



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

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

**Bridgend Adult Community Learning Partnership
Bridgend County Borough Council
Civic Offices
Angel Street
Bridgend
CF31 4WB**

Date of visit: October 2013

by

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

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The monitoring team

Liam Kealy	Reporting Inspector
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Outcome of monitoring visit

Bridgend ACL Partnership is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in May 2012.

Estyn will re-inspect the partnership following the publication of learner outcome reports for 2012-2013. Estyn inspectors will continue to visit the partnership in the intervening period to maintain an oversight of progress.

Progress since the last inspection

Recommendation 1: Improve success rates for all learners in line with national comparators and increase the number of learners who progress to higher level courses

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

Overall there has been an improvement across the partnership in the number of learners who successfully complete their course. The partnership's unverified data for 2012-2013 indicates a further improvement. However, many sectors remain around or below national comparators.

In Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) around a quarter of learners do not successfully complete their entry level courses and around a fifth do not successfully complete courses at level 1. Not enough learners take ABE qualifications at level 2.

Learners in adult and community learning (ACL) classes are generally successful at level 1. However, at entry level and level 2, around a fifth of learners do not achieve successful completion. Learners successfully complete their courses in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) well compared to learners in other partnerships. However, learners' success rates in Art, Media and Publishing are well below those of others in the sector.

The partnership has developed a useful process for tracking progression within Bridgend College and for collecting information from other partners. It has set targets for the number of learners progressing to higher level courses. Individual learning plans usefully ask learners to consider their progression possibilities. However, the partnership has not carried out a strategic analysis to find out what progression routes are needed, including routes to higher education, and how these can be offered.

Recommendation 2: Improve the process of assessment of and for learning to make sure that learners know what they need to do to improve their outcomes

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

The partnership has carried out very useful and comprehensive training for teachers to find out about and discuss best practice in assessment of and for learning. Inspectors sampled learners' work and found that teachers mark it effectively and

provide helpful comments that tell the learner what they need to do to improve their work.

The new individual learning plans have a specific focus on reviewing the achievement of learning targets and goals. All learners set up to three learning targets and discuss them appropriately with their teacher. However, teachers, particularly in ABE, do not undertake assessment for learning at the start of courses well enough. As a result, teachers cannot recommend short, specific targets to learners to help them measure their progress throughout the course. Learners' targets on many ACL individual learning plans are not specific enough.

The partnership has developed a detailed lesson observation form for use across nearly all providers within the partnership. This has an appropriate focus on learner progress and progression and assessment of and for learning. However, it is too early to see the impact of this initiative.

Recommendation 3: Improve curriculum planning to:

- **identify need;**
- **identify target groups;**
- **plan progression routes; and**
- **increase opportunities for bilingual and Welsh medium learning**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

The partnership has improved curriculum planning by organising the learning it offers to meet a skills and a wellbeing agenda. This makes sure that learning has a stronger focus on meeting national and local priorities. The partnership's strategic board approves course plans annually.

Overall, the partnership has a good understanding of the range of learning needs within the area. The partnership recognises that there are gaps in its understanding of adult learning needs at a community level. It is responding appropriately to this through a range of networking initiatives to analyse on-going needs, including with Communities First.

The partnership makes good use of a range of data to inform its planning. It also uses data well to identify target groups, such as adults over 50 whose basic skills levels limit their flexibility in the employment market.

The partnership has developed a useful marketing strategy. This helps identify new target groups and suggests ways in which they can be attracted to learning. The strategy includes output measures that will be used to judge the effectiveness of the various approaches.

The partnership has produced an attractive joint course brochure, together with a useful website, that clearly identifies progression opportunities. There are good examples of learners progressing from informal to more formal learning. For example, nearly all learners progress from the e-libs project on digital learning to formal literacy and numeracy classes.

The partnership has made good progress in developing Welsh medium courses. It has recruited additional Welsh speaking tutors and deploys them flexibly. The partnership is also adopting more creative ways to embed a Welsh dimension within courses. It is expanding the opportunities to learn about Wales through the medium of English. For example, offering courses on Welsh history and the geology and geography of Wales

Recommendation 4: Improve the planning and co-ordination of provision for essential skills

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

The partnership has produced an ABE Strategy that identifies appropriately the key elements involved in addressing the skills deficit of adult learners in Bridgend. However, it does not say clearly enough how this work links to the plans of the Local Service Board's skill subgroup. Neither does the plan address the leadership and management aspects of ABE well enough. Nevertheless, in recognition of the need to strengthen management of ABE and ESOL the college is restructuring the organisation of these subject areas to improve the planning, co-ordination and quality of provision.

A sub-group of the partnership makes appropriate use of an action plan to monitor the implementation of the strategy regularly. However, the completion dates for many actions are too far in the future and the plan does not identify interim milestones. As a result, the partnership cannot be sure that these actions will be completed in a timely manner. A few of the partnership's actions, such as those for engagement and curriculum, are not set out in enough detail to make sure that these objectives will be met.

The partnership has ambitious staff development plans for all ABE, ACL and support staff to undertake 'Delivering Essential Skills Wales' training. However, it has not set annual targets for the numbers of staff it intends to train. In addition, the partnership's reason for setting the minimum qualification for ABE staff at Level 3 Delivering ESW is not clear.

It is too soon to say what the impact of the strategy will be on outcomes for learners.

Recommendation 5: Improve the co-ordination of care, support and guidance to make sure that it helps learners to improve the standards they achieve

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

The partnership has worked well to develop new procedures for co-ordinating support for learners. The partnership's learner sub-group has introduced a process for collecting information from learners either at enrolment or at the beginning of their course.

The partnership implemented these procedures in September 2013. The new processes have already helped providers to identify learning support needs more

quickly and, as a result, they have put appropriate assistance in place.

The learner sub-group intends to hold a learner support panel on termly basis. The panel will review whether the support provided for individual learners is helping them to achieve their learning goals. Partners have also increased support for tutors to help them offer better assistance to learners.

The learner sub-group has also gained agreement from all partners to collect summary information about the range of support offered and how well it has helped learners to achieve their goals. This will provide the partnership with an improved set of data about support needs to use in planning and allocating resources.

Bridgend College has set up a new learner database that collects details about individual learners, their participation in learning, their support needs and the progress they make in developing confidence. Over time, the college intends to use this database to improve its understanding of the progress made by learners and the impact of support it provides for additional learning needs.

Recommendation 6: 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**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

The partnership has made very good progress in improving strategic planning since the last inspection. The partnership has identified how it will strengthen planning through closer working with Communities First and community development work. It intends to enhance the analysis of need and curriculum planning. It is too early to fully evaluate the impact of this on outcomes for learners.

The partnership has reviewed its role and has produced clear strategies, whose aims are consistent with and complement the local service board's aims and the council's single improvement plan. The strategy sets out objectives and performance targets, which the partnership uses to structure its quality development plan (QDP). The partnership's strategic board monitors progress towards the implementation of its QDP objectives during regular meetings. The board receives helpful reports enabling it to clarify that the rate of progress is good. Board members provide a good level of challenge to partners.

Key partners have reviewed and identified how they can best serve the development of the partnership, resulting in the college agreeing to take responsibility for delivering the adult skills provision, including Basic/Essential Skills, ICT and Skills for Employment. At the same time, the local authority has taken responsibility for the development of wellbeing provision, identifying and offering provision that addresses community engagement, health and wellbeing and the promotion of family welfare. This has improved the focus of partners' work and re-energised the partnership.

At the time of the last inspection, the college was planning to employ a partnership manager. The implementation of this plan has had a good impact on the co-ordination of the planning and development of services and has been a valuable catalyst for improvement. This enhancement of the partnership's resources has improved the monitoring of performance and the information and data made available to partners, and has made sure that partners carry out work within agreed deadlines.

Recommendation 7: 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

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

The partnership has improved its capacity for monitoring and evaluating its performance. It has set up a range of processes and procedures that aim to bring a greater focus on challenging the performance of the partnership and the quality of its work. Nevertheless, the partnership has only recently implemented these initiatives and is not yet able to demonstrate their impact fully.

For example, the partnership's strategic board has increased its role in monitoring and assessing how well the partnership performs. It makes appropriate use of national statistics to assess learner outcomes and identify courses and subjects that do not perform well. As a result, the strategic board has charged individual partners to improve underperforming courses.

The college has strengthened its staffing structure to improve how it manages the quality of its ACL provision. It intends to appoint staff with increased focus for ACL subject areas and improve the quality of these subject areas. This will bring these staff closer to the work and increase their understanding of the performance of these subject areas.

The partnership has implemented a quality charter that sets out criteria to make sure partners work to common standards and have consistency in their quality processes. The charter sets out an annual quality cycle that places responsibilities on partners to undertake common self-assessment activities within agreed timescales. The charter aims to help partners to sustain a focus on improvement and self-assessment activities.

The partnership has recently agreed a learner voice strategy to help learners inform all aspects of the work of the partnership. This strategy sets out a range of ways the partnership and constituent partners will secure the views of learners. The partnership has planned to hold its first learner forum in November.

Recommendations

In order to maintain and improve on this progress, the partnership should maintain momentum in working towards meeting the inspection recommendations that have not yet been fully addressed.

Final Comments

The partnership has responded quickly to address the recommendations from the inspection. It has worked well to redefine roles and responsibilities, agree priorities, and implement new systems and processes. The college has invested significant resources to increase the capacity of the partnership to develop and improve provision for learners and communities.