



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

Grŵp Llandrillo Menai

**Llandudno Road
Rhos-on-Sea
Colwyn Bay
LL28 4HZ**

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by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Grŵp Llandrillo Menai

The Grŵp Llandrillo Menai Consortium was created following the merger of Coleg Llandrillo and Coleg Menai in 2012. Since the previous Estyn inspection in November 2013, North Wales Training has been acquired by Grŵp Llandrillo Menai in 2019. Grŵp Llandrillo Menai became a Welsh Government (WG) lead provider for the delivery of apprenticeship programmes at the start of the new contract in 2021. It works with a small network of delivery partners and sub-contractors.

Current members of the Grŵp Llandrillo Menai Consortium include Grŵp Llandrillo Menai, Arfon Dwyfor Training, North Wales Training, Achieve More Training, North Wales Fire Service, Tempdent and Sgil Cymru.

Grŵp Llandrillo Menai Consortium's current contract for the delivery of work-based learning (WBL) apprenticeship programmes has a value of £13.15m in 2022 to 2023. The consortium mainly delivers programmes across north Wales with a small amount of provision in Ceredigion.

The Grŵp Llandrillo Menai Consortium delivers apprenticeships across the following sectors:

- Agriculture and Environment
- Business and Management
- Catering and Hospitality
- Childcare Services
- Construction Building Services
- Culture, Media and Design
- Digital Technology
- Energy
- Engineering
- Education and Information Services
- Food and Drink
- Hair and Beauty
- Health Care
- Health and Social Care Services
- Legal and Financial Services
- Life Sciences
- Property Services
- Public Services
- Retail
- Travel, Tourism and Leisure

At the time of the inspection, the consortium has approximately 2800 work-based learners undertaking training on Welsh Government-funded apprenticeship programmes.

Summary

Most learners work confidently in one-to-one, group and remote learning activities. Their written work is well presented and of an appropriate standard to their apprenticeship programme. Most learners demonstrate strong practical skills and apply these well across a wide range of activities.

Most learners use digital technology well across a range of learning activities, including using digital learning platforms and electronic portfolios. They are aware of the progress they are making and know what they need to do to achieve their apprenticeship framework. Success rates vary too much across learning areas and too many learners take longer than expected to complete their apprenticeships.

Learners are not always clear on how to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Many learners are fluent Welsh speakers. They speak Welsh routinely in discussions with Welsh-speaking tutors and peers but too few choose to complete written assessments through the medium of Welsh.

Almost all learners develop positive and respectful relationships with tutors, assessors and their peers. Many develop improved confidence and self-esteem, which enables them to engage effectively with customers and clients. Almost all reflect appropriately on their learning and work experiences.

Consortium providers have particularly strong relationships with employers across the region. They plan programmes well to meet local and regional skills needs and priorities.

Nearly all tutors and assessors know their learners well. They are well qualified in their specialist areas and keep their knowledge and skills up-to-date. They are highly supportive of their learners and use their own experience well to develop learners' vocational skills and understanding. Most provide timely and effective verbal and written feedback to learners. A few learners are too dependent on direction from tutors and assessors.

Consortium partners work particularly well together to provide consistently strong support for well-being and the additional learning needs of learners. Learners across the consortium can access resources and services at a range of sites. Most learners speak highly of the wider help and support they receive from tutors and assessors who work flexibly with learners to accommodate home and work circumstances. Staff work effectively to identify and support learners' additional learning needs.

Senior leaders across the consortium are well informed on local and regional skill needs and priorities. They work together very effectively within well-structured monitoring and reporting arrangements. Shared values and goals across the consortium reflect the equitable influence and involvement of partners in key planning and decision-making processes. Each partner undertakes appropriate self-evaluation and improvement planning activities and areas of underperformance are routinely identified and challenged at consortium level. Staff from all partners value the opportunity to take part in professional development activities that include a strong emphasis on peer-led sessions to share effective practice.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the success and timely completion rates of learners in underperforming programmes and learning areas
- R2 Ensure that all tutors and assessors consistently develop learners' literacy and numeracy skills in all learning areas

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 professional learning for staff and wrap round support for learners for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Learning

Many learners demonstrate sound recall of prior knowledge and their experiences in the workplace. In many cases, they apply this knowledge well, especially when undertaking a wide range of practical tasks. The majority of learners respond to questions confidently and use the correct technical terms and phrases. A few lack the confidence to fully contribute to discussions and when responding to questions from their tutor and assessor.

Many learners are motivated to achieve their apprenticeships and work particularly well with their tutors and assessors. Most work confidently in one-to-one, group and remote learning activities.

Most learners produce written work that is well presented and of a standard appropriate to their programme. Most work produced electronically is of a good standard. In the majority of cases, learners benefit from useful written feedback from their tutors and assessors that enables them to improve their future performance. In a few cases, learners' misspelt words are not corrected by their tutors.

Most learners demonstrate strong practical skills across their occupational areas. They routinely and confidently use these skills in a wide range of settings. In the workplace, learners receive support and guidance from their employers that encourages the development of new skills. This helps learners become productive and valued members of their employers' staff. For example, level 3 electrical maintenance apprentices develop the skills to undertake complex maintenance tasks on advanced manufacturing machinery. Level 3 energy apprentices work in small groups to undertake research and to present their comprehensive findings of offshore wind turbine installation and maintenance. Across the learning areas, learners reflect on their workplace experiences well and use this experience and knowledge to help them successfully complete a wide range of practical tasks and assessments.

Most learners are aware of the progress they are making and what assessments they need to do to complete their learning. In the best cases, learners regularly monitor their progress against the programme requirements. Many learners participate and contribute to progress reviews productively. They work confidently with their assessors and, in the best cases, negotiate and set targets for completion of their own written work and assessments. Learners with additional learning needs access the support they need and achieve their apprenticeships. However, across the consortium, a few learners take longer than scheduled to complete their apprenticeships.

Following their initial and diagnostic assessment for literacy, numeracy and digital skills, learners are not always clear regarding what they need to do to improve their skills. Although learners make progress and achieve their skills qualifications, they are not routinely challenged to improve these aspects further, where appropriate.

Most learners use digital technology well when undertaking a wide range of learning activities. They are able to navigate digital learning platforms and their electronic

portfolios. These learners make effective use of these resources to access online learning activities and share written work and assessments with their assessors.

Many learners show positive attitudes towards the Welsh language. Many are fluent Welsh speakers and undertake discussions and conversations with their teachers and peers in Welsh. Currently, the number and proportion of learners who choose to complete their written assessments through the medium of Welsh remain low.

Across the consortium, learner success rates vary too much depending upon the learning area. Learner success rates in accountancy and veterinary nursing are strong with most learners completing their apprenticeships in a timely manner. A minority of learners on health and social care programmes complete their apprenticeships successfully.

Apprenticeship success rates are still negatively impacted by the disruption associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Learners who are substantially beyond their expected completion dates continue to be supported by the provider towards completing their apprenticeships. Overall, too many learners take longer than expected to complete their apprenticeships.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

In almost all cases, learners develop a positive and trusting rapport with their assessors and tutors, and they willingly share any matters related to their own well-being, whether of an academic, work, or welfare nature. Almost all learners feel safe, secure, and free from harassment in their learning and workplace environments and know how to raise a concern should the need arise.

Where necessary, learners identify the impact of, and strategies for dealing with, difficult situations in the workplace and clearly articulate the effect this has on their well-being. For example, in the case of learners working in an advice and guidance centre, they share the impact of working with clients who face challenging situations and how this in turn affects their own well-being. They speak positively about the support they access in such situations through both the employer and the training provider.

A few learners value being able to access main college sites and services, and enjoy the associated benefits of being a learner. Examples include benefiting from the college counselling service, using the library facilities, and taking advantage of student discounts. A few learners access and interact with the online well-being hub and associated newsletters. They identify how these resources are useful on a personal level, and within their wider workplace settings. However, many learners are not yet familiar with these resources.

Learners have plentiful opportunities to share their views on learning experiences through formal mechanisms such as learner voice surveys as well as through more informal routes including ongoing open and honest dialogue with tutors and assessors.

Many learners exhibit improved confidence and self-esteem which allows them to engage well with their customers and clients. Almost all learners reflect appropriately

on their learning and experiences. They readily provide examples of how they apply their learning within their workplaces and conversely, bring their workplace experiences into their learning. For example, in a food technology session, a learner in a supervisory role recognises that the skills gained on her course enable her to successfully manage an uncooperative member of her team. Similarly, a learner in a residential care setting describes how she has developed a strategy to support a stroke patient with communication challenges, and she applies this knowledge and experience appropriately to the unit she is working on.

Many learners make appropriate decisions about their learning and respond positively to having choices in their learning. They provide clear rationales for decisions on what tasks they do and how they approach their work. They successfully negotiate realistic deadlines and, in progress review sessions, ask questions and check understanding where appropriate. Many learners are solution-focused in their approach. For example, learners based in an advice and guidance centre suggest ways to submit work that will avoid any breaches in confidentiality.

Almost all learners in group settings are respectful of one another and value the contributions that peers bring to overall learning experiences. They listen actively, show interest, ask one another questions, respect turn-taking and respond appropriately. For example, in an accountancy session, a learner shares how she records accruals in her workplace with a group of her peers who are keen to learn from her experiences.

Teaching, training, assessment and learning experiences

The consortium plans its programme delivery well to serve the needs of the region. The lead provider works well with partners and subcontractors to ensure a comprehensive offer, that reflects regional skills priorities along with the needs of local employers across a large geographical area.

The consortium's relationship with employers across the region is particularly strong. This enables it to work collaboratively with employers to design programmes that are tailored to their specific needs as well as being of benefit to the wider employer-base. An example of this relationship is when an engineering company needed to train its employees on specific hand skills. To ensure that the right skills and knowledge were included in the training programme, tutors worked closely with the employer on joint visits to other organisations to identify effective practice across the sector. The specific skills training was subsequently offered to other engineering learners within the consortium, to upskill them for future job opportunities.

Employers value the responsiveness of the training providers and the flexibility of offer across the consortium. This allows them to choose the location for their training activities and the most appropriate model of delivery. One example of these effective and mutually beneficial working relationships is where employers also offer work experience and training opportunities to tutors and assessors. This helps ensure that the providers' staff are conversant with the newest technologies and associated skills.

In nearly all cases, tutors and assessors know their learners well and have established good rapport, which results in better engagement and mutual

understanding. They are well qualified within their specialist areas and keep their skills and knowledge up-to-date. Tutors and assessors are highly supportive of their learners and draw on their own industrial and commercial experience to develop learners' vocational skills and understanding.

In the best cases, tutors have high expectations of their learners. In a few practical sessions, such as in level 3 brickwork activities, tutors challenge and encourage learners to produce work of high quality and with close tolerances.

Many assessors encourage their learners to reflect on their own practice and negotiate their choice of assessments, targets and deadlines for completion of written work and workplace assessments. In a minority of cases, teaching and review sessions are predominantly tutor or assessor led, with insufficient opportunities for learners to take the lead in discussions. As a result, a few learners on apprenticeship and higher apprenticeship programmes are too dependent on direction from their tutors and assessors.

Many tutors use a broad range of questioning techniques, including open and directed questions. In the majority of cases, tutors use targeted questions to check knowledge and understanding and to reinforce previous knowledge. Many tutors use learners' own workplace experiences well to underpin theory. In a minority of cases, tutors and assessors have an over-reliance on asking questions that do not develop learners' knowledge and abilities and do not challenge learners to reach their full potential.

In most cases, tutors offer prompt and meaningful written and verbal feedback to their learners to develop their skills and understanding. However, in a minority of cases, learners' work is not annotated effectively enough to allow learners to use feedback to develop their knowledge and understanding further.

In vocational settings, the development of the wider skills of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy is not fully embedded. Although there is evidence of the use of literacy and numeracy in the majority of reviews, there is limited feedback on submitted work or on setting meaningful targets for learners to develop these skills throughout the duration of their learning programme.

The consortium area has a large number of Welsh-speaking tutors, assessors and learners, especially in the west of the region. Tutors and assessors encourage their learners to speak Welsh in the workplace and in their progress reviews, although too few learners choose to complete assessments in Welsh. The college provides the opportunity for its tutors to learn Welsh and recognises and celebrates their progress and achievements.

Care, support and guidance

Consortium partners share their practice and work together effectively to ensure consistently strong support for the well-being and additional learning needs of learners. Resources and services at different centres are made available to all apprenticeship learners across the consortium.

All apprentices can apply for a student card that grants them full access to on-campus facilities such as learning resource centres and gyms, as well eligibility for student discounts. All learners are also offered access to helpful well-being resources and guidance. The consortium's online well-being hub has recently been made more accessible and promoted to apprentices. Valuable personal support, including counselling, is also in place to support learners that are referred by consortium staff.

Provider partners ensure that learners across the consortium are supplied with the resources they need to aid their learning. For example, learners without suitable digital devices receive a laptop and internet dongle on long-term loan. In addition, practical support for learners' welfare includes free period products and free food at each provider centre. This support helps to partially mitigate the negative effects of the rising cost of living on learners.

Most learners value highly the wider help and guidance that they receive from assessors. In regular one-to-one meetings, most assessors provide learners with considerate support, regularly checking on their well-being in a way that is meaningful to each individual learner. Assessors and tutors work flexibly to accommodate learners' home and work circumstances. Where appropriate, they give learners the choice of engaging with reviews and support sessions at the workplace, at learning centres, or online.

Cross-cutting themes are integrated as an established and worthwhile feature of regular one-to-one progress review meetings between assessors and learners. They are supported by a range of stimulating resources on topics including equality, immigration, disability, healthy relationships, mental health and preventing radicalisation. In a few instances, learners and assessors struggle to engage in a meaningful way in these discussions, or assessors do not take opportunities to integrate these topics into wider learning activities.

The provider works effectively to identify individual learners' additional learning needs. The proportion of the consortium's learners identified as having an additional learning need has increased substantially over recent years. Assessors are trained to identify and support learners with diverse needs such as an autistic spectrum condition, as well as other learning difficulties such as dyslexia and dyspraxia. Specialists at the provider and a nearby university assess the learning needs of apprenticeship learners who are referred to them. The provider puts helpful support and adjustments in place. It also makes use of a range of external services and works collaboratively with other organisations to provide additional support to apprenticeship learners.

The provider has developed a carefully considered safeguarding framework to which all partners have subscribed. This reflects the emphasis leaders place on safeguarding and the strong collaborative ethos of the consortium's approach to protecting learners. Staff undertake initial and refresher safeguarding training dependant on their role and level of responsibility. Nearly all staff members are confident that they are fully aware of the procedures for safeguarding learners and understand how to apply them.

Appropriate systems for the identification and tracking of safeguarding concerns are in place across the consortium. Collaboration between consortium partners'

safeguarding support services ensures that specialist support is put in place where needed. The provider's safeguarding leads monitor and report on safeguarding concerns and interventions to senior managers regularly, enabling them to oversee progress and ensure accountability. In addition, the consortium reflects on and analyses safeguarding matters annually. The consortium has appropriately reviewed its Prevent arrangements to prevent radicalisation.

Leadership and management

Grwp Llandrillo Menai lead a well-established consortium based on a robust two-tier partnership model, which reflects clearly identified needs within the local and regional economy. The consortium includes partnership and subcontracting arrangements across a small number of providers. Consortium arrangements are well structured with clear identification of responsibilities supported by appropriate monitoring and reporting arrangements.

Senior leaders across the consortium are well informed on local priorities and emerging or changing skill needs. This is supported via appropriate representation in regional skill partnerships and other regional forums. For example, the development of a green digital academy facilitates collaborative working with local employers to address evolving skill needs. The provider has also developed a food technology centre, which conducts research and innovation techniques for local food processing employers.

Consortium members demonstrate a strong culture of shared values, which underpins respectful relationships between all partners. Shared goals across consortium partners reflect the equitable influence and involvement of partners in overarching strategic planning and decision-making processes. Most staff across the consortium understand the strategic priorities of the provider and know what they can do to contribute towards achieving these.

The strategic priorities of the consortium appropriately link and inform operational planning across all partners. This helps provide learning and progression opportunities for learners and employers to benefit from the delivery strengths of individual partners. The maturity of relationships is reflected through healthy competition and choice across partners alongside mutually beneficial collaboration between them.

Learners and staff benefit from access to a range of online systems developed and provided by the lead provider. Partners also enjoy the opportunity to access support with delivery of essential skills provision and specialist support for additional learning needs where necessary. This ensures parity of opportunity for learners and staff across the consortium.

All partners maintain robust procedures for the tracking, monitoring and reporting of learner progress as part of their quality assurance and performance management arrangements. Data dashboards provide transparent real time data for staff and managers to monitor and review performance at all levels.

Areas of underperformance are identified and challenged across partner providers who hold each other accountable for any performance concerns. For example, there

is a clear focus at all levels of the consortium on addressing the difficulties being experienced in the health and social care sector following the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

Recent underperformance against quality thresholds has triggered internal quality audit and inspection activities. This involves all partners, including those not directly involved in delivery of these programmes, further illustrating an inclusive commitment to shared values across the consortium. As a result, senior leaders have been able to identify underpinning issues causing under performance and agree a plan for improvement.

Each consortium partner completes self-assessment activities, which are used to inform the identification of key strengths and areas for improvement reflected in quality improvement plans.

Annual planning of professional learning takes account of skill needs identified via a range of activities, including appraisals, assessor observations, learner and employer feedback. This helps to ensure that skill gaps and areas for development are addressed. All partners identify and share examples of good practice across the consortium to support continued improvement of overall performance.

Staff from all partners attend consortium professional development days, bi-annually, with a strong emphasis on peer led sessions to share best practice. For example, the most recent event included activities to enable all staff to identify and facilitate the provision of support, which is matched to the individual additional needs of learners.

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.

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

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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