



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

**A report on the adult learning in the community provision  
of**

**Cardiff & Vale Adult Learning in the Community  
Partnership**

**Cardiff and Vale College  
City Centre Campus,  
Dumballs Rd,  
Cardiff  
CF10 5FE**

**Date of inspection: March 2023**

**by**

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

**This report is also available in Welsh**

## About Cardiff & Vale Adult Learning in the Community Partnership

Cardiff and Vale Community Learning Partnership was established in 2013 from the former Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan adult learning partnerships. There are four main delivery partners: Cardiff and Vale College, Cardiff Council, Vale of Glamorgan Council and Adult Learning Wales. The partnership serves Wales' capital city, Cardiff, and the adjacent, largely rural, local authority of the Vale of Glamorgan and offers provision at a range of venues including community centres, libraries and the college's campuses.

The 2021 census reports a population 362,400 in Cardiff and 131,800 in the Vale of Glamorgan. Both areas have rates of population growth above the Welsh average since the last census in 2011 ([ONS, 2022](#)). The proportion of residents aged 65 or over is lower in Cardiff (14.5%) than the Welsh average of 21.3%. In the Vale of Glamorgan, 21.9% of residents are aged 65 or over – slightly higher than the Welsh average ([ONS, 2022](#)).

The 2021 census estimates that Cardiff has the highest proportion in Wales of residents born outside the UK, at 16.5%, compared to the Welsh average of 6.9% ([Welsh Government, 2022; Figure 2](#)). The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 shows that 18% of Cardiff's neighbourhoods are in the most deprived areas in Wales ([Welsh Government, 2019; Table 3](#)). There are marked disparities in affluence between the north and south of the city, with the majority of deprivation falling in the south. This forms a pattern which is described as the 'southern arc' of deprivation. Statistics relating to deprivation and well-being in Cardiff therefore paint a geographically divergent picture. Certain populations are more likely to suffer the consequences of deprivation across these indicators because they are more likely to live in the southern arc, for example the Black and Minority Ethnic populations and the Gypsy and Roma Traveller community. The gap in educational attainment is equally stark and adults living in deprived areas have generally lower levels of qualifications than their peers in the north of Cardiff.

In the Vale of Glamorgan, Barry is the largest town and centre of administration in the county. A large proportion of the population inhabits rural locations, villages, hamlets and farms. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that 4% of neighbourhoods in the county are in the 10% most deprived areas of Wales ([Welsh Government, 2019; Table 3](#)). The Vale of Glamorgan has four (former) Communities First areas, all in Barry.

In 2021, both Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan had a higher-than average proportion of working age adults qualified to level 4 or above, with 47.7% and 52.7% respectively, compared to a Welsh average of 41.6%; and a lower than average of working age adults with no qualifications at 7.6% and 3.1% respectively, compared to Welsh average of 8.1% ([StatsWales, 2022](#)).

In 2022, both areas also had lower levels of economic inactivity (ages 16 to 64, excluding students), with 20.3% and 13.4% compared to the Welsh average of 20.7% ([StatsWales, 2022](#)).

According to the ONS Annual Population Survey for 2022 ([StatsWales, 2022](#)) the percentage of people in Cardiff aged three and over who responded to the question to say they can speak Welsh is 28.5% compared to the Wales average of 29.7%. In the Vale of Glamorgan, the figure is lower, at 20.7%.

The partnership employs 193 part-time and 43 full-time teaching staff. Approximately 5,800 learners are enrolled on courses, of whom 2,200 are English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) learners.

## Summary

This is a highly effective partnership with a clear and well-articulated vision for its purpose, direction and provision. The vision is rooted in the partnership's commitment to improving the life chances for adult learners in its diverse communities. The four partners share and understand the partnership's vision and work effectively, collaboratively and innovatively. Strategic leaders are active in shaping and contributing to the national discussion about the future of adult learning in the community.

From its formation in 2013, the partnership has transformed into a well-established and mature body, with equitable, cohesive and open working arrangements and strong communication between partners.

The partnership provides a broad range of accredited and non-accredited courses to meet the diverse needs of the learners of its communities, including free literacy, numeracy, digital skills and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses. In particular, the partnership works effectively and coherently to deliver programmes which are well tailored to the local labour market to help adults find employment. The partnership also provides an attractive range of personal interest courses, such as jewellery making and silversmithing, creative writing, 'grow your own vegetables' and advanced French conversation for which learners pay the full cost.

Learners make strong progress in their learning and produce work of a high standard. Learners are enthusiastic and enjoy their learning. Many are keen to progress to further learning, employment or volunteering activities. The partnership is working to develop a method of evaluating learners' progression through its provision more effectively.

Despite the setbacks of the pandemic to their well-being, learners report that engaging in learning at the partnership is having a positive impact on their lives, through helping them into work, learning a new skill, supporting their children's learning, or enriching their lives through artistic and social activities.

Tutors are well prepared and plan carefully to take account of learners' needs, starting points and learning to date. They have respectful relationships with their learners and are responsive to their needs. As a result, learners are well motivated and learn skills that are useful to them in their wider lives.

Tutors make sure that learners know what they need to do to succeed in assessments and learners feel well prepared for the challenge of their assessment activities.

The partnership recognises areas for improvement in the extent to which learners contribute to self-evaluation, and the need to increase provision or access to provision through the medium of Welsh. The partnership is working to address these areas for improvement.

## Recommendations

- R1 Evaluate learners' progression into, through and on from the provision
- R2 Improve the extent to which learners contribute to self-evaluation and the work of the partnership
- R3 Explore opportunities to increase provision or access to provision through the medium of Welsh

## What happens next

The provider will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Estyn will invite the provider to prepare case studies on its work for dissemination on its website, in relation to:

- establishing an effective and cohesive partnership
- employability programmes
- partnership working to improve learners' awareness of cancer and confidence to access healthcare

## Main findings

### Learning

Most learners make strong progress in their learning relative to their starting points and produce work of a high standard. They are enthusiastic and engage well in classes, and with tasks and activities completed outside of lessons. As a result, learners acquire and develop new knowledge and skills, which many apply well in both their learning programme and everyday life. Many learners are keen to progress to further learning, employment or volunteering activities. Most learners know and understand their initial assessment results and are aware of what they need to work on to improve their skills.

In English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes, learners benefit from clear progression routes, both within ESOL provision and into wider provision such as vocational programmes and access to higher education. Most learners engage well with tutors, other learners and learning materials. Most entry level 1 ESOL learners, for example, understand and pronounce simple English words correctly, and use basic vocabulary. Most read simple words, phrases and sentences correctly with good intonation. Many can also ask simple questions requiring simple answers. Many more advanced ESOL learners can ask more complex questions.

ESOL learners benefit from written work being marked against assessment criteria for examinations. As a result, learners know what they need to work on in order to pass their examinations. There are numerous examples of learners who have progressed through different levels of ESOL programmes and on to different courses, including into higher education.

Learners on ESOL+ programmes learn useful vocational skills alongside their English language studies. For example, one learner on the ESOL+ accounting programme is self-employed and uses new skills in accounting to help him improve his business planning and record keeping as well as developing his ability in English.

In family learning sessions, parents, carers, grandparents and their children enjoy working together at the children's school. Learners use numbers with their children, for example in working with money or in helping help them learn and reinforce their work at school such as on shapes and number bonds. Learners count in Welsh as well as in English and this helps them reinforce their children's learning. Learners support each other and work well together. Most adult family learners make good progress in these sessions and enjoy using the fun materials and activities they develop to reinforce and extend their children's learning outside of school. One former learner said the course helped give her more confidence and self-esteem as well as providing an opportunity to meet new people. She is now enjoying working as a teaching assistant at her children's school.

Learners also enjoy the opportunity to participate in a range of engagement courses. In a sewing course, learners develop their skills at their own pace, for example, from basic threading of a sewing machine and stitching in a straight line to using the machine proficiently to stitch around curves and attach pockets to a garment. These programmes often give learners the confidence to progress onto other courses or into volunteering activities. For example, learners on a recycling art programme went onto ESOL and numeracy courses and a budgeting course with the local council. Another learner went on to become a lunchtime supervisor at a local school.

On employability courses such as 'introduction to childcare', all learners participate well. They acquire new skills that not only help them with seeking employment or progressing to further study, but also develop their personal skills in supporting their children and family members. Learners on a job centre digital programme use a range of basic search and filter activities to improve their digital skills and help with finding a job.

The partnership supports a range of cost-recovery courses for personal interest. Many learners on a conversational French programme value the opportunity to sustain and further develop their skills over several years of attendance. On a pottery course, learners enjoy working with clay, understand glazes and their properties and apply them effectively and to make useful or decorative pots and sculptures.

## **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

Following the pandemic, and the current cost of living crisis, many learners report suffering from anxiety, feelings of isolation, a disconnection from society and a variety of mental health issues that affect their well-being.

Learners across the partnership's wide ranging provision report benefits to their well-being from engaging with learning, including improving their employability, learning a new skill, supporting their children's learning, and enriching their lives through artistic and social activities.

Across the partnership, nearly all learners enjoy their work, are enthusiastic and contribute well in class. They are proud of their achievements in learning and progress in language acquisition. In craft sessions, learners are keen to show the artifacts they have made and explain how attending a class has improved their lives in a variety of ways.

In nearly all classes, there is enjoyment and laughter and mutual support. There is an ethos across the partnership that learning is fun as well as an emphasis on its importance in increasing life chances, improving mental health and well-being and creating inclusive and thriving communities.

Learners enjoy one another's company, appreciate each other's achievements and support and help each another in class. Many learners have made new friends, particularly those isolated during the pandemic. Many learners describe how taking part in adult learning in the community has changed their lives.

In family learning, learners improve the well-being of their families by supporting their children's education and connecting to the life of the school and the community.

Those learners who benefit from provision targeted at the less advantaged areas of Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan learn, for example, how to cook on a budget and use the food available at community pantries to the best advantage. They develop a better understanding of cooking for their families, managing their finances, and improve their numeracy skills.

Specialist provision for women who have suffered abuse allows them to reflect on events and feelings. Participants in these programmes report that they are better able to process what has happened to them, return to living positive lives and support their children.

Learners with additional learning needs attending Disability Inclusion in Community Education (DICE) courses, visit centres and socialise with their peers and a wider range of learners. They improve their skills, extend their horizons and enjoy themselves.

Learners in engagement and in cost recovery classes not only learn new skills which are enjoyable and fulfilling but make new friends. They learn to make pottery, paint and sew, often recycling and repurposing materials. Those in engagement classes experience types of learning that they would not normally access. This widens their horizons, improves their mental and physical health and opens up new options for possible learning to them. There are examples of learners progressing from engagement classes to more formal community learning, then to train at higher levels and enter employment.

ESOL learners improve their well-being and quality of life through their language acquisition and benefit from the support services that are available to them through

the partnership. Learners of all nationalities feel more included and gain understanding of one another through the partnership's promotion of information about religious festivals, community events and events to promote cooking and customs from different nationalities and refugee experiences.

The partnership has put measures in place to help learners to become resilient and to persevere with their learning activities. Many tutors have trained as well-being champions. Tutors also improve their own well-being through interacting with their learners and through the variety of well-being support offered by the partnership.

In a few classes, attendance is patchy. However, tutors generally know the reasons for absence from classes and the partnership understands why adult learners do not always attend regularly, and the lingering impact of COVID-19 anxiety.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

The partnership is highly effective in working together to provide a broad range of accredited and non-accredited courses to meet the diverse needs of its learners and communities. Learners' needs are at the forefront of all the partnership's planning and, as well as monitoring the provision to reduce the duplication and to ensure the sustainability of courses, the partnership is forward thinking. It takes good account of labour market intelligence and responds quickly to potential growth areas in the local job market so that learners are well placed to take advantage of existing and emerging opportunities. The partnership recognises that it needs to understand and demonstrate more fully the impact of adult learning in the community on the lives of learners and the Welsh economy and is embarking upon research to articulate clearly what that impact is.

In addition to its Welsh Government funded core provision, the partnership provides an attractive range of personal interest courses, such as jewellery making and silversmithing, creative writing, 'grow your own vegetables' and advanced French conversation for which learners pay the full cost.

The partnership has very effective mechanisms in place through REACH (Regional ESOL Assessment Central Hub) to assess all learners in the area wishing to join ESOL courses. There is strong demand for such courses. Assessors place learners on full-time, part-time or community courses as best suits their starting levels and learning needs. The partnership supports the learners on waiting lists well by providing informal conversation classes.

To further prepare ESOL learners for life in Wales, the partnership offers a programme of ESOL+ courses, through which more advanced learners can develop further their English in a vocational context, such as Business Administration or Health and Social Care. These courses allow learners to improve and apply their language skills and also to develop vocational skills and a useful understanding of the world of work in the Wales.

Where the partnership perceives learners have a particular need and there is a gap in the provision, it works effectively with other partners to address the issue. An example of this is when the partnership worked successfully with Velindre Cancer Centre to produce materials to raise ESOL learners' awareness and understanding of



the signs and symptoms of cancer, and the vocabulary to discuss them with medical staff.

ESOL learners have the opportunity to take part in WESOL (Welsh for ESOL learners). This helps them to understand basic Welsh language, and Welsh heritage and culture. Additionally, the partnership provides learners with the opportunity to meet with Welsh business stakeholders to consider career pathways. The partnership is beginning to signpost learners to provision taught through the medium of Welsh by strengthening its links with Menter Caerdydd and Menter Y Fro. This is, however, at an early stage of development.

The partnership has a strong focus on helping learners improve their skills to gain employment. It does this through a well-considered range of activities which may start with partnering a learner with an employment mentor, the learner moving to a non-accredited introductory course and then onto accredited provision in one of the partnership's 'vocational academies', which are clearly focused on the regional priorities for work. Additionally, the partnership organises employment fairs at regular intervals to help learners to find out about different lines of work, jobs available and to meet potential employers. Courses, such as the 'Employable Me' scheme, usefully provide learners with basic skills in such areas as first aid, customer service and health and safety.

The partnership provides a useful range of family learning courses in conjunction with local primary schools. These sessions provide family members with the opportunity to learn about how schools teach certain subject areas and to develop similar skills to help their children at home. These courses provide a gateway for learners into further learning and the partnership provides these learners with useful information about the range of courses offered and guides learners to appropriate provision.

The partnership offers a suitable mixture of face-to-face and online provision. Face-to-face provision is offered in both central and community venues which are well equipped and generally provide easy access for learners. Online classes support part-time learners to incorporate learning alongside other commitments.

Tutors are well prepared and plan carefully to take account of learners' needs, starting points and learning to date. Tutors are appropriately responsive to learners' needs within their planned sessions, improving learners' motivation as they learn skills that are useful in their wider lives.

Tutors develop respectful relationships and know their learners well. Tutors make effective use of peer support and peer learning meaning that opportunities for collaborative learning are well used. They plan the make-up of pairs and groups carefully to help learners move forward in their learning.

Tutors choose topics which are interesting to learners and relate well their wider lives and produce and use suitable resources of high quality. Many tutors share teaching resources digitally with learners which allows engagement outside of taught sessions. Many tutors make good use of learning technology in the classroom and they show good levels of confidence in using digital tools for group work and collaborative tasks in online sessions.

Many tutors use lively starter activities which engage learners' interest. Nearly all tutors respond to how learners progress as activities and tasks are worked through and skilfully adjust the pace of their sessions accordingly.

Nearly all tutors provide clear instructions and explanations that are appropriate to the level of learning and most manage sessions so that all learners have the opportunity to contribute.

Tutors assess learners' work and progress regularly in class. They provide useful verbal or written feedback to individual learners that helps them to improve while also recognising their achievements.

In accredited classes, tutors make sure that learners know what they need to do to succeed, with the result that learners understand how to demonstrate the skills they have learnt in summative assessment tasks. Tutors demonstrate high levels of confidence in learners' potential to succeed with the result that learners feel well prepared for the challenge of their assessment activities.

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

All four of the providers in the partnership use a variety of methods to advertise their courses to the public. This includes hard copies of prospectuses, social media platforms and websites. This information provides prospective learners with useful information so that they can choose the course which suits their needs. Although, as the individual provider websites and platforms are not linked, a full picture of the extensive provision available across the partnership is not readily available to them. Currently, not all providers' websites are accessible and easily navigable for Welsh speakers who wish to search for courses offered by the partnership or external providers through the medium of Welsh. The partnership recognises this and is taking steps to achieve this aim.

The partnership focuses effectively on meeting the needs of the diverse population of Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. Individual providers operate procedures to ensure that learners receive the assistance they require to access and benefit fully from their courses. Within the partnership, providers share good practice with each other usefully. For example, Adult Learning Wales' additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) had the opportunity to shadow the work of Cardiff and the Vale College's ALNCo, leading to a constructive professional dialogue aimed at improving specialist provision for learners. The partnership recognises the need to improve its arrangements for monitoring the quality and impact of support for learners.

The partnership offers valuable opportunities for learners with mental health issues or learning difficulties to follow accredited courses as part of the Welsh Government's Disability Inclusion in Community Education (DICE) learning for work and learning for life programmes. These courses are offered free of charge or at very low rates to encourage the participation of learners who might not otherwise be able to access such opportunities.

Providers focus beneficially on promoting healthy lifestyle choices to learners as well as helping learners to understand the concepts of equality and diversity. Individual providers adapt these messages skilfully within contexts relevant to their own

learners, such as during tutorial sessions, in course materials or in specific bespoke events such as anti-racism days. The partnership encourages learners to develop an understanding of culture, the community, and the wider world. ESOL learners show respect for their peers from different cultures and countries and learn successfully of the importance in British society, of democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty. For example, ESOL learners can access courses to equip them with the historical and cultural knowledge to pass the UK Citizenship Test. They can also access courses that explain the need for all drivers in the UK to comply with legal requirements such as MOTs and valid insurance, while also helping them to acquire the language skills and vocabulary to do so successfully.

The partnership works effectively to ensure that providers do not duplicate provision and provides useful information to staff and learners regarding possible progression routes within and outside the partnership, or into employment. For example, learners on courses aimed at those wishing to work in care, have access to an employment mentor who supports them through the course and helps them to access employment opportunities. The partnership also provides opportunities for learners to benefit from the support and training offered by other providers that are not formally linked to the partnership. However, overall, processes to monitor and evaluate learners' progression into, through and on from the partnership's provision are at present underdeveloped.

The partnership operates a learner involvement strategy, that draws on individual providers' learner voice procedures, to improve the ability of learners to contribute effectively to decisions about their learning. There are examples of positive co-operative working such as the local authority providers working well together to produce a joint learner survey. The partnership values learners' opinions and responds to them appropriately, for example, by changing course times to fit in with parents and carers' responsibilities and holding courses on the weekend. However, the number of learners engaging in learner voice activities is lower than in the pre-pandemic period. Overall, the partnership's processes to evaluate the effect of learner voice are at an early stage of development.

Partners work diligently to identify vulnerable learners or those in danger of radicalisation in ways that are appropriate to the contexts of their own organisations. They co-operate effectively to share intelligence to promote safe practices across the partnership. Providers ensure that tutors are well-equipped to convey the dangers of extremism and radicalisation and how to respond appropriately to potential concerns or risks if necessary. The partnership's arrangements for safeguarding learners meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

### **Leadership and management**

This is a highly effective partnership with a clear and well-articulated vision for its purpose, direction and provision. The vision is rooted in the partnership's commitment to improving the life chances for adult learners in its diverse communities. The decisions taken by leaders at all levels reflect the partnership's vision and demonstrate a 'can do' attitude to addressing the challenges faced by the learners and communities the partnership serves.

Strategic leaders from the four partners share and understand the vision and align the work and resource of their organisations in support of the partnership effectively, collaboratively and innovatively. Strategic leaders are active in shaping and contributing to the national discussion about the future of adult learning in the community.

From its formation in 2013, the partnership has transformed into a well-established and mature body, and this is reflected in its equitable and open working arrangements. Senior leaders from all partners meet regularly to co-ordinate the work of the partnership. Communication between partners is strong.

Operational leaders are well experienced and understand their provision well. They share the values of the partnership and participate purposefully in its work. The partnership has a useful group structure to help organise and coordinate its work. Teaching and learning, learner involvement and quality and data groups feed into a high-level strategy group. Operational leaders from all partners sit on these groups and contribute purposefully to the leadership and strategic direction of the partnership.

Leaders at all levels within the partnership have a good understanding of the needs of its diverse range of communities and plan provision carefully and deliberately to meet their needs. There are many examples of provision which has been developed to help adults enter education, benefit from training and then access employment. For example, there is considerable ESOL provision for the many speakers of other languages resident within the partnership's area. This is supplemented by 'ESOL+' provision which combines English language learning with vocational training to give opportunities for learners to move into employment as well as improve their English. The partnership's 'vocational academies' such as the Care Academy offer clearly planned routes for adults looking for work in the care sector through an induction process, intensive introductory training, accredited qualifications and opportunities to meet employers in the sector. The provision in these examples draws on resources from across the partnership and demonstrates the impact of leaders planning their provision with the needs of communities in mind.

The partnership has located its provision in areas where learners have straightforward access, such as community centres, schools, libraries and other convenient venues. These also act as community hubs for information, advice and guidance.

The partnership has robust and well-planned self-evaluation processes to which all partners contribute, and a realistic appraisal of its own strengths and areas for improvement. As part of these processes, partners carry out useful teaching and learning observations and learning walks across each other's provision to help moderate their evaluation and better understand the provision. The partnership is working towards a method for evaluating learners' progression throughout their provision and on to further education or employment. The partnership has an appropriate high-level plan for quality improvement.

Although the partnership uses a range of means to incorporate the views and experiences of learners into their self-evaluation, it recognises that these can be improved.

Staff across the partnership are kept in touch with developments through a partnership wide staff newsletter. Staff from all providers who deliver on the partnership's core provision have access to Cardiff and Vale College's e-learning portal to carry out online training on a useful range of topics such as information security, safeguarding, Prevent or using social media responsibly. Individual providers also offer training to their own staff focussing on the needs identified in each provider. Topics have included mental health awareness, embedding Welsh language and culture, sessions for sharing good teaching practice. Partnership-wide professional learning events have not taken place over recent years because of the pandemic but are planned to restart in the summer of this year.

## Evidence base of the report

Before the inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the learner and staff questionnaires

During the inspection, inspectors normally:

- meet the chair of the partnership, governors (where appropriate), senior and middle leaders and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the partnership's work
- meet learners to discuss their work, to listen to their views about various aspects of their provider
- visit a broad sample of sessions
- observe and speak to learners outside of sessions
- look closely at the partnership's self-evaluation processes
- consider the partnership's quality improvement planning and looked at evidence to show how well the partnership had taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a wide range of partnership documents, including information on learner assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body (where appropriate), information on learners' well-being, including the safeguarding of learners, and records of staff training and professional learning

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the partnership and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.wales](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.wales)

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: [www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales)

© Crown Copyright 2023: This report may be re used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 12/07/2023