



*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**

**Neath Port Talbot Adult Community Learning Partnership**

**Date of visit: October 2014**

**by**

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

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**The monitoring team**

Steve Bell	Reporting Inspector
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## Outcome of monitoring visit

Neath Port Talbot Adult Community Learning Partnership is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the core inspection in November 2012.

Estyn will carry out a further monitoring visit following the publication of learner outcome reports for 2013-2014. Estyn inspectors will continue to visit the partnership in the intervening period to maintain an oversight of progress.

## Progress since the last inspection

### **Recommendation 1: Improve successful completion rates for all learners and make sure that all learners make good progress;**

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

Published data shows that, in 2012-2013, learners in Neath Port Talbot achieved lower success rates than adult community learners in other parts of Wales. Learners' success rates declined by six percentage points from 2010-2011.

In 2012-2013, learners' success rates varied from 87% to 67% across the providers in the partnership. For example, learners at the college, which provides just over half of all learning activities, achieved success rates slightly higher than those of other adult community learners in further education institutions across Wales. Across a range of subjects, many learners at the college achieved success rates near to or above the national average. However, learners in the partnership's franchise provision (around a quarter of all learning activities) achieved at a rate just below the national comparator. The partnership's own analysis of learner outcomes shows a varying trend since 2010-2011, across all types of delivery.

The partnership's own unpublished data for 2013-2014 indicates an increase in the overall success rate for the college's directly delivered provision and its franchise provision. However, the data is at an early stage in the reconciliation process.

Most learners make good progress in their learning.

Learners in information and communication technology (ICT) drop-in classes make good use of self-study courses to improve their ICT skills. They make good use of ICT outside of the classroom in their daily lives, to maintain contact with family members and share ideas, and to undertake personal administration.

Learners in Return to Learn classes make good progress. They successfully achieve a range of qualifications and develop new skills that help them in their lives outside the classroom. They have improved their job prospects and their ability to help their children learn. Learners in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes improve their understanding and use of grammar, their spelling and punctuation, and are better able to hold extended conversations in English.

As a result, learners from across the partnership are more able to take on volunteering roles in their community, act as learner representatives or set up small businesses. Many progress to further learning.

Since the inspection, the partnership has given good support to learners who have been taking classes for many years to help them form self-directed learning groups. The partnership has helped 38 courses to become clubs, including Gift Card Making, Sugarcraft, Music and Guitar. Partners, including the local authority and the Council for Voluntary Services, have helped these groups to set themselves up and manage learning themselves. As a result, these learners are able to continue to make progress and develop subject based skills and knowledge.

**Recommendation 2: improve the quality of teaching across the partnership;**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

The quality of teaching across the partnership has improved.

Since the last inspection, the partnership has provided tutors with effective training about the quality of teaching and assessment it expects.

Most tutors now use the information about learners' needs well to help them plan well-thought-out sessions that meet the range of learning needs in their classes appropriately. Overall, the pace of sessions is good.

In many of the most effective sessions, tutors plan a good range of activities that engage learners in pair, group and independent work. Most tutors plan work that challenges learners appropriately. They use questioning effectively to help learners to develop and extend their thinking. As well as developing learners' subject knowledge, most tutors help learners to develop their academic skills in stages, generally paying good attention to literacy and numeracy skills as appropriate to the subject.

Most tutors mark work regularly in line with the assessment criteria for the course. In most cases, tutors provide constructive verbal and written feedback to learners. In many cases, tutors provide clear targets to help learners make the next steps in their learning. However, the marking of learners' literacy and numeracy errors is inconsistent across the partnership.

The partnership has worked effectively together to agree a new common system of teaching observations. Observations focus on specific themes, including how well literacy and numeracy are embedded into sessions. The partnership has also introduced an electronic system to record the outcomes of observations. This is effective in helping leaders to provide professional development more closely aligned with tutors' needs. This is beginning to have a good impact on raising the quality of teaching and assessment.

**Recommendation 3: improve how well tutors and learners use individual learning plans to plan learning, set realistic goals and monitor progress;**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

Since the last inspection, the partnership has undertaken a useful review of the use of individual learning plans. It has provided tutors with effective training about its expectations of the application of individual learning plans to help learners achieve their goals.

The partnership has redesigned the individual learning plan format to be more user-friendly. The format helps learners to reflect more clearly on their shorter and longer term goal. A learning log enables learners to record weekly progress and short term targets. The individual learning plan and learning log help tutors to monitor learners' progress regularly. The partnership has introduced clear review points in courses when tutors and learners consider learners' progress together.

The partnership provides an additional session for most courses to ensure that learners can make effective use of the individual learning plan as a planning tool. Most tutors use the first session of the course effectively to find out about learners' educational backgrounds, personal and learning needs and aspirations. As a result, at an early stage, tutors are better able to signpost learners to the additional support they need.

Learners' use of individual plans has improved overall, but the quality of individual learning plans remains variable. Where learners have developed good reflection skills, they use their individual learning plan effectively to help them chart their progress over time. These individual learning plans show in detail the steps that learners need to take to improve their learning and reach their goals. However, for learners who are just starting to develop their reflection skills, weekly targets set by tutors are often too broad and they do not state specifically what the learner needs to do as a next step.

The partnership has carried out a useful audit of individual learning plans, which has identified strengths and areas for development. Monitoring individual learning plans is now a regular part of observations. In a few cases, managers monitor learners' individual learning plans in their area and they provide useful feedback so that tutors can help learners to improve their reflection skills and target setting.

**Recommendation 4: improve the use of performance management information to raise the standards achieved by learners and to evaluate how well the partnership achieves its priorities and gives value for money;**

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

The partnership has identified and supported 38 groups well to evolve as clubs, enabling it to focus its funds better towards provision aligned to the priorities of Welsh Government, the labour market and the needs of communities. The third sector is well represented within the partnership, and involvement with Communities First

providers is strong.

The partnership is in the process of updating its strategic plan. It has a good awareness of Local Service Board priorities, but does not incorporate these priorities overtly enough into its strategic plan. Partners recognise the need to link adult community learning with improving learners' employability and reducing poverty, but these important drivers have not yet been included as an explicit priority in the strategic plan. This is a missed opportunity to ensure that appropriate data is gathered and analysed to evaluate the impact of provision.

The partnership has improved its understanding of learner outcomes across all providers. It has made good progress in reviewing its systems for gathering data. The local authority has made a good contribution to developing an internet-based portal, which enables tutors to record a good range of learner data directly from centres or remote locations. The portal has already enabled partners to manage the numbers of learners on courses more effectively. It has also enabled partners to identify where they have needed to recruit staff to satisfy demand for courses. However, it is too early to judge how effectively the partnership uses its new system to challenge its performance or to judge how well it is moving towards its strategic priorities, meet communities' needs and improve value for money.

The partnership has strengthened its systems for the observation of teachers' performance and uses the outcomes of these well to inform its planning and prioritisation of training and its performance management of teachers.

**Recommendation 5: Improve arrangements for the strategic analysis and planning to meet learners' needs, including raising standards of literacy and numeracy;**

This recommendation has been partly addressed.

The partnership has improved the way it identifies and records learners' additional learning needs during recruitment and induction. This has enhanced tutors' ability to respond to learners' individual needs at an early stage, to monitor learners' progress and to guide learners more effectively onto courses more suited to their strengths, interests or needs. In addition, there are several examples of the partnership using this information quickly to identify an increased demand for basic skills support and to recruit additional staff to meet this demand, or make good use of volunteers to support learners.

The college has useful literacy and numeracy strategies that give its teachers guidance on how to focus on learners' literacy and numeracy development. The strategies make clear reference to the use of marking schemes, which can improve the consistency of feedback that learners receive, and guide learners in developing their skills. However across the partnership, there is no consistent approach to marking learners' work or to giving them feedback on spelling and grammatical errors. In a few cases, tutors fail to draw learners' attention to repeated errors.

Partners evaluate the progress that learners make in literacy and numeracy in a variety of ways. However, the lack of a coherent partnership approach makes it difficult for the partnership to evaluate its impact on learners' skills development.

**Recommendation 6: Improve systems for assessing learners' additional learning needs, making sure that those learners gain appropriate support, and monitor the progress made by learners receiving support; and**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

The partnership has introduced an effective overarching approach to identifying learners with additional learning needs. The local authority and the college now have good systems in place to support learners. There are good examples of effective additional learning needs support, including adjustments made to ICT equipment and wider personal support such as assistance with childcare, transport and managing personal finances. Many learners value the support given to them.

The partnership has invested a significant resource in the identification of learners' additional learning needs, including the creation of a new role to help co-ordinate support across the local authority's provision. The college also provides an effective service to identify and support learners with additional needs.

The partnership analyses information from learners' enrolment forms within the first three weeks of a course, and makes good use of this information to provide support for the learner and tutor. The partnership has added an induction session to most courses, which has had a positive impact on learners, ensuring that they are on the right course, and that they can discuss their individual requirements with the tutor.

The partnership is developing methods for evaluating additional support for learners. However, it is at too early a stage to evaluate the impact of learner support on learner progress across the provision.

**Recommendation 7: Improve arrangements for monitoring equal opportunities and diversity.**

This recommendation has been largely addressed.

The partnership has made good progress in addressing this recommendation. The local authority and the college have appropriate equality and diversity policies and the partnership as a whole has an overarching policy setting out minimum requirements for the policies of each of its members.

The partnership effectively monitors enrolments and outcomes for learners from a range of backgrounds. The partnership captures disability and demographic information from its learners during enrolment and induction processes. The partnership pays particular attention to information about learners from the most disadvantaged areas and monitors the reasons why learners may withdraw from courses before they are completed. However, it does not use the full range of information it has available to evaluate the impact of its support mechanisms in

helping these learners to stay on their learning programmes.

Learners from more disadvantaged backgrounds, ethnic minorities, men and women successfully complete their courses and qualifications at rates around the national averages.

The partnership responds well to requests from learners to provide courses or adaptations which meet their particular needs. Examples include a sign language interpreter for learners with hearing impairments, ESOL classes that meet learners' cultural needs, training for teaching assistants in the use of tablet computers in the medium of Welsh, and bespoke IT classes for learners with disabilities and visual impairments. The partnership has noted a recent drop in the proportion of male learners and in response is carrying out a range of activities to encourage men to take up learning.

### **Recommendations**

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