



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Wrexham Adult Community Learning Partnership
The Guildhall
Wrexham
LL11 1AY**

Date of inspection: October 2011

by

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



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

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

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

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

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

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

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Context

Wrexham town is the commercial and administrative centre for Wrexham County Borough situated in north-east Wales. The population of Wrexham has grown steadily from 128,540 in 2001 to 133,559 in 2011. Just over half of the population live in Wrexham town or the surrounding urban villages. There are five Communities First areas in Wrexham County Borough: Plas Madoc; Queensway; Caia Park; Gwenfro and Hightown. In the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, four wards within Wrexham County Borough are in the most deprived areas of Wales. The county remains an area of light industries.

- Annual employment rates are 72.8% and are the highest in Wales against a Welsh average of 66.4% (December 2010).
- Annual economic inactivity is the lowest in Wales at 18.6% against a Welsh average of 23.8% (December 2010).
- Incapacity benefit at 8.1% and Jobseekers allowance at 3.5% are both well below the Welsh averages of 9.5% and 3.9% (February 2011).
- The number of residents in Wrexham with no qualifications is 8.9% and 16.3% hold qualifications below level 2.
- Four point two per cent of Year 11 school leavers in Wrexham County Borough are not in Education Employment or Training (NEET 2010). This is below the Welsh average of 5.4% and is a drop from 5% in 2009.

Participating stakeholders and providers within the partnership:

- Wrexham County Borough Council;
- Yale College;
- Coleg Harlech WEA;
- Association of Voluntary Organisations in Wrexham (AVOW);
- Caia Park Partnership Communities First;
- Dee Valley Community Partnership; and
- Glyndwr University.

Eighty per cent of the provision is delivered by Yale College in partnership with Wrexham County Borough Council.

Summary

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

Current performance

The partnership provision is judged as unsatisfactory because:

- there has been no strategic analysis or systematic audit of learners' and community needs. As a result it is not clear that provision meets learners' needs within the county;
- commissioning procedures are not currently effective enough to ensure that the range, nature, level or quality of provision match the needs of the community;
- the shared observation strategy has not yet been effective enough to improve standards in teaching;
- the over-reliance on a very limited range of qualifications for adult basic education (ABE) and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) learners does not provide them with enough challenge or develop their skills well enough;
- there is no common, shared approach to quality monitoring and evaluation that enables partners to plan for improving standards for learners; and
- progress in addressing the recommendations from the last inspection has been slow and many recommendations have not yet been fully addressed.

Prospects for improvement

The partnership has adequate prospects for improvement because:

- the partnership has developed a new strategic direction that is led by Wrexham County Borough Council and is embedded well in a clear strategic plan;
- Wrexham County Borough Council are committed to giving clear leadership to the Adult Community Learning Partnership Board;
- there is a clear vision from the Chief Executive to drive forward adult community learning in the county;
- important issues arising during the inspection were addressed immediately and swiftly by Wrexham County Borough Council;
- an Adult Community Learning Co-ordinator has recently been appointed with a clear brief to drive forward quality improvements; and
- partners work well together at an operational level.

Recommendations

In order to improve the partnership needs to:

- R1 develop a clear analysis of what learners and the community need from adult community learning;
- R2 improve the use of shared data in planning, monitoring and quality development;
- R3 ensure that the council develops an inclusive commissioning mechanism to ensure that provision of learning best meets the needs of learners and communities;
- R4 develop a common, shared approach to quality assurance across the partnership; and
- R5 complete actions necessary to address those recommendations not fully addressed from the last inspection, particularly those for teaching, assessment of learning and for safeguarding.

What happens next?

A small team of inspectors will return in about one year for three days to review the progress made in implementing the recommendations and to evaluate the progress of the new partnership structures.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

Overall, the success rate of adult community learners across the Wrexham Area Adult and Community Learning partnership is adequate.

Across the partnership, learners' attainment on accredited courses is good or adequate. Partnership completion, attainment and successful completion data shows an upward trend across the last two years and the unverified data for 2010/2011.

Attainment and success rates in ESOL are adequate and in ABE are good overall. Most learners in ABE and ESOL achieve their short term learning goals.

Progress and achievement in specific groups of learners is good. For example, nearly all learners on family learning programmes achieve their learning targets. Learners on a 'Making Choices in Childcare' programme progress well to other courses or to work in childcare.

Many learners in ESOL and ABE classes make adequate progress in developing their literacy, language and numeracy skills. However, many learners in other adult learning classes do not effectively develop their literacy skills as part of their course.

Overall a majority of learners do not make effective use of their individual learning plans. They do not set specific short learning targets and are not able to monitor and track their own progress well enough.

In a very few classes learners develop their use of the Welsh language well.

Wellbeing: Good

Overall, learner wellbeing is good. Almost all learners enjoy their learning are well-motivated and enthusiastic. Most learners feel safe in the classes and venues they attend. A minority of learners say attending courses has helped them have a positive attitude to keeping healthy. For example, one learner in an ICT class is now able to track her medical appointments online, another learner in a family learning session has learnt about safe use of the internet.

Learners' attendance is generally good.

Learners work well together and nearly all demonstrate independent learning skills. Many learners in Communities First areas have become actively involved in improving their communities. They understand the value of working together and are proud of their new skills.

Almost all learners develop their confidence well. Many use their learning to engage with the community and their family. For example, one learner who joined the “book club” to learn to be a better reader now has the confidence to read to, and with, her children. In one Communities First project, a group of Gypsy and Traveller learners have completed level 2 food preparation and hygiene certificates. They have now started to produce meals for community centre visitors.

In general learners are not always aware of how to contribute to the development of their courses or how to influence the content of future sessions. The partnership does not always support learners well enough, or give suitable advice to enable them to progress to the next stage of learning.

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

The partnership offers a wide range of accredited and non-accredited programmes. However, the OCN units ABE and ESOL learners are working towards do not offer enough challenge or provide them with meaningful qualifications.

There are good examples of courses which engage learners from under-represented groups and those who are reluctant to attend classes in formal settings. For example classes in a Mosque, provision for learners with mental health issues and Gypsy and Traveller communities.

Family programmes make effective links with other agencies resulting in examples of good provision for disadvantaged groups in community settings.

Many learners feel staff help them to learn and make progress and feel that learning will help them to achieve their goals.

However the partnership has not audited learners’ and community needs systematically. As a result it is not clear that provision meets learners’ needs within the county. Learners do not benefit from a single course brochure so it is difficult for them to see an overview of the partnership provision. A majority of new learners find the enrolment procedures confusing. A minority of learners perceive the online enrolment system as a barrier.

Too few teachers in adult learning classes develop literacy skills well. Many miss opportunities to embed these in the subject area.

Tutors know how to refer learners for basic skills support but not all tutors have a good awareness of how to identify learners’ skills needs.

The use of incidental Welsh within classes is very limited. There are a few good examples of tutors embedding the Welsh dimension well in teaching. For example, a Childcare course includes Welsh language childcare provision in order to improve employment opportunities for non-Welsh speakers. In a minority of classes learners develop their knowledge of sustainable development and global citizenship well.

Teaching: Adequate

Teaching is good or very good in around half of the sessions observed by the inspection team. In these sessions, tutors plan well, meet learning needs appropriately and help learners to progress.

Most teachers have good subject knowledge and use a wide variety of teaching methods. Sessions have good pace and a few integrate literacy and numeracy skills well.

In a minority of sessions, planning is not effective enough and the teaching lacks focus. A few tutors do not provide enough challenge or stimulation for learners.

A minority of tutors do not adapt their teaching well enough to meet the different skill levels of all learners. Their use of questioning to check learners' understanding is limited.

Tutors use volunteers well to give one to one support to learners.

Many tutors do not plan assessment well enough. They do not always record learners' starting points and so cannot say how well learners are progressing. They do not help all learners to reflect on their learning or achievements.

In a minority of classes tutors do not give oral feedback enough to encourage learners. In addition, the quality of written feedback varies and is often not detailed enough to help learners understand what they need to do to progress.

Individual learning plans vary in quality and appropriateness. Many tutors do not use plans well enough to record and track learners' progress or to identify areas for development. They do not include short targets to measure effectively the progress that learners make. The targets that many tutors set focus too much on gaining the qualification rather than meeting the individual needs of the learners.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate

Most learners feel tutors support them well. A few tutors promote health and wellbeing effectively in their sessions. Tutors in family learning programmes make good reference to healthy eating. However, there is no consistent understanding across the partnership of how to include health and wellbeing in sessions.

Initial advice and guidance does not always give learners clear advice about the programmes available to them across the partnership. The majority of learners are not aware of the support services offered by the providers.

The partnership does not have a strategic approach to identifying and making sure learners receive learning support consistently.

Learners with additional learning needs are not always identified early enough for appropriate support to be put in place at the start of their course. However, when they are identified they receive good support from their tutors. This support helps

them to succeed on their course as well as improving their confidence and self-esteem. Where appropriate learners receive good individual support and mentoring from class volunteers.

Individual providers have appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures.

Learning environment: Good

All managers and staff are committed to and encourage an ethos of inclusivity and respect. Tutors pay good attention to equality and diversity. This helps to create a positive ethos among staff and learners. The majority of tutors improve learners' awareness and understanding of diversity well.

Overall, learning resources in most locations are of a good standard. Most tutors use a good range of resources, including interactive whiteboards to stimulate learner involvement. However, in a few community venues resources are of poorer quality. Throughout the venues there are not enough displays that encourage bilingualism or awareness of Welsh culture or history.

Overall, the quality of accommodation is good. In the college accommodation is of high quality. The partnership uses a wide range of venues in community locations, which usually allows learners across the partnership to take up classes near to where they live.

The partnership has not undertaken an audit of its premises to assess their suitability for learners with difficulties and disabilities. There are a few examples of managers and staff making suitable arrangements to change rooms to make sure learners are not disadvantaged.

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

The Partnership has developed an appropriate structure that includes a strategic group and an operational group. The activity of each group is now managed by a recently appointed ACL Co-ordinator, who has a clear remit to manage quality improvement. During the period of the inspection, Wrexham CBC members showed commitment to and agreed the details of a useful strategic plan, which the Wrexham CBC ACL Partnership Board are tasked to take forward. This plan outlines a useful vision that can inform future prioritisation and planning. However it is too early for this Board to have developed clear objectives and strategic targets which will enable it to monitor the progress of its strategy. Overall current provision shows a good awareness of the principles outlined in the Welsh Government's "Delivering Community Learning for Wales" document.

Partners work well together at operational level, often sharing resources. However, there is not yet a clear strategic analysis of needs to enable the ACL Partnership Board to evaluate whether provision meets the needs of communities and learners. The third sector has recently been better involved in the Partnership's operational management group and is also represented on the strategic board, but is not yet involved enough in all aspects of strategic planning.

There are emerging examples of partners collaborating in sharing data, which have created useful discussions about quality. However not all partners are systematically involved in these initiatives. Such examples have not yet clearly impacted on service improvements or on standards for learners.

The partnership does not yet have clear enough commissioning procedures for the ACL Partnership Board to be able to ensure that the range, nature, level or quality of provision match the needs of the community.

Improving quality: Unsatisfactory

There are good examples of providers using learners' views responsively to develop local provision. The partnership has a learner involvement strategy that encourages partners to gather feedback and to use this for planning. This strategy has not fully impacted on quality planning, and the strategy does not give enough attention to the needs and views of those learners not involved in learning or involved through the voluntary sector or community-based programmes.

Involvement in the partnership has helped the voluntary sector to develop mechanisms that improve the quality of its provision.

Initiatives to drive up quality across the partnership are emerging, such as peer assessment programmes. However, not all partners are routinely involved in these. The outcomes of these initiatives have not been analysed effectively enough to ensure that targeted intervention results in quality improvement. There is not a common, shared approach to quality monitoring and evaluation across the partnerships that enable partners to bench mark quality or plan improvement effectively.

The partnership has a potentially useful quality development plan that covers many of the issues that Estyn inspectors identified as priorities for improvement. However, some quality objectives are not SMART enough, and the target date for their completion has passed. The recently appointed ACL co-ordinator has now taken responsibility to monitor and manage progress towards these targets through the Life Long Learning operational management group within the partnership.

Since the last inspection the partnership has made adequate progress towards meeting a minority of recommendations made by Estyn inspectors in the previous report. However, in a majority of important recommendations, progress has been too slow.

The joint self-assessment report (SAR) produced by the partnership for the inspection was generally open and contains sufficient evaluation to enable the partnership to make judgements about provision. Overall there was a good match between the provider's findings and those of the Estyn inspection team.

Partnership working: Unsatisfactory

The partnership quality development plan has established useful priorities for improvement, though the partnership has changed structure twice since the last

inspection and this has delayed progress in taking this forward. Partners work discretely once funding has been allocated, and curriculum is decided by individual organisations. This works well for those learners who are accessing viable provision. However, this does not enable the partnership sufficient control of curriculum planning and this impacts adversely on learner opportunities.

Partners have attempted to identify provision across the partnership with the intention of removing duplication. This has had some success but was limited as not all providers participated in the exercise.

The two main providers within the partnership have carried out reciprocal monitoring of a small sample of teachers. Outcomes have not been analysed effectively and the impact is not yet evident.

There is insufficient sharing of information about learners. Not all partners use common data formats and this prevents data collection about learners across the whole partnership. This means it is not possible for the partnership to identify and make decisions about gaps in provision, individual learner progress or what impact teaching has on learners. There is no information gathered about potential learners who do not access provision.

Resource management: Adequate

Nearly all staff are well qualified for the subjects they deliver. Individual providers offer appropriate opportunities for staff to develop their skills. However, there is no strategic, partnership approach to staff development.

The partnership makes good use of a number of modern and well resourced community centres which were built as a result of an ESF capital bid. Provision is also offered at a good number of schools spread throughout the geographical area. These are used effectively by the college for its ACL delivery.

The partnership does not have an effective strategy to market the provision and recruitment. There is not enough signposting of learners from one organisation to another and this limits learners' options. There is no course enquiry or application process for learners, so no information is stored about learners who are not successful at enrolment.

The partnership has no strategy to evaluate the impact of adult learning on the value for money it offers.

However the inspection team judges the partnership as providing adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Learner satisfaction

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

Three hundred and twenty two learners returned the questionnaire and a majority completed most of the questions. The findings helped Estyn to have a view of learners' opinions and experience of the provision currently delivered in the partnership area.

Nearly all learners said they enjoyed their learning and that they would recommend the learning provider to others.

Nearly all reported that staff provided good personal support, helped them to learn and to make progress, and used good quality learning materials.

Nearly all learners felt they were given good information by the provider when choosing their course. However, a very few learners felt that they were not given good advice about options and what they could do when they finished their course.

A very few learners felt there was not enough learning support options available to them and a very few felt staff did not offer enough learning opportunities and support opportunities through the medium of Welsh.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

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