



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

Guidance handbook for the inspection of community-based adult learning

from September 2019

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Introduction

Purpose of the guidance handbook

This guidance sets out the way the inspectorate will conduct inspections of community-based adult learning partnerships from September 2019. It sets out the inspection arrangements for partnerships and offers guidance to inspectors on making inspection judgements.

Where the inspection identifies important concerns in relation to standards, quality of education and training or leadership and management, then the inspectorate will conduct follow-up activity in the partnership to support improvement. Guidance on the different types of follow-up activity is available on Estyn's website.

Adult learning partnerships can use this guidance to see how inspections work and to help them in strengthening their own self-assessment and improvement processes.

Further information and guidance about inspections can be found on the inspectorate's website www.estyn.gov.wales

Context

This guidance relates to the core inspection of adult learning partnerships. Estyn regularly inspects aspects of post-16 education and training through other activities. Some of this inspection work results in published evaluations, while other activity does not result in published evaluations.

Community-based adult learning link inspector work. Each partnership has a link inspector who meets regularly with senior leaders to discuss topical issues related to education and training. The link inspector visits result in oral feedback and dialogue during the visit. The link inspector work informs thematic inspections or sector summaries in the Annual Report.

Thematic reports. Each year, the Welsh Government asks Estyn to produce national reports on a range of themes. Estyn will often visit a sample of partnerships or survey all partnerships as part of this work. The visits result in oral feedback and national reports feature individual providers and partnerships, where relevant, with case studies of effective practice.

Legal basis for the inspection of adult learning partnerships

In the post-16 sector, the Learning and Skills Act (2000) requires the Chief Inspector to report on:

- the quality of the education and training provided
- the standards achieved by those receiving education and training
- the quality of leadership and management, including whether the financial resources made available to those providing education and training are managed efficiently and used to provide value for money

Policy background

While not governed directly by the following policies and conventions, the guidance handbook takes account of the following:

- the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
<http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/?lang=en>

Part 1: Inspection arrangements

Introduction

This section is set out in a way that reflects the sequence of work before, during and after a core inspection.

The reporting inspector (RI) is responsible for the conduct and management of the inspection and for the inspection report. While this guidance focuses mainly on the role of the reporting inspector, all team members must comply with the same inspection requirements.

Principles of inspection

Inspectors will:

- ensure that inspection is of high quality and responsive to the needs of all learners
- ensure that judgements are secure, reliable, valid and based on first-hand evidence
- involve partnerships fully in the inspection process, including the opportunity for the partnership to select a nominee
- use the partnership's improvement priorities and self-assessment report as the starting point for the inspection and to identify key issues for investigation in order to make judgements on the validity of its findings
- include peer inspectors in the inspection process
- keep to a minimum any requirements for documentation and preparation by the partnership
- gain the learners', staff and governors (where appropriate) perspective and that of other stakeholders
- apply the principle of equality for Welsh and English to all our inspection work, providing bilingual services whenever they are appropriate
- be constructive in identifying and supporting partnerships with important aspects or weaknesses that require improvement

Code of conduct for inspectors

Inspectors should uphold the highest possible standards in their work. All inspectors have to meet the standards of Estyn's code of conduct. When conducting the inspection, inspectors will:

- carry out their work with integrity, courtesy and due sensitivity
- evaluate the work of the partnership objectively
- report honestly, fairly and impartially
- communicate clearly and openly
- act in the best interests of learners
- respect the confidentiality of all information received during the course of their work

It is important that inspectors judge the effectiveness of provision and leadership on their contribution to outcomes and not on the basis of any preferences for particular methods. The key to the judgement is whether the methods and organisation are fit for the purpose in supporting all learners to achieve high standards and strong levels of wellbeing.

Inspectors should inform Estyn of any perceived or actual conflicts of interest as soon as they receive notification that they are on the inspection of the partnership.

Expectations of partnerships

In order that inspection and regulation are constructive and beneficial, it is important that inspectors and partnerships establish and maintain a professional working environment based on mutual courtesy, respect and professional behaviour. We expect inspectors to uphold Estyn's Code of Conduct but we also expect partnerships to:

- be courteous and professional
- apply their own codes of conduct in their dealings with inspectors
- enable inspectors to conduct their inspection in an open and honest way
- enable inspectors to evaluate the provision objectively against the Common Inspection Framework
- use Estyn's electronic systems for managing inspections as required
- provide evidence that will enable inspectors to report honestly, fairly and reliably about the partnership
- maintain a purposeful dialogue with the reporting inspector and other inspectors
- recognise that inspectors need to observe practice and talk to staff, learners and other stakeholders without the presence of a manager or senior leader
- draw any concerns about the inspection to the attention of the reporting inspector in a timely and suitable manner through the nominee or senior manager
- work with inspectors to minimise disruption and stress throughout the inspection
- ensure the health and safety of inspectors while on their premises
- maintain the confidentiality of meetings and inspection findings until the final publication of the report

At the point of the inspection notification, partnerships should review the composition of the inspection team. It is the responsibility of partnerships to highlight any perceived or actual conflicts of interest prior to the start of their inspection.

Health, safety and wellbeing issues

Inspectors will carry out inspections in accordance with the inspectorate's guidance on inspecting safeguarding. If they observe anything that they think constitutes in their opinion, a real risk to the safety of staff, visitors or learners, inspectors should alert managers at the partnership. In all cases, inspectors should make a separate electronic note of the risk and that they informed managers of it. Inspectors should report on obvious risks relating to health, safety and wellbeing under inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance). Where these risks are a serious concern, inspectors should include a short comment in the report and a recommendation in the report. Estyn will send a wellbeing letter to the partnership asking them to outline how they will address the shortcoming.

Responding to a safeguarding allegation

If an inspector becomes aware of a safeguarding allegation//suspicion in respect of a child, young person or vulnerable adult, they should follow the procedures as set out in the current version of 'Estyn's policy and procedures for safeguarding', which is available on Estyn's website.

Approach to inspection

The starting point for inspection is the partnership's assessment of its own performance and priorities, supported by relevant evidence. Inspectors will not inspect all aspects of work in depth during a core inspection. They will sample evidence to test the partnership's own assessment of its work.

The progress learners make from their starting-points and the standards they achieve are the key measures of the quality of the education and training they have received and of the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the partnership. Inspection will focus on the needs of learners, their attitudes to learning and the impact that the provision makes on supporting their progress and the standards they achieve.

The inspection period and number of inspectors may vary according to the size of the partnership.

Each inspection reports will cover all inspection areas covered by the common inspection framework.

We will carry out inspections in line with our Welsh Language Policy, available from the inspectorate's website www.estyn.gov.wales and supported by supplementary guidance on inspecting the development of learners' Welsh language skills.

The Virtual Inspection Room

The inspectorate will use an electronic system, called the 'Virtual Inspection Room' (VIR), for managing many aspects of the inspection. It is a web-based system that allows partnerships to upload information before the inspection and to download guidance from the inspectorate about the inspection process. The VIR is also the place where partnerships can access the emerging questions from the reporting inspector at the start of the inspection and the post-inspection questionnaires.

The inspection team

Inspection teams will be led by a reporting inspector (HMI) or additional inspector (AI), with other team members drawn from among HMI, peer inspectors (from another adult learning partnership) or additional inspectors. Additional inspectors may be on secondment or contract to the inspectorate.

The reporting inspector manages the inspection team and is the first point of reference for everyone involved in the inspection.

We will invite partnerships to select a senior member of staff, called the nominee, to work with the inspection team. In practice, most partnerships accept the invitation, but it is not a requirement. The nominee should have sufficient seniority to act as a link between the partnership and the inspection team but need not be the leader of the partnership. Partnerships can access the guidance for nominees on preparing for the inspection from links within the initial contact form (ICF), completed by the Inspection Co-ordinator (IC) and available via the VIR.

Contacting the partnership before the inspection

The partnership will receive 15 working days' notice of the inspection.

Following this, the inspectorate will contact the partnership by telephone to set up the arrangements for the inspection. Inspection co-ordinators (IC) in Estyn will undertake the initial contact with partnerships. During this discussion, the inspection co-ordinator will:

- explain the purpose of the inspection and discuss an outline programme for the inspection
- discuss the specific information required before the inspection, including the completion by the partnership of a self-evaluation form on its provision for safeguarding, and make the arrangements for receiving it in electronic form through the Virtual Inspection Room
- ask if there are any issues or risks the team should be aware of and ask for a general health and safety briefing for the team at the start of the inspection
- establish whether the partnership wishes to have a nominee and, if it does, agree the role of the nominee and explain the process for completing the nominee guidance
- inform the partnership of when the reporting inspector will contact the nominee for an initial discussion about the extent and location of provision and the parameters for choosing a sample of provision
- arrange a meeting at the start of the inspection with the nominee to provide a health and safety briefing for the team
- arrange a meeting at the start of the inspection for the provider to set out its priorities for improvement and its current stage of development
- provide links and guidance for the completion of online pre-inspection questionnaires for learners and staff
- agree arrangements for setting up a meeting with partnership members
- arrange the availability of supporting evidence, including samples of learners' work
- ensure that there are agreed procedures for addressing any concerns or complaints that might arise during the course of the inspection
- arrange for a member of the governing body (where appropriate) to meet inspectors during the inspection period
- organise any domestic arrangements, such as a base for the inspectors, parking and internet access
- set up the arrangements for feeding back the inspection findings
- agree the arrangements for completing the post-inspection questionnaire
- inform the partnership that the key matters of the arrangements will be confirmed in writing

The inspection co-ordinator will request the following information from the partnership through the virtual inspection room as soon as possible after the formal notification of the inspection:

- key background information on the partnership
- a copy of the partnership's most recent quality development plan (QDP) and self-assessment report
- the number of learners, including those with partners and sub-contractors and their location
- details of the partnership's assessment activities for the period of the inspection
- arrange a date (as agreed with the RI) for the initial planning meeting

The inspection co-ordinator will ask the partnership to inform other partners and stakeholders about the inspection.

When we notify partnerships of the inspection, they will receive information on how to conduct a confidential online survey of learners. Estyn will also provide a pre-inspection online questionnaire for governors (where appropriate), all teaching, assessment and support staff directly employed by the partnership, its partners. The outcomes of the surveys will form part of the pre-inspection evidence and help inspectors to form emerging questions to investigate.

During the inspection, inspectors may interview a sample of learners, teaching, assessment and learning support staff as part of their gathering of evidence.

Planning the inspection and preparing the team

Taking into account the partnership's identified improvement priorities and self-assessment report, and any information already held by the inspectorate, the reporting inspector will plan the inspection and allocate responsibilities to members of the inspection team.

Inspections involve observations in the partnership's different settings of teaching, training, assessment, including learner walks and other work of learners. In agreement with the reporting inspector, the partnership will produce a schedule of visits for each member of the inspection team. The sample will reflect the range of the partnership's work.

During the inspection

Initial team meeting

In the initial meeting of the inspection team, there should be a health and safety briefing from a member of the partnership staff from the relevant venue. The provider should provide a brief position statement about its strategic priorities and its current stage of development. After that, the team should discuss with senior leaders the improvement priorities identified by the provider and the progress that it is making in its improvement work. The reporting inspector will confirm these arrangements with the provider during the pre-inspection phone call.

Inspectors will sample, test and validate the provider's own priorities and its evaluations of its strengths and areas for improvement, and any other strengths and

areas for improvement which the reporting inspector identifies. The discussions will also consider the evidence that inspectors need to review. This will include assessment observations, learning walks, sampling learners' written work, and interviews with learners, staff, employers and other stakeholders.

Gathering and reviewing inspection evidence

The team will plan the inspection so that they can cover the reporting requirements within the five inspection areas. The team will ensure that they have enough time to review the key evidence they need to make their judgements. The main forms of evidence are:

- documentary evidence, including information on learners' performance and progress
- observation of teaching, training, assessment and other activities
- samples of learners' work
- survey responses from learners, employers, staff and governors
- discussions with learners, leaders, managers, governors and other key stakeholders

The team will use direct observation of learners' practical skills and written work wherever possible to gather evidence to support their judgements. Inspectors may select an additional sample of learners' work to meet the needs of a particular emerging question or to further their investigation of a specific aspect.

Inspectors will undertake a range of activities to gather evidence for their evaluation of learners' progress and the quality of the partnership's provision. This may include learning walks (where appropriate), where inspectors move relatively quickly through a number of training sessions looking at a specific aspect of the provision, conversations with selected learners about their work, and discussions with individual teachers, trainers and assessors about learners' progress in their training sessions and how they plan work to meet their needs. They may also undertake longer training session observations.

The voice of learners is a key source of evidence for inspectors. Discussions with learners will provide an opportunity to explore learners' knowledge and understanding of their work and skills. It will also help inspectors to gauge how well they feel the partnership supports learners and contributes to their wellbeing.

Partnerships should make information available to the inspection team about the standards achieved by learners, particularly the results of any initial screening tests and other assessments. This will help inspectors to judge learners' progress, to come to a view about the standards learners achieve compared to their starting-points and the way teachers, trainers and assessors use the information.

The team will need to consider stakeholders' views about the partnership and test out the validity of those views during the inspection.

It is important that the reporting inspector holds a brief daily meeting with the nominee to clarify inspection issues and the broad, emerging findings of the inspection team.

Recording inspection evidence

Inspectors will use various forms to note and to collate their findings and judgements.

Wherever possible, inspectors will complete their forms electronically as part of Estyn's electronic system for collecting, collating and recording inspection findings.

Team meetings

The main purpose of team meetings is to arrive at an accurate, reliable, valid and corporate view of standards and the quality of provision and leadership. Meetings will provide opportunities for inspectors to:

- test the judgements in the partnership's quality development plan and self-assessment report
- discuss emerging issues
- review visits to learners
- resolve pre-inspection issues and emerging questions
- identify any gaps in the evidence base
- consider main inspection findings and any recommendations

Professional dialogue

At the end of an observation, inspectors should have a brief professional dialogue with the member of staff involved in the activity. It may be necessary, in some cases, to conduct this discussion later during the inspection. Where the inspector has moved to another site, the inspector may need to conduct the discussion by telephone or online face-to-face.

The main focus of the discussion should be on the learners, the progress they make during the session and the standards they achieve during the activity. The inspector should stress that these are emerging, interim findings on one aspect of the evidence base and that these may be amended, on reflection, after scrutiny of learners' work or talking to learners, or as the result of moderation within the team. Inspectors should try to focus on any strengths as well as areas for development in relation to the specific activity seen.

Due to the sharply focused nature of learning walks, and the spread of the activity across a number of activities within a relatively short period of time, inspectors will not be in a position to offer professional dialogue to individual teachers, trainers or assessors after learning walk activity.

Formal feedback

At the end of the on-site part of the inspection, the team will provide oral feedback to the nominee and senior leaders for the partnership. The feedback should focus on the main judgements for each of the five inspection areas and the reasons for awarding them.

The feedback meeting provides the opportunity for the nominee and senior leaders to hear and to reflect on the judgements. The feedback should focus on the strengths and areas for improvement and the factors that contribute to them. The reporting inspector should explain to the partnership leaders' partnership that factual matters may be corrected and judgements may be clarified, but that judgements are not negotiable.

During all core inspections, the inspection team will consider whether the partnership needs any follow-up activity. The reporting inspector will inform the partnership if any follow-up activity is required.

During the inspection, the team will also consider if there is any effective practice in the partnership that is worthy of consideration and emulation by other partnerships. Where this is the case, the reporting inspector will ask the partnership to prepare a case study (or studies) for dissemination on Estyn's website.

All the judgements reported during an inspection are provisional and subject to moderation and validation by HMCI. They are confidential to the partnership's staff and governors (where appropriate). They should not be communicated beyond this group, including via social media, until Estyn publishes the report on its website.

Complaints about the conduct of the inspection

If there are any issues about the conduct of the inspection overall or the conduct of individual inspectors, then the partnership, through the nominee, should raise these directly, and as soon as possible, with the reporting inspector. The partnership should not wait until after the inspection, but should raise any issues during the on-site inspection. Issues often arise due to misunderstandings and these can usually be resolved quickly and satisfactorily with the partnership close to the time when they occurred.

There is guidance for partnerships on Estyn's complaints handling procedures on Estyn's website.

After the inspection

The inspection report

The reporting inspector is responsible for producing a final inspection report that is clear to a lay audience and helpful to the partnership.

When writing reports, inspectors should take account of Estyn's writing guidance which is available on our website www.estyn.gov.wales.

We will publish reports bilingually, where partnerships have made this request, in line with Estyn's Welsh Language Policy.

We base the structure of the inspection report on a Common Inspection Framework and the report will take the following form:

About the partnership

Summary

Recommendations

What happens next

Main findings

- 1 Standards
- 2 Wellbeing and attitudes to learning

- 3 Teaching and learning experiences
- 4 Care, support and guidance
- 5 Leadership and management

The evidence base of the inspection

We will produce the report within statutory or agreed sector timescales.

The factual accuracy check

The inspectorate will give the partnership a late draft of the report to help check the factual accuracy of the content. The partnership will normally have five working days in which to consider the draft report and to identify any factual errors.

The focus of the factual accuracy check is on resolving any factual inaccuracies in the inspection report. It does not focus on the findings or the judgements. There is further guidance for partnerships on the nature and scope of the factual accuracy check on Estyn's website.

The partnership should raise any complaints about the conduct of the inspection during the on-site inspection. However, if the partnership continues to have unresolved complaints about the conduct of the inspection after the end of the on-site inspection, then it should refer to Estyn's complaints handling procedures on Estyn's website. The focus of the procedures is on the conduct of the inspection and not the findings or the judgements arrived at by the inspection team.

Assuring the quality of inspections

The inspectorate is committed to:

- effective selection, training, briefing, support and deployment of inspectors, including peer inspectors and additional inspectors
- effective training, briefing and support to allow the nominee to play an active role
- regular dialogue with the nominee during inspection
- criteria and recording systems that comply with the common inspection framework and guidance
- careful review and analysis of evidence
- unambiguous oral feedback of the team's findings and judgements for each inspection area
- clear, accurate and well-presented reports

As part of its quality assurance procedures, the inspectorate invites partnerships to complete a post-inspection questionnaire (PIQ). The questionnaire will be available to the partnership in the VIR. The nominee should complete the first part of the PIQ immediately after the on-site inspection on behalf of the partnership and submit it electronically to Estyn through the VIR system. The nominee, having gathered views from partnership members, can complete the second part of the PIQ after the publication of the inspection report on behalf of the partnership, again through the VIR system.

The partnership should raise any concerns about the conduct of an inspector during the inspection as soon as possible with the reporting inspector.

The reporting inspector will carry out the quality assurance of the inspection in the first instance. The inspectorate will quality assure a sample of inspections on site and will assure the quality of all inspection reports before their publication on Estyn's website. Estyn's arrangements for ensuring the quality of inspections and the arrangements for dealing with complaints are available on the inspectorate's website www.estyn.gov.wales.

Part 2: Inspection areas and reporting requirements

The guidance that follows sets out how inspectors should approach the various sections of the inspection report and what they need to consider when evaluating the five inspection areas of the common inspection framework.

The Common Inspection Framework

The five inspection areas of the common inspection framework are set out below.

Each inspection area contains reporting requirements. These are the aspects that the inspection team must cover when reporting on each partnership.

The Common Inspection Framework

1 – Standards

- 1.1 Standards and progress overall
- 1.2 Standards and progress of specific groups
- 1.3 Standards and progress in skills

2 – Wellbeing and attitudes to learning

- 2.1 Wellbeing
- 2.2 Attitudes to learning

3 – Teaching and learning experiences

- 3.1 Quality of teaching
- 3.2 The breadth, balance and appropriateness of the curriculum
- 3.3 Provision for skills

4 – Care, support and guidance

- 4.1 Tracking, monitoring and the provision of learning support
- 4.2 Personal development
- 4.3 Safeguarding

5 – Leadership and management

- 5.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers
- 5.2 Self-evaluation processes and improvement planning
- 5.3 Professional learning
- 5.4 Use of resources

Making judgements

The inspection team will award each inspection area a judgement from the four-point scale below.

Excellent – Very strong, sustained performance and practice

Good – Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement

Adequate and needs improvement – Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement

Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement – Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

Inspectors will arrive at their judgements by considering and weighing the importance of the strengths and weaknesses in each inspection area. The report on each inspection area will reflect and support the relevant judgement. Weaknesses become important where they have a significant impact on standards and/or wellbeing. Strengths are often present where there are important aspects that require improvement. However, where there are important aspects that require improvement then the appropriate judgement will normally be “Adequate and needs improvement”, or “Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement”.

Where partnerships receive “Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement” for one or more inspection areas, the partnership will normally require a level of follow-up activity. There is further guidance on the nature of follow-up activity on Estyn’s website: [Follow up guidance for post-16 partnerships and inspectors](#)

Inspectors will always include clear evaluations in relation to the reporting requirements in each inspection area. They will also consider all aspects of these reporting requirements as set out in the inspection guidance handbook. However, what inspectors report on within each reporting requirement may differ depending on the relative significance of what they find in each partnership.

Inspectors may report ‘by exception’. This means that they may report on some aspects only where there are particular strengths or significant weaknesses.

About the partnership

This section of the report should be brief and should contain factual background information about the partnership. The section should not contain any evaluation of the partnership or its provision. The reporting inspector normally agrees the content of this section with the nominee for the partnership during the inspection and during the partnership’s factual check of the draft report prior to its publication. Where there is disagreement about the content of this section, the reporting inspector will make the final decision about what to include in the report.

This section will contain brief information on:

- the size, nature and location of the partnership

- the type and level of training programmes delivered
- the number of learners in-training
- consortium members and sub-contractors
- any significant changes since the last inspection
- the month and year of the partnership's previous inspection
- any other relevant factors

Summary

This section of the report will contain a short summary statement (usually 100-200 words) on the inspection findings.

The summary should report on the key strengths and any important aspects or weaknesses that require improvement. It should be consistent with the findings in the body of the report. It should not contain one overarching judgement on the partnership as a whole.

Recommendations

The recommendations should give the partnership a clear and specific indication of the areas for improvement that it will need to address. Inspectors should write the recommendations in order of priority and inspection area. The recommendations should arise from the main judgements in the inspection areas and should provide a clear and practicable basis on which the partnership can move forward.

What happens next?

This section of the report will set out what the partnership needs to do following the inspection. In all cases, the partnership will need to respond to the recommendations by putting in place the actions required to make the improvements identified by the inspection team. The report will also indicate whether Estyn has asked the partnership to provide a case study in relation to any aspect(s) of its work. The report will state whether the partnership requires any level of follow-up activity by Estyn.

Inspection areas

For each inspection area, there is guidance on what it covers and the considerations that inspectors need to keep in mind when evaluating it.

Within each inspection area, the reporting inspector may report on the aspects in the order they appear in the guidance handbook, or they may choose to sequence the aspects differently in order to reflect their findings. For example, in Inspection Area 1 - Standards, they may begin with standards and progress in skills, then specific groups and standards, and progress overall at the end. In Inspection Area 3 – Teaching and learning experiences, they may begin with the curriculum and then teaching if this makes the findings of the team clearer.

The report on each inspection area should be around 250-700 words.

There is supplementary guidance on the inspection of various aspects of the work of partnership on Estyn's website: www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection/supplementary-guidance.

1 Standards

1.1 Standards and progress overall

Inspectors should evaluate the standards reached by learners overall on Welsh Government funded courses in literacy, numeracy, digital skills and English as a second language courses and other courses which help learners to apply and develop these skills. Inspectors should judge whether these are appropriate to learners' abilities. Inspectors should recognise learners' progress, especially their progress from their individual starting points towards achieving their courses.

Inspectors' evaluation of learners' achievement and progress from their starting points should be based on session observations, assessment and development of skills, scrutiny of learners' work and discussions with learners. Inspectors should evaluate how well learners recall previous learning, develop thinking skills, acquire new knowledge, understanding and skills, and how well they apply these to new situations.

Inspectors should look at progression data covering a period of time, normally over at least the last three years, to identify trends in performance. Inspectors should consider, in particular, how well courses have prepared learners to achieve their personal goals and to improve their chances of employability. Inspectors should consider the progression and destination information in the light of their own evidence from session observations, discussions with learners and scrutiny of written and practical work and other relevant documentation, such as individual learning plans.

1.2 Standards and progress of specific groups

Inspectors should evaluate the progress of particular groups of learners, for example learners on different levels, learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, those from minority ethnic groups and learners who do not have English as a first language.

Judgements about achievement should take account of information about learners'

individual needs and abilities. Inspectors should consider the rate of progress these learners make in relation to their individual targets and starting points.

Inspectors should also consider whether specific groups of learners are making as much progress as they could in relation to their starting-points and their ability. For example, inspectors should consider how well learners with more developed skills achieve and the extent to which the work they undertake challenges them fully to achieve as well as they could.

1.3 Standards and progress in skills

Inspectors should evaluate to what extent learners develop their literacy, numeracy, digital skills and English as a second language skills from their initial starting points. Inspectors should take learners' progression routes, individual learning plans and the development of learners' confidence in being able to apply their learning in personal and work contexts.

Inspectors should report clearly on learners' standards in each of the skills of speaking and listening, reading and writing (in Welsh/English), numeracy and digital skills and English as a second language. When inspecting skills, the focus should be on whether learners have the required skills in literacy (Welsh/English), numeracy, digital skills and English as a second language appropriate to their qualification level and employment opportunities.

There is further guidance on inspecting learners' literacy (Welsh/English), numeracy, digital skills and English as a second language on Estyn's website (www.estyn.gov.wales).

Inspectors should judge standards in literacy, numeracy, digital skills and English as a second language based on first-hand evidence, for example through observations of learners in sessions, scrutiny of learners' work and discussions with learners. Inspectors should consider how well in language classes, including English as a second language classes, learners listen and understand, can express their ideas clearly in speech and writing in a range of genres for a range of audiences as well as be able to read for gist, in-depth understanding and interpretation of a wide range of texts appropriate to their stage of learning. Inspectors should also consider how well learners are able to apply their learning and skills in real life and relevant situations. In numeracy classes, inspectors should consider how well learners understand how to make basic numerical calculations, solve numerical problems using a range of appropriate strategies appropriate to their stage of learning and are able to apply their knowledge to real life situations. For digital skills, inspectors should consider how well learners can undertake basic operations, such as write, store and retrieve word-processed documents, can search the internet for items relevant to their tasks, make judgements about the quality of internet content and demonstrate and apply a good understanding of internet safety. Inspectors should also consider how learners can undertake more advanced tasks, such as programming and modelling and the extent to which learners can apply these skills in real life situations. Inspectors should consider the extent to which learners' communication and higher-order thinking skills support or hinder their progress, interaction with other learners, tutors, trainers, assessors and their employers.

Inspectors should consider learners' standards in Welsh. They should consider the progress learners make in developing and using their Welsh language skills in the

context of their courses (particularly for key priority areas as identified by Welsh Government), and how they are developing skills in Welsh for future employment in Wales.

2 Wellbeing and attitudes to learning

2.1 Wellbeing

Inspectors should consider how well learners on literacy, numeracy, digital skills and English as a second language courses plan to undertake the course effectively and maintain a work-life balance. Inspectors should also consider how well learners develop skills in perseverance and resilience to continue and complete successfully the course when they encounter difficulties.

Where partnerships use residual Welsh Government funding to provide courses that encourage vulnerable learners to take up a course or return to learning, or to help learners develop hobbies or health and wellbeing courses, or they facilitate the continuation of socially orientated classes, inspectors should take into consideration how well the courses contribute to learners' overall wellbeing and work-life balance.

Where partnerships use residual Welsh Government funds to provide courses for learners' personal interest and wellbeing (for example, languages, cookery, craft or art classes), inspectors should consider how well learners benefit from their participation (for example, their development of new knowledge, understanding and skills, the benefit of interaction with other learners, the development of their creativity) and how this learning contributes to their wider lives and wellbeing.

Inspectors should consider the extent to which learners feel safe and secure, and free from physical and verbal abuse. They should consider how well learners understand how to keep themselves safe online. They should consider how well learners use this understanding in their own lives and in the workplace.

Inspectors should consider responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires from learners and staff, carefully in relation to learners' wellbeing and develop emerging questions, where appropriate. Inspectors should also consider evidence from observations of learners interacting with their peers and with staff, as well as evidence from discussions with individuals and groups.

Inspectors should consider how well learners show confidence in their lives, for example in the way they interact with staff, other learners, and new people and with their peers. Inspectors should consider how well learners are developing as ethical, informed citizens, for example through their awareness of fairness, equality, sustainability and tolerance.

2.2 Attitudes to learning

Inspectors should evaluate to what extent learners are developing the key attitudes and behaviours required in their work and personal lives. Inspectors should evaluate the extent to which learners are ambitious, confident, capable and independent learners. They should look at how well learners engage with new, unfamiliar experiences and ideas. They should judge learners' interest in their work, their ability

to sustain concentration and to avoid distractions. They should consider how readily learners engage in real life tasks and complete them well and in a timely manner. They should evaluate how well learners persevere and remain purposeful when they face difficulties or seek other solutions when their first approach to a problem is unsuccessful.

Inspectors should consider to what extent learners are able to work in a range of ways, for example, in pairs and small groups. Inspectors should consider how well learners demonstrate respect for the contributions of others, for example by allowing others to speak or by remaining calm when others disagree with them.

Inspectors should consider the extent to which learners on literacy, numeracy, digital skills and English as a second language courses show a good understanding of employability skills, for example, punctuality, regular attendance, preparation for class, consideration of others' views and use a range of strategies to further their learning. Inspectors should observe whether learners are considerate and relate well to each other and their tutors.

When evaluating participation and enjoyment in learning, inspectors should consider the evidence from scrutiny of learners' work, interviews with learners, observation of their engagement in sessions and, in discussion, their levels of aspiration, motivation and confidence.

Inspectors should consider learners' attendance and punctuality as evidence of learners' participation, engagement in learning and reliability, bearing in mind the level of commitments learners may have in their caring or work roles. Inspectors would expect that where learners cannot attend, they would have contacted their tutors in advance and arranged to catch up their studies. Inspectors should report by exception, i.e. where there is a clear trend of weak or very strong attendance.

3 Teaching and learning experiences

3.1 Quality of teaching

When reporting specifically on the quality of teaching across the partnership, inspectors should begin with a clear evaluation of its overall quality using a judgement from the four-point judgement scale. They will also record this judgement for inclusion in Estyn's inspection database.

The evaluation of teaching does not necessarily have to be the first section of the inspection area as inspectors may begin with the quality of learning experiences or the provision for skills if this makes their findings clearer.

The specific judgement on the quality of teaching may be one level higher or lower than the judgement for the inspection area overall, if this reflects the balance and significance of strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching compared with the other two aspects in the inspection area.

When evaluating teaching, inspectors should note that there is no fixed template that tutors and assessors should follow, and tutors may use a range of different approaches over time. The key consideration is whether the teaching is successful

in engaging learners' interest and how well it develops their literacy, numeracy and digital skills, vocational skills, and knowledge, skills and understanding in other subjects learners may be studying to an appropriately high level as they move through their programme.

Inspectors should evaluate the extent to which tutors have high expectations of all learners. They should consider the quality of short, medium and long-term planning and how well their planning meets the needs of the qualification framework. They should consider the extent to which tutors have clear objectives for learners' learning and how effectively use a range of approaches and resources to engage learners' interest and to challenge them to achieve as well as they can. They should consider the extent to which they make their classes stimulating and engaging so that all groups of learners, including the most and least able, can learn productively.

Inspectors should judge how well tutors use various questioning techniques and problem-solving activities to draw out and further develop learners' responses and gauge their understanding. They should consider the clarity of instructions and explanations and judge how well learners develop their literacy, numeracy, digital and vocational skills, knowledge and understanding as a result. Inspectors should judge how well tutors help learners' develop confidence to use their knowledge, understanding and skills to their advantage in any work enterprise in which learners engage and that learners have a good understanding of the behaviours employers expect of employees; for example, regular attendance, punctuality, openness to further learning. They should evaluate how well the tutors manage learners' participation in classes to ensure all learners have the opportunity to participate fully and that no one learner is allowed to dominate or withdraw themselves from discussion in a class session. Inspectors should consider how well tutors make their sessions stimulating and engaging places in which learners can learn productively. Inspectors should judge how successfully technical and support staff support learning.

The focus on assessment in this inspection area is on the development of skills in literacy, numeracy, digital skills and English as a second language and, in other classes, the extent to which learners develop their knowledge, skills and understanding appropriate to the subject area. Inspectors should evaluate the oral and written feedback from tutors and assessors to help learners know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. They should consider how well tutors and assessors help learners to assess their own performance. Inspectors should evaluate the extent to which the senior leaders, tutors and assessment staff monitor, track and keep up-to-date records of the progress of each learner and report on these clearly to meet the needs of employers. They should consider how well tutors and assessors ensure that their assessments are valid, timely, accurate and reliable.

Inspectors should evaluate whether learners regularly review their own learning, understand their progress and are involved in setting their own learning targets.

In coming to evaluations on teaching, training and assessment, inspectors should use the full range of evidence available to them. This is likely to include evidence from learners' portfolios, schemes of work, assessment records, and information on learners' progress, session observations, and discussions with learners.

Inspectors should not allocate a judgement to an individual session, tutor or assessor, but should report on the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching and assessment across the partnership.

3.2 The breadth, balance and appropriateness of the provision

Inspectors should evaluate the extent to which learning experiences across the provision stimulate and challenge learners so that they engage fully in their learning and make the best possible progress.

Inspectors should consider the partnership's strategic approach to planning the provision and the extent to which it helps learners to become ambitious, confident, aspirational and well-informed individuals who are resilient and able to progress to further learning or employment.

Inspectors should consider how well the provision caters for specific groups of learners, especially those with special educational needs and learners with English as an additional language.

Inspectors should consider the ways in which the partnership develops a programme of learning activities that reflects the cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity of Wales and helps learners understand about employment opportunities in Wales. Inspectors should consider how well the partnership helps, or signposts, learners to appropriate organisations which can help them write a job application highlighting their skills and knowledge, prepare for interview and produce a curriculum vitae.

Inspectors should consider the extent to which the partnership makes additional learning opportunities available. These might take the form of more advanced courses through which learners can develop their skills to a higher level through engaging in activities that use the skills they have learned. Examples of these may include creative writing, how to be a treasurer for a club, how to organise a social event, educational visits, participating in occupational skills competitions, achieving additional qualifications and leading or participating in charity and fund raising events.

3.3 Provision for skills

Inspectors should evaluate the extent to which the provision caters for learners to acquire the necessary skills in literacy (Welsh/English), numeracy and digital skills to support their work. Inspectors should consider how well the partnership has taken account of employment opportunities and made links with local employers within the locality and the region to provide learners with programmes based on real life scenarios.

Inspectors should evaluate the extent and quality of the provision for the development of Welsh language skills. They should consider how well learners are made aware of the advantages of learning Welsh and becoming bilingual. Inspectors should comment on the arrangements that partnerships have to support learners' Welsh language skills development.

4 Care, support and guidance

4.1 Tracking, monitoring and the provision of learning support

Inspectors should consider how well the partnership tracks and monitors learners' progress and wellbeing, including attendance and participation. Inspectors should consider how well the partnership uses this information to consider the progress of specific groups, for example those learners whose circumstances may make them vulnerable to underachievement or those who are more able. They will need to consider how well the partnership identifies relevant issues and responds appropriately to the outcomes of tracking and monitoring, for example through the provision of appropriate support and challenge, the use of intervention strategies, the mentoring or coaching of individuals or groups. Inspectors should also consider how well the partnership works together to provide effective support for learners.

Inspectors should consider how well the partnership supports learners with emotional and social needs so that they can enjoy their learning.

4.2 Personal development

Inspectors should evaluate the effectiveness of impartial guidance and advice provided to learners before the start of their course.

Inspectors should evaluate the effectiveness of the provision for personal and specialist support for learners. This will include the availability of services of specialist agencies, especially for learners who face considerable barriers to learning, including personal, financial, domestic, transport, health and family care responsibilities.

Inspectors should evaluate the partnership's arrangements for promoting healthy lifestyle choices, for example in relation to healthy eating and drinking, substance misuse, online safety, mental health issues and work life balance. Inspectors should consider the guidance and other support provided to safeguard the welfare of learners and promote their personal development.

Inspectors should look at how well the partnership helps learners to understand issues relating to equality and diversity, and develops the values of tolerance and respect. They should consider how well the partnership develops learners' knowledge and understanding of harassment, discrimination and extremism. They should also consider how well the partnership responds to and manages any incidents relating to bullying, harassment and discrimination. They should consider to what extent the partnership challenges stereotypes in learners' attitudes, choices and expectations.

Inspectors should evaluate the extent to which learners, including those from different groups take on responsibilities and play a part in their wider community and their work places. Inspectors should evaluate how well the partnership helps learners to develop an understanding of their culture, the local community and the wider world.

4.3 Safeguarding

Inspectors will report on whether the partnership's arrangements for safeguarding learners meet requirements and give no cause for concern. Where arrangements

are a serious cause for concern, inspectors should include a recommendation in the report and Estyn will send a wellbeing letter to the partnership asking them to outline how they will address the shortcoming(s).

Inspectors should evaluate to what extent the partnership's safeguarding arrangements ensure that all learners are protected. Arrangements should include the identification of learners aged under 18, and vulnerable adults in need or at risk of significant harm, safe recruitment practices and having appropriate arrangements for safeguarding referrals. Prior to the inspection, the inspection co-ordinator will ask partnership nominees to identify any groups which include learners under 18 years of age. Should these groups be included in a sample for observation, the reporting inspector will allocate a HMI to carry out the observation as the HMI will have an enhanced DBS.

Inspectors should also consider how well the partnership promotes safe practices and a culture of safety. The Welsh Government has issued specific statutory requirements and guidance about these safeguarding matters and partnerships should have in place policies and procedures that comply with them.

Inspectors will look at how effective partnership's arrangements are for preventing and addressing bullying, harassment and discrimination. They should consider how the partnership keeps learners safe from the dangers of radicalisation.

Inspectors should consider whether the partnership has robust procedures for checking the suitability of staff and others who are in contact with learners and that the partnership maintains a record of these checks. Inspectors should check that all staff know what to do to respond to safeguarding issues and that the designated lead officer and lead governor/proprietor, and other staff where appropriate, have received relevant safeguarding training.

Inspectors should evaluate how well the partnership uses its intelligence about safeguarding matters, both within its own provision and that of any sub-contractors, and how well reporting processes are used to quality assure safeguarding by senior managers.

5 Leadership and management

5.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers, including the governing body

Inspectors should evaluate the extent to which senior and middle leaders have established and communicated a clear vision and appropriate aims, strategic objectives, plans and policies for the partnership that focus on meeting learner needs.

Inspectors should reflect on how well senior and middle leaders set high expectations for staff, learners and themselves. They should consider how well senior and middle leaders develop an effective and engaged staff. They should consider to what extent senior and middle leaders model and promote professional values and behaviours that contribute positively to partnership improvement and effective collaboration between staff across the partnership. They should consider how well staff at all

levels understand and discharge their roles and responsibilities and how well they collaborate in driving forward strategic priorities for the partnership and for improvement.

Inspectors should consider a wide range of evidence when evaluating the quality of leadership and management: for example, minutes from a range of recent meetings, interviews with staff, improvement action plans and reports on their implementation, self-assessment reports from leaders and the analysis of information on learner performance.

Inspectors should consider how well senior and middle leaders act in accordance with the principle of sustainable development and how well they make decisions and set priorities for improvement that balance immediate, short-term needs with the long-term needs of learners, the local community and Wales.

Inspectors should look at the extent to which senior and middle leaders sustain high quality or improve weak aspects of provision. They should consider how well senior and middle leaders prevent problems from occurring in the first place and how quickly they bring about any remedial action required.

Inspectors should consider the extent to which senior and middle leaders are purposeful and successful in meeting national, regional and local priorities.

Inspectors should consider how well senior and middle leaders share positive features of provision with staff across the provision and collaborate with other education partnerships and other partners within the sector to achieve improvements locally, regionally and nationally. Inspectors should focus on how well the partnership uses strategic alliances and collaboration with other agencies to help to build its capacity for continuous improvement and to reduce the impact of poverty on attainment.

Inspectors should evaluate how well governors, or members of supervisory boards (where relevant) understand and discharge their roles and responsibilities. They should consider how well they know the partnership's strengths and areas for development and the degree to which they have participated in setting the partnership's strategic priorities. They should consider whether there is an appropriate balance between support and challenge in the way it holds senior leadership to account.

5.2 Self-evaluation processes and improvement planning

Inspectors should evaluate how accurately senior and middle leaders know the partnership's strengths and weaknesses and tackle duplication. They should consider how well senior and middle leaders gather and analyse first-hand evidence of standards of provision, including teaching and assessment. Inspectors should evaluate how well leaders as a result of involvement and consultation with a wide range of appropriate partners and stakeholders, such as local and regional employers and local community groups, adjust their provision and additional learning opportunities appropriately.

Inspectors should consider the impact of improvement planning and how well identified priorities for improvement link to the outcomes of the partnership's self-assessment. Inspectors should consider how well senior and middle leaders ensure

that priorities are supported by the allocation of resources. They should evaluate how well senior and middle leaders define relevant and measurable actions for improvement in specified and realistic timescales and allocate responsibility for their delivery.

Inspectors should take into account the partnership's track-record in making improvements and the extent to which they have led to a positive impact on learners' learning and wellbeing, for example through improvements to the quality of teaching and destinations of their learners. Where appropriate, inspectors should consider how well the partnership has responded to recommendations from previous Estyn inspections or from strategic partners and whether the partnership's actions have led to improvements.

5.3 Professional learning

Inspectors should evaluate to what extent senior leaders have created a culture and ethos to support the professional learning of all staff, including the arrangements to support the active engagement of all staff in increasing their professional knowledge, understanding and skills. They should consider the extent to which staff participate effectively in professional learning experiences, appraisal and performance management.

Inspectors should evaluate the impact of senior and middle leaders in the way they manage the performance of staff in order to help staff to improve their practice. They should also judge whether senior and middle leaders address issues of underperformance robustly and directly where necessary.

They should consider professional learning undertaken by staff and its impact on learners' learning and their own practice. They should explore the extent to which staff have shared professional development outcomes with other staff. They should look at how well senior leaders have identified good practice within the partnership and ensured that other staff may benefit from it. They should also consider how well staff work with other partnerships of professional development to help them develop their professional practice and keep their vocational skills and technical knowledge up-to-date.

5.4 Use of resources

Inspectors should evaluate the extent to which the partnership's spending decisions, contract management, and broad financial planning link appropriately to its strategic priorities and its improvement planning. In relation to spending decisions, inspectors should consider how well the partnership balances its short-term needs alongside the long-term needs of learners.

Inspectors should consider the extent to which senior and middle leaders know the costs of existing training programmes and activities and review how cost effective they are. Inspectors should consider the size of any surplus or deficit relative to the partnership's budget. They should consider whether there is a consistent trend of spending that is significantly above or below the annual delegated budget and explore the reasons for this, where it occurs.

Inspectors should consider whether there is an appropriate level of staffing and learning resources to deliver the planned provision effectively. Inspectors should

consider whether the partnership uses its accommodation effectively and efficiently, and the extent to which the accommodation supports or detracts from teaching and learning of high quality. Inspectors should consider whether learners have good access to a full range of learning and assessment activities appropriate to their needs.

The evidence base of the inspection

The report will contain a brief overview of the evidence base of the inspection. In this section, reporting inspectors will summarise the activities undertaken by members of the inspection team and the sources of evidence that they considered before, during and after the inspection to ensure that the findings of the inspection are valid, accurate and reliable.

Thematic focus

Estyn may choose a small number of additional themes to focus on each year. The themes chosen will help Estyn to gather information on specific aspects of education and training in Wales. Estyn will use the information to complement its remit work and to inform the findings of the Chief Inspector's Annual Report.

Where there is an additional theme, the inspection team will focus on only one additional theme on each inspection. There will be no separate section of the report or a separate judgement on the additional theme in the published report.

The inspection team may approach the gathering of evidence for the additional theme in a variety of ways, depending on the theme chosen. It may involve a questionnaire or an interview with a specific member of staff or scrutiny of documentation or learners' work, or a combination of approaches. The aim is to make the gathering of evidence as proportionate and as manageable as possible for the partnership and the inspection team.