



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Bridgend Adult Community Learning Partnership
Brewery Lane
Bridgend
CF31 4AP**

Date of inspection: May 2012

by

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



During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the provider's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

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

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Publication date: 05/09/2012

Context

The County Borough of Bridgend has a population of 134,564. The largest town is Bridgend, followed by Maesteg and the seaside resort of Porthcawl. There are eight Communities First areas representing some of the most deprived wards in Wales. Welsh Government statistics show that about 3% of Bridgend's population are from ethnic minority communities and the percentage of people who say they can speak Welsh (15.5%) is lower than the Welsh average of 24.8%.

The Annual Population Survey 2011 shows that 70.2% of people aged 16-64 years old were in employment compared to the Welsh average of 66.2%. The economic inactivity rate at September 2011 was 21.6%, lower than the Welsh average of 23.5%. The largest employment sectors in the county borough are wholesale, retail, transport, hotels and food followed by public administration, defence, education and health.

The county borough has a lower rate of adults of working age with no qualifications (11.3%) compared to the Welsh average of 12.1%. Whilst there are more people living in the county borough qualified to NQF level 3 (21.6%) than the Welsh average of 20.4%, there are slightly fewer people qualified to NQF Level 2 (21.1%) compared to the Welsh average of 21.4%. Similarly there are fewer people in the county borough qualified to NQF level 4 and above (29.3%) than the Welsh average of 30.6%.

The Bridgend Adult Community Learning Partnership

The two main providers in Bridgend are Bridgend College, which is responsible for about two thirds of the provision and Bridgend County Borough Council, which delivers a quarter of the provision. The remainder of the provision is delivered by a range of voluntary sector providers. The Bridgend Adult Community Learning (ACL) Partnership involves a range of public and voluntary-sector organisations in Bridgend County Borough including:

- Bridgend County Borough Council;
- Bridgend College;
- Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations (BAVO);
- Workers' Educational Association (WEA) South Wales; and
- Glamorgan Welsh for Adults Centre.

The strategic direction for adult community learning provision in the County Borough is overseen by the Skills sub group of the Bridgend Regeneration and Environmental Partnership. The Bridgend Adult Community Learning Partnership was last inspected in May 2007.

Summary

The provider's current performance	Unsatisfactory
The provider's prospects for improvement	Adequate

Current performance

The partnership is judged as unsatisfactory because:

- too many learners do not successfully complete their learning in comparison with learners in other providers and against national data comparators;
- many learners do not progress to higher level courses;
- the assessment of learning is not effective enough to help learners to improve their outcomes;
- overall, the partnership does not co-ordinate its care, support and guidance well enough;
- arrangements for planning the curriculum are weak;
- there is insufficient attention to the strategic planning and management of adult community learning to provide guidance or direction for the provision;
- it has not yet fully developed systems to monitor, evaluate, scrutinise and challenge the quality and impact of its work; and
- very slow progress has been made in fully addressing the recommendations from the last inspection.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement for the partnership are judged as adequate because:

- many changes are too recent to evaluate the impact on strategic management;
- the partnership is slow to address areas for improvement; and
- the partnership's continuity planning to secure key aspects of provision is not robust enough.

However:

- the partnership has developed its provision to better meet national and local priorities. Partners show a good willingness to work together within the partnership and with external organisations, to reduce duplication, develop new programmes of work and extend provision for learners;
- completion, attainment and success rates show an upward trend for the Bridgend College direct delivery and in its franchised provision;
- the two main providers have recently implemented a standardised and moderated assessed observation process and completed two internal inspections of franchised and Bridgend College ACL provision; and
- partners demonstrate an awareness of the need to develop the ACL partnership.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the partnership should:

- R1 improve success rates for all learners in line with national comparators and increase the number of learners who progress to higher level courses;
- R2 improve the process of assessment of and for learning to make sure that learners know what they need to do to improve their outcomes;
- R3 improve curriculum planning to:
- identify need;
 - identify target groups;
 - plan progression routes; and
 - increase opportunities for bilingual and Welsh medium learning;
- R4 improve the planning and co-ordination of provision for essential skills;
- R5 improve the co-ordination of care, support and guidance to make sure that it helps learners to improve the standards they achieve;
- R6 improve the strategic planning of adult community learning in order to:
- agree strategic aims and objectives;
 - identify performance indicators and measurable targets;
 - agree the responsibilities of partners; and
 - improve the partnerships capacity to co-ordinate its work; and
- R7 improve systems to monitor and evaluate the performance of the partnership and the arrangements for the scrutiny and challenge of the quality and impact of the partnership's work.

What happens next?

Due to the unsatisfactory nature of the provision inspected in Bridgend, the inspection team judges that the Bridgend ACL Partnership will undergo a re-inspection within 18-24 months.

The focus of the re-inspection will be the progress made by the partnership in addressing the areas for improvement identified in those key questions and quality indicators judged as adequate and unsatisfactory. The re-inspection team will also evaluate the progress the partnership has made in meeting each of the recommendations from this inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Unsatisfactory

Standards: Unsatisfactory

Overall the successful completion rate achieved by learners is near to or well below national comparators in most of the provision. However, too many learners do not successfully complete their course. A quarter of learners do not successfully complete their qualifications in the college's franchise provision, which is near to the national comparator. Twenty-one per cent of learners do not successfully achieve their qualifications in the provision directly delivered by Bridgend College, which is well below the national comparator. Whilst learners in the local authority provision successfully complete their courses well in comparison with national averages, a fifth of these learners do not achieve successful completion.

Learners in Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes work towards useful Essential Skills Wales qualifications. Most learners make good progress in classes and learn new skills. However, successful completion of ABE courses is just below national comparators. Not enough learners achieve credit for specific skills to recognise small steps of learning. A few learners in ABE classes do not take qualifications at a level that challenges their progress well enough. A few learners taking essential skills achieve a range of accredited outcomes in different subjects, including English, cookery and mathematics. However, too few learners progress to level one and level two courses.

Learners in classes for English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) work towards relevant Skills for Life qualifications and make good progress in classes. A minority attain the skills and qualifications necessary for citizenship. Successful outcomes for ESOL courses are comparable to the national comparator.

Learners taking ACL courses make good progress in classes and a few learners combine adult learning courses with specific literacy and numeracy classes. Learners taking digital photography show a good understanding of the basic principles of the technical aspects of photography. They take pride in their work and share their work well with each other. Learners in French beginners' classes achieve good standards and make good progress. They have good pronunciation and a good grasp of everyday phrases. However, in a few classes not enough learners are developing their literacy and numeracy skills well enough as part of their course. Many learners do not progress to higher level courses.

A majority of learners use individual learning plans well to set targets and monitor and track their own progress. However, a few learners do not have individual learning plans as part of their course. A few learners have plans with generic class targets and are not able to monitor their own individual progress well enough.

Welsh speakers do not use their Welsh language well enough within classes. Learners across all providers do not develop their understanding of Wales, the Welsh language and Welsh culture well enough.

Wellbeing: Good

The majority of learners feel safe and know whom to approach in the event of an incident or issue. Learners' attendance is good. Most learners demonstrate high levels of motivation and enthusiasm to achieve. The majority of learners enjoy the challenge of learning and feel that their tutors support them well. For example, learners taking First Steps into becoming a Health and Social Care Worker take the course to improve their employment prospects and relish learning new skills.

Most learners enjoy their learning and take part well in class. Learners are enthusiastic and support each other well. Learners help foster a good environment to develop their own learning skills. For example, learners in French and essential skills apply themselves well to their learning and undertake tasks with enthusiasm.

Many learners apply their new skills for the benefits of their communities, such as acting as a secretary of a karate club, a football team coach and the chair of an out-of-school club. One ESOL learner volunteers in a charity shop to improve her language skills. Many learners use their learning to improve their employment opportunities.

Most learners develop good personal, social and learning skills. A majority of learners have improved their self-confidence and their confidence in their ability to learn. Learners in photography show good critical appraisal skills when discussing their work with others and listening to their ideas and viewpoints. Many learners demonstrate appropriate independent learning skills.

Many learners are not sufficiently aware of how to contribute to the development of their courses or how to influence the content of future sessions. Providers do not help learners to identify progression routes clearly enough.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Adequate
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Learning experiences: Adequate

The partnership has developed its provision to better meet national and local priorities for adult community learning. About a third of all courses are in the subject area of preparation for life and work. Provision is available in all areas of the county borough and at times to suit learners.

Partners work appropriately together to offer a wide range of provision. The partnership is extending provision for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Providers have introduced pre-employment and employability skills provision, which complements existing programmes delivered by the Library service and Learn Direct provision well. Most of this provision is accredited and available at levels from entry to level three.

Bridgend College gives good support to other providers to help them improve their provision for essential skills. However, the partnership does not have a strategy for developing essential skills across its provision and in a broader range of contexts. The partnership does not monitor and evaluate essential skills data well enough in order to improve and develop provision.

Individual providers appropriately target provision at priority groups, including ESOL learners, hard to reach learners in disadvantaged communities and learners with physical and mental health problems. Providers work well with local employers to deliver learning to employees. Providers also work well with charities to deliver learning to their clients.

However, the partnership's arrangements for planning the curriculum are weak. It has not undertaken a comprehensive needs analysis that identifies target groups and the scale of need in the community. As a result, the partnership is not clear how well provision meets the needs of communities or their learners. The partnership has carried out a potentially useful audit of provision, which has reduced duplication of provision and increased Welsh for Adults courses. Nevertheless, the partnership does not plan progression routes for learners well enough. As a result, learners cannot identify easily the progression routes available to them and many learners do not progress to higher levels of learning.

Progress in developing Welsh medium provision has been slow since the last inspection. The partnership has recently delegated Welsh medium provision to a Welsh Forum involving a range of Welsh medium organisations. The Forum has undertaken a needs analysis. As a result, it has developed a few taster courses and short courses such as harp playing and French through the medium of Welsh in different parts of the county borough.

Teaching: Adequate

All tutors have good subject knowledge and communicate this to learners effectively. Most tutors have detailed schemes of work and clear lesson plans with specific learning objectives. They match the work to meet learners' interests and level of learning well. Nearly all tutors use a range of teaching approaches effectively to promote good active learning such as individual tasks, pair work, group exercises, question and answer sessions and use of regular homework. The pace and style of most sessions meet learners' needs well.

In their classes most tutors give good attention to individual learners' needs and interests, with appropriate challenge to their learning. They encourage and support learners constantly in their learning. However, in a very few cases not all aspects of the work are explained well enough. Most tutors use questions to reinforce learning effectively. However, a few tutors do not use enough open questions to assess learners' knowledge and understanding.

All tutors give regular and appropriate oral feedback to learners to improve their understanding. The majority of tutors mark learners' written work regularly and provide clear feedback on the standard of their work. However, many tutors do not explain what learners need to do to improve their skills. In general tutors' comments are not specific enough to help learners know what they have achieved or how to improve their work further. The majority of tutors do not encourage learners to evaluate their own work, and the practice of evaluating the work of others is very limited.

The majority of tutors do not use individual learning plans effectively to track and review learners' progress. Tutors use group profiles in other classes, which identify

specific issues about individual learners. However, these issues are not used to agree learning plans with learners. As a result individual learners cannot track their progress well.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate

Overall, individual providers offer appropriate support for ACL learners. However, the partnership does not co-ordinate its care, support and guidance well enough. It does not evaluate the impact of its care, support and guidance on raising the standards that learners attain. There is little planning or sharing of good practice.

Bridgend College provides good support for ACL learners. For example, it helps learners with problems regarding housing, mental health and substance use. ESOL tutors support their learners well by giving advice and guidance on a wide range of issues and help them to settle into their communities. Learners who attend the college have useful induction sessions that pay good attention to health and safety and equalities and diversity. However, arrangements for learners in outreach centres are not as well developed

The college and the local authority provide effective support for learners with dyslexia and hearing impairment. They provide assistive technology for learners with visual impairment. In general, however, arrangements in the partnership for identifying and meeting additional learning needs lack co-ordination. The partnership has not agreed protocols for sharing data, which makes it difficult for the partnership to monitor effectively the take up of support for additional learning needs. As a result, too many learners do not get the right type of support to help them succeed.

The partnership has no marketing strategy. However, individual providers have developed a range of effective marketing tools including web-based information. Providers distribute ACL brochures to homes and key centres. Many learners find the brochures useful to find out about courses. However, providers do not identify progression opportunities clearly enough in their course materials.

All of the partners have comprehensive safeguarding policies and procedures in place. Providers have effective arrangements for checking CRB records and for taking up references. All staff undertake induction training on the protection of vulnerable adults. However, the partnership has no standardised training involving all providers. The college has a very effective safeguarding committee that has developed a number of useful initiatives to keep learners safe. However, not all providers from the partnership currently sit on this group.

Learning environment: Good

Overall, the partnership pays good attention to equality and diversity and provides appropriate awareness training for most of its staff. The environment in the majority of classes is welcoming and courteous. The college, through the Excelsior Plus¹

¹ Excelsior Plus is funded by the European Social Fund. It is part of a wider strategic project entitled 'Working Skills for Adults' covering the ESF Convergence areas of South Wales. The programme helps adults who are in work gain new skills and qualifications.

programme, works well with small businesses, social enterprises and charities to help them improve their equality and diversity strategies.

On the whole, learners show a high regard for each other's views and ideas. However, in one case the tutor and a few learners show a lack of respect for the Welsh language.

The partnership succeeds in creating a positive ethos that supports social and educational inclusion. It has good systems in place to promote learning opportunities for learners from disadvantaged communities, especially in developing skills for employment. However, not all classes attract the intended targeted groups.

Overall, venues provide good quality facilities for learning and are fit for purpose. They are well lit, comfortable and accessible to learners with disabilities. Most venues have a good range of resources, including the provision of laptops and whiteboards.

However, venues do not promote Welsh culture or bilingualism well enough. In a few cases noticeboards lack displays. Providers miss opportunities to bring stimulation and character to learning environments. In ABE and ESOL classes, providers display information on walls and noticeboards in a style that is not helpful for learners with low reading skills.

In a very few cases, resources are not fit for purpose and adversely affect the quality of teaching and learning. For example, ICT tutors are not able to provide practical demonstrations of work in the classroom because they use different operating systems to those used by learners. In a few other cases, venues do not provide printers in classrooms and learners are not able to see the end result of their work.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Unsatisfactory
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Leadership: Unsatisfactory

There have been a number of changes to the local authority's planning structures since the last inspection. Management of adult community learning provision has passed from the Learning and Skills Network to a Skills Group of the Bridgend Regeneration and Environmental Partnership (BREP). Neither group has given enough attention to the strategic planning of adult community learning. This has hindered the ACL partnership in tackling the recommendations from the last inspection.

The local authority has a supportive skills strategy, which aims to increase the number of workless people taking part in learning and improve local residents' skill levels.

However, the partnership does not have a clear strategic plan for adult community learning, underpinned by strategic objectives. Neither does it have a clear business plan in which partners agree targets to guide their work. In addition, the partnership has not agreed how it will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its work or the range of data to collect and analyse to inform its planning. This prevents the partnership from making timely progress in planning and managing its own performance and evaluating the impact of its provision. Neither can the partnership measure its contribution to meeting the objectives of the authority's skills strategy.

The partnership's management group involves a good range of providers, including voluntary sector partners. The group helps partners make improvements to provision, such as reducing the amount of duplication.

However, the group does not co-ordinate its work well. This impacts adversely on its capacity to manage and monitor improvement. Two members of the partnership have discussed appointing a co-ordinator and new arrangements for leading the partnership. Nevertheless progress in taking action on these matters has been too slow.

Overall, provision responds to national priorities. However the funding for a key programme, which aims to improve learners' preparation for work, ends in August 2012. Whilst partners wish to continue to deliver the programme, there is no agreed plan in place to make sure the provision can continue.

Improving quality: Unsatisfactory

The partnership does not have good systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of its provision. Neither the skills sub group, nor the partnership's strategic group, analyse and challenge the performance of the partnership well enough. Nevertheless, individual providers have suitable systems in place to assess the quality of their provision. The two main providers, Bridgend College and Bridgend County Borough Council, work appropriately together to implement a process for observing teaching and learning.

The partnership's self-assessment process is not effective. It does not evaluate the outcomes of adult community learning well, in particular because it does not make good use of the available data and intelligence to identify strengths and areas for improvement, nor to set targets and plan for improvement.

The partnership did not involve all partners in producing the self-assessment report. Senior staff from Bridgend College and Bridgend County Borough Council produced the partnership's self-assessment report. The partnership's operational group, which involves a range of providers, approved the report and its findings. The partnership did not involve learners or tutors well enough in the self-assessment process. Overall, there is a poor match between the partnership's findings and those of the Estyn inspection team.

All providers in the partnership have strategies for listening to and involving learners. However, the partnership does not have an overall plan for learner involvement.

The partnership's plan for improvement is not good enough. Success criteria are not clear and lack challenge. The partnership's identified actions focus too much on operational issues. They do not tackle issues in the management of the partnership well enough. The partnership has not identified which partners will take responsibility for its improvement actions.

The partnership has not effectively tackled many of the issues identified in the last inspection in 2007. The partnership has not improved its processes for planning, quality assurance or the co-ordination of support for additional learning needs. Neither has it improved opportunities for bi-lingual learning to any great extent.

Partnership working: Adequate

Individual providers work satisfactorily together to develop programmes of work in line with the skills strategy. They combine appropriately to share resources and expertise, increase funding and extend the range of provision available across the county borough.

For example, providers have worked well to jointly secure extra funds from external sources for programmes such as Bridges into Work – which helps people improve their skills and increase their chances of getting a job, and the Excelsior programme. Staff from Bridgend College work well to train staff from Work Clubs to help learners access Learn Direct courses. However, providers have not put suitable succession plans in place to continue these programmes once the original funding ceases.

The Council's library service works well with other providers to support learners to improve their basic skills. Individual providers work well with a range of other bodies, such as the Stroke Association, to provide learning opportunities for their clients.

Bridgend College and Bridgend County Borough Council have recently agreed proposals to change arrangements for the leadership and co-ordination of the partnership. However, they have not implemented these proposals.

Resource management: Unsatisfactory

The majority of staff are appropriately qualified and experienced for the subjects they deliver. All staff have access to a good range of professional development training and opportunities to share good practice in teaching and learning. There are several good examples of partners sharing resources to provide joint training activities. However, the partnership does not have a planned approach to staff development. It does not do enough to measure the impact of staff development activities on improving learners' standards and the quality of teaching and assessment.

The partnership makes good use of external funding sources to deliver adult community provision across the county. However, the partnership has no clearly defined exit strategies for this kind of provision. As a result the partnership is not sure that it can continue to meet its priorities when these funding streams come to an end.

In general, providers use demographic data appropriately to direct resources to areas where it is needed most and for learners with essential skills needs. In a few cases, partners work well together to reduce duplication by agreeing which partner is the most appropriate to deliver courses. However, the partnership does not have a joint marketing strategy to recruit learners and to support their progression on to further learning. Venues are well equipped but only in a very few cases do partners share accommodation and equipment in order to reduce costs.

The partnership has no strategy to evaluate the impact of resources on learner outcomes, which are unsatisfactory, and does not know whether funding is used effectively. Therefore the inspection teams judges that the partnership provides unsatisfactory value for money.

Appendix 1

Learner satisfaction

Estyn carried out a learner survey just before the inspection of the partnership.

Two hundred and fifty-one learners successfully returned the questionnaire and most of them completed most of the questions. The findings helped Estyn to have a view of learners' opinions and experience of the provision currently delivered in the partnership area.

Nearly all learners felt that taking part in learning has helped them improve their life skills and will help them achieve their goals. Many learners also felt that taking part in learning has helped them become involved in their community. Nearly all learners would recommend their learning provider to others. Nearly all learners enjoy their learning.

Nearly all learners felt they were given good information when they were choosing which course to take. Most learners consider they had received good advice about what they could do when they had finished their learning programme. Nearly all learners reported that they had good personal support from their tutors, especially during the first weeks of their learning programme.

Nearly all learners felt that staff helped them to learn and make good progress. Nearly all staff show all learners respect and listen to their views. Nearly all staff use good quality learning materials and nearly all learners have enough access to books and equipment to help them do their work.

However, a few learners felt that staff did not give them enough opportunity to choose to learn in either Welsh or English.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

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