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Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

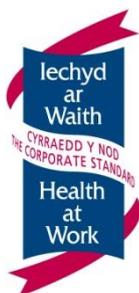
A report on

**Vale of Glamorgan Adult Community Learning Partnership
Vale of Glamorgan Council
Civic Offices
Holton Road
Barry
CF63 4RU**

Date of inspection: February 2013

by

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



During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the provider's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

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

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This document has been translated by Trosol (English to Welsh)

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Publication date: 15/05/2013

Context

From the 2011 census, **The Vale of Glamorgan** has a population of approximately 126,679. Ninety seven per-cent of the population are white, 1.4% are Asian and 1.1% Black. The largest town is Barry with a population of approximately 51,000. Barry is the centre of administration in the county. Other major towns include Cowbridge, Llantwit Major, Dinas Powys and Penarth. There are 23 electoral wards in the Vale. A large proportion of the population inhabits rural locations; villages, hamlets and farms. At the census in 2011 the percentage of the population who say they can speak Welsh is 10.8%. This is significantly lower than the Welsh average of 24.8%.

Education

The county has 7.7% of working age adults with no qualifications. This is well below the Welsh National average of 11%. The percentage of the population with qualifications below level 2 is 12.5%. This is 2.6 percentage points below the Welsh average of 15.1%. The number of higher qualified adults in the county is therefore higher than the Welsh averages with 79.8% of the population qualified to level 2 or higher compared to the Welsh average of 73.9%. Similarly, 60.4% have qualifications at level 3 compared to the Welsh average of 52.4% and 38.1% are qualified to level 4 against the Welsh average of 31.5%.

Employment

The Welsh statistics for September 2012 show that 68.7% of the population are in employment. Of these, 37% of the population are employed in public administration, defence, education and health while 22% are employed in wholesale, retail, transport, hotels and food.

Unemployment

The unemployment rate in the Vale as at December 2011 was 3.8%. The Annual Population Survey 2012 shows that there has been a steady increase in economic inactivity from 18.1% in September 2009 to 21.6% in September 2012. This is marginally below the Welsh average of 22.3%. The number claiming benefits as at February 2012 was 12.8% of the population. Of these 6.9% were incapacity claimants.

Prosperity

The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that 6% of the population are in the 10% most deprived areas of Wales. The Vale of Glamorgan has four Communities First areas. These are: Gibbonsdown; Cadoc; Court; and Castleland.

The Vale of Glamorgan Community Learning Partnership

There are four main providers of Adult and Community learning in the Vale of Glamorgan. These are:

- The Vale of Glamorgan Council
- Cardiff and Vale College (CAVC)
- The (Cardiff and) Vale of Glamorgan Welsh for Adults Centre
- The Workers' Educational Association (WEA)

Four fifths of the partnerships provision is delivered by Vale of Glamorgan Council. Most of this provision is non-accredited. Two thirds of the provision is delivered in the two least deprived areas of the county.

Summary

The provider's current performance	Unsatisfactory
The provider's prospects for improvement	Unsatisfactory

Current performance

The partnership is judged as unsatisfactory because:

- around half of learners do not successfully complete their learning;
- trends in success rates over the last three years have been inconsistent across all providers within the partnership and across all learning areas;
- adult community learners do not develop their literacy and numeracy skills well enough;
- Adult Basic Education learners do not develop their skills well enough at level 1 and level 2;
- curriculum planning lacks an overall strategic direction;
- it is not clear that the provision meets the needs of learners within the area;
- teaching is not effective enough in around 40% of classes;
- the curriculum is a poor match to the profile of the community and there are too few learners from under-represented groups in education enrolling on courses;
- the partnership does not have clear, operational or business plans for adult learning;
- there are limited procedures in place to monitor the partnership's performance effectively; and
- the partnership does not have a clear and shared understanding of the resources available to deliver adult learning in the Vale of Glamorgan.

However:

- learners in adult learning courses make good progress in developing new skills;
- there has been a significant increase in the number of Welsh language classes; and
- the partnership supports learning clubs well.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are unsatisfactory because:

- the partnership does not have a clear strategic direction that sets targets and challenges performance;
- there are no clear operational or business plans in place for adult learning;
- data is not used well enough to monitor and challenge performance;
- the partnership does not have an over-view of the standards achieved by learners or the quality of provision;

- the management group does not have a good understanding of its current performance;
- quality processes to improve teaching and learner outcomes are not robust enough;
- there is no in-depth awareness and understanding of the resources available to deliver the curriculum effectively and to achieve educational priorities; and
- the recommendations from the last inspection have not been fully addressed.

However:

- there has been an improvement in learner outcomes during the current year;
- many learners progress well from taught classes to form learning clubs; and
- partnership sub-groups have completed audits of current delivery to identify areas for future development.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve success rates and accreditation for all learners
- R2 Improve the provision for developing learners' literacy and numeracy skills, particularly to ensure that ABE learners have access to higher level courses
- R3 Improve the quality of teaching across the partnership
- R4 Improve the strategic leadership, management and co-ordination of adult community-based learning in the Vale of Glamorgan to make sure that provision is better aligned to local and national priorities and set targets that challenge performance
- R5 Analyse data robustly and improve quality processes to monitor and evaluate performance effectively to bring about improvements for learners
- R6 Review and revise the curriculum to ensure that all learners have equal access to appropriate learning opportunities

What happens next?

Inspectors will visit the partnership in 12 to 18 months' time to carry out a full re-inspection of the provision.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Unsatisfactory

Standards: Unsatisfactory

Across the partnership, the overall rate at which learners successfully complete their courses is below national comparators. Published data shows that 81% of learners in the local authority provision do not achieve successful completion of their courses. The partnership's own data shows around half of learners not achieving successful completion.

Learners from the other providers in the partnership successfully complete their learning at higher rates. However, these account for a smaller proportion of provision and are below or significantly below national comparators.

The rate at which learners attain a qualification across the partnership is also below or significantly below the national comparator. Two thirds of learners in the local authority provision do not attain the qualification for their course.

Trends over the last three years have been inconsistent within courses, within providers and across the partnership. However the provider's own data for the current year indicates an improving trend, with two thirds of learners successfully completing their learning.

Adult Basic Education (ABE) learners have appropriate opportunities to work towards useful Essential Skills Wales qualifications. The number of learners who successfully complete these courses is around or slightly below the national comparator. The rates at which ABE and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners successfully complete their courses show an improving trend over the last three years. However, many ABE learners do not take qualifications at a level that challenges their learning and encourages appropriate progression. Very few learners work towards, or achieve, level one and level two qualifications.

In a minority of ABE classes learners do not progress well enough. Nearly all learners have individual learning plans (ILPs) which are used by teachers and learners to record weekly progress and to set long term aims and goals. However, targets in ILPs are not sufficiently smart, detailed or short term enough to allow learners to measure their own progress and set themselves challenging short term objectives.

Learners with additional learning needs make sound progress in developing their creative skills. However, they do not develop their independent living skills well enough.

Learners in adult community learning classes make good progress. In practical arts and craft classes learners develop manual and technical skills well. Most learners in beginners IT classes are able to use simple software packages and independently use search engines to search for information relevant to their lives and interests. In

guitar classes nearly all learners develop good skills in playing the guitar, can play scales and chords well, and have a good understanding of note values. In a sailing navigation class, most learners are able to apply their knowledge in new contexts to plot courses on charts, calculate true and magnetic north and estimate the time of travel.

Although a minority of learners develop an appropriate understanding of Wales, the Welsh language and Welsh culture through their studies, the majority of learners do not systematically develop these aspects well enough.

Wellbeing: Good

Most learners feel safe and confident in their learning environment. Many learners make good use of learning to stay healthy and active. For example, as a result of a body toning class a few learners who work in a charity shop are able to stand for longer periods.

Almost all learners engage well with their learning and are motivated and enthusiastic. In most classes there is a strong ethos of mutual support. In a few art classes learners benefit from group discussion about the quality of their work.

Overall attendance is good in many classes. However, attendance in ESOL and ABE classes is too inconsistent, especially in classes where the number of learners is low. As a result, learners in these classes do not have sufficient opportunities to engage in group discussions. They do not develop well enough conversational skills such as sharing ideas and giving and supporting opinions.

Learners on practical courses develop relevant skills to work independently. A majority of learners use their new skills outside the class. For example, learners on Sugar Craft courses design and produce cakes for friends and family and use cakes to raise funds for charity.

Learners in a few classes including Decoupage and Guitar have successfully formed learning clubs to further improve their learning and wellbeing. Learners in these clubs achieve a high level of satisfaction and relaxation through their learning.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Unsatisfactory

Learning experiences: Unsatisfactory

The partnership offers a wide range of non-accredited programmes and an increasing range of accredited programmes in response to the Welsh Government agenda.

The partnership has recently undertaken a mapping exercise for skills provision. However, it has not yet fully audited learners' and community needs systematically. As a result it is not clear that provision meets learners' needs within the area. Curriculum planning lacks any overall strategic dimension.

The partnership has a wide range of learning venues located throughout the Vale of Glamorgan. However, venues are not well located to deliver provision in the areas with most need. The local authority delivers all ABE provision in one main centre. The partnership has recently completed a mapping exercise to evaluate the appropriateness of alternative venues. However, it is too early to see the effectiveness of this initiative.

Learners in Adult Basic Education (ABE) benefit from an initial assessment. However, there is no diagnostic assessment in place. As a result tutors are not able to easily identify the specific skills that learners need to work on. The curriculum for ABE learners does not provide opportunities for higher level skills qualifications.

Planning for adult learning classes does not have enough focus on opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills as a naturally occurring part of learning.

The partnership does not deliver Welsh language and culture as an established dimension within all classes.

The local authority uses appropriate session plans to help tutors raise awareness of Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC). However, in a minority of classes tutors miss opportunities to discuss the global dimension in classes such as pottery/ceramics, painting and drawing, textiles and needlework.

Teaching: Adequate

The quality of teaching and assessment is adequate overall.

In a majority of classes, tutors plan the curriculum and teaching sessions effectively. They have good subject knowledge and they use a wide range of interesting activities to increase learners' knowledge and skills in the subject. In the majority of cases, tutors plan sessions with clear learning outcomes. There is a good pace to sessions and tutors challenge learners' thinking appropriately. The majority of tutors show learners effectively how to put new skills into practice and they encourage discussion among learners to extend learning. In the most effective sessions, tutors pay good attention to learners' personal goals and motivations for learning. In the majority of cases, particularly in practical classes, tutors support individual learners well to develop learners' skills through learners' own particular interests and projects. In the most effective teaching, tutors ensure that learners understand the technical words associated with the subject and apply numeracy skills where this arises naturally. In accredited classes, tutors ensure that learners have a good understanding of the assessment criteria. The majority of tutors provide regular verbal and written feedback. In practical classes, tutors help learners to record evidence of learning effectively through written statements and photographs of the stages of development of artefacts.

In a minority of cases, teaching is less effective. In these cases, tutors do not plan in enough detail to effectively take into account learners' individual needs or challenge more able learners. Teaching sessions often lack pace and tutors use only limited teaching methods to engage learners. In a few cases, tutors overuse worksheets with practice exercises. They miss opportunities to help the learners to apply their

learning in a realistic context or to further develop literacy and numeracy skills. In a few cases, tutors are not skilled enough in teaching classes with small numbers of learners.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate

Overall, tutors support learners well. Learners feel that this has had a positive impact on their health and wellbeing. Most learners undertake a useful induction session at the start of their course. This includes health and safety issues and identifies learner needs appropriately.

Many adult community learners have access to good information and advice about the courses available. Individual providers produce useful prospectus information, leaflets and websites outlining provision. The partnership also organises a number of taster days and events to promote courses. However, the partnership does not use marketing activities effectively enough to engage or increase participation of learners from priority groups.

The providers' arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern. All providers have comprehensive policies in place and the local authority has effective arrangements for recruiting staff under their Safer Recruitment Policy. All safeguarding information is available to staff via staff handbooks and the tutor website. However, training on safeguarding is inconsistent across the different providers.

Overall, many providers in the partnership offer appropriate support for learners with additional learning needs. However, the partnership does not have a co-ordinated strategy to identify and assess the take up of support and to monitor the impact it has on learner outcomes. Many learners across the partnership are unaware of the support services available to them and support is inconsistent.

Learning environment: Unsatisfactory

Overall, the partnership does not focus well enough on promoting social and educational inclusion. The curriculum does not offer all learners within the Vale of Glamorgan equal access to the courses they need to progress in education, employment and wellbeing. There is a higher percentage of older learners in the provision compared to similar providers and a lower percentage of male learners compared to similar providers.

However, the partnership promotes an ethos of equality and diversity well to learners attending the provision. The partnership has appropriate equality and diversity statements and tutors and learners treat each other and their environment with courtesy and respect. However, not all partners provide training in equality and diversity and this means that the partnership is not able to share best practice.

In most centres, the accommodation is good. Rooms and workshop space are of an appropriate size, have adequate natural light and are appropriately equipped. Most classes have interactive white boards and computer facilities. The majority of centres are accessible to learners with disabilities.

Suitable crèche facilities are available at several of the centres. Social space at most centres is generally good. Learners at the Cowbridge centre benefit from access to an outside garden space and they use this facility well during the warmer months.

Providers work well together to share venues. Nearly all providers in the partnership have a rolling programme to improve learning environments as funds become available. However, the partnership has not yet undertaken a detailed accommodation review to ensure that all centres are used effectively to the benefit of all learners.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Unsatisfactory
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Leadership: Unsatisfactory

The Local Service Board has set up the Vale Learning and Skills Partnership. The Learning and Skills Partnership provides leadership and direction for the high level adult learning objectives contained in the Vale of Glamorgan Community Strategy. The local authority's own corporate plan appropriately reflects these adult learning objectives.

The learning and skills partnership has put in place a clear structure for the management and co-ordination of adult learning, including through the ACL management group and a number of sub-groups.

However, neither the learning and skills partnership nor the local authority has clear, operational or business plans for adult learning. As a result, the effectiveness of these arrangements for management and co-ordination is limited. The partnership is making slow progress to develop, plan and deliver local learning and skills programmes in line with its stated priorities.

The learning and skills partnership review a range of reports from subgroups. These reports are largely narrative and lack any focus on the outcomes of the work carried out by the groups. The partnership has recently improved how it uses data to monitor and challenge performance. However, the partnership still does not use this data well enough. This leaves the partnership without a good understanding of the standards achieved by learners or the quality of provision in all parts of the partnership.

Senior officers and elected members in the local authority are committed to adult learning for all Vale of Glamorgan residents. For example, older people use its provision well. This plays an important role in improving their health and wellbeing. The authority also plays a supportive role in increasing Welsh language provision.

The local authority, which is the main provider in the partnership, recognises the need to target its provision to better meet national and local priorities. However, it has not yet achieved a good enough balance. The partnership recognises these shortcomings and has recently set up new arrangements to take forward priority areas such as Essential and Employment Skills, Widening Participation, and the Poverty agenda. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these initiatives on improving provision.

Improving quality: Unsatisfactory

The partnerships arrangements for improving the standards achieved by learners and the quality of provision are poor.

The adult community learning (ACL) management group co-ordinate the production of the partnership self-assessment report and quality development plan appropriately. The group makes suitable use of its self-assessment process to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The group also acts as a useful vehicle for sharing practice.

However, the ACL management group does not have enough focus on improving standards and the quality of provision. The group sets an annual plan that identifies when it will complete its quality improvement process. This plan is not detailed enough and does not contain the full range of information the management group need to consider and analyse in order to make informed judgements.

This means that members of the group are not able to robustly scrutinise and challenge the outcomes of self-assessment activities. The group does not do enough to compare performance with other providers or between providers in the partnership. As a result the management group does not have a good understanding of its current performance.

The management group's quality development plan identifies a range of improvement activities. However, in most cases the group does not use quantifiable targets that set out the extent of the improvement it is seeking to achieve. This means that the partnership cannot monitor the progress it makes and compare this against existing performance. Where the partnership does use quantifiable targets these targets do not help the partnership to make improvements quickly enough.

The ACL management group reports progress to the Learning and Skills Partnership. However, the Learning and Skills Partnership does not scrutinise the work of the ACL partnership robustly enough. As a result it is not sufficiently aware of the current performance of the ACL partnership. Neither is it able to challenge the ACL partnership to set robust targets and quicken the pace of improvement.

Individual providers carry out observations of teaching and learning an annual basis. This provides individual organisations with an overview of the standards achieved by learners and of the quality of teaching and assessment observed. However, observers do not make enough use of the full range of judgements available to them. As a result, the observation process does not identify areas for improvement well enough to inform the self-assessment process or quality development plan.

Local authority adult learning tutors find arrangements for discussing and developing curriculum and professional practice very helpful. However, tutors do not meet in curriculum area groups that include all providers. This means that those tutors from providers that have the better outcomes are unable to share their practice to help other tutors improve the standards achieved by learners.

The partnership has not fully addressed the recommendations made in the last inspection in 2007 and similar issues remain regarding the quality of provision for ABE and ESOL.

Partnership working: Unsatisfactory

At a strategic and operational level many of the partners have worked together well for a number of years, mainly under the leadership of the local authority. The Learning and Skills Partnership was formed by combining the 14-19 Local Area Networks and the Adult Learning Network. The partnership is chaired by Cardiff and Vale College and has appropriate representatives from the main providers of adult learning in the Vale. The partnership co-ordinator is part of the local authority and is responsible for most of the actions in the partnership action plan.

Over the past two years, the partnership has established a number of relevant sub-groups under the learning and skills partnership. These sub-groups have representatives from a wide and diverse range of agencies and learning providers. The partnership makes good use of the expertise of the external agencies they work with.

External agencies work well with providers to influence planning. For example, as a result of their involvement with the partnership, volunteers from The Vale 50 plus Strategy Forum are aware of new provision which they promote on their website. The partnership supports and includes smaller providers well.

Providers have worked well together to secure small amounts of funding from external sources to enhance promotional events and taster sessions. The partnership has effective links with the library service to promote classes. However, there is currently no effective strategic marketing plan in place. The partnership has not set appropriate recruitment targets and therefore has no measure to evaluate the effectiveness of marketing events.

The partnership strategic group has not set a clear direction for the operational group. It does not have enough information to support or inform planning to recruit potential learners or communities that are not taking part in learning.

Partners are open and inclusive and show a good level of mutual trust. However, individual partners are not challenging each other well enough to improve or develop joint working practices. The partnership is not yet successful in meeting local and national priorities.

Partners work well together to share venues where appropriate. Welsh for Adults courses are an effective and integral part of local authority community venues. Partners have planned a few useful and informative joint staff development events.

Representatives from Regeneration and Community First have recently joined the partnership but it is too early to judge the impact of this on provision.

Resource management: Unsatisfactory

The partnership does not have a good enough understanding of the resources that are available to deliver the curriculum effectively and to achieve its educational priorities. As a result, it does not allocate resources well enough to meet its strategic targets. The partnership does not make effective use of its resources in its operational plans to target resources to areas where the need is greatest.

The majority of staff across the partnership are well qualified and experienced. Most ABE and ESOL tutors have additional relevant qualifications for teaching language, literacy and numeracy.

The partnership is part of a joint continuing professional development group with adult community learning providers in Cardiff. This group has recently completed a useful training needs analysis across the two areas. However, it is too early to assess the impact on programme delivery and learner outcomes. The partnership does not monitor, track and evaluate the training undertaken by part-time staff in the Vale of Glamorgan well enough.

Overall, the partnership does not have an effective approach to maximising funding. The partnership does not monitor well enough the number of learners in classes. Many classes, particularly in ABE and English for Speakers of Other Languages, have very low numbers.

The partnership does not measure the impact of resources on learner outcomes well enough. Successful outcomes for learners are unsatisfactory. Therefore the partnership provides unsatisfactory value for money.

Appendix 1

Learner satisfaction

The number of learners who completed and returned the questionnaires was very low compared to numbers from other Adult Community Learning Inspections. Only seven learners across the whole provision returned their questionnaires. This sample is too small, in comparison with the overall number of learners in the partnership, to provide any meaningful analysis.

However, of the seven questionnaires that have been analysed, the following is noted.

- All learners enjoy their learning.
- All learners consider that learning will help them achieve their goals.
- All learners think that they have good personal support from their tutors, especially during the first weeks of their learning programme.
- All learners feel that staff show all learners respect. They feel that staff listen well to their opinions and act on the views of learners.
- All learners feel that staff help them to learn and make good progress.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Gill Sims	Reporting Inspector
Liam Kealy	Team Inspector
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Rachael Bubalo	Team Inspector
Penny Lewis	Team Inspector
Sharon James	Team Inspector
Steve Bell	Team Inspector
Bethan Hughes-Jones	Peer Inspector
Andrew Ogle	Peer Inspector
Maggie Dix	Peer Inspector
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