



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

A report on the work based learning provision of

Cardiff & Vale College Apprenticeships

**47 Colcot Road
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by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Cardiff & Vale College Apprenticeships

Cardiff and Vale College lead a partnership of 19 sub-contractors to deliver Welsh Government apprenticeship programmes. These include the college's own provision, CCFC, Bosch Automotive, Brothers Constantinou, Coleg QS, Focus On, JGR Training, JTL, Kwikfit GB Ltd, More Training, NDGTA, Penguin, People Plus, Remit, Safe and Secure, Sgil Cymru, Skillnet, South Wales Fire & Rescue Service, Tydfil Training, and WBTA. The network serves a diverse community in the capital region of Wales working with key partners to deliver apprenticeships. The provider works with 1,000 employers, including multi-national businesses, national businesses and small to medium enterprises, which represent approximately 76% of employers. Cardiff and Vale College Apprenticeships delivers apprenticeships to approximately 2,500 learners. They deliver apprenticeships at levels 1 to 5 in the following sectors:

- Health, public services and care
- Agriculture, horticulture and animal care
- Engineering and manufacturing technologies
- Construction, planning and the built environment
- Information and communication technology
- Retailing and customer service
- Hair and beauty
- Hospitality and catering
- Leisure, travel and tourism
- Arts, media & publishing
- Business, administration and law

Around 64% provision is delivered at level 3 and above with 71% of apprentices being in the 16-18 age range. Currently, 95% of foundation apprentices 93% of apprentices and 65% of higher apprentices are undertaking apprenticeships in priority sectors. Approximately, 85% of provision is in health, public services and care, engineering and manufacturing technologies and construction, planning and the built environment. Eight per cent of learners are from ethnic minority groups and 35% are from areas of high deprivation.

Summary

Across Cardiff and Vale College and its network of partner providers, most learners make sound progress in developing their workplace practical skills. They develop their theory knowledge well and use this knowledge when undertaking a range of tasks on and off-the-job. Most learners use practical skills well when carrying out daily tasks in the workplace. Across the network, many learners become valued members of their employer's staff and contribute well to their business. As a result of their apprenticeships, many learners improve their self-confidence and self-esteem.

Most learners are motivated and enthusiastic about their programmes and know what assessments and tasks they need to do to progress. They show positive attitudes to learning. Most assessors and teachers plan assessments and off-the-job sessions well and many support learners well to progress. Learners' written work is generally well presented and benefits from constructive written feedback from assessors. However, in a few cases this feedback is superficial and does not give clear guidance on what learners need to do to improve. Most learners receive strong levels of personal support from their assessors. Learners with an additional learning need receive strong levels of support in the workplace and when undertaking off-the-job activities.

The provider works particularly well with a high number of employers delivering programmes across many learning areas. The provider has been particularly effective in securing apprenticeship training for a number of high-profile employers. The provider's senior manager team has a strong commitment to work-based learning and apprenticeships and provides clear strategic direction for the delivery of its Welsh Government apprenticeship contract. Senior managers have been proactive in forming key strategic partnerships, especially in the capital region with key stakeholders to widen the understanding and benefits of apprenticeships. The provider uses comprehensive self-evaluation procedures and has a clear focus on improving learner outcomes, although middle leaders are not always clear enough on key strengths and areas for improvement. In a minority of cases, learners take longer than expected to complete their framework, particularly those on higher apprenticeships.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve framework success rates and timely completion in underperforming areas, especially higher apprenticeships
- R2. Ensure that teachers and assessors learn from each other to improve their practice
- R3. Ensure that self-evaluation by middle leaders informs effective improvement across the network

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 in relation to the support the provider gives to learners with an additional learning need and the wide range of programmes available to learners and employers, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Learning

Across the provision of Cardiff and Vale College Apprenticeships and its delivery network, many learners are aware of the progress they are making towards completion of their apprenticeship frameworks. Most understand their individual targets and agreed learning goals for the completion of written work and practical assessments.

During their apprenticeships, many learners develop strong work-related practical skills and theory knowledge. As a result, many become valued members of their employer's staff and develop a wide range of industry related skills that enables them to sustain employment and progress their careers.

Many learners are enthusiastic and confident when answering questions about their work and when communicating with their assessors, employers and peers. Many learners demonstrate sound recall of prior knowledge and are able to explain clearly how theory relates to their activities in the workplace.

Many learners improve their speaking and listening skills well, relative to their starting point. As a result, they are able to confidently adapt their approach to dealing with different people and situations. In the best cases, they demonstrate these skills well when interacting with customers and managers.

Skills development is most effective when more able learners are challenged to build on their initial assessment results by completing essential skills qualifications above that required of their framework. In the best cases, where learners have proxies, targets for improvement in literacy and numeracy are planned using initial assessment results. Overall, around half of learners are aware of what they need to do to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

Most learners who attend off-the-job sessions show good levels of engagement and positive attitudes to learning, both in theory and skills lessons. Most learners in group settings are respectful of one another and value the contributions that their peers bring to the overall learning experience. Learner conversations during paired activities are work-focused and most learners remain attentive throughout.

Most learners produce written work of at least a suitable standard and a few produce higher quality work. In the best cases, learners structure their work well and use spelling, punctuation and grammar appropriately. In an off-the-job practical session, learners linked theory to practice well when using electrical test equipment to test newly wired circuits. They recorded results accurately and matched these to industry standards to test and ensure compliance.

Many learners are ambitious and are determined to advance within their organisations. A very few learners have benefitted from participating in Welsh, UK and international skills competitions and this opportunity has motivated and further developed these learners.

Most learners demonstrate sound occupational competence and show good initiative in the workplace. For example, a higher apprentice in information advice and guidance has translated all of their external facing work documents into Welsh for the benefit of their organisation's Welsh speaking clients. Motor vehicle service and repair learners clearly link and apply theory and concepts to workplace practice when demonstrating strong practical skills across a range of work activities, such as when undertaking vehicle servicing in line with manufacturers' specifications.

Many learners use digital technology well when undertaking a wide range of learning and assessment activities. They are able to navigate digital learning platforms and electronic portfolios well where these are being used. Most learners make good progress in digital literacy, for example by improving their skills in the use of spreadsheets to produce Gantt charts to a high standard. Other learners demonstrate good understanding of how they can use software to plan and monitor design and build projects, such as building a house. Other learners have improved and used advanced spreadsheet skills well for financial accounting projects and assessments.

Many learners improve their awareness of the value of Welsh language skills in the workplace when undertaking Prentis-laith learning modules at the start of their programme. Few learners are fluent Welsh speakers and a very few of these learners choose to complete their written assessments through the medium of Welsh.

In 2021-2022, many learners achieved their foundation or apprenticeship frameworks and half of higher apprenticeship learners achieved their full framework. When compared to published national outcomes data for the same year, foundation level

framework success rates were particularly strong in health, public services and care and business administration and law. Apprenticeship success rates were also strong in health, public services and care, while success rates on similar programmes in engineering and construction were broadly in line with published national data. Framework success rates were weaker on higher level programmes in health, public services and care and business administration and law. In a minority of cases, learners take longer than expected to complete their framework, particularly those on higher apprenticeships.

Well-being, support and guidance

The provider has sound structures in place to support learners' well-being, and provide them with suitable support and guidance.

The provider encourages and supports learners to take care of their well-being and safety in their workplaces.

Most assessors and teachers appropriately discuss well-being aspects with learners during their programmes. For example, they cover topics such as mental health, safeguarding and radicalisation appropriately during learner progress review sessions.

The provider promotes the health and well-being of learners well through a wide range of activities, events and promotional materials. It has relevant policies and guidelines that focus clearly on issues related to learners' well-being such as bullying and harassment, health and safety and safeguarding. It has effective partnerships with external agencies such as the police and the health board to identify learners under the age of eighteen that may need additional support.

The provider plans beneficial professional learning opportunities for its teachers and assessors, including sub-contractors, to assist them in supporting learners' well-being. For example, an annual conference arranged by the provider includes workshops on topics such as mental health awareness, peer-on-peer sexual harassment and equality and diversity. This has helped to increase staff knowledge and confidence in discussing these topics with learners.

The provider identifies the support needs of all learners appropriately, ensuring that they have access to the relevant support from the start of their apprenticeships. The provider tracks learners' progress well and collects a wide range of information that can be used to make sure learners access the correct support they need, for example learners' literacy, numeracy, digital literacy levels, Welsh competency, expected completion dates and learning needs.

The provider uses its employer networks well to support learners to find suitable alternative employment opportunities where necessary. This has helped learners who were considering withdrawing from their programme to remain in training and make good progress towards achieving their apprenticeship framework.

The provider takes very good account of learners' additional learning needs and ensures that tailored support is provided as required. The provider and partners develop detailed support plans for learners tailored to their individual needs. These

plans address a wide range of challenges for learners including travel, workload, social interaction and support in the workplace.

The provider has developed effective procedures to support learners with complex individual support needs. In these cases, they work closely with the learner and employer. Employers have been highly supportive in developing their understanding of learners' needs. They have effectively modified their practices where appropriate to effectively support their learners. Due to this careful and tailored planning, learners' individual needs have been met particularly well. As a result, these learners have not only remained in training, but completed work to a particularly high standard. They have developed their confidence and self-esteem and become highly valued members of their employer's staff.

The provider has appropriate procedures for checking the suitability of its own staff and sub-contractors who are in contact with learners. It keeps appropriate records of those staff who have valid Disclosure and Barring Service checks and ensures that staff are registered with the Education Workforce Council where required.

The provider and its sub-contractors have suitable policies and procedures relating to safeguarding and they manage safeguarding matters appropriately. Nearly all learners and staff demonstrate a sound understanding regarding safeguarding procedures and who they should contact if they have any concerns.

The provider ensures that all staff, including sub-contractors, undertake and update online training on relevant safeguarding areas, for example mental health awareness, staying safe online and safeguarding adults at risk. In addition, staff with lead responsibilities for safeguarding have undertaken appropriate mandatory training to enable them to fulfil their roles. The provider's arrangements for safeguarding learners meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

The provider listens to the views of learners well through a comprehensive range of methods including learner forums and learner surveys, which produce strong response rates. The provider uses responses to address issues of concern for learners. For example, they established that most learners were aware of 'Prevent' and radicalisation but had a limited understanding of them. To address this, they have produced resources, including a planned online tutorial programme, to improve learners understanding of Prevent.

Teaching, training, assessment and learning experiences

The Cardiff and Vale Apprenticeships partnership successfully plans its offer in a strategic and collaborative way. The provision is aligned to local and national priorities by carefully considering Welsh Government priorities and labour market needs. The provision positively appeals to young learners, with 40% of all apprentices being aged 16 to 19.

The provider works in partnership with local and national employers to develop tailored provision to meet their specific workforce needs. These apprenticeship opportunities in aviation, financial services and the creative industries are highly sought after and involve rigorous competitive recruitment arrangements. Employers and assessors work together to match prospective learners to these prestigious

opportunities. The provider has successfully extended the 'shared apprenticeship' model to the creative industries. This provision enables a small number of young people to undertake an apprenticeship whilst working flexibly across different organisations in the creative sector. The provider's apprenticeship programmes are having increasing success in attracting young people from under-represented groups, including ethnically diverse communities.

Additional learning opportunities are used well to stretch and challenge apprentices to develop higher level knowledge and practical competence. A number of learners have been successful at skills competitions, and since 2022, all partners across the network nominate their most skilled learners for national competitions and awards. A recent apprentice, whose skills and confidence were enhanced by working towards winning gold for their vehicle body repair skills at an international competition, speaks as a role model to inspire others.

Across the partnership, most teachers and assessors successfully form and maintain supportive working relationships with their learners. They consider and respond flexibly to learners' preferred learning styles and take care to ensure that learners are comfortable.

For a few apprentices, staffing changes among their teachers and assessors mean that learners experiences are disjointed or activities and assessments have been delayed. This contributes to a few learners taking longer than expected to successfully complete their apprenticeship frameworks.

The provider's teachers and assessors are experienced industry practitioners who draw extensively on their own experiences to put teaching and learning into real workplace contexts for learners. This enables teachers and assessors to highlight links to industry practice, which helps to reinforce their apprentices' learning. During on-the-job assessments as well as progress review meetings, assessors skilfully identify aspects of learners' workplace activities that meet assessment criteria. They also help learners to identify where they can extend their practice to further develop their learning and skills and ultimately benefit their employers.

In theory sessions, most teachers plan a range of learning activities that include an effective combination of activities, often including individual and group work. These activities are beneficial in building on previous sessions and helps to develop and reinforce new concepts and skills well. However, in a few instances, teachers do not plan well enough to maintain the engagement of those who learn and complete tasks more quickly. As a result, the momentum of learning among these apprentices is disrupted by periods of waiting for their peers.

Many teachers use a beneficial range of methods to check on learners' progress, this includes online quizzes, written tasks, practical activities and verbal questioning. During individual and group-work, teachers circulate between learners to check on their progress and provide worthwhile support and encouragement. A few teachers and assessors skilfully employ probing questioning to test learners' deeper knowledge and understanding. For example, apprentices discuss how a control valve will function under different conditions as part of a hydraulic power assisted steering system. However, in a minority of cases, teachers' questioning does not encourage

learners to think more deeply or does not ensure that all learners are engaged and play an active part in question-and-answer sessions.

Nearly all assessors and teachers regularly provide their learners with useful verbal feedback on a one-to-one basis. In a few instances, assessors provide insightful, detailed written feedback that both addresses specific aspects of the learner's work and reflects holistically on the learner's development and what they need to do to improve. However, in a minority of cases where written feedback is appropriate, it is too superficial and does not explain what learners need to do to improve, well enough.

Across the network of sub-contractors, there are small pockets of provision that successfully enable learners to develop and use the Welsh language as an integral part of their work-based learning. For example, in creative and digital media, the practitioners and resources are in place to enable the small number of learners to confidently choose to use their Welsh in as much of their work as they feel comfortable. The provider has recently expanded its provision to help most new apprentices who are not fluent in Welsh to develop a basic level of ability by undertaking the Prentisiaith 'Awareness' course. However, across the provision overall, opportunities for learners to use or develop their Welsh in the context of their vocational learning and job roles are limited.

Targeted teaching for the development of learners' literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills is effective. Teaching arrangements vary appropriately across the partnership to complement the different models of apprenticeship delivery. However, in a few cases, teachers do not plan activities carefully enough to be relevant to their learners and their workplace. Overall, teachers and assessors successfully encourage a minority of learners who need to achieve literacy and numeracy qualifications, to study these at a level above the minimum required by their apprenticeship framework.

Leadership and management

Cardiff and Vale College Apprenticeships lead a long-standing partnership of sub-contractors to deliver its Welsh Government apprenticeship contract. The provider's name has recently been changed to better reflect the apprenticeship provision being part of the college, giving greater clarity to potential learners and employers. The partnership includes sub-contracting arrangements with 19 providers, to deliver the contact directly, in partnership with other sub-contractors and by acting as a managing agent. The provider and its sub-contractors work with many employers including multi-national, national and small and medium sized enterprises mainly in the south east.

The provider's senior leadership team has a strong focus on apprenticeship programmes and recognises this as a key part of their provision. The provider is proactive in the regional forum and regional skill partnerships to raise the profile of apprenticeships and help address skills gaps. Senior leaders are well informed on local and national Welsh Government priorities and the skills needs of local and national employers. The provider has worked hard with the local authority to promote and create apprenticeship opportunities. They provider engages well with new employers offering apprenticeship opportunities to meet their recruitment and training

needs, especially in the capital region, for example delivering apprenticeships in the financial sector.

Across the partnership, learners and staff benefit from access to a range of online resources developed and provided by the lead provider. Sub-contractors have the opportunity to access support with delivery of essential skills provision and specialist support for additional learning needs where identified. Strong collaborative working across the partnership has helped support learners who may have lost their jobs or encountered difficulties in their workplaces to secure alternative employment to be able to continue their apprenticeships.

The strategic priorities of the partnership appropriately link and inform operational planning across all sub-contractors. This helps provide progression opportunities for learners and employers to benefit from the delivery strengths of individual sub-contractors.

The provider and its sub-contractors work towards a culture of shared values, based on openness, transparency and support, which underpins effective working relationships between partners. The provider has a clear management structure aligned closely to defined roles and responsibilities. Communication across partners is particularly strong with regular and focused meeting reviewing key aspects such as contract management, learner performance and quality. The provider has a link member of staff who works closely with sub-contractors and is the main point of contact. This procedure results in quick response times to questions or when advice or guidance is required.

The provider uses comprehensive quality assurance processes that includes a range of quality probes and performance indicators for most key aspects of delivery. These include regular meetings with sub-contractors to review overall quality and learner performance. These meetings are beneficial in identifying learners at risk of not achieving and difficulties sub-contractors may be experiencing. These meetings also provide purposeful opportunities for sharing good practice and for sub-contractors to obtain support from the network where needed.

When underperformance is identified the provider is proactive in giving the support that is needed whilst remaining sensitive to individual sub-contractor's circumstances. During this procedure the provider agrees a quality improvement plan with its sub-contractor that is regularly monitored. Additional support may take the form specialist staff support and advice and guidance.

The provider undertakes comprehensive annual self-evaluation of its apprenticeship provision. Sub-contractors undertake their own self-assessment and quality development plan, which informs the overarching document. Self-evaluation focuses clearly on learner outcomes and experiences and identifies useful areas and targets for development. Key information from the self-evaluation record is used to inform the quality development plan. This plan contains the main challenges for the provider, although greater detail is contained within the sub-contractors' own documents. In a few areas, the overarching documents are not sharp enough in clearly identifying key aspects, such as the quality of teaching, training and assessment across learning areas and partners. As a result, middle leaders are not always clear enough on key strengths and areas for improvement across their provision.

The provider's self-assessment feeds into professional learning planning and a beneficial programme of activities are developed to support areas identified for improvement. These include mandatory training regarding how to improve learner progress and overall performance and a session on developing skills, setting smart targets and effective learner feedback. Sub-contractors play an active role in the planning and delivery of professional learning, especially in the sharing of best practice where it has been identified. An annual event 'WBL-fest', includes targeted sessions to develop teaching skills and increase awareness of topical themes, such as anti-racism and gender identity.

Evidence base of the report

Before the inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the learner and employer questionnaires and consider the views of teachers, trainers and assessors through their questionnaire responses

During the inspection, inspectors normally:

- meet the principal/chief executive, governors (where appropriate), senior and middle managers and individual teachers, trainers and assessors to evaluate the impact of the provider's work
- meet learners to discuss their work, to listen to them and to gain their views about various aspects of their provider
- visit a broad sample of sessions, including off-the-job, theory and practical training sessions
- visit a broad range of learners in their workplaces to observe their workplace skills, observe assessments, review their theory work and meet their employers
- look closely at the provider's self-evaluation processes
- consider the provider's quality improvement plan and looked at evidence to show how well the provider had taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a wide range of provider documents, including information on learner assessment, tracking and progress, records of meetings of managers and staff, meeting with sub-contractors and key partners and meetings with employers, 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)

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

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