



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

**Report of visit
Level of follow-up: Estyn monitoring**

**Mid Wales Work Based Learning Consortium
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SY23 3UE
United Kingdom**

Date of visit: June 2014

by

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

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The monitoring team

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Outcome of monitoring visit

Given the slow progress made by Mid Wales Work Based Learning Consortium in addressing the recommendations from Estyn's inspection report of October 2012, a further Estyn monitoring visit will need to take place within the next 12 months. However due to the significant changes in the membership of the consortium over the next few months, there will also be one-day monitoring visit in Autumn 2014 by the consortium's Link Inspector and the Reporting Inspector for this monitoring visit.

Progress since the last inspection

Recommendation 1: Improve the rates at which learners achieve their full qualification frameworks

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

Estyn's inspection in October 2012 used Welsh Government published data on successful outcomes for work-based learners (WBL) for the period 2010-2011. This showed that the consortium had an overall apprenticeship framework success rate significantly below the national average. Since then there has been an improvement in success rates from this low base. Published data for apprenticeship framework success rates over the last two years shows that the Mid Wales Work Based Learning Consortium has moved to just below the national average.

The two-year trend masks year on year inconsistency, the framework completion in last year's published data showing a 2% percentage points decrease from the previous year's percentage. However the completion rates for both years, taken individually, were still slightly below the national average.

The latest published data for 2012-2013 shows significant variation in the performance of learners in different subject areas such as business administration; construction wood; management; and motor vehicle.

The performance of individual partners within the consortium is also variable.

The two-year trend in the rates that learners progress to employment or further training within work-focused and traineeship programmes is inconsistent. As a result, learners on these programmes show success rates and positive progressions around or slightly below the national average.

Since the inspection in 2012, the consortium's steering group has given responsibility for improving outcomes for all learners to the Operational Management Group and Quality Group. As a result, these groups have put several interventions in place including:

- an early leaver intervention strategy to improve outcomes by reducing the number of early leavers; and

- the sharing of data, using the consortium's Sharepoint system so that all providers enter their information on performance and progress of their learners.

The consortium's unpublished data for the current year indicates further improvements across all programme areas.

However the consortium is unable to identify specifically what actions it has taken to improve learner outcomes. It lacks systems to track the progress of learners or the impact of its interventions, relying instead on feedback from its partners to identify underperformance. Even where underperformance is reported, the consortium was unable to identify any specific actions to address this.

Recommendation 2: Embed and evaluate strategies to develop learners' literacy and numeracy skills

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

The consortium has an appropriate literacy and numeracy strategy. This includes a requirement to assess learners' skills at the start and end of their programme to measure the impact of the essential skills support given. However, despite having an appropriate strategy, it is not being implemented effectively due to inconsistent application by partners and poor use of data. Data generated from this exercise is not gathered or analysed effectively to enable leaders and managers to judge how effectively the support allocated helps learners to improve their skills.

The consortium's working group for the development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills enables the sharing of good practice across the consortium. It has also put in place a useful common marking scheme with all appropriate staff receiving training in its use. However a few tutors are not using the scheme effectively, so they miss important spelling and grammatical errors when marking learners' work or, in a few cases, mark incorrect spelling or grammar as correct. As a result, learners do not learn from their mistakes.

Many learners, observed in sessions and in their work, demonstrate good literacy and verbal communication skills. However, in a minority of learners' portfolios there are examples of poor spelling or grammar. In a few cases, learners' standards of literacy do not improve over time. Where learners need to make improvements in their literacy and numeracy, only a few tutors set targets that are specific enough. There are good examples of tutors encouraging learners to develop their skills in numeracy, but this aspect of work is still not fully developed throughout the consortium. However the focus on application of number is not clear and there is no way of tracking learners' progress in this area.

All partners have appropriate provision for basic skills support. However, there is no evaluation of this provision at the consortium level. All learners in the workplace receive support in developing literacy and numeracy skills from their tutors/assessors. However, a minority of tutors are not confident enough in their own delivery of this support.

Despite the quality development plan for the consortia having an objective for tutors to assess literacy and numeracy and another to improve target setting for literacy, numeracy and information communication technology (ICT), it is not clear how the consortium will measure the impact of these objectives on learners.

Recommendation 3: Raise the standards of teaching, training and assessment across the consortium

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

Overall, good progress is being made to raise the standard of teaching, training and assessment. All partners have now trained their staff in peer assessment skills, but the introduction of peer observations and the monitoring of standards of teaching and learning are inconsistent. They have also undertaken further training involving all consortium partners to raise the standard of teaching. Most staff receive regular assessments, and classroom-based staff receive clear feedback on how well they are performing.

A minority of work-based tutors/assessors do not receive clear summative judgements from their line manager that tell them whether they are performing at a satisfactory or better level, although all receive guidance on areas for improvement.

Most tutors plan sessions well and take good account of the range of learners' ability levels by varying their teaching styles in sessions accordingly. They make good use of practical examples to explain theory and to help learners to develop skills and use appropriate resources, and a few develop innovative resources that enhance learning. Most tutors track learners' progress well within each teaching and training session and provide good support for learners to ensure that they all make good progress in sessions.

All tutors in the workplace undertake regular reviews of learners, and record the outcomes of these reviews well. However, there are inconsistencies amongst some assessors in the marking of learners' work and in giving effective feedback to learners to ensure that they understand how well they are progressing. Most tutors set appropriate targets for learners. They support learners well, offering relevant help and guidance where learners are facing difficulties.

Where learners speak Welsh, tutors encourage them to make good use of the Welsh language in assessments or reviews. There are a few good examples of tutors encouraging non-Welsh speakers to develop language skills. Many tutors feel confident in developing learners' understanding of Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC). In a few cases, such as in farriery, learners have a good understanding of the commercial value of the multi-application of resources. A few tutors have developed good resources to improve learners' awareness of ESDGC.

Recommendation 4: Improve the collection and use of data to effectively evaluate key strands of the provision

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

Since the last inspection the consortium has significantly improved its collection and use of data to improve the performance of learners. More effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are also now in place but in many cases it is too early to judge their impact on learners.

The consortium has established a useful shared web-based information portal for all partners. This now includes data sharing of each of the partner's teams' performance data. The consortium has improved the way that data is analysed, and its projections of performance are now based on monthly meetings with each partner.

The improved capture and analysis of information and data on the reasons why learners leave their programmes early have led to changes to the consortium's recruitment, induction and support processes. For example: identification of learners at risk of not completing their programme is through a partner completing a 'cause for concern' notice, which triggers additional monitoring and support; and learners in occupational areas with high rates of job turnover (for example childcare) are required to have been in their job role for three months before enrolling on a training programme. The Quality Monitoring group is closely monitoring the impact of these changes on learners. However, it is too early to fully quantify the impact of these recent changes upon the consortium's recruitment, induction and support processes.

The consortium carries out a good range of activities to gather data on the views of learners. These include electronic and paper-based surveys, learner forums and focus groups, as well as the Learner Voice survey. The Quality Group uses the information from these sources well to improve its provision.

The sharing of financial performance is via the consortium's SharePoint site. It informs virement discussions that take place in the Steering Group and Operational Management Group (OMG). This includes detailed analysis of income and spend against targets for all partners.

Recommendation 5: Develop and implement a comprehensive strategic plan for the consortium; and

This recommendation has not been addressed.

The consortium has failed to develop a strategic plan in line with the inspection recommendation. The plan that was extant at the time of the inspection remains almost unchanged and is still current at this time. In September 2013, the consortium made a minor change to the plan to include reference to the Estyn inspection. This gave responsibility to its Operational Management Group to progress the recommendations from the inspection report. However, the plan makes no other reference to the inspection outcomes.

Overall, the draft strategic plan is vague with no clear recognition or understanding of the views of other stakeholders in the area to help the consortium shape its strategic direction. As a result, the consortium's vision and overarching strategic aims are unclear. The objectives are more operational than strategic and would appear more relevant to the work of the Operational Management Group.

As currently presented, the plan will not help the consortium to evaluate the impact that it might have in the local area.

Currently, the consortium is going through a period of change, which has meant a certain amount of uncertainty about the future membership of the consortium. However, this in itself should not have contributed to the significant delay in addressing this recommendation.

Recommendation 6: Ensure quality systems and procedures are embedded and consistently applied across the consortium

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

Since the inspection in 2012, the partners within the consortium have continued to work together to try and ensure that quality systems and procedures are embedded and consistently applied across the consortium. The consortium's Quality Group, reporting to the OMG, has responsibility for taking this work forward.

However, the provider's self-assessment report on progress against the Estyn recommendation for improving quality describes process only, with little evidence of priority for improving quality systems since the inspection. There is little evidence of actions taken and the impact of those actions on the consortium's overall performance.

There have been some improvements, including an appropriate range of standardised policies and procedures across the consortium for key areas, such as safeguarding, health and safety and complaints, and a useful common handbook for the learners. These are readily available to staff and learners on the consortium's Moodle site.

However, overall, the OMG and the steering group do not discharge their roles and responsibilities well enough in respect of quality issues, including addressing the recommendations from the last inspection report. This lack of clear direction and accountability means that progress in improving quality and standards is too slow and varies too much across the partners, for example the inconsistent introduction of peer observations, the monitoring of standards of teaching and learning, and the monitoring of the implementation of agreed practices for literacy and numeracy. As a result of this, improvements are too slow and many issues identified in the previous inspection remain.

Recommendations

In order to maintain and improve on this progress, the provider should continue to work towards meeting the inspection recommendations that have not yet been fully addressed.