



Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

**A report on the adult learning in the community provision
of**

**Carmarthenshire Adult Learning in the Community
Partnership**

**Carmarthenshire County Council
County Hall
Carmarthen
SA31 1JP**

Date of inspection: November 2023

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Carmarthenshire Adult Learning in the Community Partnership

The provision for adult learning in the community in Carmarthenshire is co-ordinated by the Carmarthenshire Adult Community Learning Partnership. Partners include Carmarthenshire County Council's Adult Community Learning, Coleg Sir Gar, Adult Learning Wales, Learn Welsh Carmarthenshire, Careers Wales and Communities For Work Plus. In addition, the partnership works with a wider base of other providers, including voluntary sector organisations, schools and community projects, as well as Housing and the education and children's services. The key partners deliver provision in the priority areas of essential skills and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) as identified by the Welsh Government and funded through direct grants and franchise arrangements. Provision is offered in a range of venues which include community learning centres, community venues, libraries and schools.

Carmarthenshire is the third largest county in Wales in terms of geographical area and fourth largest in terms of population size. It has the fifth lowest population density in Wales. Approximately 61% of Carmarthenshire's population live in rural areas.

Carmarthenshire has over 187,000 people living in over 81,000 households, with an above average level of people aged 65 plus at 24% and a below average level of those aged under 15 at 16%.

Just over 26% of residents over the age of 16 are economically inactive with just under 72% in employment, slightly lower than the Wales average. Of these 73% are in full time employment, with gross weekly pay for full time workers of £623.40, which is higher than the Wales average of £603.50, but lower than the average for Great Britain at £642.20.

Office of National Statistics data shows that around 34.5% households are living in poverty. This is 1.1% higher than the Wales average. The data also shows that residents between the ages of 16 and 64 who have qualifications at level 4 or higher stands at 40%, which is slightly higher than the Wales average of 38.6% and 89% of the population have qualifications at level 2 or higher. The percentage of people with no qualifications in Carmarthenshire is 7% slightly lower than the Wales average of 8.3%.

In 2021, census data indicates that the percentage of Welsh speakers aged three or over stood at just under 40%, a decrease from 43.9% in 2011. 97.6% of Carmarthenshire residents report that their main language is either English or Welsh. One point two per cent of people report that their main language is Polish; this is higher than the Wales level of 0.7%. Carmarthenshire is home to approximately 450 refugees and asylum seekers.

Summary

The Carmarthenshire Adult Learning Partnership works appropriately together to provide a suitable range of courses for learners across the county. In most cases, learners make suitable progress and develop and improve their knowledge and skills. Across the partnership, most learners apply themselves conscientiously when attending their courses. They develop a wide range of language, essential, life and craft skills. Learners work well with each other and their tutors. As a result of attending their courses, most learners improve their confidence and self-esteem. They also give each other emotional support when required and form friendship groups that further support their learning.

The partnership places a high focus on learner well-being through a variety of strategies that makes learning relevant and enjoyable. Tutors carefully consider learners' well-being needs alongside their learning needs.

The partnership delivers courses in an appropriate range of good quality venues. These venues are welcoming and engaging spaces that learners enjoy working in. Across the partnership, tutors give learners strong levels of support. In most cases they have high expectations for their learners and plan a wide range of interesting activities. Many sessions are delivered in a skilled manner with good quality and stimulating resources that engages learners and supports their progress. Although the partnership ensures that Welsh culture is included in the majority of courses, currently the partnership delivers very little Welsh medium provision.

The partnership engages with the community through a range of methods including sponsorship, advertising online and at community venues. Many learners access courses through recommendations from others. The partnership values learners' feedback and opinions and undertakes regular surveys. Although most of the provision is listed on the council website the partnership does not benefit from a shared area that gives detailed information about the availability of all courses on offer.

The partnership works appropriately to meet the needs of current learners. The strategic leadership of the partnership has recently changed with roles and responsibilities still to be clearly defined. Relationships between providers are positive and communication is generally informal. Operational management supports a wide range of teaching and learning activities well.

The partnership recognises the need to provide better provision planning, quality improvement and promotion of programmes. It also recognises the need to monitor and assure the overall quality of partnership provision and the development of Welsh-medium provision. Each partner assures the quality of its own provision. Currently, the partnership does not benefit from strategies to monitor the overall quality of its provision. Although strategic leaders are aware of these development needs, it is too early to measure the impact of their actions.

Recommendations

- R1 Sharpen strategic leadership procedures and practices in the partnership, including the quality assurance of provision
- R2 Develop and promote Welsh-medium provision

What happens next

The provider will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will review the provider's progress.

Estyn will invite the provider to prepare a case study on its work in relation to its multiple approaches to raising awareness of neuro-diversity, inclusivity and support for learners for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Learning

Most learners make suitable progress in learning in relation to their starting points. In discussion with their tutors, most learners set appropriate learning targets to help them meet personal, social and work-related goals.

In English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, most learners apply themselves conscientiously to developing the four language skills. They make quick progress in developing their speaking skills in particular. In many cases, learners attain a reasonable level of fluency that helps them to find work more easily. It helps them to carry out daily transactions and to make friends in their locality. Most beginner learners learn new vocabulary quickly. They can explain the meaning of the words to others in English and they use the words correctly in specific contexts, such as talking about the world of work.

Many beginner learners read short texts aloud well. They pay suitable attention to punctuation and read fluently with good pronunciation and intonation. They re-order picture stimuli correctly to recount the story to others in the class.

More advanced ESOL learners show a good understanding of grammar and they apply their developing knowledge within new contexts. They use reading strategies, such as skimming and scanning, effectively to understand the key points of texts. In many cases, they write precise summaries of the material they have read. During online ESOL courses, most learners use their listening skills effectively to identify large numbers and to place the decimal point appropriately.

A few ESOL learners understand some simple words and phrases in Welsh, for example common greetings and idiomatic phrases. Many learners are developing

their understanding of Welsh culture and voice well through the use of texts, videos and discussions that tutors use as stimulus materials.

In literacy classes, most learners develop their skills of speaking, listening and understanding well. In these classes, learning is most effective where learners have the opportunity to develop their understanding of grammar through analysis of a range of texts, such as stories and poems. Learners with additional learning needs make good progress in their learning.

In numeracy sessions in family learning, parents develop their understanding of the methods which schools use to teach primary children numeracy. Most parents find the sessions helpful and, with the tutors, they develop an interesting range of bilingual games and songs matched to the school's curriculum which they, and other family members, use at home to support and enhance children's learning at school. In the second half of sessions, children join their parents and they practise the games and songs. This provides children with useful one-to-one learning time with their parents. A few parents from these groups join other courses subsequently to further their own education.

In essential skills numeracy classes, learners review effectively household costs. They make good progress in developing new knowledge and skills in building a budget and in finding ways to save costs.

In digital classes, most learners make steady progress in developing a range of skills appropriate to their interests and needs from a common starting point, such as learning to use an application. Many learners learn to use their mobile phones to take photographs of items they wish to sell. They learn how to crop the photos to ensure that potential buyers can see the item clearly. Other learners develop their skills in sending emails with attachments and all learners gain confidence in using the newly acquired skills by practising with a range of electronic devices.

In personal interest courses, nearly all learners develop well the knowledge and key skills in which they are interested. For example, on music appreciation courses learners use their prior learning effectively to help them understand and analyse the development of European operatic styles. Most learners follow a musical score well with the tutor's help and they can identify the melodies which portray themes within the opera. They have a good understanding of how the use of different types of musical scales convey different moods and atmosphere in music. In art, collage and craft classes, learners use different types of materials effectively to create expressive artefacts. In many cases, learners find it therapeutic to learn new skills and be creative.

The opportunities for learners to learn through the medium of Welsh or bilingually are very limited.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Adult learners in Carmarthenshire benefit from the adult learning partnership's prioritisation of their well-being. The providers promote a variety of strategies that makes learning relevant, and enjoyable. Nearly all learners understand that their wider well-being and welfare needs are considered alongside their learning needs.

Many learners have busy and often challenging lives and recently will have suffered serious trauma. Many learners face the stress of long-term worklessness and increasing financial difficulties; others are isolated or lonely, or have varying degrees of mental health needs.

Centres re-opened swiftly after the COVID-19 lockdown periods and learners were keen to return to face-to-face learning. Older learners in particular felt that opportunities to learn and mix with others were important and the partnership helped them feel safe and secure.

Attendance is good. Learners enjoy their learning, have very positive attitudes, are attentive, and contribute well in class. In recent surveys, all learners say that they enjoy their learning and a very high proportion would recommend classes to friends. Nearly all learners feel safe and know how to make a complaint and report a problem or a safeguarding issue.

Learners improve their well-being through a range of academic and personal interest classes, which include crafts, art and music. They take part in further enrichment activities either facilitated by the partnership or by wider partner organisations. For example, ESOL learners share traditional food and recipes both as part of their learning and at extra social events. This enables them to make new friends, increase their understanding of other cultures and promote social cohesion.

Learners are keen to describe how taking part in learning enriches their lives, improves their life chances and combats loneliness and isolation. Learners in full-time ESOL classes show resilience in facing daunting new situations such as dealing with government administration and are highly motivated to learn English in order to improve their employability skills, to support their children's learning and to take part in local society. ESOL learners who are supported by tutors to volunteer in their profession, such as nursing and medicine, until they can attain the level of English required in the UK are positive about their future. Volunteering helps their self-esteem and keeps them in touch with familiar activities.

Learners in literacy classes are keen to improve their ability with language so that they can cope with form-filling and understand information. Many also wish to access literature and poetry so that they can push themselves out of their comfort zone, and understand and express feelings and emotions. Other learners are keen to improve their mathematical and information technology skills necessary to navigate the digital world. Many are keen to move to other types of learning, and where relevant, to progress to higher levels.

Learners in a range of special interest classes in the arts develop a love of learning. They develop artistic and craft skills and their appreciation and understanding of music, make new friends whilst often taking their minds off their low mood or personal difficulties. Background music played in appropriate classrooms helps them to keep calm and relaxed.

Many learners are developing their resilience and ability to deal with unfamiliar experiences. English for speakers of other language learners gain confidence from visiting a post office to understand how official procedures, such as gaining a driving licence, are carried out. Learners across the curriculum benefit from organised visits

to libraries, local places of interest or walks in towns and the countryside. They discuss what they have seen, done and experienced. This improves their local knowledge, their fitness and their mental health.

Nearly all learners work well together in class and help one another with their work. They also give each other emotional support and often form supportive friendships which develop outside of their classes. As a result of this peer support, learners become more tolerant of others' difficulties. Many overcome their self-consciousness and embarrassment about the challenges they have experienced in their own learning.

Teaching and learning experiences

The Carmarthenshire Adult Learning partnership works together appropriately to deliver a diverse range of courses across the county. The provider has a clear focus on delivered courses in the Welsh Government priority areas. As a result, most courses are in the essential skills, ESOL and employability learning areas. The ESOL provision includes a range of full-time and part-time courses from entry level to level two up to GCSE. The partnership delivers personal interest courses when a need or demand is identified. Examples of such courses include classical music appreciation and literature. The partnership offers a few family learning courses in literacy and numeracy to parents wanting to support their primary school age child's education. Currently, the partnership does not deliver provision bilingually or through the medium of Welsh.

Courses take place in a range of suitable venues. Many venues are welcoming and engaging spaces that learners, tutors and administrative support staff enjoy working in. In the best cases, learning environments are well resourced with a comprehensive range of teaching and learning materials. A very few courses, generally language courses, are delivered online by agreement between learners and tutors.

The partnership provides provision for learners with additional learning needs (ALN) appropriate to their needs. This provision also helps develop learners' communication and social skills as well as supporting their well-being needs.

Across the partnership, tutors are enthusiastic and particularly supportive and sensitive of learners' individual support needs. In most cases they plan sessions particularly well and have high expectations for their learners. They use their subject knowledge well to plan a wide range of interesting activities to increase learners' knowledge, skills and participation. Many sessions are delivered in a skilled manner with good quality and stimulating resources that are carefully matched to learners' individual learning styles and needs. Tutors show learners effectively how to put new skills into practice and actively encourage learners to extend their learning, for example a video about Ireland and Wales, which learners use as a basis to make a wide range of comparisons between the two countries.

Most tutors make good use of learners' individual learning plans to agree and set realistic but challenging personal goals. They use these plans well to capture key information about learners' starting points, short-term goals and support needs. In the best cases, these documents are used well to monitor the progress of learners against targets and contain focused and detailed records that track and monitor

learners' progress. Most tutors provide timely and purposeful verbal and written feedback to learners. During most sessions tutors move between the group checking on learner progress and giving constructive and supportive verbal feedback. This feedback gives learners clear guidance on improving their performance and also supports many in improving their verbal communication skills and confidence. Many tutors use questioning well to engage learners and check their understanding and knowledge.

In most cases, tutors support individual learners particularly well to develop their skills and knowledge. In most ESOL and personal interest lessons, tutors encourage the use of independent and critical thinking skills by encouraging learners to fully contribute to discussions. For example, in ESOL classes tutors provide beneficial opportunities for learners to focus on healthy lifestyle choices whilst developing their English language skills. These learners develop their skills by writing letters to friends listing actions they could take to help them live healthier lifestyles. Across the provision, the pace of sessions is appropriate to ensure all learners are sufficiently challenged. In the best cases, additional materials are available to meet the needs of learners who progress at faster rates. For example, in literacy sessions, tutors gave learners useful opportunities to develop their grammar through reading a selection of poems. Most tutors give constructive and beneficial verbal feedback to learners that further supports learning and progress. In accredited classes, tutors make sure that learners have a good understanding of the assessment criteria of their courses. Where appropriate, tutors encourage learners to use information technology and mobile telephones to support their learning and digital skills development.

Although the provider undertakes regular advertising to recruit new tutors, recruitment remains a significant challenge. This is a barrier to developing and delivering the provision further.

Care, support and guidance

The partnership engages learners through a range of methods including sponsorship, advertising online and at community venues such as libraries. Many learners access courses through word of mouth from friends or family members. Most of the provision available is listed on the council website, although there is no shared partnership area and detailed course information is limited to a few courses.

Nearly all learners have an effective initial meeting and assessment prior to starting their course. This helps the partnership agree the best course and mode of study based on learners' needs. The partnership provides useful information to learners regarding possible progression routes within and outside the partnership, or into employment.

The partnership offers useful guidance to learners on how to access support that helps them overcome barriers to their learning. For example, the partnership works with the further education college and the Ethnic Minority and Youth Support Team (EYST), to help ESOL learners access childcare and Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) support grants, which enables them to attend their classes.

Learners disclose any additional learning need (ALN) they have on their initial enrolment form or on their individual learning plan that is completed during their

induction. Where a need is identified, the ALN co-ordinator (ALNCo) offers to meet learners to create a useful one-page profile which informs the adaptations and reasonable adjustments required. Profiles are shared with the learner and tutor and the learner has review meetings with the ALNCo throughout their learning.

The ALNCo shares useful links and resources with delivery teams around topics such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autistic spectrum condition. Central tracking of progress of learners is limited to those that have a disclosed ALN and where a learner has engaged with the ALNCo.

Tutors know their learners well and make reasonable adjustments and adaptations to suit their learners' needs. For example, learners with dyspraxia or ADHD are given personalised tasks in literacy lessons based around their individual interests and preferred learning styles. Learners with mild visual impairments who struggle to view content on their mobile phone screens are loaned larger electronic devices to better access online resources. Tutors keep in touch with learners outside of class through online methods to allocate work and communicate any relevant information.

Nearly all learners say they get good support from their tutors, that they show them respect and listens to their views. The partnership values learners' opinions and responds to them appropriately, for example by changing course times to fit in with parental responsibilities, work patterns and travel commitments, and putting on additional full time ESOL courses to meet learner demand. A small number of online courses have been made available for those learners that cannot physically access learning centres. The partnership has also responded to learner feedback about the standards of learning facilities and, in many areas, has upgraded to more suitable learning environments.

Many learners benefit from their interactions with other learners from countries across the world, as well as learning about Welsh culture. They are encouraged to describe cultural events they have attended in Wales, such as Remembrance Sunday, and they discuss similar events in their own countries. This develops their understanding of the local community, the wider world and the importance of tolerance and respect of others.

The partnership has started taking positive steps to respond to an increased demand from learners for mental health related issues. A few members of staff have been supported to become formally trained in mental health first aid and all staff have attended professional learning on subjects such as trauma-informed practice. This has helped staff have an increased awareness of how to identify and support learners' mental health concerns. Counselling support is available to learners through members of the partnership. However, availability and access for community-based learners are limited and, as a result, very few learners take up this support. Several tutors are continuing their own learning to enrich their teaching skills and the way that they support learners. A few tutors are training in neurodiversity and sharing their knowledge with other tutors and with learners through explanations and through information posters which contain quick reference (QR) codes for easy access to further information. These tutors are enhancing their awareness and skills to support learners' differing additional learning needs. They also help learners to understand their own learning and mental health issues, and those of others.

The partnership arrangements for the safeguarding of learners meet requirements and give no cause for concern. Each provider within the partnership has all the necessary policies and procedures in place in relation to safeguarding, including safe recruitment practices.

All staff undertake appropriate regular mandatory online training on subjects such as safeguarding, equality and diversity. However, tracking systems for monitoring mandatory training are underdeveloped and central records are not always up to date.

Leadership and management

The Carmarthenshire Adult Learning Partnership comprises of three providers working together across the local authority area. It works appropriately with other providers in the area to meet the needs of current learners. The strategic leadership structure of the partnership has recently changed with roles and responsibilities being more clearly defined.

Operational management supports purposeful practices, creating a culture that values staff input. Examples include developing new courses, taking a flexible approach to accreditation, experimenting with digital tools, and creating displays in centres. Tutors are clear on structures and reporting lines and are well-supported by a responsive operational management team. Relationships between providers are positive and informal channels of communication are used well to share information, and avoid duplication of provision.

The partnership's self-assessment of its performance is fair and recognises the need to improve planning and provide better quality improvement and promotion of programmes. It also recognises the need to monitor and assure the overall quality of partnership provision and develop Welsh-medium provision. Each partner uses their own established quality assurance process, but the partnership does not have an overarching approach or procedures to monitor the quality of provision. Strategic leaders are aware of many development needs. However, it is too early to measure the effectiveness or impact of their actions.

The partnership works well informally but lacks a clear strategic and co-ordinated approach to provision planning. For example, at present there is no shared approach in relation to determining which provider is responsible for delivering specific programmes.

Individual providers use a comprehensive range of strategies to recruit learners including websites, leaflets, information events, and open days. However, the partnership does not benefit from an overarching and coherent approach to engaging with the communities of Carmarthenshire and identified target audiences.

The local authority predicts an underspend against the core learning grant, and this is being appropriately considered with a view to implementing a procurement process to deliver provision. Target numbers for franchised council provision through the college are agreed within appropriate service level agreements and data returns are submitted by the college at regular points throughout the academic year.

The partnership has identified gaps in provision in areas such as mental health, well-being, and Welsh-medium courses, and intends to fill these through the planned procurement process.

Partners are starting to collaborate on arrangements to deliver the UK government's Multiply project to develop adult numeracy skills. The Multiply team in the local authority is working with the community learning team to map proposed provision against the existing offer to support a more cohesive approach.

The partnership delivers much of its provision in the more densely populated areas where a need has been identified. Learner travel times to venues vary with most learners finding centres accessible, warm, welcoming, and appropriately resourced.

Leaders face challenges recruiting qualified and skilled ESOL and essential skills tutors. Those interested in roles are encouraged to volunteer before teaching, with the potential that they will be well supported through appropriate professional teaching qualifications.

The partnership's approach to identifying professional learning needs is robust and informed through performance management, observations, learning walks and learner voice activities.

All local authority tutors complete mandatory online training and can benefit from targeted professional learning, such as food hygiene programmes and training in dyslexia, trauma-informed practices, and effective questioning techniques. The local authority collaborates with other local authorities across six counties to deliver professional learning opportunities supported by the Welsh Government Continuing Professional Development grant.

Local authority tutors attend college professional learning where appropriate. Equally, college and Adult Learning Wales tutors benefit from local authority led professional learning activities. Training opportunities are well-received, and attendance is good with tutors across the partnership receiving payment to participate.

Evidence base of the report

Before the inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the learner and staff questionnaires

During the inspection, inspectors normally:

- meet the chair of the partnership, governors (where appropriate), senior and middle leaders and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the partnership's work
- meet learners to discuss their work, to listen to their views about various aspects of their provider
- visit a broad sample of sessions
- observe and speak to learners outside of sessions
- look closely at the partnership's self-evaluation processes
- consider the partnership's quality improvement planning and looked at evidence to show how well the partnership had taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a wide range of partnership documents, including information on learner assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body (where appropriate), information on learners' well-being, including the safeguarding of learners, and records of staff training and professional learning

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the partnership and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

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

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publications Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.wales

This document has been translated by Trosol (English to Welsh).