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Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

Skills for older learners

The impact of adult community learning on the wellbeing of older learners

January 2012



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- ⬆ pupil referral units;
- ⬆ independent schools;
- ⬆ further education;
- ⬆ independent specialist colleges;
- ⬆ adult community learning;
- ⬆ local authority education services for children and young people;
- ⬆ teacher education and training;
- ⬆ work-based learning;
- ⬆ careers companies; and
- ⬆ offender learning.

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Summary

- 1 The Welsh Government gives good priority to older learners and works with 16 adult community learning (ACL) partnerships across Wales¹ to provide lifelong learning for older learners in the community. These partnerships are at their most effective when supporting learners between 50 and 65 years old who are not in employment or are in groups that do not access learning outside their communities. Many of these older people have developed their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills through community learning opportunities and this has improved their employability.
- 2 However, the current emphasis on skills for employment has resulted in gaps in the provision for other older learners, mainly those over 65 years old, who are retired, and some of whom are in isolated or vulnerable situations. These older learners do not have access to education and skills development opportunities that could contribute to their continued health and wellbeing in the next phase of their lives. The curriculum offered to these older learners, including those who can pay for courses, is inflexible, does not meet their needs adequately and does not promote lifelong learning. Enrolments in adult education fall dramatically in the over-70 age group.
- 3 The Department for Education and Skills (DfES)² and other Welsh Government departments do not currently do enough to join up the different elements of the Older People's strategy and the Delivering Community Learning³ policy statement to improve provision and outcomes for all older people.
- 4 In a few cases there are good connections between the ACL partnerships and the local service boards. However, most local service boards do not make use of ACL partnerships experience to develop good responses to older people's needs.
- 5 Opportunities are also missed by the majority of ACL partnerships to develop strong links with the Older People's Co-ordinators (OPCs) across Wales. As a result, ACL partnerships do not always use the information and contacts of the OPCs to consider the needs of all older people.

¹ Appendix 4 List of ACL partnerships in Wales

² The Welsh Government's Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, recently renamed the Department for Education and Skills (DfES)

³ [Welsh Government | Delivering community learning for Wales](#)

Main findings

- 6 The learning programmes for older people in Wales focus on improving qualifications and skills levels. These programmes do help many people to improve their job prospects and gain employment. There are a few examples where providers in the ACL partnerships work well to agree joint arrangements to offer good levels of support to learners who learn in local community and outreach centres.
- 7 Many older learners build their self-esteem and confidence through adult and community learning. Many of these learners progress to higher levels of learning. Many also widen their understanding of subjects that they have not previously studied. Others continue to contribute to family and community activities by using the skills they have learned.
- 8 Older learners who are still looking for employment and wish to improve their qualifications show enthusiasm and commitment when re-entering the world of learning. They are supported well by a few ACL partnerships where skilful and thoughtful approaches to planning focus on the needs of older learners. Even when support is generally good, not enough use is made of co-ordinated careers guidance services.
- 9 Once older people pass the age where they are seeking employment, their contact with local community programmes decreases rapidly. This is because the curriculum and subject areas on offer almost always revolve around the attainment of qualifications, which these much older learners do not want or need.
- 10 The analysis of trends emerging from a scrutiny of about 13,000 older learners' enrolment records shows that people past employment age still want to enrol on courses and classes that help them to remain well and healthy and to keep up with their interests. But enrolments drop dramatically in the over-70 age group.
- 11 Interviews with older people highlighted how loss of confidence and connections in the local community has a rapid negative impact on their wellbeing. Older people recognise that the stimulation that learning brings to their lives can help them to remain active and independent.
- 12 Many ACL partnerships do not plan well enough for the broad spectrum of older people's learning. They do not make enough use of the funding available to offer a flexible curriculum that meets the needs and aspirations of older learners.
- 13 Departments in both the Welsh Government and local authorities do not have a clear strategy to meet the needs of the growing ageing population in Wales. They do not pool the resources aimed at older people in order to develop well-thought through plans for people in retirement.
- 14 The Welsh Government recognises that there is strong quantitative evidence that participation in learning in later life reinforces people's independence and capacity to look after themselves, and can also slow the development of dementia, thereby delaying the need for expensive residential care. However, links are not

made well enough between education, health and social services to support wellbeing into old age. There are also strong humanitarian grounds for making available provision for older people that will support the United Nations Principles for Older People, which is that the state should support their independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity.

Recommendations

The Welsh Government should:

- R1 monitor the implementation of the delivering community learning policy to improve joint working across the departments, directorates and branches responsible for older people; and
- R2 gather data about learning opportunities in the Older People's Monitor, so that it monitors wellbeing through learning as well as access to employment.

The Department for Education and Skills should:

- R3 work with other Welsh Government departments to pool all budgets aimed at supporting older people's lifelong learning and wellbeing;
- R4 agree performance indicators or outcome measures for ACL partnerships to monitor their work with older people in supporting independent living; and
- R5 encourage and support ACL partnerships to support older people to organise and manage their own learning.

ACL partnerships should:

- R6 increase flexibility in delivery methods, curriculum choice, session length and methods of assessment for older people, especially those over the age of 70.

Local authorities should:

- R7 make sure that local service boards improve their use of the ACL partnership expertise in delivering lifelong learning and joined-up services for older people.

Context

Population of older people in Wales

- 15 Wales has an ageing population. Approximately 38% of the total population of Wales is over the age of 50. This is higher than in other United Kingdom countries⁴. However, the distribution of older people across Wales varies. About half of the local authority areas have above average numbers of older people, with areas that are popular with retired people such as Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Anglesey having the highest percentages of older people making up their populations.
- 16 The size of the population over 50 is expected to increase. In 1948, 40% of people died before pensionable age, but by 1996 this reduced to 7%. The projected figure for older people over the age of 85 in 2034 is 2.5 times larger than in 2009.
- 17 Wales has a growing necessity to consider the needs of older citizens. The National Statistics Office for Wales⁵ has issued these summaries about older people.
 - One in three people over the age of 65 lives on their own and for people over 85 it is nearly one in two.
 - Projections indicate that the 2011 Census will show 19% of people as being over 65.
 - The proportion of people who are over the age of 80 is slightly higher than the UK or EU average, and is at least one percentage point higher than over half of all EU countries. (Only Sweden and Italy have a higher proportion.)
- 18 In addition, those:
 - aged over 60 are more likely to use in-patient hospital services;
 - over 70s are twice as likely to use them as the under 60s;
 - the number of people over the age of 50 treated in hospital has risen by a third over the past ten years; and
 - people aged over 75 are twice as likely to use social services day care and three times as likely to use homecare or meals-on-wheels compared with people aged 65 to 75.

Delivering Community Learning

- 19 The Welsh Government launched the Delivering Community Learning policy in November 2010. The policy statement sets out a range of priority groups for adult community learning to which a minimum of 80% of the total funding allocated to local authorities and further education institutions for ACL provision should be devoted:
 - anyone aged 16 and above accessing an ACL basic skills and/or ESOL programme, including contextualised basic skills and citizenship courses;

⁴ Appendix 3 Population summary for United Kingdom

⁵ Statistical summary for Older People in Wales 2008

<http://wales.gov.uk/cisd/publications/statspubs/focusolder2008/en.pdf?lang=en>

- those who are not currently in education, training or employment and are in receipt of state benefits or support (excluding state retirement pension); or
- those aged 50 plus who are not in full-time employment.

- 20 The policy statement recognises the contribution that adult community learning has for the wellbeing of older learners. It notes that ACL contributes to the delivery of a number of Welsh Government policies and strategies that aim to strengthen and enhance the social resources of local communities. As well as the economic agenda, ACL impacts on social inclusion, health and wellbeing, community regeneration, the eradication of child poverty and the older people's strategy.
- 21 In the policy statement the Welsh Assembly Government also "recognises that there is strong quantitative evidence that participation in learning in later life reinforces people's independence and capacity to look after themselves, and can also slow the development of dementia, thereby delaying the need for expensive residential care. Learning in later life makes a key contribution to the Welsh Assembly Government's Strategy for Older People. It contributes to ageing actively, can support the provision of effective care and extend the working lives of those who wish to remain in employment."
- 22 Continuing to learn new skills and maintaining knowledge is an important factor in supporting older people's wellbeing. The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) published the findings from the Inquiry into the future of lifelong learning⁶ in 2009. The inquiry report highlights the need to develop a framework for all-age learning. It emphasises the need for education programmes to reflect the change in population balance. The report identifies the growing need for learning for life beyond work with many people living 20, 30 and in some cases 40 years past retirement age.

⁶ Learning through life: Inquiry into the Future of Lifelong Learning

1 Skills for employment and economic regeneration

- 23 All adult community learning (ACL) partnerships⁷ have developed ways to support older learners to practise and develop employability skills. For example, six partnerships in south-east Wales have made good use of European funds to develop a project to support learners back into work. The Bridges to Work⁸ programme works well with those who lack confidence and longer-term unemployed people to develop their employability skills. The six partnerships support each other well and have recruited over 13,000 ACL learners, around 20% of whom are over 50 and under 65.
- 24 All partnerships offer ways for adult learners to increase their literacy and numeracy skills. Where these are most successful, adults can access learning sessions that help them to improve these skills quickly alongside other skills related to their interests, for example in information technology (IT) or family history.
- 25 In addition, the Welsh Government has offered other programmes, such as the ReAct⁹ and ProAct programmes, that have reached out to older people. A significant percentage, 23%, of those involved with the ProAct project were over 50. In the ReAct project, about 22% of those involved were over the age of 50. As a result of the ReAct programme, 2,697 learners attained new qualifications. The majority of these qualifications were National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3.
- 26 However, the ReAct and ProAct programmes do not involve ACL partnerships and use direct contacts with employers and careers services to recruit adult learners. As a result, these programmes miss opportunities to use the knowledge and experience of ACL partnerships to reach out to and deliver learning to a wider number of adults.
- 27 During inspections, Estyn has found that, in a minority of ACL partnerships, too few adult community learners use the independent careers advice available from Careers Wales. Figures from Careers Wales show that adult learners are under-represented in the numbers of people who use careers guidance overall.¹⁰ Only 17% those using Careers Wales information and guidance sessions are aged 50 and over.
- 28 Chances are missed to 'join up' services for older learners to offer them the best opportunities to continue to learn.

⁷ Appendix 4 Adult Community Learning Partnerships

⁸ Bridges into Work is a European funded programme that aims to increase employment and tackle economic inactivity.

⁹ ReAct programme – supports workers facing redundancy to gain new skills and ProAct helps employers to retain staff and improve their skills.

¹⁰ Appendix 5 Older learners and Careers Wales

2 Skills for wellbeing

- 29 The Strategy for Older People in Wales¹¹ underlines the important place that learning has to help older learners stay independent, be able to continue participating in their community and to maintain their levels of wellbeing. Opportunities to maintain skills and acquire new skills for wellbeing are important in a civilised society. However, the Older People's Monitor¹² does not consider carefully enough the impact of lifelong learning on older people. It only monitors access to employment and does not consider access to learning in old age.
- 30 In the later phase of their lives, older people face a number of challenges. Nowadays, family members are more likely to disperse and older people are not able to rely on them for day-to-day encouragement to remain fit and active. Their general mobility often becomes limited. Many older people in Wales also face financial challenges and cannot pay for participation in community activities. These factors can result in many older learners losing the confidence to leave their homes and their isolation is increased.
- 31 Older people need access to local learning programmes, that will equip them for later life. They need opportunities to maintain and develop their skills in keeping fit, preventing or dealing with mental health problems, keeping up to date with technology and current affairs, staying safe, volunteering, and in some cases helping grandchildren to learn.
- 32 There are many social and economic benefits in maintaining and developing these lifelong learning skills in older people. Continuing to learn and keep an active mind can lead to less expensive health and social care interventions. Continuing to learn can also lead to increased numbers of older people who can remain independent, self-fulfilled and involved with their local communities longer. The current arrangements for older learners, especially those no longer seeking employment, who are isolated or vulnerable, can mean that these older learners do not continue to learn after retirement and into old age.
- 33 The funding of adult learning has been traditionally based on learner outcomes. There has been an expectation that most older learners will attain a qualification or credit certificate when they enrol on ACL provision. It has often been difficult for providers to make available the kinds of learning opportunities older learners need when both they and the learners have to concentrate on the attainment of qualifications that they do not need.
- 34 Whilst a majority of older learners value the opportunity to receive certificates for the successful completion of courses, many older learners remember negative learning experiences in the past and see accreditation as a barrier to learning and unnecessary since they do not need or plan to use these qualifications. Providers and funders have yet to develop effective ways of acknowledging and measuring progress in wellbeing and the other skills that older learners value.

¹¹Appendix 8 The Strategy for Older People in Wales 2008-2013

¹²Appendix 6 Older People's Monitor

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/olderpeople/research/wellbeingmonitor2009/?lang=en>

3 Older learners' experience of adult community learning

- 35 Estyn reviewed sample data from approximately 13,800 learners aged 50 and from four different ACL partnership providers that reflects the learning choices of older learners over a period of three years between 2007 and 2010.
- 36 Around 50% of learners aged between 50 and 65 use their local community learning provision to improve their employability skills and knowledge. These learners follow courses in IT, basic skills, Access to Higher Education, business skills, and communication.
- 37 Often, older learners are expected to complete a full qualification because of the funding this attracts for the institution delivering the course even though this may not be what learners need. They often need additional and updating of skills but do not need to start at the beginning of a qualification. When they are required to study a course in its entirety, it often means that they have to repeat work unnecessarily. This repetition means that the funding and time being spent are not being used to best advantage. Few institutions accredit prior learning.
- 38 From the review of the data¹³, it is clear that many learners continue to learn up to the age of 70. However, after the age of 70, learner enrolments dip dramatically. The 50-69 age groups represent 67% of the cohort. However, those who are over 70 represent only 33% of learners. This gives cause for concern because it raises questions about the equality of access to learning opportunities. It is likely that all older people do not have access to lifelong learning in line with the Strategy for Older People in Wales.

Percentage	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85-89	90+	All Ages
Male	3.6%	3.2%	6.2%	6.2%	4.0%	3.7%	3.0%	0.3%	0.1%	30.2%
Female	10.8%	11.1%	12.8%	12.8%	12.5%	7.0%	1.5%	1.1%	0.2%	69.8%
Total Cohort	1,984	1,966	2,610	2,615	2,259	1,467	620	188	41	13,750

- 39 Currently, many learning opportunities concentrate on the requirements of younger learners and their need for initial qualifications. This means that the delivery and style of learning do not always match older learners' needs well. For example, the timing of courses and the lack of accreditation of prior learning mean that older learners do not always attain their learning goals quickly and effectively.
- 40 Estyn asked the Older People's Co-ordinator¹⁴ (OPC) in each local authority to complete a questionnaire using their local knowledge of older people. Each co-ordinator gave their views and experience of older people with regard to attitudes towards and delivery of education for older people in their area.
- 41 All Older People's Co-ordinators completed a questionnaire for this report and the main features of their experience of working with older people in Wales are that most older people want to continue to learn. They also report that older people face a

¹³ Appendix 7 Analysis of sample of ACL learners enrolments 2007-2010

¹⁴ Each local authority area has an Older People's Co-ordinator

range of barriers in continuing to learn. These include:

- cost of attending courses;
- availability of transport;
- older people believing that they are too old to learn;
- lack of ambition on their behalf from professionals;
- family responsibilities impacting on older people's opportunities;
- accredited learning creating a barrier for many older people;
- knowing where, how and when learning is available;
- lack of confidence; and
- older person's issues/perceptions about personal appearance or present fitness to be able to take part in physical activity.

- 42 Older People's Co-ordinators also describe programmes developed for older learners in their areas.¹⁵ In many ACL partnerships there are examples of older people's groups being encouraged to be self-supporting. This has happened mostly in art and craft, other creative activities and local history. For example: a group of eight female learners, all 65+ who engage in craft and poetry sessions, have formed into a club in one local community learning centre. This model of self-support is one way to encourage participation and self-fulfilment as long as the learners have the skills to maintain the running of the club.
- 43 The frequency of contact that Older People's Co-ordinators have with the ACL partnerships across Wales is variable. Some have contact at regular intervals but others have no regular contact or none at all.
- 44 Older People's Co-ordinators do not have ways to promote a range of learning options for older people and, although there are some funded projects, many of the projects are short-term or not co-ordinated well. One example is the Click programme advertised by the BBC, which encouraged older people to make more use of the internet and ITC. It was not as successful as it might have been because not all ACL partnerships were made aware of its timing and therefore were not able to plan well to support these older learners to continue to practise and develop confidence in the skills they have already learnt.
- 45 Estyn undertook a number of interviews with older learners currently participating in adult community learning sessions in five ACL partnership areas across Wales. Estyn asked learners in Bridgend, Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, Gwynedd and Anglesey about their experience of learning in their local communities. We asked each older learner to talk about the successful outcomes of their learning experience. All learners valued the opportunity to learn new skills and to increase their knowledge.
- 46 These learning experiences included those provided by the ACL partnerships and ones developed by the Older People's Co-ordinators. In the survey we were interested to know what older learners believe are the major outcomes from their learning experience, in relation not only to the curriculum area studied, but also the values highlighted in the United Nation's principles for Older Persons, which are:

¹⁵ See Appendix 10 Summary of Older People's Co-ordinators' responses

- independence;
- participation;
- care;
- self-fulfilment; and
- dignity.

- 47 Estyn also interviewed approximately 125 older learners about their own assessment of the gains learning brought them. We asked learners to identify their own success factors from their learning experiences.

Older learners' self-assessment of the outcome of their learning experience	
improved their social contacts	100%
improved health benefits from attending sessions	94%
improved their confidence and self-esteem	77%
improved their community involvement and volunteering	57%
improved skills for the 21st century (e.g. computing, use of new technology)	47%

- 48 Learners over 70 register more benefits of self-confidence and self-esteem and improved health benefits than 50-70 year olds. Learners over 70 are much less likely to identify benefits that enhance their 21st century skills or improve their community involvement and volunteering.
- 49 All the learners talk about the importance of meeting others. In many classes learners also make friendships through the class. Many new members of classes report that they receive a warm welcome and look forward to attending. They all talk about the emotional support they give to each other. Many encourage friends to join because of their own experiences.
- 50 Nearly all the learners mention health benefits. One learner wanting to overcome a mental health issue has joined because of advice from a Social Services worker. Four learners have suffered strokes and said that the classes helped them recover because of the mental stimulus and the regaining of confidence. All the members of one class say that the work helps to keep their joints supple.
- 51 The following case studies outline the many differing starting points for older learners and the variety of learning gains older people receive from their learning experiences. The outcomes highlight increased social inclusion, health benefits and wellbeing for older learners as well as employment skill development.

Improving the use of 21st century skills for employment

Learner A is partially sighted and registered as disabled. He is a keen member of the walking group organised in the local centre and is currently preparing for accreditation as a walk leader. In addition he does 'cookery for men' and IT. A charity that supports ex-service men and women has provided him with specially adapted IT software. Because of this and with the support of the local Jobcentre, learner A has enrolled on a web-design course as he is keen to return to employment.

Learner A is also a keen participant in age-impaired shooting competitions for the partially sighted and competes regularly. He regards all his activities as preventative medicine. He does not regard his disability as a barrier, and support from the local learning programme helps him to develop his skills and continue to contribute to society.

Improved self-esteem and confidence

Learner B has dementia. He has been a keen musician and amateur magician. When diagnosed he gave up many of the activities he enjoyed because he struggled to concentrate and retain information. He has joined a learning group and begun to use an IT fitness game to help him exercise and focus his mind. This has been very effective and after discussion with his psychiatrist he has begun practising his magic and playing the guitar again. He does a great deal of voluntary work, performing his magic for children's charities and playing in a group for community events. This ability to give something to others is very important to Learner B. He feels that he is still a useful member of society, and enjoys being with others. It gives him a great sense of achievement. He considers that the more he does, the better he feels and he gets a 'lift' from doing things for others.

Improved health

Learner C suffers from depression. She was initially encouraged to join classes by her husband who was concerned that she rarely left the house and was becoming more and more unwell. Since joining her first class she has learned a number of crafts and not only attends organised classes now but also some informal groups.

Learner C still struggles to set out from home but realises that these activities are vital to her mental health. She enjoys learning new things, and values the social contact and the distraction provided. Learner C is convinced that if she had not started attending classes she would not be able to cope. She says it has "kept her alive".

Improved community involvement & volunteering

Learner D and Learner E

On retiring five years ago, Learners D and E moved to north Wales from the south of England. Their only knowledge of the area was based on holidays. They became involved with the local older people's learning centre after a neighbour recommended they "give it a visit". Both learners have successfully completed courses at the centre. Its real value to them has been the community involvement and volunteering they undertake as a result. Learner D is a general all-around repair man and the 'Mr Fixit' for the centre. Learner E is one of the committee members and regularly takes on administration and volunteer worker roles at the centre. They are very proud of the success of the centre and now have a large number of friends. Learner E maintains that the involvement with the centre keeps her well. Their work takes up a great deal of time but they love every minute of it.

Improved social contact

Learner F moved to south Wales from London four years ago. She is a widow and knew no one in the area. Because she saw an art class in the park one day, she decided to find out what learning opportunities were on offer. She has since taken part in a wide range of classes including art, yoga and currently woodwork. She is a fervent advocate for adult community learning. She now has many friends, and is learning new, interesting and useful skills and greater independence. Learner F says that classes challenge her to do things she never dreamt she could do and have enabled her to settle to a very happy new life in south Wales.

4 Older learners' curriculum choices

- 52 This section analyses the preferred choices for enrolment by older learners. Choices are dependent on the courses that are offered by local partnership providers. Choices are often limited by what has been available historically, the availability of known tutors and the availability of funding.

Literacy and other employment-related learning

- 53 Generally, learners aged between 50 and 64 who wish to enhance their employability skills use literacy classes most. However, many adult learners prefer to enrol on contextualised learning courses where they add to their literacy skills alongside a subject that interests them. Many courses related to employment skills often include contextualised literacy skills in their content. A few older learners who are grandparents use family learning sessions to learn how to help their grandchildren in their schoolwork.

Numbers of people in the 50+ age ranges enrolled on literacy related courses in 2007-10

	Subject Area	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85-89	90+	All Ages
Male	Literacy	76	32	29	38	13	16	13	0	0	217
Female	Literacy	180	157	96	66	44	21	0	1	0	565

These figures do not include all ABE and Family learning sessions.

Other employment-related learning

- 54 These courses include business studies, construction, counselling, and retail skills, sign language, Access to higher education (HE) courses, tutoring skills, catering and childcare skills. The courses vary in length and qualification levels. Many courses help older learners to find out about employment options and find out more about their own preferences. This means that these learners find ways to review their vocational options or to re-enter the employment market knowing more about their own skills and preferences.

Numbers of people in the 50+ age ranges enrolled on employment-related courses in 2007-10

	Subject Area	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85-89	90+	All Ages
Male	Employment related	100	63	96	100	65	51	149	5	4	633
Female	Employment related	230	235	251	318	452	273	25	36	8	1,828

Information technology

- 55 These courses are among the most popular amongst older people. About 30% of all learners over 50 follow courses in IT. These courses and sessions can be short courses, often lasting around 20 hours in one aspect of IT or longer courses that lead to qualifications. In a few cases, older learners are able to access workshop provision where they can update their skills in a specific IT skill, such as internet

shopping, but this type of provision is not always available. Many learners aged between 50 and 69 use these courses to add to their employability skills. Most older people over 70 also realise the importance of understanding the use of IT and those who join courses value the opportunity to learn close to where they live. These courses help older people to learn about Skype and email that help them keep in touch with family members who may no longer live close by. Where these sessions are available, older learners make good use of the skills they learn to use the internet to find out current information, for example about how to order goods online and how to find out about sources of financial support and pensions.

Numbers of people in the 50+ age ranges enrolled on IT courses in 2007-10

	Subject Area	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85-89	90+	All Ages
Male	IT	103	127	245	315	242	245	157	20	2	1,456
Female	IT	315	325	446	527	563	323	64	34	8	2,605

Languages

- 56 These figures do not include all the Welsh language learners but concentrate on modern foreign languages. Many older learners use this opportunity to catch up on learning they missed in school. French, Spanish and German are the most popular languages. Research shows that learning a new language helps older people to avoid the worst outcomes of Alzheimer's disease.¹⁶

Numbers of people in the 50+ age ranges enrolled on language courses in 2007-10

	Subject Area	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85-89	90+	All Ages
Male	Languages	68	87	163	173	106	63	33	4	1	698
Female	Languages	284	217	230	188	128	52	5	17	2	1,123

Personal development

- 57 In these courses, older learners build confidence and communication skills. These sessions can help both employability and independent living skills and allow older learners to pursue personal interests. The learners represent only 4% of this learner sample. The independent living skills offered to some learners are most often available to those learners who have had some physical or mental disability throughout their lives. Skills in independent living also help other older learners to avoid losing the ability to remain independent. These sessions build ways for learners to continue to participate and help to bring self-fulfilment and dignity.

Numbers of people in the 50+ age ranges enrolled on personal development courses in 2010-11

	Subject Area	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85-89	90+	All Ages
Male	Personal development	61	23	46	25	5	9	15	0	0	184
Female	Personal development	83	70	60	50	39	29	10	9	1	351

¹⁶ Ellen Bialystok York University Toronto to the American Association for the Advancement of Science Feb 2011.

Food and nutrition

- 58 These courses are not always available to older learners. Maintaining an interest and enthusiasm for cooking meals at home, particularly when many older people live alone, is an important factor for older people trying to maintain their wellbeing. An increasing number of older men use these classes to improve their cookery skills after they have become widowers.

Numbers of people in the 50+ age ranges enrolled on food and nutrition courses in 2007-10

	Subject Area	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85-89	90+	All Ages
Male	Food and Nutrition	15	13	23	34	16	13	6	0	0	120
Female	Food and Nutrition	75	49	62	45	49	38	11	5	3	337

Music

- 59 Not enough adult learners are able to access music courses. Music and learning to play an instrument help many older learners to remain engaged with their communities. It is not uncommon for older learners whose employment history concentrates on more scientific skills such as engineering or medicine to come back to learn how to make and play music. This helps these adult learners to communicate with others and often these learners will involve themselves in community activities to provide musical accompaniment to charity events or visit other older people who are isolated in their homes.

Numbers of people in the 50+ age ranges enrolled on music courses in 2007-10

	Subject Area	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85-89	90+	All Ages
Male	Music	24	29	40	47	38	19	9	1	0	207
Female	Music	22	28	36	39	49	23	5	3	0	205

Keeping healthy

- 60 Most providers offer health-related fitness classes, but few learners take up these options. Classes include alternative therapies, relaxation techniques, Tai Chi and Yoga. There are not enough general 'gentle exercise' classes for older learners. Very few male learners take up these health-related options. Provision to encourage older learners to remain fit and well is not co-ordinated across local community facilities and providers do not plan well together or advertise to encourage older people to join in. Older learners do not often have clear information about where to access sessions that will help them to remain fit. Older People's Co-ordinators also report that lack of confidence to join active classes is often a barrier to participation.

Numbers of people in the 50+ age ranges enrolled on health and fitness courses in 2007-10

	Subject Area	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85-89	90+	All Ages
Male	Health	2	10	6	3	6	9	3	2	0	41
Female	Health	65	70	60	50	39	29	10	9	1	333

History

- 61 This area of learning has the lowest participation rate at less than 1%. However, reminiscence work with older learners is a powerful way to keep vulnerable and much older learners engaged and included in community activities. This area of learning is often very successful and allows much younger learners and members of communities to understand their own histories and the part older relatives and community members played in events. Where these sessions run well they help community cohesion by bringing the older and younger generations together.

Numbers of people in the 50+ age ranges enrolled on history courses in 2007-10

	Subject Area	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85-89	90+	All Ages
Male	History	5	2	8	14	4	10	2	1	0	46
Female	History	12	24	33	23	16	10	2	0	1	121

Art and craft

- 62 These courses include fine art, photography, pottery, card making, needlecraft and stained glass work.
- 63 More female learners than male learners follow courses in art and craft. More older learners over the age of 60 follow these courses. These courses allow older learners to practise manual dexterity and retain their hand-to-eye co-ordination. A minority of learners can be recovering from stroke and report that these sessions aid their recovery well.
- 64 In art and craft, increasingly, older learners combine creative work with the use of IT. Digital photography is a good example where art and computer skills are combined successfully to help older learners to record community and family events, to know how to upload photographs to their own computer equipment and include them in community websites, or to post them to friends and family via email or other websites.

Numbers of people in the 50+ age ranges enrolled on art and craft courses in 2007-10

	Subject Area	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85-89	90+	All Ages
Male	Art and craft	42	52	192	102	49	75	31	7	0	550
Female	Art and craft	222	353	488	458	336	159	70	34	10	2,130

5 Adult community learning partnerships and planning for community learning

- 65 Each ACL partnership has either a local authority or a further education institution as its lead partner. Typically, the partnerships also include in their membership, the regional Welsh language school, Workers Educational Association (WEA South)/ Coleg Harlech WEA (N) and the local county voluntary council. In August 2010, DfES asked all ACL partnerships to submit strategic partnership plans.
- 66 An analysis of these plans shows that all partnerships take into account the main priorities DfES asked them to consider. The priorities are:
- widening participation amongst disadvantaged or under-represented groups;
 - economic inactivity;
 - Basic Skills and ESOL;
 - Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship; and
 - Welsh medium and bilingual learning.
- 67 This example from Gwynedd and Anglesey adult community learning partnership shows the range of policies they take into consideration when developing their adult community learning programme.

Gwynedd and Anglesey ACL Partnership strategic plan

Policy context for partnership plans include:

National

- DfES Corporate and Operational Plans;
- Welsh Government remit letter to the National Council of Education and Training;
- Welsh Government's Strategy for bilingual learning;
- National Basic Skills Strategy – Words Talk, Numbers Count;
- Webb report; and
- DfES' criteria for the new Adult and Community Learning Partnerships.

Regional

The Regional Statement of Needs and Priorities, in particular:

- raising participation in learning amongst the economically inactive;
- embedding generic and key skills in learning;
- embedding the North Wales 'Strategic Approach to Basic Skills';
- developing a strategic approach to the use of e-learning;
- increasing provision of Welsh/bilingual education and training;
- North Wales Economic Forum – North Wales Development Strategy;
- training for entry level provision;

- developing e-learning and training support for difficult to engage groups; and
- North Wales Basic Skills Strategy.

Local

- Local partnership annual recommendations for Learning, in particular the activities related to:
 - Basic Skills;
 - economic activity;
 - e-learning; and
 - bilingualism;
- Gwynedd and Isle of Anglesey Local Authorities' Community Strategies; and
- Gwynedd and Isle of Anglesey's Older People Strategy.

- 68 However, not enough ACL partnerships take the needs of older learners into account in their planning. Only a minority of the strategic partnership plans from the remaining partnerships name the Older People's Co-ordinator or the Older People's Strategy as influencing the development of their plans.
- 69 However, there are a number of practical projects where ACL partnerships support older people's needs. Examples of this are outlined in appendix 1. These partnerships join together with other departments and agencies in local areas to plan holistically for the needs of older learners and reflect this in their partnership plans.
- 70 Two further partnerships mention intergenerational learning and re-skilling of older learners in their plans. However, in comparison to this work with 50+ learners, a majority of ACL partnerships indicate a greater emphasis on work with 14-19 learners.
- 71 Whilst much good work delivered by ACL partnerships successfully supports younger people to learn in informal and community settings, the greater emphasis on younger learners in partnership plans often leaves a gap in the planning and response to older learners' needs. Not all partnerships use their experience and expertise well to respond to older learners' needs, particularly those learners who have retired and require learning opportunities that promote their social inclusion, health and wellbeing and active involvement in their community.
- 72 Programmes are often planned in isolation so that education programmes delivered through for example the health service and the leisure departments are not linked well. Volunteering skills, physical activity programmes, and easily accessible short IT sessions targeting particular skills, such as internet shopping, accessing information, and use of Skype, are not often linked together to target the recruitment of older people. This can mean that many older learners do not continue to learn after retirement and into old age.

6 Adult community learning and the Welsh Government

- 73 The delivering community learning policy recognises the role of ACL in realising the Welsh Government vision for Wales. The policy acknowledges that better collaborative working, improved progression and high standards of delivery need to be reinforced by a more joined-up, holistic approach to policy initiatives within the Welsh Government. The policy requires DfES to collaborate within the Welsh Government to 'join up' policy initiatives.
- 74 However, the policy statement does not outline how adult community learning partnerships and DfES can collaborate with Welsh Government departments that have a responsibility to consider older people's needs, for example:
- **Health and Social Services** with links to health and social care; provision of services in Wales to the mentally ill and NHS delivery;
 - **Social Justice and Local Government** equality and equal opportunities; strategic planning by local authorities; and
 - **Business and Budget** strategic financial direction; making the most effective use of WAG budget; value for money and effectiveness of spend across Assembly's; and strategic and corporate planning in the Welsh Government.
- 75 All of these departments take responsibility to provide support and services to older people. But there is generally a lack of understanding across these departments about how adult community learning can encourage and support older people to remain active and participate in community life. Effective solutions to support the active participation of older people are not developed between DfES, health and social services departments at a strategic level. This means that, at an operational level generally, ACL partnerships do not follow the principles of the Older People's Strategy or plan for the needs of older learners effectively.

Appendix 1: Projects supporting older people's needs

Caerphilly ACL partnership: supporting skills for work and wellbeing

The Caerphilly ACL partnership has a number of projects to support curriculum planning and identify the employability skills needed by older learners. The partners include the Economic Development links to the 'Supporting Division' of the local authority and Job Centre Plus, along with local employers. This group, called the 'People Forum', supports older people to maintain independence, and makes sure that there are good outcomes for older learners' safety, health and general wellbeing. The forum includes the social services department, housing associations and voluntary sector organisations such as Gofal-Cymru, Women's Aid, the Association for the Blind and Mencap.

There are positive links with Working Links and Bridges to Work. These programmes help older people gain further qualifications and retrain for new areas of employment.

Caerphilly ACL partnership works with Community Partnerships

There are improving links between a number of Community Partnership meetings in Communities First areas in Caerphilly where local managers discuss curriculum and learning needs with local citizens.

The Senior Community Education Manager and ESF Project Manager are members of Caerphilly Skills, Education and Employment (SEE) Group. Members include Mental Health Services, Economic Development, further education colleges, CAB, Careers Wales and local business leaders, with a remit to oversee the integration and co-ordination of interventions to help a range of ages. The group helps people aged 25+ to access and improve their skills to secure sustainable employment. The group forms the primary link between education and regeneration and supports the implementation of the Basic Skills strategy for adults.

Neath Port Talbot ACL partnership supports welfare rights

The Neath Port Talbot, the ACL partnership is working with the local authority Welfare Rights unit to make sure that partnership workers can act as a point of contact for older people to make them aware of the recent changes in the welfare payments.

Blaenau Gwent ACL partnership: working together to promote skills for employment

In Blaenau Gwent, the Bridges into Work 50+ Learning Co-ordinator, the ACL partnership, ICT Tutor and Development Officer have regular contact to promote learning new skills and to deliver taster sessions to encourage community learning. Members of Blaenau Gwent leisure staff also join the Life Begins @ 50+ Steering Group to organise and advise on sport and leisure activity taster sessions.

Anglesey's Agewell programme includes the training of peer monitors.

Providers on Anglesey take a different approach to the needs of older learners. The Agewell programme is funded by the Big Lottery for a period of three years. The programme supports older people well and responds to their learning needs by offering an appropriate range of learning opportunities. The programme includes:

- physical activity such as dancing and Tai Chi;
- use of IT and other lifelong learning sessions such as cookery for men;
- advice and information;
- volunteering projects; and
- links to statutory services into the programme e.g. the expert patient programme, falls-prevention and the national exercise referral scheme.

The social services department has also trained a team of older people as peer monitors to undertake regular visits to care homes to monitor service users experience in terms of dignity and respect.

Interviews with learners on the Agewell programme demonstrate a number of important outcomes for these learners. All learners feel safe, positive and confident in their learning environment. Most learners gain effective independent learning skills and continue their learning outside the classroom. They make good use of their skills in community settings, at work or with their families. They improve their self-esteem and confidence. They demonstrate high levels of motivation and are enthusiastic. They attend well or make sure they catch up on work they miss. They show respect and concern for each other and listen attentively. Many learners take responsibility for their learning. All learners enjoy their learning. They understand their rights and responsibilities both to themselves and to others.

Swansea ACL partnership has an older people's community learning centre.

This centre offers self-directed activities and self-funded activity. The programme encourages older learners to join, many of whom felt they were too old to learn. Members encourage their neighbours to join in. One learner said that as a person who lived alone she also considered that coming to classes added to her feelings of safety. If she failed to appear she knew that the tutor would try to contact her and this made her feel safer.

Because of the scale of demand for short bite-size learning sessions, instead of offering a range of formal IT courses, the partnership is piloting an ICT workshop programme, geared towards flexibility so that a learner does not have to enrol for a full year. There are ten IT workshop sessions of around three hours offered in five locations. There are workshops each day of the week. Learners attend and then progress according to their particular needs. The sessions support older learners who may not wish to pursue a full qualification course but simply wish to update their IT skills so that they are able to access web based information or use email to communicate with family and friends.

Older learners in Swansea also contribute well the planning process of their learning by working on forums and/or contributing to focus meetings.

Appendix 2: Evidence base

- LLWR, Careers service and Employment data on people over 50;
- National census figures;
- Questionnaires from Older People's Co-ordinators;
- Visits to Gwynedd and Ynys Môn, Swansea, Caerphilly, Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend ACL partnerships; and
- Interviews with learners from ACL partnerships.

Literature reviewed included:

- Delivering Community Learning;
- Learning through Life Tom Schuller and David Watson;
- Taking Part? Active Learning for Active Citizenship and Beyond Marjorie Mayo and John Annette;
- Delivering community learning for Wales; Wales Government;
- Beyond Boundaries: The Beecham Report;
- Older People's Strategy;
- UN resolution for older people; and
- Review of all ACL inspection reports from the last inspection cycle.

Appendix 3: Population summary for United Kingdom, 2010

Wales

Ages	Total		Males		Females	
All Ages	3,006,400	%	1,470,900	%	1,535,500	%
50-54	193,600	6%	94,400	6%	99,200	6%
55-59	186,200	6%	91,000	6%	95,200	6%
60-64	202,800	7%	99,800	7%	102,900	7%
65-69	162,800	5%	79,100	5%	83,700	5%
70-74	132,700	4%	63,000	4%	69,700	5%
75-79	106,600	4%	48,000	3%	58,600	4%
80-84	79,500	3%	32,400	2%	47,100	3%
85-89	51,100	2%	17,700	1%	33,400	2%
90 and over	25,400	1%	7,200	0%	18,300	1%
Percentage over 50		38%				

Scotland

Ages	Total		Males		Females	
All Ages	5,222,100	%	2,530,300	%	2,691,800	%
50-54	366,200	7%	177,400	7%	188,900	7%
55-59	324,000	6%	158,100	6%	165,900	6%
60-64	327,500	6%	159,600	6%	167,900	6%
65-69	254,800	5%	120,400	5%	134,400	5%
70-74	219,100	4%	99,700	4%	119,400	4%
75-79	176,100	3%	74,900	3%	101,200	4%
80-84	122,900	2%	47,300	2%	75,700	3%
85-89	71,400	1%	23,700	1%	47,700	2%
90 and over	35,200	1%	9,200	0%	26,000	1%
Percentage over 50		36%				

England

Ages	Total		Males		Females	
All Ages	52,234,000	%	25,757,600	%	26,476,400	%
50-54	3,308,000	6%	1,637,200	6%	1,670,800	6%
55-59	2,970,600	6%	1,460,700	6%	1,509,900	6%
60-64	3,140,200	6%	1,535,300	6%	1,604,900	6%
65-69	2,434,600	5%	1,174,600	5%	1,260,000	5%
70-74	2,052,300	4%	968,200	4%	1,084,100	4%
75-79	1,668,400	3%	749,100	3%	919,200	3%
80-84	1,253,200	2%	513,400	2%	739,800	3%
85-89	791,900	2%	278,000	1%	513,900	2%
90 and over	405,900	1%	115,000	0%	290,900	1%
Percentage over 50		35%				

Northern Ireland

	Total		Males		Females	
All Ages	1,799,400	%	884,400	%	915,000	%
50-54	113,300	6%	55,700	6%	57,600	6%
55-59	97,700	5%	48,900	6%	48,800	5%
60-64	93,200	5%	45,400	5%	47,800	5%
65-69	79,500	4%	38,000	4%	41,500	5%
70-74	63,700	4%	29,400	3%	34,300	4%
75-79	50,700	3%	21,900	2%	28,800	3%
80-84	37,000	2%	14,000	2%	23,000	3%
85-89	20,200	1%	6,700	1%	13,500	1%
90 and over	9,500	1%	2,400	0%	7,100	1%
Percentage over 50		31%				

Appendix 4: ACL partnerships in Wales

Partnership name	DfES funded provider name
Bridgend	Bridgend College Bridgend County Borough Council – Adult Community Learning University of Glamorgan Welsh for Adults Workers Educational Association South (WEA(S))
Cardiff	Barry College Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan Welsh for Adults Centre Cardiff Council - Schools and Lifelong Learning Coleg Glan Hafren Workers Educational Association South (WEA(S)) YMCA Wales Community College
Carmarthenshire	Carmarthenshire County Council Coleg Sir Gar The South West Wales Welsh for Adults Centre (DACE) Workers Education Association (WEA) South Wales
Ceredigion	Aberystwyth University Mid Wales Welsh for Adults Centre Ceredigion County Council Coleg Ceredigion Dysgu Bro Ceredigion Community Learning Workers Educational Association South (WEA(S))
Conwy/Denbighshire	Coleg Harlech WEA(N) Coleg Llandrillo Yale College
Five Counties	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Caerphilly County Borough Council Coleg Gwent Monmouthshire County Borough Council Newport County Borough Council Torfaen County Borough Council Workers Educational Association South (WEA(S)) Ystrad Mynach College
Flintshire	Bangor University Welsh for Adults Coleg Harlech (WEA(N)) Deeside College
Gwynedd & Anglesey	Coleg Harlech WEA(N) Coleg Menai/ Coleg Meirion Dwyfor Regional Language School Bangor University Welsh for Adults

Merthyr Tydfil	University of Glamorgan, WfA Workers Educational Association South (WEA(S) Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC) Merthyr College
Neath Port Talbot	Neath Port Talbot College Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council South West Wales' Welsh for Adults Centre Workers Educational Association South (WEA(S)
Pembrokeshire	Pembrokeshire College Pembrokeshire County Council Workers Educational Association South (WEA(S)
Rhondda Cynon Taff	Coleg Morgannwg RCT Local Authority – Adult Education University of Glamorgan Welsh for Adults Workers Educational Association South (WEA(S) YMCA
Swansea	Gower College Regional Language School Welsh for Adults Swansea City and County Council Workers Education Association (S)
Vale of Glamorgan	Barry College Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan Welsh for Adults Centre Vale of Glamorgan County Council Workers Educational Association South (WEA(S) YMCA Community College
Wrexham	Coleg Harlech/WEA (N) Yale College Wrexham CBC's Leisure and Culture Department

Appendix 5: Careers Wales; adult contacts – older learners 2008/2009

Total number of all clients: Information giving 27,324
Guidance sessions 28,953

	Information giving			Guidance sessions		
Age	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
50-59	3,132	1,804	4,936	3,607	1,913	5,520
60+	500	175	675	520	102	622
Total	3,632	1,979	5,611	4,127	2,015	6,142

Appendix 6: Older People's Monitor

The purpose the Older People's Monitor is to 'monitor' the wellbeing of older people (aged 50 and over) in Wales. It aims to provide a multi-dimensional, reliable and current picture of wellbeing. It is the first in a series of monitors which will allow the Welsh Government and its partners to monitor and respond to key trends as well as raising awareness of issues that need to be tackled. The next Monitor in the series is planned for 2011.

The Monitor reports key published data: the most relevant, up-to-date and high quality evidence based on a review by Cardiff University and importantly the voices of older people themselves via a qualitative study undertaken by Glyndwr University.

The wellbeing indicators reported in the chapters are based on the UN Principles for Older Persons and the Welsh Government's Strategy for Older People in Wales Indicators of Change. Department of Work and Pension Opportunity Age Indicators are also included where appropriate. These indicators are reported on an all-Wales level.

A report from the monitor:

<http://wales.gov.uk/caec/research/ocsro/executivesummary.jsessionid=qLWQNs8SGMtsmhVW1sblWP5GZtcWnFnDSVnXGDBbW29fTczbJcvk!-36623044?lang=en>

Summary of issues identified:

- Most respondents described social attitudes towards older people as negative.
- The majority of respondents had concerns about ageing.
- The most prominent were concerns about mental deterioration and maintaining independence.
- The concern most often raised related to the prospect of entering residential care.
- A wish was expressed for more freely available information detailing the entitlements for older people.

- Respondents were unhappy about the prospect of paying for health and social care needs in old age. This was perceived as discriminatory by those who had saved and been careful.
- Those in employment wanted to carry on working as long as they could (albeit with a reduction in hours).
- Respondents had age-related expectations of health. That is good health was described as 'good for my age' as opposed to good per se.
- Whereas generally GP services were perceived positively, perceptions of hospital care were variable and, in respect of older people's care in hospital, mostly negative.
- Neighbourhood and community were cited as key components regarding satisfaction with current accommodation and perceptions of security.
- In terms of social participation, respondents could be categorised as either 'joiners' or 'loners'.
- Financial security was perceived as very important, and most respondents expressed concerns about the current economic crisis.
- Respondents were generally positive about young people, especially where they had contact with young people through family, work or the local community.
- Most respondents placed importance upon a healthy diet and claimed to eat healthily.

Appendix 7: Analysis of sample of ACL learner enrolments 2007-2010

Learner analysis - All age groups and curriculum choice

Analysis in this remit is based on a scrutiny of approximately 13,000 Learner Enrolment records of learners aged 50 and above over a period of 3 years. The data was provided for this survey by a sample of five ACL partnership providers.

	Subject Area	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85-89	90+
Male	Art and craft	42	52	192	102	49	75	31	7	0
Female	Art and craft	222	353	488	458	336	159	70	34	10
Male	Employment related	100	63	96	100	65	51	149	5	4
Female	Employment related	230	235	251	318	452	273	25	36	8
Male	Food and Nutrition	15	13	23	34	16	13	6	0	0
Female	Food and Nutrition	75	49	62	45	49	38	11	5	3
Male	Health	2	10	6	3	6	9	3	2	0
Female	Health	65	70	60	50	39	29	10	9	1
Male	History	5	2	8	14	4	10	2	1	0
Female	History	12	24	33	23	16	10	2	0	1
Male	IT	103	127	245	315	242	245	157	20	2
Female	IT	315	325	446	527	563	323	64	34	8
Male	Languages	68	87	163	173	106	63	33	4	1
Female	Languages	284	217	230	188	128	52	5	17	2
Male	Literacy	76	32	29	38	13	16	13	0	0
Female	Literacy	180	157	96	66	44	21	0	1	0
Male	Music	24	29	40	47	38	19	9	1	0
Female	Music	22	28	36	39	49	23	5	3	0
Male	Personal development	61	23	46	25	5	9	15	0	0
Female	Personal development	83	70	60	50	39	29	10	9	1

Appendix 8: Background to the Strategy for Older People in Wales

There is already a need in Wales to plan ahead for an ageing population and improve the number and quality of services offered to people over 50. These factors prompted the Welsh Government to set up an Advisory Group tasked with advising on the needs of older people in Wales.

You can find out more about the Advisory Group's recommendations and a summary of their findings on to their website at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/olderpeople/publications/whenim64/?lang=en>. Their work has informed the development of a Strategy for Older People in Wales that launched in January 2003. This landmark Strategy takes into account **the United Nations**.

Principles for Older Persons; these are independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity.

Welsh Government plans

- **Valuing older people:** The Welsh Government is committed to tackling discrimination against older people, promoting positive images of ageing and giving older people a stronger voice in society, by:
 - a National Partnership Forum for Older People;
 - developing ways of promoting a positive image of older people;
 - involving older people in their local community, planning local services and infrastructure;
 - developing policies to tackle poverty and social exclusion;
 - promoting the development of integrated services to meet older people's needs; and
 - developing a better community transport system.
- **Employment and learning:** To promote and develop older people's capacity to continue to work and learn for as long as they want, and to make an active contribution once they retire, by:
 - supporting the recruitment and retention of older people in employment;
 - tackling discrimination in employment on the grounds of age;
 - helping older people to set up their own business if they want to;
 - helping older and retiring business people pass on their experiences to new entrepreneurs;
 - providing older people with as much information as they need on learning opportunities in their area; and
 - a network of community learning centres and IT facilities across Wales
- **Health:** To promote the health and wellbeing of older people through integrated planning, service delivery frameworks and more responsive diagnostic and support services, by:
 - promoting good health amongst older people;
 - addressing the variations in standards of care;

- reducing the impact of illness and disability for older people;
 - improving the Primary Care and Community Services; and
 - developing high quality services in optometry, dental care, nutrition, hearing and pharmacy services
- **Independence:** To provide high quality services and support, which will allow older people to live as independently as possible in a suitable and safe environment, and to make sure that acute, primary and specialist services are available to older people when they need them, by:
 - encouraging the adequate supply of suitable housing and adaptations that will allow older people to live independently for as long as possible;
 - setting up unified assessment procedures for health and social care;
 - supporting the development of intermediate care services close to home; and
 - promoting availability of choice in the range of domiciliary care service.

The strategy is set in a ten-year framework of action. For more information on the action plan log on to:

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/health/publications/socialcare/guidance1/services/?lang=en>

Strategic objectives

- To work with the UK Government to support the recruitment and retention of older people in employment;
- To work with the UK Government in the implementation of legislation to tackle discrimination in employment on the grounds of age;
- To help more older people to set up their own businesses and to encourage the transfer of knowledge and experience from older/retired business people to new entrepreneurs;
- To promote the benefits of learning and to provide readily accessible information and advice to potential learners of all ages on learning opportunities available;
- To create a network of community learning centres throughout Wales in line with local need; and
- To promote and develop the availability of IT facilities in communities and IT skills for older people.

Appendix 9: Community learning policy statement

What is adult community learning?

ACL embraces a wide range of learning opportunities, which is difficult to encapsulate within a short definition. However, the absence of a commonly agreed definition of ACL has resulted in inconsistencies of provision throughout Wales and an inability to identify and evaluate this complex, but significant area of lifelong learning. Therefore, taking into account feedback from learning providers and other stakeholders, we define ACL as:

Flexible learning opportunities for adults, delivered in community venues to meet local needs.

- ACL is **flexible** as it involves the delivery of primarily short and part-time courses available at a range of times and venues.
- ACL is largely **targeted at adults over the age of 25**. This does not exclude younger adult learners. ACL is an important thread in the *Welfare to Work* agenda providing a vital opportunity for those not engaged in education, employment or training to participate in learning.

ACL provision should be devoted to prioritise the following groups of learners:

- anyone aged 16 and above accessing an ACL basic skills and/or ESOL programme, including contextualised basic skills and citizenship courses;
- those who are not currently in education, training or employment and are in receipt of state benefits or support (excluding state retirement pension); or
- those aged 50 plus who are not in full-time employment.

Further Information at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/learningproviders/communitylearning/de-liveringlearning/?lang=en>

Appendix 10: Summary of Older People's Co-ordinators' responses

Estyn sent a questionnaire to each of the co-ordinators to ask them about their views and experience of older people with regard to attitudes towards and delivery of education for older people in their area.

All OPCs completed a questionnaire for this report and say that older people face a range of barriers in continuing to learn. They include the following:

- cost of attending courses;
- availability of transport;
- older people believing they are too old to learn;
- lack of ambition from other professionals;
- family responsibilities impacting on older people's opportunities;
- accredited learning creating a barrier for many older people;
- where, how and when;
- lack of confidence;
- older person's issues/perceptions about personal appearance or present fitness to be able to take part in physical activity; and
- lack of ambition from other professionals.

OPCs also describe programmes developed for older learners in their areas. In many ACL partnerships there are examples of older people's groups being encouraged to be self-supporting. This has happened mostly in art and craft, creative activities and local history. For example: a group of eight female learners all 65+ who engage in craft and poetry sessions have become a club within the local community learning centre. This methodology can be one way to support participation and self-fulfilment as long as the learners have the skills to maintain the running of the club.

The contact that OPCs have with the ACL partnerships across Wales is variable. Some have contact at regular intervals but others have no regular contact or none at all.

OPCs do not have ways to promote a range of learning options for older people and many talk about projects that bring resources, but many of the projects are short term or not co-ordinated well. An example is the Click programme advertised by the BBC recently.

Summary of OPCs responses to questions

Q1 Do older people in your experience want to continue to learn?

Overall, around 60% of older learners in contact with OPCs are interested in continuing to learn.

Q2 How many have found it difficult to continue to learn?

OPC's assessment:

- A majority of older learners experience barriers to continuing their learning. This number links significantly with the numbers that OPCs estimate would welcome opportunities to return to learn.

Other issues that affect older learners accessing learning:

- cost of courses;
- transport – especially in rural areas;
- reduced numbers of learning options because of reduction in funding allocations;
- times when free IT is accessible;
- discomfort with concessionary rates, especially if needing to say receiving benefits;
- lack of confidence to join in, especially if school experience was negative;
- participation in active leisure activities being limited by personal appearance perceptions and levels of fitness;
- delivery mode preventing regular attendance for those who are carers;
- lack of flexibility with accredited learning courses to allow older learners to attend and to choose whether to be awarded credit;
- interpretation by providers of the Age Discrimination Act, which has created less concessions for older learners; and
- a few examples where venues are not accessible – mostly in rural areas.

Q3 Have you any examples where older learners have organised their own learning activities that help them maintain or develop new skills?

Analysis of OPCs replies indicated that around:

- 9% of replies knew many older learners who organised their own learning;
- 36% of replies said about half of older learners organised their own learning;
- 28% of replies said under half of older learners organised their own learning; and
- 27% of OPCs gave no answer to the question.

Further information:

- Most OPCs recognised the importance of older learners self-organised groups. Examples of “So You want to Learn”. This group has a constitution.
- Health and Wellbeing Group and an IT group for 50 weeks a year.
- One local authority has a large number of 50+ featuring arts and craft, dancing and exercises.
- Four other local authority areas mentioned clubs for older learners.
- A few OPCs recognised that they do not have not enough information about self-help groups and the importance of learning through social gatherings: relating to peer to peer learning where all learn, and recognising that all teaching is of great importance.
- Possible support from local authority adult education to establish clubs.

- A few OPCs mentioned University of the third Age (U3A).
- Two OPCs recognised the 50+ Forum as a learning organisation – organising speakers on a regular basis to inform members in order to support other older people within the community. Contact with groups such as VCVS, VVB, the Community Health Council and Age Cymru.
- Merched y Wawr have 1,050 members across this county who are involved in informal learning. Age Concern provides IT learning for older people and the WI, with 970 members, also organises classes.
- An older people's group brokering their own sessions with a local further education college
- A community history group writing about their community's history.
- The Agewell programme includes members of the cooking for men cookery classes becoming confident enough in their cooking skills to prepare light lunches at the centre.
- Peer monitors programme: a Social Services Department trains a team of older people to undertake regular visits to care homes to monitor service users' experience in terms of dignity and respect.
- A local authority funded swimmers 'class' had been in place for 30 years, although it could only loosely be termed as a 'class'. The local authority and the community school where it was based appreciated the social, health and community value of this 'class'. All swimmers were over 50, some into their 80s and 90s. About 10 years ago, due to reduced community learning funding, the swimming group was told that funding and support would no longer be available through the local authority. The swimmers then started a community constituted group, which not only sought funding and support to continue the swimming, but also ensured the sustainability of all community activity which took place at this community school and surrounding area. To justify the continuance of the swimming 'classes,' the group reformed itself into a 'healthy living' class, with one hour in the pool for physical exercise, and one hour in the classroom to learn about healthy eating and how to improve both their physical and mental wellbeing. That class is still popular and running today with over 35 participants, age ranging from 50 to 80, female gender 95% and male 5%. It meets for an hour a week over 50 weeks of the year. Learning skills have improved confidence, mobility, mind and body.
- An information and communication technology group with 10 participants ranging in age from 50 to 75; female gender 50% and male 50%. Basics of keyboard, mouse and programs. Progression into digital inclusion internet, use of digital cameras etc.

Q4 Are older people in your area currently able to access further education and training that will support them to improve their chances of staying in employment?

- The OPCs found this more difficult to estimate. There were few examples given, although many of the OPCs recognised the significant contribution that learning activities made to older people's wellbeing.
- Most of the OPCs talked about the range of learning opportunities available and the range varied considerably between local authority areas.
- Two OPCs reported that low esteem and the belief that training is for younger people raises barriers for older learners. In a few cases, OPCs felt that training

is only designed with young people in mind and that large training providers often only use illustrations of young people to advertise learning opportunities.

OPCs mentioned these funding sources:

- European Funding: New Work Connections and Swansea Workways will now provide a gateway to learning and employment as well as, for example, initiatives such as Skill Build through Employment Training, Future Jobs Fund, Job Match, Torfaen Training, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), the Working Skills for adults programme and the React scheme. The Agewell programme has established a number of volunteering opportunities and we have had instances where people have returned to employment.

Q5 How much contact do you have, as a worker, with providers of adult community learning in your area?

Fifty per cent of OPCs replied, indicating levels of contact with ACL partnerships at the frequency of:

Once a year	18%
Once a term	18%
Regularly	55%
Not answered	9%

- There is a wide range of differing contacts and meetings in many authorities.
- Reference was made to support for skills development via activities such as taster sessions. A range of voluntary sector organisations can be involved in providing adult learning opportunities in community settings, for example Age Concern, MIND, Housing Associations and Communities First partnerships.
- OPCs work with 59+ forums in their local areas. Many community education workers have membership of 50+ strategy groups.
- Around 18% of OPCs reported that they work with strategic officers in community education/community learning and only one co-ordinator said that they contributed to strategy documents to develop plans for older learners.
- Only one co-ordinator described courses and sessions being provided for older learners by working with the local community learning partnership.

Q6 Does this contact help to develop more opportunities for local older people to access learning that helps them to continue to remain intellectually active?

- Where good working relationships have developed, OPCs gave many good examples of acknowledging older learners' needs.
- Around 40% of OPCs talked of difficulties with funding and availability of resource to support older learners' needs. Where examples were given, these programmes were often funded from project funding, often on short funded programmes.
- Where examples were given, learning often reached out into settings where hard to reach and excluded learners live, for example residential care and housing associations.

- These sessions provided opportunities to support healthy living, volunteering and re-entry to employment.
- Adult Learning Partnerships sometimes have awards for Older Learner of the Year and Intergenerational awards to encourage and publicise older people's learning.
- Examples were given of work that is difficult to consolidate. For example, after consultation with local groups, programmes were set up but attendance tailed off. Reasons include increase in costs, bad weather, or friends being unwell or not well. (Little was said about teaching style, mode of delivery or changing choice for those who attended who were not part of the original consultation.)
- Many projects have been established with successful outcomes, but have struggled to maintain performance once support workers or subsidies have been withdrawn. This has created barriers in, for example, updating information and transport. (Dysgu Gyda'n Gilydd has been a great success due to the 'animateur' and community approach. Funding is a real issue in terms of meeting need across a rural county.)
- Tensions between partners working together and the lack of funding opportunity were also given as examples of failure to provide older learners with programmes that support their involvement.

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