



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Swansea Adult Community Learning Partnership
City and County of Swansea
County Hall
Oystermouth Road
Swansea
SA1 3SN**

Date of inspection: October 2014

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.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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Context

The City and County of Swansea local authority is bordered by the unitary authorities of Carmarthenshire to the north and by Neath Port Talbot to the east. It is bounded by Swansea Bay and the Bristol Channel in the south. In July 2014 the City and County of Swansea had a population of 240,332. Of this number, 63.8% of people were between the ages of 16-64 years old. Swansea is the second largest city in Wales and the regional centre for South West Wales.

According to figures from the Office of National Statistics, in March 2014 65.4% of the population were employed. This is below the percentage average for Wales of 69.5%. The largest employment sectors in the City and County of Swansea are Retail (13.8%), Construction (10.1%), Professional, Scientific and Technical (10.1%), Accommodation and Food Services (8.9%) and Health (8.4%). Around 69% of the population were employed in private micro, small and medium enterprises. However, 22.3% of the population of the City and County of Swansea are economically inactive but seeking a job. This is just below the Wales average of 24.5%.

The percentage of people aged 16-24 in the City and County of Swansea with qualifications of NVQ4 and above has steadily increased from 25.9% in 2006 to 32.6% in 2013. At the same time, the percentage of people aged 16-64 in the City and County of Swansea with no qualifications has steadily decreased from 17.7% in 2006 to 10.5% in 2013 according to figures from the Office of National Statistics. This is just below the Wales average of 10.6%.

Seventeen per cent of 147 areas in the City and County of Swansea are in the 10% least deprived areas in Wales, while 12% of the 147 areas are in the most deprived areas in Wales (Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2011). In overall terms, the most deprived areas in the City and County of Swansea are in Townhill, Penderry and Castle. The 'One Swansea' Strategic Needs Assessment 2013 identifies that health outcomes are significantly worse in the most deprived areas of the City and County of Swansea and that there is a large variance in life expectancy with a gap of nearly 12 years for males and seven years for females when compared to those in more affluent parts of Swansea.

In the City and County of Swansea, 11.4% of people over the age of three say that they can speak Welsh. This represents a decline from 2001 when 13.4% of people over the age of three said that they could speak Welsh. Ethnic minorities account for around 6% of the population. This is higher than the Wales average of 4.4%, but lower than the United Kingdom average of 14%.

Summary

The provider's current performance	Good
The provider's prospects for improvement	Excellent

Current performance

The partnership's current performance is judged to be good because:

- learners in Swansea achieve good standards;
- success rates have improved by almost 18 percentage points since 2010-2011;
- many learners progress to other more advanced courses or they use their learning well to gain work or set up their own businesses;
- the partnership provides courses that are well linked to local, regional and national priorities;
- the quality of teaching is good; and
- the learning support team work very effectively together across the partnership to support the spectrum of additional learning needs, including complex needs.

Prospects for improvement

The partnership's prospects for improvement are excellent because:

- strategic leaders take very good account of the local, regional and national priorities when planning provision;
- strategic leaders communicate their vision clearly, scrutinise the work of the partnership regularly and plan appropriately to meet future scenarios;
- quality assurance is based firmly on first-hand evidence and analysis, and it is rigorous, open and honest;
- the partnership works very effectively together and with other organisations, such as Communities First, to provide well-targeted courses in venues easily accessible to learners, and
- the partnership deploys its resources very well to support learners' achievement.

Recommendations

- R1 Review and communicate the new strategic direction for the partnership to providers, learners and strategic partners
- R2 Monitor provision across the partnership to ensure that the Welsh language and the Welsh dimension are appropriately embedded in the provision
- R3 Implement cross-partnership observation and moderation procedures to assure the quality of learning and teaching further

What happens next?

The adult community learning partnership will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will invite the adult community learning partnership to prepare a written case study, describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Overall, adult learners in Swansea achieve good standards and make good progress.

In 2012-2013 the overall success rate achieved by adult learners in Swansea was just under 87%, almost three percentage points above the national comparator. Learners in Swansea were amongst the top third of adult learners in Wales. They have improved their success rates by almost 18 percentage points since 2010-2011.

In 2012-2013, adult learners achieved success rates of 85% or better in two-thirds of all learning activities. All learners in Health, Public Services, and Care and many learners in Adult Basic Education, English for Speakers of Other Languages and Information Communication Technology successfully completed their course. Learners in these sectors have improved their success rates over the last three years. However, learners in Retail and Commercial Enterprise, Education and Training, Engineering and Foundation for Work have achieved success rates that have been well below the national average since 2010-2011.

Different groups of learners achieve well. Learners who come from the most deprived areas in the City and County of Swansea succeed as well as learners from other parts of the area. They achieve slightly higher success rates than learners from similar areas across Wales. Many of these learners progress to further learning at the same level of higher levels of learning. Slightly more men take part in adult learning in Swansea compared with other parts of Wales. They achieve slightly higher success rates than female learners.

Learners taking English as a second language make good progress. Many learners successfully complete their course and a majority progress to further courses, such as literacy, or courses in further education, such as Access to Higher Education courses in Science, Nursing or Law, Accounting or Engineering courses.

Essential skills learners improve their spelling and understanding of language. A few learners make good use of dictionaries to support their learning. Learners in basic numeracy improve their understanding of estimation through studying the construction of the Channel Tunnel. Other essential skills learners use mobile technology well. They make very good use of social media and other applications to create their own e-books, posters and films. They use these applications to practise written communication skills with each other outside of the classroom and improve their literacy skills.

Overall, learners make good progress in their classes. Learners in jewellery-making produce intricate work. One of these learners now sells her jewellery commercially. Learners in furniture upcycling experiment well with different designs, techniques and equipment.

In Family Learning, parents improve their literacy and numeracy skills and gain new Welsh language skills. They gain satisfaction in working towards a qualification. Many of these learners use their new skills well to help their children learn. They have improved their communication with their children and they have learned how to structure play more effectively. Parents on the 'Get Into Gower' project have made good progress in improving their teamwork and leadership skills.

Learners develop their literacy, numeracy skills and digital skills in a range of classes. Learners in Italian cookery have grasped the importance of measuring ingredients carefully. Learners in Parchment Crafts have developed good digital skills alongside their craft skills. They make very effective use of email to send patterns and designs to each other, download and print projects and organise their work well on their computers. In Basic Sewing Skills, learners develop their reading and measurement skills through good use of patterns.

However, in a very few classes observed, learners did not develop their literacy or numeracy skills enough. Very few learners developed their Welsh language skills or understanding of the context of Wales.

Wellbeing: Good

Most learners engage well with learning, are enthusiastic and enjoy their classes. They show respect to fellow learners and their tutors. They work well together and support each other to progress. As a result, attendance is good in the majority of sessions and completion rates are high.

Nearly all learners grow in confidence during their courses. They are very positive about the benefits of their learning and the skills they have learned. They use the skills acquired in class very well in other contexts. As a result of attending a jewellery class, one visually impaired learner is now helping other visually impaired people with the craft, while another has developed good business skills and commercial acumen and, as a result, set up her own business. Parents and children from Family Learning classes continue with activities at home. They improve family communication and they structure play with their children more effectively. This leads to an improvement in their relationships within their families. Two learners who completed a floristry course at Gower College have now set up their own business.

The majority of learners feel safe in their learning environment. They know with whom to discuss any issues about safety. However, in a very few cases learners expressed concern about leaving the venue at night and about the misuse of disabled parking on some sites.

Many learners report that their health and wellbeing are promoted through the social contact that they have in classes and in learning new skills. In many of the cookery classes, learners gain a better understanding of healthy eating and living. Young learners who have been in care develop good cookery skills. They improve their understanding about healthy eating; and learn to manage personal hygiene and to live independently. A few of these learners have progressed to mentoring other young people in care.

Learners express their views clearly through surveys and a range of learning fora including a regional forum. As a result, learners are able to influence how courses are delivered and help to improve their quality.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

The Swansea Learning Partnership provides a wide range of courses and progression routes, which take good account of local and regional needs as well as national priorities, such as literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills. It works effectively together to reduce duplication. The partnership uses labour market intelligence efficiently to identify the range and type of provision needed in the different areas to address the needs of priority groups and developing job sectors.

The partnership works effectively in the most deprived areas of Swansea. It provides courses at appropriate levels to help learners gain suitable accreditation to prepare for, and enter, the world of work. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Adult Basic Education (ABE) courses help learners to improve their language, literacy and numeracy skills, while short courses, such as Get Swansea Online, help learners to develop their ICT skills to carry out essential tasks online, such as using the universal job match site or taxing a car.

Other courses are aimed appropriately at helping learners to gain soft skills to re-enter learning or to pursue interests which support their wellbeing. Family Learning courses are effective in helping parents to understand what and how their children are taught at school so that they can help their children at home. As a result, many parents progress to other courses that are of interest and they increase their chances of employment. Additionally, the partnership provides courses tailored specifically to the needs of more vulnerable learners to help them, for example, to develop healthy eating habits on a limited budget.

Tutors across the partnership include regular opportunities for learners to practise essential skills within the context of the subject. For example, in cookery sessions, tutors ensure that learners have opportunities to calculate, weigh and measure ingredients for recipes, as well as following the instructions in recipes.

The partnership offers a number of courses through which learners develop their understanding of sustainable development and global citizenship. Many ESOL classes help learners to develop a good understanding of British and Welsh culture and heritage. Courses, such as upcycling and strimming, and projects whereby residents learn how to improve and sustain their local area, help learners to develop their understanding of environmental issues and entrepreneurial skills.

Following the last inspection, the partnership has provided training for tutors to improve their Welsh language skills to be able to promote the Welsh language in classes. However, the extent to which tutors promote the language remains inconsistent. In many cases, tutors make reference in sessions to Welsh culture and heritage where appropriate to their subject. However, the partnership has not yet tracked how well embedded these aspects are in the provision.

In the current academic year, the provision for Welsh-medium or bilingual learning is limited. However, the partnership signposts more advanced learners in Welsh to other providers in the area to improve their Welsh in formal and informal contexts.

Teaching: Good

Most tutors have very good subject knowledge and they communicate their enthusiasm for the subject to the learners well.

Most tutors plan their sessions effectively to take good account of the schemes of work, literacy and numeracy strategies and the range of learners' needs and interests. They plan well-paced lessons and they make good use of pair, group and independent work to engage learners' interest and develop their learning skills. Most tutors use a wide range of activities and resources effectively to stimulate and challenge learners. In many cases, tutors help learners to use mobile technology effectively to research additional information.

Most tutors use learners' individual learning plans on accredited and non-accredited courses well to understand learners' goals and aspirations. They help learners to plan short and longer term targets which both tutors and learners monitor at regular intervals. In most cases, this helps and motivates learners to remain on the programme and achieve their aims.

Most tutors provide learners with clear feedback on their progress. On accredited courses, tutors assess learners work regularly against the criteria and provide helpful written feedback. Tutors encourage learners to make regular use of mobile technology to record their progress over a period of time. For example, in floristry, learners record the stages of developing a flower arrangement for future reference and assessment.

In a few cases, tutors use Welsh regularly in sessions. .

Care, support and guidance: Good

The partnership's provision promotes a good range of courses in health and wellbeing including baking, Italian cookery, mindfulness and Family Learning provision. As a result, learners improve their personal development. For example, during a "Dad's Cookery Course", learners improved parenting skills including promoting healthy eating within the family and improving children's attendance at school.

The partnership works effectively with a wide range of agencies and services to support learners. It provides learners with good impartial information and advice about support available in a variety of ways during induction and in the learner handbook. This has contributed to good retention on courses.

Part-time college learners are able to access all facilities across all sites. However, library facilities at outreach centres are not always available in the evening. This reduces the opportunities for a minority of learners to study. The provision of online programme materials helps learners to catch up successfully with lessons they have missed, to obtain extra resources, to watch linked videos and to access web links.

The partnership providers have appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures in place. They ensure that all staff undertake the necessary safeguarding checks. All providers of the partnership have bullying and harassment policies. Tutors across the partnership inform learners of the expected behaviour at induction and in the learner handbooks. All individual partners have complaints policies in place. However, a very few learners are not aware of how to make a complaint.

Many learners undertake initial assessments and, where appropriate, diagnostic assessment. Staff refer learners for learning support at appropriate times before and during courses as needs become apparent. As a result, the partnership is able to respond very well to the spectrum of learning needs. The learning support team works very effectively across the partnership to support learners with additional learning needs, many of whom have complex needs. This helps these learners to remain in learning. This is an excellent feature of the provision.

Learning environment: Good

The partnership works effectively to include learners from a diverse range of backgrounds. It works well to recruit learners from Communities First areas and those experiencing difficult life circumstances, such as drug and alcohol addiction and homelessness. The partnership has identified that only 35% of men attend adult learning classes. It is offering specific courses, such as essential skills in the environment and woodworking skills, to attract young, male learners to improve their chances of employment.

All providers have Strategic Equality Plans in place. They produce annual progress reports to monitor implementation and impact.

All tutors undergo equalities and disability awareness training as part of their induction. Tutors pay good attention to equality and the atmosphere in all sessions is welcoming and respectful. Learner handbooks include useful information about equality policies, and the ABE course guide uses a cultural year planner to promote diversity well.

The partnership uses a wide range of venues including college sites, schools, village halls and community centres, enabling nearly all learners to take up classes near to where they live. In the majority of cases, learning takes place in venues that are well maintained and accessible to learners. The college encourages adult community learners to be involved in deciding upon the equipment needed in class and it invites them to present bids to buy equipment or furniture to enhance their learning environment.

Learning resources in nearly all locations are of a good standard, with good ICT facilities in most venues. For example, all partners have bought electronic tablets and they have used them to good effect to engage and motivate learners with low levels of literacy. However, issues regarding connectivity and software compatibility prevent the delivery of a small number of applications in a very few ICT classes. A minority of tutors do not make good enough use of the available technology to support learning.

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

Strategic leaders provide a clear vision and values for the adult community learning partnership. There is a clear focus on local, regional and national priorities. In particular, there is a strong focus on reducing the number of people without qualifications to help tackle poverty.

The Swansea Learning Partnership Strategic Group has established new terms of reference recently. It is developing a strategic plan for adult community learning in the light of budgetary restraints to provide a clear future focus and strategy for the partnership in line with the 'One Swansea' Needs Assessment and Plan.

There is an effective meetings structure in place, which ensures that the Swansea Learning Partnership Strategic Group monitors and challenges the work of the partnership effectively. Records of meetings of the partnership's strategic and operational groups are appropriately documented and monitored. The minutes state clearly actions to be undertaken, by when and by whom.

Leaders at all levels across the partnership show a strong commitment to working together for the benefit of all members of the community, to remove duplication of provision and to provide appropriate progression routes for learners. The sharing of good practice and support is a strong feature of the partnership.

Elected members and officials, governors and board members have a good knowledge of the local, regional and national needs and priorities. They support the provision of adult community learning and its contribution to improving the lives of people in the community well. They provide effective scrutiny for the partnership and the providers within the partnership.

Improving quality: Good

All partners contribute effectively to the self-assessment process. The partnership uses evidence about the quality of teaching and learning from partners well to improve performance. It also makes good use of learner surveys to evaluate the provision.

Individual partners carry out observations of teaching in order to evaluate the quality of teaching. Partners work together effectively to carry out observations of new staff. However, the partnership has yet to establish formal cross-partner observation and moderation procedures. It has carried out a useful pilot joint observation and moderation exercise at a local prison and it plans to roll this out across the partnership in the near future.

The partnership's own evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning is in line with the judgements of the inspection team.

The partnership makes effective use of published data to evaluate its performance and to compare its outcomes with those of other partnerships. It uses this

information well to plan for improvement at course level. It also makes good use of its results from the Learner Voice Wales survey to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Partners work well together to share good practice and allocate areas of responsibility. Gower College Swansea provides effective support to the partnership to evaluate performance and to put improvement plans in place. It works well with other partners to monitor progress against actions for improvement.

The partnership has addressed most of the recommendations from the 2010 inspection report effectively. However, the recommendation with regard to the use of the Welsh language in class is not yet completed and the measurable outcomes in the Quality Development Plan with regard to this are not specific enough.

Partnership working: Excellent

Members of the partnership have a very good understanding of the aim to make sure all adults within the area reach their full potential. This aim also supports the Swansea Local Service Board's agenda of tackling poverty and developing the local economy well.

Partners work very effectively together. They put the needs of the learner, and the area, at the heart of what they do and they seek continuously to improve outcomes and life chances for learners within the community. They discuss issues openly and effectively, and resolve them in a timely manner.

The partnership works very well with a wide variety of other organisations within the voluntary and third sectors. There is a high level of trust between the partnership and these agencies and they work effectively together to plan provision and to avoid duplication. These good relationships allow them to improve the engagement of learners and other communities within the area. There is emphasis on improving confidence and life skills and breaking down barriers to learning, for example by providing learners with transportation to venues that they may not otherwise be able to reach.

A significant strength of the partnership is the proactive involvement of Communities First. As a result of this very good partnership working, many learners from Communities First areas progress from short courses into further learning within the partnership. This is an excellent feature of partnership working. Learners from a Families Learning course have progressed to a 10-week course "Get Into Gower", which aims to encourage parents to learn about the local area and what it holds for them and their children. Learners on this course are working towards an essential skills qualification and they are planning their progression to further accredited courses within the partnership.

The partnership works well with the regional learning partnership and other ACL partnerships in South West and Central Wales. Activities have included developing a learner involvement strategy, planning learner consultation events together, delivering a regional essential skills project and devising a Welsh Language Toolkit to be published on the regional learning partnership website. The partnership has used the toolkit for training tutors to use Welsh more regularly in their teaching. However, as yet, it is too early to evaluate the impact of the training.

Resource management: Good

Nearly all tutors are appropriately qualified. All ABE and ESOL tutors have specialist qualifications. The use of fractional tutor posts within ESOL and ABE provision has a positive impact on the planning, delivery and quality of these learning programmes. The partnership makes good use of shared learner support posts to improve retention and success.

The partnership co-ordinates training priorities well, but it does not formally review data about participation rates, or the impact of training on teaching and learning. Partnership training events enable individual providers to benefit from professional development arranged by other organisations within the partnership. The partnership makes good use of external funding opportunities to support staff development and share best practice. For example, the partnership has used a JISC 'technology for learning' grant to train essential skills tutors across the partnership to integrate the use of mobile technology in classes.

All partners have appropriate arrangements in place to monitor class size and address issues of class numbers when necessary. The local authority is making good progress towards meeting the needs of learners that do not fall within the priority areas for adult community learning, for example the development of 'cost neutral' courses and 'self-directed' learning clubs.

The partnership makes good use of community venues. However, the partnership does not routinely review the suitability of its buildings and facilities for the activities it delivers. The partnership works effectively as part of the regional learning partnership to obtain and manage funding from a variety of sources, for example Essential Skills in the Workplace and Big Lottery projects. Success rates indicate that the partnership uses its resources well to support learners.

Outcomes for learners are good and the partnership provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Learner satisfaction

We use the outcomes of the Welsh Government's annual Learner Voice Wales survey to inform all our inspections of post-16 education and training. The survey asks learners a range of questions about the following key themes:

- the information, advice and support provided to them;
- provider responsiveness, learning environment and student wellbeing;
- the quality of teaching and training; and
- overall satisfaction;

Each theme contains a range of questions requiring learners to rate their provider's performance.

The survey was completed by 860 adult learners in Swansea. There were 200 male and 658 female respondents, representing a 31% of the partnership's male learners and 69% partnership's female learners. The respondents were predominantly older learners aged 45 plus. Most respondents were from white ethnic backgrounds and 10% of respondents reported experiencing learning difficulties. The largest numbers of respondents were taking courses in arts media and publishing, information and communication technology, and adult basic education.

Seventy per cent of respondents rated the partnership as very good overall. This is above the sector average of 64 %. A further 22 % rated the partnership as good overall. Ninety-six per cent of respondents thought that their course was better than they expected. This is above the sector average of 93%.

The percentage of respondents scoring the partnership as very good was above the sector average all of the five key themes and across all of the questions in the survey. Ninety-four per cent of respondents rated teaching and learning as good or very good.

Respondents scored their subjects as being very good in six out of nine sector subject areas. Retail and commercial enterprise, leisure, travel and tourism, and adult basic education were well above the sector averages. However, health, public services and care was well below the sector average.

The survey also analyses learners' responses by demographic information – gender, age, ethnicity and disability. The partnership achieves 'very good' scores that are better than the sector average for overall satisfaction across nearly all of the key demographics. Ethnic minority learners rated the partnership lower than the sector average. Similarly, the percentage of respondents across all key demographics who say their courses are better than what they expected is generally above or near to the national average.

The partnership received about 500 verbatim comments. Generally respondents were very positive about their tutors and the standard of preparation and support they receive from them. Respondents were also positive about the skills they have learned and the benefits of their learning.

Generally, respondents did not think that any improvements to their class or learning were necessary. Nevertheless a few respondents suggested improvements which included;

- the timing of classes;
- making sure that individual learners in mixed level classes had better support to make progress;
- improving the information and guidance about courses;
- the suitability and layout of rooms for learning languages;
- improving arrangements for informing learners about start and finish times; and
- improving the experience of leaving the venue at the end of the class.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

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