providers' response to the report findings

This response is on behalf of all the members of the Vale Learning Network (VLN) that provide, or have an interest in, adult community-based learning in the Vale of Glamorgan and, in particular, those partners who participated in this inspection. This includes Barry College, Cardiff University (Welsh for Adults Centre), Valeplus, Vale Centre for Voluntary Services, Vale of Glamorgan Council and the Workers' Educational Association (South).

We welcome the confirmation this report gives to our close working relationships, the strength of our partnership arrangements and the progress we have made in raising and equalising standards of provision across our area.

We are particularly pleased that the work of the network's Quality Group has been recognised as having a significant impact. The completion of our first annual cycle of self assessment review and quality development planning before the inspection took place, provided the groundwork for our progress. The current review of the area's adult learning curriculum being conducted by the group will ensure local provision improves upon the already good value for money given by all VLN partners.

We accept that there are issues identified in the report which need to be addressed. In particular, VLN will work closely with all partners to further develop Welsh for Adults and ESOL provision in the Vale, provided sufficient public funds are available. We will also ensure that learners can progress more quickly by concentrating our efforts on methods of teaching and assessment; the recording and use of learner data; and improving the take up of support.

In order to build on our existing substantial strengths we will ensure the continuation of our partnership arrangements and the collaborative way we conduct our work. The VLN is committed to seeking further support and funding to make this happen and will use these opportunities to develop collective, strategic, community learning planning within the framework of a new Local Service Board for the Vale of Glamorgan.

Appendix 1

Evidence base of the inspection

The inspection team consisted of HMI, additional inspectors and peer assessors.

The team carried out 112 inspection visits and 23 meetings in March 2007.

The team visited:

- teaching sessions;
- a variety of learner activities; and
- community venues.

Members of the team had 23 meetings with:

- learners;
- tutors;
- managers;
- curriculum managers;
- finance managers;
- quality managers;
- management information systems managers;
- Principal and Vice-Principal of Barry College;
- elected members of the Vale Council;
- Director of Learning and Development, Vale Council;
- co-ordinator and members of the Vale Learning Network;
- Cardiff University Welsh for Adults manager and staff;
- managers and staff from WEA(S); and
- representative of the Vale Council of Voluntary Services.

The team also considered:

- a wide selection of learners’ work; and
- comprehensive documentation made available by providers, both before and during the inspection.

Appendix 2

The Inspection team

Penny Lewis	Reporting Inspector
Mererid Wyn Williams	Deputy Reporting Inspector
Enid Hankins	Team Inspector
Liam Kealy	Team Inspector
Rachael Bubalo	Team Inspector
Elizabeth Arthur	Team Inspector
Mark Evans	Team Inspector
Angharad Reed	Additional Inspector
Gary Beauchamp	Additional Inspector
Sarah Lewis	Additional Inspector
Megan Dauksta	Additional Inspector
Catherine Beman	Additional Inspector
Richard Sibson	Additional Inspector
Betty Mason	Peer Assessor
Brenda Jones	Peer Assessor
Gill Downer	Peer Assessor
Mari Morgan	Peer Assessor
Jina Gwyrfai	Peer Assessor
Lynda Lumb	Peer Assessor

Appendix 3

Data and statistics: explanatory note

The statistics described in the report refer to the National Comparators for 2002-2003 that are based in the Individualised Student Record (ISR). These statistics are compiled by DELLS from data supplied by individual organisations and institutions. These statistics provide comparative data for a range of courses across 19 learning areas. The extent of the statistics is limited as only FE institutions were required to submit the full ISR returns which form the basis of the National Comparators.

The National Comparators enable inspectors to compare similar data for individual organisations and institutions and to make judgements about the performance of particular courses and learning areas within institutions and organisations.

There are three sets of National Comparators:

Completion – this comparator is concerned with the proportion of learners who complete their qualification aims. In other words, the proportion of enrolled learners who stay on their course to the end.

These statistics enable inspectors to make comparisons between institutions and organisations for individual courses and learning areas regarding the proportion of learners who complete their course.

Attainment – this comparator is concerned with the proportion of learners who achieve their qualification aim and attain qualifications or certification. Thus, inspectors are able to determine not only the proportion of learners who complete their course or qualification aim but also the proportion of those learners who attain a qualification or certification. Comparisons can be made between individual institutions or organisations and the National Comparator to make judgements about performance.

Successful completion – this comparator is concerned with the proportion of the total number of enrolled learners who complete their course or qualification aim and attain a qualification or certification.

Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR)

Data used in the section describing the nature of providers is derived from the adult community-based learning programmes in the LLWR record for 2003/2004. This data enables inspectors to determine the volume of Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) funded provision delivered by individual providers in relation to the total volume of the WAG funded provision available to adult learners in the area.