



# Guidance for Inspectors

## What we inspect

Adult Learning in the Community  
For pilot inspections from 2022



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

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## Introduction to ‘What we inspect’

This handbook sets out what inspectors need to consider when evaluating the five inspection areas in adult learning in the community (ALC) partnerships. It explains ‘What we inspect’. It should be read in conjunction with the document ‘[How we inspect](#)’, which sets out our approach to inspection in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The guidance is essential reading for reporting inspectors and all other members of the inspection team, including the nominee. It may also be useful for providers to support their understanding of the inspection guidance. There is a separate handbook that explains the inspection process and methodology, ‘[How we inspect](#)’.

The five inspection areas are set out below.

### Inspection areas 1 – Learning

1.1 Standards and progress in learning and skills

### 2 – Wellbeing and attitudes to learning

2.1 Wellbeing

2.2 Attitudes to learning

### 3 – Teaching and learning experiences

3.1 The breadth, balance and appropriateness of the provision

3.2 Teaching, training and assessment

### 4 – Care, support and guidance

4.1 Personal development

4.2 Safeguarding

### 5 – Leadership and management

5.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers

5.2 Self-evaluation processes and improvement planning

5.3 Professional learning

## Evaluating each inspection area (IA)

Inspection teams will not give overall grades for each inspection area. However, they will make a robust and thorough evaluation of the partnership’s provision and its impact on learners’ learning and wellbeing.

Inspectors will always include clear evaluations in relation to the reporting requirements in each inspection area, as exemplified in this handbook. However, what inspectors report on within each inspection area may differ depending on the relative significance of what they find in each partnership. Inspectors may report ‘by exception’. This means that they may report on some aspects only where there are

particular strengths or weaknesses. Where inspectors identify serious shortcomings in one or more inspection areas, the partnership will normally require follow-up activity. There is [further guidance](#) on the nature of follow-up activity on our website.

### **About the partnership**

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

This section will contain brief information on:

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

### **Overview**

This section of the report should:

- contain a short overview of the main findings (200-300 words), outlining the key strengths and any important weaknesses that require improvement
- make the link between learners' outcomes, the quality of provision and the effectiveness of leadership
- be consistent with the findings in the body of the report

### **Recommendations**

The recommendations should:

- link closely to the main evaluation areas of the inspection guidance, with the weightiest recommendations reflected in the overview
- give the partnership a clear and specific indication of the area(s) that require improvement
- help the partnership to understand clearly what they should do to make the necessary improvements
- be written in order of priority, not in the order of the guidance

### **What happens next?**

The 'What happens next' section will set out what the partnership needs to do following the inspection. In all cases, leaders will need to respond to the recommendations by putting in place the actions required to make the improvements identified by the inspection team.

It should exemplify any interesting or innovative practice case studies that we have invited leaders to share.

The section will explain whether the partnership requires any level of follow-up activity by Estyn. The overview will make a brief explanation of the reasons for follow-up.

### **The evidence base of the inspection**

Inspectors will use a wide range of evidence to make sure that their findings are valid, accurate and reliable. This section of the report will explain the sources of evidence that inspectors used as well as the range of activities that they carried out during their visit.

## Inspection areas

The following section explains what each inspection area covers and what inspectors need to keep in mind when evaluating each one.

The inspection areas are numbered 1 – 5, but they are equally important. Within each inspection area, the report will not always cover the aspects in the order they appear in this handbook. Inspectors may choose to sequence the aspects differently in order to reflect their findings. For example, in Inspection Area 3 – Teaching and learning experiences, inspectors may write about teaching before learning experiences and provision if this makes the findings of the team clearer or they may combine elements of teaching and provision to explain their findings where appropriate.

The report on each inspection area will normally be around 500 to 700 words.

There is supplementary guidance on the inspection of various aspects of the work of partnership on our website: [www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection/supplementary-guidance](http://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection/supplementary-guidance).

## 1 Learning

### 1.1 Standards and progress in learning and skills

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

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

Inspectors should consider, in particular, how well courses have prepared learners to achieve their personal goals and to improve their employability.

Inspectors should consider how well learners progress over time, and their destinations when they leave the provision. Inspectors will use the provider's progression and destination information and their own evidence from session observations, discussions with learners, scrutiny of written and practical work and other relevant documentation, such as individual learning plans.

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

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

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

Inspectors should report clearly on learners' standards in each of the skills of speaking and listening, reading and writing (in Welsh/English), numeracy and digital skills and English as a second language. .

Inspectors should judge standards in literacy, numeracy and digital skills based on first-hand evidence, for example from observations of learners in sessions, scrutiny of learners' work and discussions with learners. Careful observation of learners in sessions and talking to learners will provide evidence of their speaking and listening skills, their literacy, numeracy and digital skills and their ability to think. Scrutiny of work will provide evidence on how well learners can write clearly and read for understanding, how well they can use their literacy, numeracy and digital skills given their initial starting points. Inspectors should consider the extent to which learners' communication and higher-order thinking skills support or hinder their progress, and their interaction with other learners and teachers.

Inspectors should consider learners' standards in Welsh. They should consider the progress learners make from their starting points in developing and using their Welsh language skills in the context of their courses (particularly for key priority areas as identified by the Welsh Government), and how they are developing skills in Welsh for future employment in Wales and for use in their communities and daily lives.

While inspectors should consider a wide range of information on learners' standards and progress, they should normally only report on historic performance data where the outcomes are both collected nationally and externally verified.

The absence of comparative learner outcomes data for 2019 -2020, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 means that inspectors will not be able to identify trends in learner outcomes data in adult learning in the community partnerships. Inspectors should base their evaluation of learners' standards and progress in learning on own evidence from session observations, discussions with learners and scrutiny of written, practical and digital work. They will consider how well the partnership uses its own assessment and outcome information to monitor and support the progress of individuals and groups of learners in inspection areas 1 and 3 (learning, and teaching and learning experiences); and self-evaluation in inspection area 5 (leadership and management).



## **2 Wellbeing and attitudes to learning**

### **2.1 Wellbeing**

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

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

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

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

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

Inspectors should consider the extent to which participation in learning helps learners to develop as confident individuals, and lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society, for example, through progression in employment, contributing to their communities or supporting their parenting or caring responsibilities.

### **2.2 Attitudes to learning**

Inspectors should evaluate to what extent learners are developing the key attitudes and behaviours required in their work and personal lives. Inspectors should evaluate the extent to which learners are ambitious, confident, capable and independent learners. They should look at how well learners engage with new, unfamiliar experiences and ideas. They should judge learners' interest in their work, their ability to sustain concentration and to avoid distractions. They should consider how readily learners engage in tasks and complete them well and in a timely manner. They should evaluate how well learners persevere and remain purposeful when they face difficulties or seek other solutions when their first approach to a problem is unsuccessful.

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

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

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

Inspectors should consider learners' attendance and punctuality as evidence of learners' participation, engagement in learning and reliability, bearing in mind the level of commitments learners may have in their caring or work roles. Inspectors would expect that where learners cannot attend, they would have contacted their tutors in advance and arranged to catch up their studies.

Inspectors should report by exception, i.e. where there is a clear trend of weak or very strong attendance.

Inspectors should consider how the COVID-19 pandemic, and any interruption to learning caused by the pandemic, has impacted on learners' wellbeing, participation and engagement with learning.

### **3 Teaching and learning experiences**

#### **3.1 The breadth, balance and appropriateness of the provision**

Inspectors should consider the partnership's strategic approach to planning the provision and the extent to which it meets the needs of its community, including the range and breadth of provision, the geographical location and timing of provision, and the opportunity to access provision remotely, if appropriate. .

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

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

Inspectors should consider the ways in which the partnership develops a programme of learning activities that reflects the cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity of Wales and helps learners understand about community and employment opportunities in Wales.

Inspectors should consider how well the partnership helps, or signposts, learners to appropriate organisations which can help them write a job application highlighting their skills and knowledge, prepare for interview and produce a curriculum vitae.

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

Inspectors should consider the extent to which the partnership facilitates clubs or voluntary groups to organise their own learning and provision; or offers cost-recovery provision beyond the scope of its Welsh Government funding.

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

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

The main evaluations, context and summary should not report directly that the provider has achieved any named awards, including those that are publicly funded. However, there may be reference to named awards in the evidence base, particularly where the award has had an impact on improving standards or provision

### **3.2 Quality of teaching, training and assessment**

When evaluating teaching, inspectors should note that there is no preferred methodology or fixed template that tutors should follow, and tutors may use a range of different approaches over time. The key consideration is whether the teaching is successful in engaging learners' interest and how well it develops their understanding, skills, knowledge and competency as they move through their programme.

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

the extent to which they make their classes, including online delivery, stimulating and engaging so that all learners, including the most and least able, can learn productively.

Inspectors should judge how well tutors use questioning techniques and problem-solving activities to draw out and further develop learners' responses and gauge their understanding. They should consider the clarity of instructions and explanations and judge how well learners develop as a result. Inspectors should judge how well tutors help learners' develop confidence to use their knowledge, understanding and skills to their advantage in any work or community enterprise in which they are engaged. .

They should evaluate how well the tutors manage learners' participation in classes, including those delivered online, to ensure all learners have the opportunity to participate fully and that no one learner is allowed to dominate or withdraw themselves from discussion in a session. Inspectors should consider how well tutors make their sessions stimulating and engaging places in which learners can learn productively. Inspectors should judge how successfully technical and support staff support learning.

The focus on assessment in this inspection area is on the development of skills in literacy, numeracy, digital skills and English as a second language and, in other classes, the extent to which learners develop in that subject area. Inspectors should evaluate the oral and written feedback from tutors to help learners know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. They should consider how well tutors help learners assess their own performance.

Inspectors should evaluate the extent to which leaders and tutors monitor, track and keep up-to-date records of the progress of each learner and report on these clearly. They should consider how well tutors ensure that their assessments are valid, timely, accurate and reliable.

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

In coming to evaluations on teaching, training and assessment, inspectors should use the full range of evidence available to them. This is likely to include evidence from learners' portfolios (including those completed online), schemes of learning, assessment records, and information on learners' progress, session observations, and discussions with learners. Inspectors should not allocate a judgement to an individual session, tutor or assessor, but should report on the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching and assessment across the partnership.

## **4 Care, support and guidance**

### **4.1 Personal development**

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

Inspectors should evaluate the effectiveness of the provision for personal and specialist support for learners. This will include the availability of services of specialist

agencies, especially for learners who face considerable barriers to learning, including personal, financial, domestic, transport, health and family care responsibilities.

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

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

Inspectors should evaluate the extent to which learners, including those from different groups take on responsibilities and play a part in their workplaces and the wider community.

Inspectors should consider how well the partnership:

- makes provision for learners with additional learning needs
- supports all learners' emotional and social needs so that they can enjoy their learning and benefit from the opportunities that it offers
- provides well-considered support for learners' physical and mental health and wellbeing, for example in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic
- helps learners to develop an understanding of their culture, the local community and the wider world
- tracks and monitors learners' progress and wellbeing, including attendance and behaviour
- uses this information to consider the progress of specific groups, for example those learners whose circumstances may make them vulnerable to underachievement or those who are more able
- identifies relevant issues and responds appropriately to the outcomes of tracking and monitoring, for example through the provision of appropriate support and challenge, the use of intervention strategies, the mentoring or coaching of individuals or groups
- uses partnerships with others to provide effective support for learners

## **4.2 Safeguarding**

Inspectors will report on whether the partnership's arrangements for safeguarding learners meet requirements and give no cause for concern. Where arrangements are a serious cause for concern, inspectors should include a recommendation in the report and Estyn will send a wellbeing letter to the partnership asking them to outline how they will address the shortcoming(s).

Inspectors should evaluate to what extent the partnership's safeguarding arrangements ensure that all learners are protected whether on-site, off-site or online. Arrangements should include the identification of learners aged under 18, and

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

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

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

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

Inspectors should evaluate how well the partnership uses its intelligence about safeguarding matters across all its partners, and how well reporting processes are used to quality assure safeguarding by senior leaders.

## **5 Leadership and management**

### **5.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers**

Inspectors should evaluate the extent to which the leadership of the partnership have established and communicated a clear vision and appropriate aims, strategic objectives, plans and policies for the partnership. They should evaluate how effectively all partners contribute to the partnership and the extent to which partners work collaboratively to meet the needs of their community and its learners.

Inspectors should reflect on how well the leadership at all levels set high expectations for staff, learners and themselves. They should consider how well leaders develop an effective and engaged staff. They should consider to what extent leaders model and promote professional values and behaviours that contribute positively to effective collaboration between staff across the partnership. They should consider how well staff at all levels understand and discharge their roles and responsibilities and how well they collaborate in driving forward strategic priorities for the partnership and for improvement.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Inspectors should consider whether there is an appropriate level of staffing and learning resources to deliver the planned provision effectively. They should consider how well the partnership promotes the welfare and wellbeing of its staff.

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

Inspectors should consider the priority that leaders across the partnership have given to ensuring that all staff understand and promote the partnership's safeguarding culture.

## **5.2 Self-evaluation processes and improvement planning**

Inspectors should evaluate how accurately leaders across the partnership know the partnership's strengths and weaknesses. They should consider how well leaders gather and analyse first-hand evidence of standards of provision, including teaching and assessment. Inspectors should evaluate how well the partnership reviews its provision in response to feedback and consultation with its stakeholders such as learners, local and regional employers or community groups.

Inspectors should consider the impact of improvement planning and how well identified priorities for improvement link to the outcomes of the partnership's self-evaluation. Inspectors should consider how well leaders ensure that priorities are supported by the allocation of resources. They should evaluate how well leaders define relevant and measurable actions for improvement in specified and realistic timescales and allocate responsibility for their delivery.

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

## **5.3 Professional learning**

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

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

They should consider professional learning undertaken by staff and its impact on learners' progress and wellbeing and their own practice. They should explore the extent to which staff have shared professional development outcomes with other staff. They should look at how well senior leaders have identified good practice across the partnership and ensured that other staff may benefit from it.