



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Addysg Oedolion Cymru / Adult Learning Wales
7 Coopers Yard
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Cardiff
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by

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

About Addysg Oedolion Cymru / Adult Learning Wales

Addysg Oedolion Cymru / Adult Learning Wales is the only national provider of adult learning in Wales. It has the status of a further education institution.

The provider came into being in 2016 as the result of the mergers of Coleg Harlech and Workers' Education Association (WEA) North with WEA South Wales, and subsequently WEA South Wales with Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) Wales Community College.

The Chief Executive took up post in 2017. Under the Chief Executive and Council's guidance, the provider has undertaken a significant restructure to enable the organisation to respond to financial challenges, to reduce the senior management team to three people post-merger and to direct the released resources to where they are most needed.

Addysg Oedolion Cymru / Adult Learning Wales enables around 13,000 learners annually to gain qualifications through 30,000 learning activities across Wales. Of this number, 7% of learners identified as fluent Welsh speaking and 12% non-fluent Welsh speakers. The provider organises a curriculum for learners who fall into one or more of protected characteristics, who are economically inactive and who are the hardest to reach. Fifty-three percent of learners live in 40% of the most deprived areas of Wales and 25% of learners are unemployed or economically inactive. All provision is community-based to meet the needs of learners in communities and work places. It has a particular focus on those who have missed out on learning or those who need a second chance. It works with over 200 partners and employers, including Wales Trades Union Congress Cymru (TUC Cymru), to provide essential upskilling provision, for example in literacy, numeracy, digital skills and English as a second language, to help address in-work poverty.

Addysg Oedolion Cymru / Adult Learning Wales provides learners with access to education from entry level units to basic skills qualifications, as well as qualifications at level 2 and level 3 for adults from all backgrounds. It delivers professional higher level qualifications in youth and community play work qualifications, teacher training and counselling. Addysg Oedolion Cymru / Adult Learning Wales focuses on delivering Welsh Government priorities. Eighty-two percent of provision delivered through Welsh Government funding is accredited and 18% is non-accredited. The provider works in all regional skills partnerships and in co-operation with the other 15 regional adult learning partnerships across Wales.

Summary

Most learners make good progress in their learning. Many learners can apply their newly acquired knowledge, skills and understanding appropriately in their everyday lives and work. Nearly all learners have positive attitudes to learning. Most venues are readily accessible to learners and they attend classes regularly, even though many learners may have to travel quite a distance to get to the class. Many older learners benefit from attending classes in which they develop new skills and socialise.

Most tutors and support assistants have a strong understanding of their learners' aspirations and needs. They deliver well-focused sessions that take good account of individual needs and interests. The provider delivers a wide range of courses. It works well with other providers to deliver a curriculum that addresses individual, local and regional needs. The provider works well with its partners to provide effective general support to most learners, and to vulnerable learners or those who experience disadvantage in particular. However, the availability and provision of support for learners with additional learning needs varies across courses and regions and there are a very few safeguarding concerns to address.

The senior leadership team has worked effectively with stakeholders to develop a well-articulated vision for Addysg Oedolion Cymru / Adult Learning Wales. Council members have an in-depth understanding of the organisation and they provide robust challenge and support. However, the provider's self-evaluation processes are underdeveloped and there are not enough opportunities for tutors to share effective practice and resources.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Good
Care, support and guidance	Adequate and needs improvement
Leadership and management	Adequate and needs improvement

Recommendations

- R1 Address the safeguarding concerns raised during the inspection
- R2 Improve the rigour of self-evaluation processes and planning to ensure that all areas for development are identified and fully addressed
- R3 Improve the ways in which tutors can share practice and resources
- R4 Improve support for learners with additional learning needs

What happens next

The provider will draw up an action plan showing how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will review the provider's progress.

Estyn will invite the provider to prepare a case study on its work in relation to the acquisition of practical essential skills whilst fostering understanding of Welsh life and culture and community cohesion for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

Most learners on English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses make strong progress in developing their English language skills. In entry level classes, most learners speak and read simple sentences confidently. They recall vocabulary, such as parts of the body, well and they structure questions correctly using prompts given by the tutor. A very few learners at this level make particularly strong progress and they quickly gain confidence in speaking and in writing simple sentences.

In more advanced ESOL classes, most learners have good recall of genres of writing and can explain clearly how the style meets the purpose of the writing. Most speak English relatively fluently with accurate pronunciation and intonation. Most advanced learners can produce their own notes to plan a party, wedding or holiday. They can write complex sentences correctly using a broad range of vocabulary based on their notes.

A few learners benefit very well from applied courses which help develop other skills and knowledge, such as driving theory, as well developing their English. On these courses, learners practise and develop their reading and speaking skills through identifying driving hazards and identifying bilingual road signs.

In a few literacy courses, most learners make strong progress towards their individual learning goals. On higher level courses, learners develop their research skills well by undertaking study about their individually chosen topics prior to class. This helps the learners to speak knowledgeably about topics that are of interest or which apply to their daily lives or work. Learners answer questions effectively and at length using a good range of vocabulary and grammatical structures.

In a very few classes across different courses, learners show that they have appropriate numeracy skills. For example, when completing exercises on shopping for family meals, many learners show that they have a clear understanding of simple addition and budgeting.

Many learners make sound progress in developing their digital skills from a wide range of starting points. Learners who start with very limited digital skills practise basic file management tasks and learn to navigate through a range of operating systems on laptops, tablets and mobile phones. More advanced learners develop skills in word processing, using spreadsheets and developing simple databases. For example, in an entry level class studying databases, learners discover their potential use in managing membership lists for a bowls club or keeping in touch with constituents of a community councillor or the beneficiaries of an autism charity.

However, in a few cases, the rate at which learners improve their digital skills in classes is limited by teaching approaches that do not stretch higher ability learners. In a few cases, learners do not use their own devices in lessons enough, which means that they struggle to apply the skills taught in the lesson to their own situation.

A few Welsh-speaking learners speak Welsh in classes with their peers. A few learners use simple Welsh greetings and terms with their tutors and with their peers. However, on the whole, learners do not develop, or extend, their existing Welsh language skills through their learning programmes.

Overall, across the range of programmes offered by the provider, learners make sound short and longer term progress in their studies, develop skills well and successfully complete their courses and qualifications at good rates. Many learners gain accreditation through their studies.

In 2017-2018, learners successfully completed their courses and attained their qualifications at a rate of 91%, in line with the national comparator. This represents a trend of improvement over the past three years.

According to the provider's own data, about 70% of learners are new to the provider year on year. Of those returning to the provider having studied courses in the previous year, many study appropriately at the same or higher level than their previous courses.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all learners are proactive and enthusiastic about their learning and participate well in sessions. It is the nature of the adult learner that they often have family commitments and personal circumstances that may be barriers to attending. Nonetheless, many learners attend their classes regularly and travel long distances, often on public transport, to get to their classes. Most learners let tutors know when they are not able to attend.

Nearly all learners feel happy, safe and secure in lessons and groups. Learners are welcoming, confident and willing to discuss their learning and their circumstances clearly and thoughtfully with others. Learners of differing abilities support each other sensitively and many have formed friendships that continue this support into other areas of their life. In ESOL classes, learners from very different backgrounds and cultures, have become friends outside of their formal learning and they support each other with issues of daily life, including parenting issues.

Most learners use their improved skills and new found love of learning to help their children with schoolwork. This enhances the experience and aspirations of their wider families.

Most learners at all levels increase their literacy and they feel more confident about understanding different types of literature, filling in forms and dealing with official documents. They also improve their digital skills and they become more confident at using information technology. They are better able to understand the digital activities of their children and grandchildren, using messaging, email and video communications.

Many learners gain valuable life skills. They increase their confidence and they become clearer about the steps they need to take to achieve their learning and life goals. Many learners are eager to continue their learning at a higher level, or on courses in different subjects at a similar level. A few learners studying at higher levels progress into higher education courses such as nursing, teaching and criminology.

There are many examples of learners who have turned their lives around as a result of attending a class. Many learners come to their course from disadvantaged areas and face challenging personal issues. They often have low academic achievement and poor self-esteem. They attend courses that improve their employability and become confident to apply for work, where appropriate. Other learners increase their skills to improve their performance in their current job, to seek promotion or to help them in their volunteering roles.

As a result of their learning, many learners go on to attend classes that are not funded directly by core Welsh Government funding. These classes, provided in partnership with a variety of agencies, enrich learners' lives and widen their horizons. They introduce learners to art and music, literature, history and politics. Intercultural visits and trips to museums, the Senedd and the Westminster parliament help to integrate learners of different nationalities and beliefs into their communities. Many learners who attend craft classes benefit from discussing and sharing ideas with others, thereby combating loneliness and isolation and speeding up their recovery from illness, for example, mental health problems. This is particularly true for older learners, those from marginalised groups and from isolated communities.

Partnership work with other organisations, such as voluntary organisations, also helps learners to engage in civic participation, enables learners with disabilities to participate more fully in education and cultural activities and enhances leadership skills for young women. These experiences also help to raise learners' aspirations and engenders change in learners' lives and communities.

As a membership organisation, learners' democratic engagement contributes to the development of active citizenship. Learners are offered free initial membership. A few learners take part in local and regional meetings and learner forums. A few become active WEA branch members or attend branch lectures and other learning activities. These learners benefit from access to wider non-partisan political debate to develop their democratic skills. They have the opportunity to learn about local history and culture, discuss Welsh Government policies and to contribute to strategic Addysg Oedolion Cymru / Adult Learning Wales issues. However these activities are not consistent across Wales, with little activity of this kind in North Wales.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Nearly all tutors have a wealth of experience and expertise. They have strong subject knowledge, relevant and professional qualifications and they understand their subject area well.

Most tutors have comprehensive plans and they deliver well focused teaching sessions with a positive and purposeful atmosphere. Nearly all tutors and support assistants have an in-depth understanding of their learners and they take good account of their individual needs, abilities and interests during their classes. They support learning well. Most tutors use appropriate questioning techniques well to check learners' understanding. Nearly all tutors demonstrate effective classroom management appropriate to adult learning classrooms. They make sure the majority of learners are fully engaged in their tasks. In most cases, tutors use teaching approaches that help learners to produce independent written work that is well presented and of a high standard. Most tutors use a wide range of useful and stimulating teaching resources but, in general, resources are not available bilingually.

However, in a very few cases, tutors' planning does not focus clearly enough on the learning needs of the individual. Tutors overly direct learners and dictate sentences for them to write. The pace of the lesson is too slow and more able learners become distracted.

Many tutors skilfully embed literacy and digital skills well into the lessons. For example, tutors encourage learners participating in an ESOL driving test theory classes, to read the text in driver handbooks aloud. Learners receive encouraging and constructive feedback on pronunciation, sentence structure and vocabulary. However, a very few tutors use too complex language and terminology and as a result, learners do not fully understand what they need to do.

The provider delivers a wide range of courses that includes ESOL, essential skills, personal development, literacy and numeracy, digital skills, access to higher education and youth work training, as well as operating a curriculum based on identified local and regional needs that is well designed to meet the needs of learners and communities. The provider works effectively with a wide range of partner organisations to engage with priority learner groups. The provider delivers a broad range of one day, short-term and longer term courses that provide valuable options to engage hard-to reach learners or those who need to update certain skills, for example in basic cookery and first aid training.

The regional managers and curriculum development officers plan provision effectively within their own geographical areas. Most venues are suitable for learning and they are within easy access from town centres on bus routes and have adequate car parking facilities. Leaders take good account of local community needs and they have autonomy to agree the curriculum and delivery models with a wide range of partners. However, joint planning initiatives between all curriculum development officers and other adult learning partners are not undertaken consistently across all regions.

The provider has an appropriate focus on the delivery of provision for learners with profound learning disabilities, mental health issues and ESOL in line with its mission and vision. The provider works with a wide range of specialist partners, such as Women Connect which provides a range of services to women and Oasis who work with refugees and asylum seekers.

The provider works well with local Job Centre Plus partners to ensure all learners have access to a wide range of current job opportunities. For example, learners who are unemployed attend confidence building and personal development courses to equip them with interview skills.

Many tutors embed literacy and numeracy well into their course delivery. However in a few cases, tutors miss naturally occurring opportunities for skills development.

The delivery of Welsh language skills is underdeveloped. Although tutors do introduce very basic occasional Welsh into sessions, not enough tutors expand learners' knowledge of the Welsh language and culture, which would further enhance employability and contribute to the understanding and sustainability of Welsh communities.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

Addysg Oedolion Cymru / Adult Learning Wales works well with partner organisations to engage learners on courses in accessible venues where they feel safe. Most tutors track learners' attendance and participation effectively and they use information supplied by learners on the enrolment form, or their own observations in class, to identify individual support needs. The provider and its partners provide good general support to most learners, particularly to those who are vulnerable or who experience disadvantage.

Most tutors provide useful and valued support to learners with additional learning needs in their classes. For example, they support learners who are dyslexic by making appropriate adjustments to materials through provision of handouts on coloured paper to match individual needs.

However, the availability and provision of support for learners with additional learning needs varies across regions and curriculum areas. The provider does not evaluate regularly support provided to learners with additional learning needs across the whole organisation to ensure equality of access and learners' progress.

Many tutors and learners are not clear about how to access to specialist support staff and there are only limited examples of such support being provided. Very few learners access additional learning support funding or financial contingency funds. Those who do access this funding benefit from assistance with note-taking in class, books, registered childcare fees, transport and assessment fees. The provider has started work to improve information for tutors and learners through a new website. However, the provider had not yet launched the website at the time of inspection.

Many tutors use the provider's guidance effectively to help learners on longer courses write individual learning plans with short and long-term targets. They work effectively with learners to monitor their progress towards achieving them. Many tutors use group learning plans effectively, where it is appropriate to do so. However, the use and effectiveness of these learning plans is inconsistent between tutors, courses and regions.

The majority of learners enrol on courses through partner organisations. Many learners find out about provision through advertisements in the local press, social media and word of mouth. In most cases, learners receive appropriate induction to the course and guidance during the first meeting of their class. Many learners enrol on courses leading to credit-based qualifications and they often progress to suitable further courses. However, the provider does not make it clear enough to learners how they can use accumulated credits towards credit-based awards, such as certificates and diplomas.

The provider has created a learner handbook which contains useful information. For example, it sets out the code of conduct along with useful information on issues such as learner voice. However, not all learners receive this handbook, nor it is easily accessible on the provider's website.

The provider encourages and supports learners' personal development within and beyond the classroom well, for example, through developing learners' skills in

language development and ability, confidence and communication skills. A few learners in a local mental health support centre use their newly developed skills to make particularly positive contributions as volunteers and peer mentors to support others in their local community who are also experiencing mental health issues.

The learner handbook and code of conduct is useful in supporting learners' knowledge and understanding of harassment and discrimination. In a very few classes, learners develop their understanding well of how to stay safe online. For example, they learn how to avoid becoming victims of financial scamming emails and text messages.

The provider has clear guidelines for dealing with bullying, harassment and discrimination issues. It has a clear policy for safeguarding of which most tutors have a sound understanding. The provider has appropriate guidelines for the use of disclosure and barring service checks.

The provider's arrangements for safeguarding are a concern. It is not clear from the provider's safeguarding policy how the policy applies when the provider works in partnership with other providers. Moreover, as a designated further education institution, the provider has a statutory duty to comply with Prevent Duty guidance. A minority of staff have not yet completed any training about their responsibilities under Prevent, and guidance for learners and staff do not address the issues of radicalisation and extremism.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

Addysg Oedolion Cymru / Adult Learning Wales is a values-driven organisation which puts the learner at the centre of its work. It operates effectively on democratic principles, which it has inherited from its legacy institutions.

The senior leadership team is made up of the chair of council, the two vice-chairs of council together with the chief executive, head of curriculum and performance and the head of learner services and resources. The team provides effective strategic leadership.

The team has worked effectively with staff, learners and members to establish a well-articulated vision for Addysg Oedolion Cymru / Adult Learning Wales. A new strategic plan with the clear aims of ensuring excellent teaching and learning, raising the profile and importance of adult learning, working in strong collaboration and engagement with partners and realising responsible growth underpins the vision. Both the vision and the strategic plan are well understood by staff across the organisation. The senior leadership team meets regularly to track and monitor the plan.

Council members have a good understanding of the work of the organisation and offer robust challenge and support. Its meetings are open to staff, members and learners should they wish to attend. Addysg Oedolion Cymru / Adult Learning Wales takes good account of the national, regional and local priorities.

The new leadership and management structure supports the work of Addysg Oedolion Cymru / Adult Learning Wales appropriately. Most staff understand their roles and responsibilities clearly and undertake them well.

Regional managers oversee the work of regional teams. Together with the national delivery manager, they liaise effectively with other partners in the regions, such as other adult learning partnerships, to provide suitable courses and to avoid duplication.

Quality curriculum co-ordinators work independently of the regional teams and undertake internal quality assurance of learners' accredited work effectively.

The curriculum and quality group, which is led by the curriculum manager and made up of regional managers, the national delivery manager, the quality manager and the ESOL/essential skills manager, meets monthly to monitor provision, discuss the budget, review data, share information and solve problems. These meetings provide useful opportunities to develop consistent practice and shared understandings across the organisation. As a result of regularly analysing a range of data and undertaking monitoring activities, such as learner visits, managers initiate actions quickly to improve provision, teaching and learning in the areas for which they are responsible. However, due to not having a full complement of staff until September 2018, the provider was not able to carry out its full programme of teaching observations in the previous academic year, with the result that a minority of tutors have felt unsupported in developing their teaching skills.

The provider offers staff and tutors regular opportunities, such as tutor conferences and online courses, to update their knowledge and skills. However, it does not provide enough opportunities for tutors to share their practice and resources, and thereby improve the consistency of teaching and learning across regions.

The provider's processes for self-evaluation lack rigour. Regional self-evaluations are sound and inform the organisation's overall self-evaluation processes appropriately. The provider has a reasonable understanding of its strengths and areas for development. However, self-evaluation processes do not focus enough on the impact of actions. The provider does not draw on a wide enough range of evidence to pick up on areas for improvement and to inform its evaluations fully.

The quality development plan sets out clearly the priorities for improvement. It records who is responsible for carrying out the actions, who monitors the actions and completion dates. However, in many cases, targets are too generic.

The provider has a good understanding of its income and expenditure. The reduction in the number of senior leaders has enabled the provider to divert appropriately more funding to delivery. New contractual arrangements with partners help to reduce expenditure effectively when planned courses have to be cancelled at late notice. Careful management of the budget has enabled the provider to move from a deficit in the previous academic year to a small surplus in the current year.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the partnership and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Estyn evaluates a partnership's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

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

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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