



# Estyn

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Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg  
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales

## Merging the boundaries in adult community-based learning

July 2008



BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL  
INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



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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;
- ▲ LAs;
- ▲ teacher education and training;
- ▲ work-based learning;
- ▲ careers companies;
- ▲ offender learning; and
- ▲ the education, guidance and training elements of The Department for Work and Pensions funded training programmes.

Estyn also:

- ▲ provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others; and
- ▲ makes public good practice based on inspection evidence.

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## Introduction

- 1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Welsh Assembly Government's policy development for the planning of adult community-based learning (ACL). The report evaluates how well providers of ACL work in partnership to deliver better provision to learners. It considers the quality of partnership working between providers and how well providers work together with learners to deliver a curriculum relevant to local and national needs.
- 2 The Beecham review, 'Beyond Boundaries: Citizen Centred Local Services for Wales' (2006) identifies the critical success factors needed to improve the level of collaboration and planning of ACL at a local authority level. These critical success factors are:
  - citizen engagement – involving learners in the planning of services for all learners;
  - delivery – developing a focus on improving outcomes;
  - partnership – creating a culture, skills and behaviours that are conducive to shared delivery; and
  - challenge – improving performance management.
- 3 Beecham also notes that the complexity of funding for public services risks undermining value for money and makes the pooling of budgets and resources more difficult at a local level.
- 4 The recent review of Further Education in Wales: 'Promise and Performance, the review of the mission and purpose of Further Education in Wales', Webb (2007) also recommends a way forward for the provision of adult community-based learning in Wales. The review recognises the importance of ACL as a valuable and embedded feature of Welsh culture and history. It also acknowledges the benefits and social gains that participation in learning brings for many adults and for Welsh society.
- 5 The Webb review recommends that the focus of the public funding of adult community-based learning should concentrate on the most needy:
  - those adults who have not achieved a level 2 qualification;
  - those adults who belong to population groups in which participation in learning is especially low; and
  - those who live in areas of marked educational disadvantage.
- 6 The review also discusses the issues concerned with a range of different providers involved in delivering adult community-based learning, each with different funding streams and differing strategic perspectives. Webb recommends that the Welsh Assembly Government develop a strategic approach, particularly for the most disadvantaged groups, involving multiple agencies funded by pooled budgets.

- 7 'Skills that Work for Wales' – the Welsh Assembly Government's consultation document for skills and employment in Wales (January 2008) – recognises the contribution of adult community-based learning in helping people who do not have a positive experience of learning; those who may not be in work, those who may not take part in learning and disadvantaged learners. The consultation document proposes to:
- secure greater community ownership of the priorities for adult community-based learning;
  - provide new opportunities for the third sector to deliver learning in the community;
  - increase the amount of Basic Skills provision, including an expansion of the Employers Pledge to improve the basic skills of people in work;
  - increase the capacity of Trade Unions to offer learning to their members;
  - ensure that ESOL courses for migrant workers are funded appropriately in line with Welsh Assembly Government policy; and
  - ensure that older workers are able to take advantage of new and existing skills programmes.
- 8 'Skills that Work for Wales' demands that providers of adult community-based learning are able to engage with communities to enable them to take ownership of local priorities. The document also states that providers will need to work well with each other and employers to make sure that all learners have access to a curriculum that improves their personal and vocational skills.
- 9 This report identifies how well providers work together to address the critical success factors set out in the Beecham review and draws together the good features and shortcomings of effective partnership work identified through inspections of adult community-based learning.
- 10 This report outlines how prepared providers are to address the proposals in 'Promise and Performance' and 'Skills that Work for Wales'. It evaluates how well providers work together to develop strategic approaches to delivering adult community-based learning and to engage with learners to increase community ownership of the priorities for adult community-based learning.
- 11 This report has been prepared by drawing on existing reports of inspections of adult-community based learning and through conducting a small number of interviews with providers and learners (see Appendix 2).

## Background

### **The nature of adult community-based learning**

- 12 Adult community-based learning encompasses educational provision for adults made by local authorities, further education colleges, higher education institutions and voluntary organisations including County Voluntary Councils, individual voluntary organisations, the Workers Education Association South Wales (WEA (S)), Coleg Harlech/Workers Education Association North Wales (CHWEA (N)), and the YMCA Community College.
- 13 In the case of further education colleges, adult community-based learning includes a college's directly delivered provision and provision delivered through third party arrangements. This provision includes:
  - return to learning (First steps learning);
  - skills for work or further study;
  - personal development and well-being;
  - learning for active citizenship and community development;
  - primary basic skills;
  - English for speakers of other languages (ESOL);
  - skills for independent living; and
  - Welsh for Adults.
- 14 In addition, similar programmes funded by local authorities may include work carried out through initiatives such as Communities First, the Older People's strategy, arts development, the People's Network, parental education and community development initiatives.
- 15 Programmes delivered by voluntary sector organisations include learning which improves the capacity and skills of adults to undertake voluntary roles in their communities, activities which contribute to the regeneration of local communities and general programmes of education which help learners to improve their knowledge, skills and understanding in a range of subjects.
- 16 Most of the institutions of higher education in Wales also deliver programmes of adult community-based learning. These programmes are intended to encourage learners to progress to higher education or extend their learning in other ways. However, Estyn does not inspect ACL programmes delivered by institutions of higher education, other than Welsh for Adults.

- 17 Adult learners take part in learning for a variety of reasons including:
- to improve their knowledge, skills and understanding. This could be for vocational and educational reasons including improving how they use information and communications technology or to improve their basic skills or use of English;
  - to develop a personal interest;
  - to maintain contact with other members of the community;
  - to contribute to improving their communities;
  - to improve their health;
  - to help them undertake voluntary work; and
  - to help others learn, including their children and grandchildren.
- 18 Adult community-based learning is funded mainly by the Welsh Assembly Government and/or a local authority. The Welsh Assembly Government's Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) provides funding to individual colleges of further education, local authorities, the two Workers Educational Associations and the YMCA Community College via the national Planning and Funding System.
- 19 Other Assembly Government departments also give funding to individual providers for adult community-based learning activities. These include Communities First, the Community Facilities and Activities programme, voluntary sector initiatives and the Rural Community Action programme.
- 20 Many providers secure other sources of funding including European monies and the national lottery.

### **Adult community-based learning and links to national and regional strategy**

- 21 Many providers of adult community-based learning link their provision well to a range of the national priorities and policies promoted by the Welsh Assembly Government.<sup>1</sup>
- 22 These include:
- economic development;
  - the skills agenda;
  - community regeneration;
  - health and well-being;

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<sup>1</sup> This is confirmed by Estyn inspection evidence. See ACL inspection reports on the Estyn website: [www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk)

- Iaith Pawb;
- National Basic Skills strategy;
- citizenship – including the delivery of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL);
- environment and Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC);
- youth justice; and
- Older People's Strategy.

### **The inspection of adult community-based learning**

- 23 Estyn's inspections of adult community-based learning take into account the network of adult community-based learning provision available to learners within a 'travel to learn' area. In most cases this is a single local authority area.
- 24 Inspections include the work of all providers operating in any area including local authorities, colleges of further education, the WEA (S), Coleg Harlech WEA (N), the YMCA Community College, the local County Voluntary Council and a varying number of small voluntary organisations.
- 25 Estyn's inspections of adult community-based learning are based on the Common Inspection Framework (See Appendix 1) and report on:
- the standards achieved by learners, in the learning areas of:
    - Adult Basic Education (ABE);
    - English for speakers of other languages (ESOL);
    - Welsh for Adults (WfA);
    - Adult Learning; and
    - Community Development;
  - the quality of education and training; and
  - the standard of leadership and management, including how well providers work together to deliver adult community-based learning.
- 26 Between September 2004 to January 2008, Estyn inspected 13<sup>2</sup> local authority areas and two institutions: the YMCA Community College, and the WEA(S).

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<sup>2</sup> Caerphilly, Wrexham, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Conwy, Denbighshire, Torfaen, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Neath Port Talbot, Vale of Glamorgan, Bridgend, Carmarthenshire and Cardiff

## Main findings

- 27 The standard of leadership and management is good in 44% of the partnerships inspected since 2004. In each of these cases, providers work well in partnership and chief officers and senior managers are committed to working together. They have a clear vision for adult community-based learning (ACL). They agree a good strategic direction for ACL and set up a clear structure for the management and co-ordination of the provision.
- 28 However, providers are hindered in their planning by the absence of a national strategy for adult community-based learning that sets out a vision, aims and objectives for the sector and pulls together the various strands of Welsh Assembly Government priorities and policy.
- 29 The nature of the funding arrangements for adult community-based learning does not encourage providers to share core funding. Providers often work well together to bid for short-term grants to run innovative projects but they do not plan well to cover the cost of continuing the work when the funding runs out. Too few partnerships allocate resources to manage the work of the partnership itself. As a result, partners are hindered in their ability to co-ordinate the work of the partnership or undertake joint pieces of work such as joint staff development and training.
- 30 Nationally agreed benchmarks are not available to enable all providers to compare their performance in a systematic and formal way. There is no national view of the demography of adult community-based learners, how well they achieve, what they are learning and what they do when they finish a course.
- 31 The majority of providers do not work together well enough to share and make the best use of the management information available to them. Most providers use data well to measure their own performance, but they rarely share data with partners or work with them to collate data at an area level. This hinders their planning and monitoring and their ability to make improvements in the provision for learners in their area.
- 32 Where the standard of leadership and management is good, providers work well together to produce good strategic and operational plans. They respond well to local and national priorities and target provision at specific groups of learners. They agree which is the most appropriate organisation to deliver particular aspects of ACL. They reduce competition and duplication.
- 33 In the majority of partnerships where the standard of leadership and management is good, providers make sure that the curriculum reflects the needs of the learners and the community. They design a curriculum that is responsive to national and regional economic strategies. They make sure that learners have choice and clear progression routes. However, few partnerships are effective at finding out the level of need for Welsh language or bilingual classes.

- 34 Not enough providers involve learners in deciding priorities for ACL in their area. A few providers are improving how they engage with learners. In these cases there are three main methods used by providers to engage with learners:
- through formal decision making structures;
  - through using outreach methods and community consultation; and
  - by training learners as advocates or champions for adult learning.
- 35 Voluntary organisations that provide adult community-based learning fulfil a vital learning need in the community developing learning programmes that respond to the needs of the most difficult to reach adults. The larger voluntary providers often play a significant role in local partnerships but smaller voluntary groups find it difficult to play a full role as they do not have the resources to do so. Other statutory bodies with a key interest in education and training are often missing from local partnerships.
- 36 Institutions of higher education are involved well in the planning arrangements for the delivery of Welsh for Adults. However, local partnerships do not consider the other ACL activities delivered by HE in their planning well enough or work with HE providers to widen the menu of progression routes open to learners.
- 37 Providers in half of the partnerships inspected work well together to make sure that accommodation and venues for ACL are of a good standard and are used to their full capacity. They have established a strategic network of learning centres to make sure that learners have easy access to venues of a high standard.

## Recommendations

### **In order to support providers to build on the good practices of partnership working, the Welsh Assembly Government should:**

- R1 develop a clear national policy framework for the provision of adult community-based learning;
- R2 establish formal partnerships for the delivery of adult community-based learning centred on specific geographical areas across Wales;
- R3 develop a funding strategy for adult community-based learning which enables providers to share budgets and achieve value for money; and
- R4 establish a data strategy which includes nationally agreed benchmarks and performance indicators for adult community-based learning to measure:
- completion, attainment and successful completion at subject level (e.g. Level 1 IT, Level 2 Art);
  - progression to higher levels of learning;
  - progression to new areas of learning at the same level;
  - the success and progression of learners with little previous success in learning;
  - the impact of strategies for widening participation; and
  - demographic trends in the participation of learners in adult community-based learning.

### **Providers should:**

- R5 work formally with other providers in partnership groups that involve all providers operating in the area including voluntary sector providers and higher education Institutions.

### **Partnerships should:**

- R6 produce strategic and operational plans that take good account of national and regional priorities and which reduce competition and duplication and make best use of all available resources to secure good value for money;
- R7 share performance data between providers to compare how well learners in each organisation are achieving and to make sure that demographic data is used to target provision, to identify underrepresented groups and to resource any additional learning needs;

R8 share budgets for the delivery of adult community-based learning in order to:

- achieve value for money;
- allocate resources to manage the work of the partnership; and
- undertake joint pieces of work including staff development and training;

R9 carry out an effective audit of the needs of communities and design an appropriate curriculum;

R10 identify priority groups of learners;

R11 identify and publicise progression routes for learners;

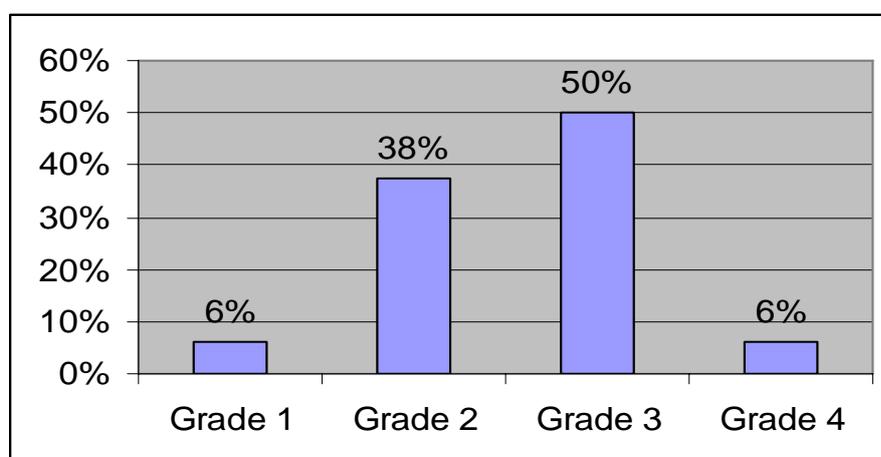
R12 have clear mechanisms for involving learners in decision making and curriculum planning; and

R13 develop strategic networks of learning centres with a high standard of accommodation and facilities.

**Partnership working: Creating the culture, skills and behaviours for effective shared delivery**

- 38 Providers of ACL have improved how they work in partnership since 2004. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training's annual reports for 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 show that providers have improved the strategic planning and co-ordination of courses. Providers have also improved how they jointly assess the quality of their provision.
- 39 However, providers are hindered in their planning by the absence of a national strategy for adult community-based learning that sets out a vision, aims and objectives for the sector and pulls together the various strands of Welsh Assembly Government priorities and policies. The lack of an overall national framework for adult community-based learning weakens the strategic leadership and management of adult community-based learning in almost all areas (Estyn April 2004<sup>3</sup>).
- 40 Estyn judged the standard of leadership and strategic management (Key Question 5 – see appendix 1) to be good or better in 44% of all inspections of adult community-based learning. This reflects the quality of partnership work observed from October 2004 to January 2008.

**Table 1: The effectiveness of leadership and strategic management**



- 41 The providers working in these good partnerships are effective in agreeing a strategic direction for ACL across their area. They agree who is best placed to deliver aspects of ACL to reduce competition and duplication and work together to deploy resources more efficiently.
- 42 The majority of providers do not work together well enough to share and make the best use of the management information available to them. This hinders their planning and monitoring and their ability to make improvements in the provision for learners in their area.

<sup>3</sup> Estyn (April 2004) Widening participation in adult community-based learning: A survey of best practice

43 In the 44% of partnerships where leadership and management is good, providers are successful in working together to agree a strategic direction for ACL. They implement good operational practices and demonstrate the following good features:

- chief officers and senior managers have a strong commitment to working in partnership with other providers in the area and to agree who should take the lead in particular areas and subjects. They give good direction to their staff;
- all providers and interested parties in the area work well to set up a clear structure for the management and co-ordination of adult community-based learning. Providers often establish a formal group to manage the work. Community Consortia for Education and Training (CCETs), or the strategic groups which have replaced them, give good support for these type of arrangements;
- management groups have a clear vision for ACL and a set of aims and objectives that are understood by staff at all levels. They give a strong lead to any sub-groups and staff responsible for operational delivery;
- management groups work well together to produce strategic and operational plans. They pay good attention to local, regional and national priorities and make sure that learners have a good choice of provision;
- management groups have worked well together to deliver specific projects. These are often linked to time-limited funding streams;
- strategic planning has a strong influence on the delivery of the curriculum and the groups of learners at which the curriculum is aimed. Providers agree which organisation is best placed to deliver particular aspects of adult community-based learning and where and when courses should be delivered. They work well together to make sure that learners have a good choice of provision and to reduce competition and duplication;
- individual providers have a good understanding of how well their own organisation is performing. They use performance data well to identify strengths and weaknesses in outcomes for learners and in the quality of teaching on individual courses. They analyse information on learners' progression to higher levels of study or to different courses at the same level. They compare outcomes with national comparators, where they exist, or with those achieved by a similar provider;
- leaders and managers often carry out internal inspections of their own provision, identify good practice and make sure effective teachers share their good practice with other staff; and
- leaders and managers from different providers work well together to make sure that the venues and accommodation available for adult community-based learning are of a good standard and that they are used to their full capacity. In many cases, providers have established a strategic network of learning centres to make sure that learners have easy access to venues of a high standard.

**Implementing good arrangements for the strategic planning and management for adult community-based learning in Neath Port Talbot**

In Neath Port Talbot the local authority's Chief Officer for Education and Leisure, the Principal of Neath Port-Talbot College and the Director of Neath Port-Talbot Council for Voluntary Services work well together to give strategic leadership to the New Learning Network. The network is the community learning sub-group of the Neath Port Talbot CCET. The Network brings together representatives of 60 partner organisations in a variety of groups to plan and monitor adult community-based learning.

The network makes sure there is a strong link between the delivery of adult community-based learning and the education and training priorities for the area. Partners have agreed 15 key objectives in a Community Learning Plan. The network is able to measure progress against these targets to see how well it is doing. The structure of the network helps partners to respond well to operational issues that arise when many providers, with their different procedures, work together.

The network's Community Learning Plan has strong links to a range of national, regional and local strategies. These include the Regional Statement of Needs and Priorities, the Community Plan for Neath Port Talbot, the Basic Skills and Essential Skills strategies, the Older People's strategy, and the Carers strategy. The good links to these strategies make certain that providers arrange their provision well to benefit learners.

**Implementing good arrangements for the strategic planning and management of adult community-based learning in Conwy**

In 2005 Cwlwm, the Community Consortia for Education and Training in Conwy, set up a lifelong learning sub-group. The sub-group sets the strategic direction and operational plan for adult community-based learning in Conwy effectively. The lifelong learning sub-group link makes sure that its objectives link well to the strategic aims and objectives of Cwlwm and to the strategic objectives of other key plans in the area, including the Community Strategy and the Regeneration Strategy. The sub-group monitors the implementation of its strategic plan and identifies progress against targets. The lifelong learning sub-group prioritises work with learners living in disadvantaged communities. This has had a significant impact on the range of learning opportunities offered in those areas and on positive outcomes for learners.

- 44 Many providers work well together on time limited projects to help learners achieve or to improve leadership and management.
- 45 For example, Coleg Harlech WEA (N) works well with colleges of further education across North Wales to deliver projects funded through the European Social Fund. These projects help new learners take part in learning and move on to higher levels of learning. Many providers across Wales worked well together to make good use of the Common Investment Fund and the Quality Improvement Fund, managed by the then ELWa<sup>4</sup>, to improve their systems and processes.

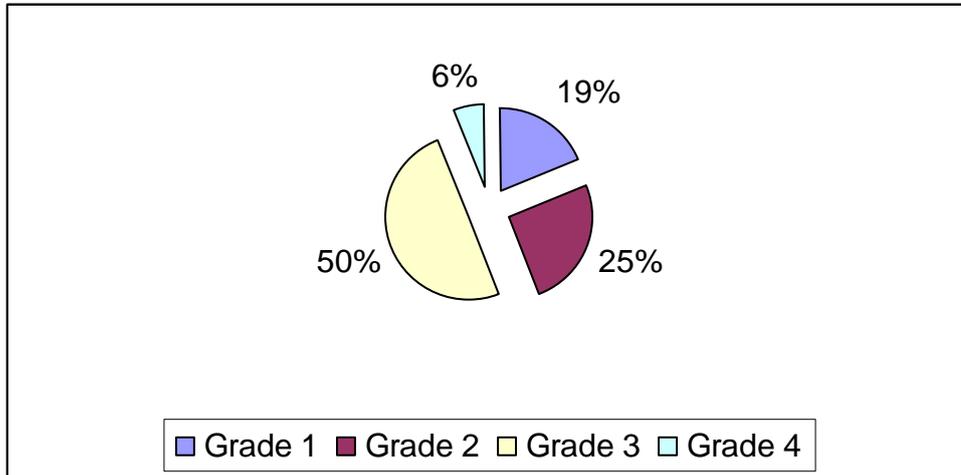
<sup>4</sup> ELWa – a former Non Departmental Public Body responsible for post 16 education and training in Wales, now part of the Welsh Assembly Government

46 Where inspectors identified shortcomings in the standard of leadership and strategic management of adult community-based learning, partnerships demonstrated the following characteristics:

- chief officers and senior managers had not implemented formal arrangements for planning the delivery of adult community-based learning;
- not all providers or interested parties, particularly voluntary sector organisations or institutions of higher education, were represented in planning arrangements for adult community-based learning;
- providers were not effective in ensuring that the management and co-ordination of ACL had an impact on delivery and they were unable to measure progress; and
- management groups had not given sufficient direction and clarity to the work of sub-groups responsible for the operational delivery of ACL.

**Delivering together: Developing a shared focus on improving outcomes and widening the curriculum**

**Table 2: How well does the curriculum offered to learners meet the needs and interest of learners and the local community?**



- 47 Forty-four per cent of the partnerships and institutions inspected between October 2004 and January 2008 work well together to make sure that the curriculum offered to learners reflects the needs of the community.
- 48 Where curriculum planning is good, providers work together to carry out effective audits of the community's needs. They then use this information well to:
- produce clear plans that identify key priorities for provision and adjust the curriculum to respond to national and regional economic strategies;
  - influence the delivery of the curriculum in a way that reflects the needs and interests of learners and the wider community;
  - work in a non-competitive way to reduce duplication and to fill identified gaps in the overall provision; and
  - make sure that learners have a good choice of provision with clear progression routes both from one level to another and at the same level.

**The YMCA Community College:** Targeting learners who do not participate in learning

The YMCA Community College works very well with specialist partners to reach individuals who generally do not participate in learning. For example, the college works well with the National Probation Services for Wales to provide learning opportunities for offenders serving community punishment orders. The college makes sure that learners have good information about progression routes which are available within the college or through other further education providers.

**Vale of Glamorgan Learning Network:** Ensuring choice and progression

The Vale of Glamorgan Learning Network works well together to market the courses from all providers effectively. This maximises local people's awareness of the available learning opportunities and makes sure that learners have a good choice of provision. Providers work well in a non-competitive way to reduce duplication and to fill identified gaps in the overall provision. The Network has produced a 'progression routes' document which provides useful information to help tutors give advice to learners who want to continue their learning at a higher level.

**Curriculum planning in Neath Port Talbot**

The New Learning Network in Neath Port Talbot plans effectively to provide a curriculum that responds well to national and regional economic strategies, particularly in ICT, Care, the Media, and Preparation for Life and Work. Providers regularly analyse data about the nature of the curriculum and use this information well to plan curriculum developments and identify key priorities for new provision. The network also reallocates resources across learning areas in order to make sure that the curriculum has a good fit with local needs.

- 49 Too many providers do not work well enough together to make sure that the curriculum reflects the needs of the community. In these cases:
- providers have not established priorities and key objectives for ACL or established curriculum plans;
  - the curriculum offered to learners merely mirrors the pattern of previous years;
  - providers have not determined the level of need for Welsh language or bilingual classes or consulted first language Welsh speakers about their needs and interests;
  - providers often duplicate provision and as a result do not make good use of the resources available for ACL in their area; and
  - providers do not offer learners a wide enough range of opportunities to progress to higher levels of learning or to courses offered by other providers.

## **Partnership with learners: Engaging learners in decision making and in planning their learning**

50 A few providers of ACL work well with learners to involve them in planning provision. They engage well with learners in order to achieve the proper balance between what learners want and making sure that the best range of courses and classes is available to meet the needs of the community. These providers use three ways of engaging with learners:

- through formal decision making structures;
- through using outreach methods and community consultation; and
- by involving learners as advocates or champions for adult learning.

### **Formal decision-making structures**

51 Where providers are effective in consulting and engaging learners in making decisions about their learning, they:

- formally involve learners as partners in the planning process. They set up management groups or forums or convene special meetings. Learners are directly involved in stakeholder and management groups;
- offer learners training to develop the skills to take part in planning and decision making processes; and
- have formal systems for gathering learners' views when planning their annual programmes.

### **Good arrangements for setting up learner forums**

RISE, a learning network operating across the five local authority areas comprising the old county of Gwent, has set up a learners' forum in each of the five areas. Each of the five local forums is represented at a RISE learners' forum that contributes to the partnership board of RISE. The five area forums meet once a term whilst the RISE learners' forum meets monthly.

Participants involved in RISE's forums consider that they have become more able to influence the partnership board and the operational activities of RISE.

52 Learners who take part in learner forums identified that in order to become involved in decision-making processes they need to:

- be given sufficient notice of activities to enable them to take part;
- be reimbursed for expenses incurred as a result of attending meetings;

- be provided with training to help them develop their skills and understanding;
- be given clear guidance and terms of reference regarding their role in decision making processes;
- be able to make a difference at tutor and course level;
- receive regular reports on progress; and
- see that the different needs and abilities of participants are taken account of in working practices.

### **Involving learners in management and governance**

The Workers Educational Association South Wales (WEA (S)) ordinarily involves learners in their decision making processes and the governance of the organisation.

The WEA (S) encourages and helps learners to form branches at a local level. Local branches are responsible for deciding on the curriculum offered in their area and for raising finance for additional activities.

The WEA(S) is governed by a volunteer council which elects its members from its branches and learner cohort. Council members take on responsibilities as trustees of a charity, governors of an institution of further education and directors of a limited company. As a result, the Council is responsible for formulating and approving strategic and operational plans and policies. In recent years, it has been responsible for a major reorganisation of the management structure of the organisation, for improving the financial management of the organisation and for quality assurance.

### **Setting up learner forums for specific purposes**

Following the implementation of an Older People's Strategy in 2003, Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council set up three local forums that brought together representatives of older people. The forums contributed to the Older People's strategy in Rhondda Cynon Taff and the development of an ACL curriculum for older people. Because of this, the council set up an 'Action Planning for Older Learners Group'. This makes sure that older learners are able to inform learning providers of their needs on an ongoing basis.

### **Outreach methods and community consultation**

- 53 A few providers work well with learners using outreach work and community consultation methods to help them identify learners' needs and plan the learning accordingly.

**Working directly with learners to consult them about their learning needs**

In Bridgend, staff from the Learning Brokers project work directly with people living in Community First areas. They effectively help them identify their learning needs and the barriers which stop them from taking part in education or training. The project staff work well with learning providers, including the local authority. As a result, suitable learning opportunities are made available and learners receive a high level of support.

The Reaching Higher Reaching Wider programme in Wrexham is based in Caia Park, one of the four Community First Wards in the county borough. Staff work directly with learners from the Caia Park area to encourage them to take part in courses that help them to build their confidence and progress to higher education. Learners also become involved as members of the project management group which helps them to influence the delivery of the programme.

- 54 In 'Promise and Performance' (2007), Webb reports that voluntary organisations have some of the best success stories with the most difficult to reach adults. This view is supported by the 'Skills that Work for Wales' consultation document (January 2008). The evidence from inspection shows that this work is most effective when community based and/or voluntary organisations combine with providers of adult community-based learning to deliver learning. This joint work makes sure that providers:
- are more able to engage with reluctant and hard to reach learners;
  - can develop learning programmes that respond to these learners' needs; and
  - can help community-based and/or voluntary organisations carry out quality assurance procedures effectively.

### **Working with voluntary and community-based organisations to engage hard to reach learners**

Adult community-based learning providers in the Vale of Glamorgan Learning Network have worked well with voluntary and community based organisations to engage hard to reach learners successfully.

Providers have worked effectively with:

- Llamau Housing Association to engage learners who are homeless or clients of the Youth Offending Team;
- MIND, SCOPE and the Vale NHS Trust to successfully bring people with considerable health issues into learning; and
- a local mosque to develop an IT course specifically for Muslim women. These learners would have found it difficult to take part in learning alongside people from the wider community.

Providers in Torfaen work well with other statutory and voluntary organisations including Sure Start, the Women's Refuge, and Credit Unions. This helps learners, including those with additional learning needs, to take part in courses tailored to their needs, and encourages community regeneration.

### **Involving learners as advocates or champions for learning**

- 55 A few providers have trained individual learners to help them act as advocates or champions for learning. This helps learners to provide advice and guidance to other adults to encourage them to get involved in learning.

### **Enabling learners to champion adult community-based learning**

The RISE network has created the role of the Learner Advocate. Learning Advocates help providers to prepare annual learning development plans and canvas the views of other learners on learning programmes. They also make contact with people who are not involved in learning to encourage them to become involved.

The WEA(S) trains learners to act as Community Learning Representatives. They are trained to offer advice and guidance to individuals and local communities on a voluntary basis. Approximately 150 learners have taken part in the programme. This training helps the Community Learning Representatives draw up action plans, design publicity materials and go out into their communities to talk about their own learning experiences and the benefits of learning to others. The Community Learning Representatives also offer signposting information on financial support, transport and childcare.

The WEA(S) has worked well with other providers, such as Cardiff County Council, to implement this programme. As a result, the council has been able to design new courses and attract learners from areas of the city where, previously, little or no adult learning took place.

**A key to partnership working: Equitable, non-competitive funding and genuine sharing of resources**

- 56 Not enough providers are willing to share their funding and resources. The funding system for ACL often encourages providers to compete for learners in order to secure revenue to run their own institution or organisation. This competition is not always in the best interests of the learner and sometimes leads to more than one provider targeting the same group of learners.
- 57 Providers are better at working together to secure new sources of funding to develop new projects or ways of working with learners. These projects are often the most innovative and successful at engaging reluctant learners or hard-to-reach groups. However, such funding is often short-term and providers do not always review their core funding to make sure that together they can fund the activity when the external funding has ceased.
- 58 There is rarely any funding available to pay for the development or running of a local partnership or for development workers or co-ordinators. Large providers often cover some of the running costs of a partnership. However, smaller partners, who often bring forward innovative new ways of working to encourage people back into learning occasionally feel that, as they cannot contribute financially, they are regarded with lesser status in the group.
- 59 In many areas, providers work well together to train staff. However, even though staff frequently work for more than one provider in an area, there is rarely a strategic, area staff development plan. Joint training is often dependent on the initiative of individuals and opportunities for training, and the types of training delivered are inconsistent across Wales.
- 60 Most providers work well together to share physical resources. They share the use of good quality venues close to where learners live. Many venues have a good standard of ICT resources.
- 61 In Pembrokeshire, most providers have worked well together to develop a good network of community learning centres. Most centres have ICT resources with e-learning available on many sites. In Neath Port Talbot, providers have worked together well to establish a strategic network of 19 learning centres. In Bridgend, most providers share the use of venues effectively which makes sure that good use is made of these venues. This strategic approach to the development of a network of venues for adult community-based learning helps providers to target resources and improve the standard of accommodation and facilities.

**Wider partners: Working with the third sector and other providers of adult community-based learning, including higher education institutions**

- 62 Voluntary sector providers offer a different methodology and different styles of learning from larger, institutional providers. However, it is often difficult even for the larger voluntary organisations to find the resources to play a full part in local area networks. This is particularly the case when the organisation covers a wide area or the whole of Wales, such as the two Workers Educational Associations and the YMCA Community College.
- 63 Smaller voluntary providers find it even more difficult to play a full role in local partnerships or learning networks. These providers often lack the staff, the resources or the support to get their voices heard or to contribute well to the overall planning and quality management of provision.
- 64 Providers of ACL or those with a key interest in adult learning who are often absent from local partnerships include:
- Library services;
  - Older Learners' Strategy co-ordinators;
  - Health and Well-being workers;
  - Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) co-ordinators;
  - the Probation Service; and
  - Trades Unions.
- 65 Many higher education institutions (HEIs) in Wales offer a wide and varied curriculum of adult learning, which covers a range of accredited and non-accredited classes. The higher education institutions (HEIs) have good experience of working in partnership with other providers of ACL for the delivery of Welsh for Adults provision. However, there few good examples of providers of adult community-based learning working in partnership with HEIs to plan provision across an area and to create progression routes for learners. There is no requirement for HEIs to take part in the planning of local provision, the training of tutors or the measurement of quality. Therefore, opportunities are missed to:
- share expertise and resources;
  - develop progression routes;
  - encourage a wider range of learners to consider moving to courses at a higher level;
  - offer a more exciting and enriching curriculum to community learners; and
  - jointly offer training and continuing professional development (CPD) to tutors.

**A key challenge for partnership working: To improve performance management**

- 66 Historically, performance indicators applied to ACL are derived from the further education sector. The use of national comparators for completion and attainment focuses attention on outcomes for learners and the quality of teaching at course level and enables providers to compare their performance with the sector.
- 67 The application of the existing performance indicators for further education to ACL is often inappropriate. Adult community-based learning does not have the same characteristics as further education and the scale of learning is not the same.
- 68 Adult community-based learning courses are often only 60 hours in length, or shorter. Participants may attain a number of credit-based qualifications from the one course, and these may be at a variety of levels. In adult community-based learning, course titles are not standardised between providers although the content and outcomes of courses will be similar. Many adult learners will remain in learning following the end of their course. They will either progress to a higher level of learning or take a related course at the same level. As a result it is not appropriate to apply performance indicators designed to measure completion and attainment in different settings.
- 69 The widening participation agenda is a key driver for many providers of ACL. Many learners with little previous success return to learning through courses in the community and they make good progress. However, there is currently no national measure in place to demonstrate the extent of that success.
- 70 In adult basic education, ESOL and Welsh for Adults, there are qualification frameworks within which most providers operate. However, the lack of a benchmark for progression still hinders providers from measuring the number of learners that progress between levels.
- 71 Most individual providers collect data about enrolments, completion and attainment rates at course level. They use this performance data well to measure their own performance. They identify strengths and weaknesses in outcomes for learners and in the quality of teaching on individual courses. Only a very few providers analyse information on learners' progression to higher levels of study or to different courses at the same level. However, as there are no agreed national benchmarks for the sector, systematic and formal arrangements for monitoring and improving learners' achievements and standards of teaching and assessment on a national basis are underdeveloped.
- 72 Too few individual providers share their performance data with partners. Neither do partnerships collect this information at an area level to inform their planning and monitoring of how well providers in the area are performing in relation to each other or to other areas in Wales. As a result there is no national view of how well adult community-based learners are achieving, what they are doing and to where they are progressing.

- 73 All providers collect demographic data about learners when they enrol. However, the use of this data to inform planning and monitoring is very underdeveloped. Providers make little use of this data to identify the characteristics of their learner cohort, to target provision, to identify underrepresented groups or to resource any additional learning needs.
- 74 Similarly, this data is not shared with other providers in order to create a picture of the demographic characteristics of the adults taking part in adult community-based learning in the area. Furthermore, currently, there is no national policy drive to pull this information together at a national level. Whilst this information exists to some extent in the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR), is no national picture of the demography of adult community-based learners in Wales.
- 75 Performance indicators and benchmarks for the whole ACL sector would help providers and learners to aspire to achieve the highest standards and:
- instil ambition to perform at the highest level;
  - prevent poor performance by early detection and action;
  - help providers to compare their performance across the areas in which they operate and with the national picture; and
  - provide a view on how well learners are achieving and of their progression routes.
- 76 A shared range of sector specific performance indicators would measure:
- completion, attainment and successful completion at subject level (eg Level 1 IT, Level 2 Art);
  - progression to higher levels of learning;
  - progression to new areas of learning at the same level;
  - the success and progression of learners with little previous success in learning;
  - the impact of strategies for widening participation; and
  - demographic trends in the participation of learners in adult community-based learning.

## **Appendix 1: The common inspection framework**

The common inspection framework for education and training in Wales centres on seven key questions that apply to the provider, or partnership, as a whole, as well as to any aspects of their work such as areas of learning, subjects, courses and programmes. The key questions are as follows:

### **Standards**

- 1 How well do learners achieve?

### **The quality of education and training**

- 2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?
- 3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?
- 4 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?

### **Leadership and management**

- 5 How effective are leadership and strategic management?
- 6 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?
- 7 How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?

## Appendix 2: Evidence base

This report draws on evidence reported in the inspections of adult community-based learning undertaken in:

Caerphilly (October 2004)  
Wrexham (February 2005)  
Rhondda Cynon Taff (May 2005)  
Conwy (November 2005)  
Denbighshire (February 2006)  
Torfaen (March 2006)  
Ceredigion (May 2006)  
Pembrokeshire (October 2006)  
Neath Port Talbot (February 2007)  
The Vale of Glamorgan (March 2007)  
Bridgend (May 2007)  
Carmarthenshire (October 2007)  
Cardiff (December 2007)  
The YMCA Community College (December 2006)  
The Workers Educational Association (January 2008)

Data presented in the tables is taken from the grades awarded for Key Questions 1-7 for all inspections of adult community-based learning since October 2004.

Further interviews were also conducted with:

- Coleg Harlech Workers Educational Association North Wales
- Coleg Gwent
- University of Glamorgan
- The RISE Learners Forum

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The Estyn Reports of inspections of adult community-based learning can be downloaded at [www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk)

## Glossary/references

<b>Common Investment Fund</b>	A Welsh Assembly Government initiative to promote collaborative working, improvements in the learning infrastructure, the quality of the learning experience and the quality of the learning environment
<b>Community Consortia for Education and Training (CCET)</b>	These were local groups of education and training providers for learners over 16 that met regularly to discuss and plan local provision. They were established in 1999 following the recommendations of the Education and Training Action Plan for Wales. However, the Welsh Assembly Government is reviewing the role of CCETs following the establishment of 14-19 networks and Children and Young People Partnership groups.
<b>Communities First</b>	Communities First is the Welsh Assembly Government's programme to improve the living conditions and prospects for people in the most disadvantaged communities across Wales.
<b>County Voluntary Councils</b>	County Voluntary Councils represent and promote the voluntary sector within their Local Authority area.
<b>Credit Union</b>	Credit Unions offer financial services to the community including loans, savings, current account, accounts and insurance.
<b>DCELLS</b>	The Welsh Assembly Government's Department for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning
<b>ELWa</b>	Education and Learning Wales. This is now part of the Welsh Assembly Government's Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills.
<b>European Social Fund</b>	The European Social Fund (ESF) was set up to improve employment opportunities in the European Union and so help raise standards of living. It aims to help people fulfil their potential by giving them better skills and better job prospects.

<b>ICT</b>	Information and communications technology
<b>Learn Direct</b>	Learn Direct is an organisation that provides flexible on line training opportunities via a network of 2000 on-line learning centres in Wales, England and Northern Ireland.
<b>MIND</b>	The National Association for Mental Health in the United Kingdom
<b>Quality Improvement Fund</b>	The Quality Improvement Fund (QIF) was a key element of the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy for driving up quality and promoting excellence in the delivery of post 16 learning across Wales. The fund was administered by the then ELWa.
<b>SCOPE</b>	Scope is a UK disability organisation whose focus is people with cerebral palsy.
<b>Sure Start</b>	Sure Start is a Welsh Assembly Government programme which aims to deliver the best start in life for every child and brings together early education, childcare, health and family support.
<b>The third sector</b>	The third sector is comprised of non-governmental organisations that are value driven and which principally reinvest their surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives. It includes voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises, co-operatives and mutuals. Housing associations are also included in the third sector.
<b>Women's refuge</b>	A women's refuge is a safe haven for women with or without children who have suffered domestic violence.
<b>Youth Offending Team</b>	There is a Youth Offending Team in every local authority in Wales and England. Staff from a variety of agencies are represented in the teams. The purpose of the team is to prevent youth offending.