



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

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

**Ceredigion Adult Learning in the Community Partnership**

**Ceredigion County Council  
Penmorfa  
Aberaeron  
Ceredigion  
SA46 0PA**

**Date of inspection: February 2024**

**by**

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

**This report is also available in Welsh.**

## About Ceredigion Adult Learning in the Community Partnership

Ceredigion Adult Community Learning Partnership oversees the delivery of Welsh Government-funded adult learning in the community across the county of Ceredigion.

At the time of the inspection, the Welsh Government community learning grant funded adult learning in the community delivery partner is Ceredigion County Council (Dysgu Bro Ceredigion)

The other significant Welsh Government-funded delivery partners are Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales, who offer a range of courses across the county, and Coleg Sir Gâr/Ceredigion, which offers GCSE and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes. Aberystwyth University and University of Wales Trinity St Davids also offer a very few classes through the partnership..

Provision includes the following programmes: literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills, GCSE mathematics and English, ESOL, employability courses including short courses in topics such as first aid or health and safety, British Sign Language, numeracy courses funded through Multiply, well-being courses, and engagement/taster programmes. Provision is largely funded through Welsh Government and UK Government funding streams with a few partly learner-funded fee-paying courses.

Ceredigion is a rural county, with population or administrative centres at Aberystwyth, Lampeter, Cardigan and Aberaeron. Provision is offered at a range of venues across the county, with some provision online.

According to the [Office for national statistics](#) Ceredigion's resident population is 71,500 (Census 2021). In 2021, Ceredigion had the fourth smallest population of the 22 local authority areas in Wales, maintaining the same position it held a decade ago. There has been a decrease of 5.8% of resident population from 2011 to 2021. The 2021 census indicates that 25.7% of the county's population is aged 65 years and over – slightly higher than the average for Wales of 21.3%. The proportion of residents aged 15 to 64 is 61.1% – slightly lower than the average for Wales of 62.2%.

The [Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation \(WIMD\)](#) (2019) shows that the partnership, which covers a large geographical area, serves a range of learners including those living in two areas that fall within the 10% of most deprived areas of Wales. Overall, the county has a slightly lower proportion of deprived areas than the average for Wales.

Overall, Ceredigion has fewer adults without qualifications and more adults qualified to level 2 or above than the average for Wales. [Stats Wales](#) (for the year ending 31 December 2022) shows that 86.6% of 18-64 years old in Wales have qualifications at level 2 or above. In Ceredigion, this figure is 91.7%. The percentage of residents who have no qualifications at all is 5.7%, compared to the average for Wales of 8.3%.

Across the county, 7.1% of Ceredigion's residents are non-UK born, according to the [Office for national statistics](#) (2021). This is a 1.0% percentage point increase since 2011.

According to the Annual Population Survey for the year ending September 2023, the percentage of people who say they can speak Welsh across Wales averages 29.2%. In Ceredigion, the proportion of people who say they can speak Welsh is higher than the Welsh average, at 56.8%. ([Stats Wales, 2024](#))

In 2022-2023 there were 830 enrolments across the partnership. Of these enrolments 779 were unique learners. At the time of inspection, 475 unique learners were enrolled at the partnerships and class sizes averaged around five learners in attendance per group session.

## Summary

Many learners across the range of the partnership's courses work at a standard appropriate to their starting points. They develop skills in literacy, numeracy, digital literacy, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), or in the range of other courses offered by the partnership. Most learners report that participating in learning has improved their confidence and well-being. However, the partnership has not offered accredited programmes in ESOL and so these learners have not had the opportunity to attain qualifications that may be of value to them. The partnership does not evaluate how learners progress into, through and beyond its provision. The partnership does not currently offer any provision for learners through the medium of Welsh.

Tutors develop excellent rapport with their learners and know them well. They develop mutually respectful relationships and create warm and welcoming learning environments. The pace of most sessions is appropriate and adapted to learners' abilities. Most tutors effectively engage learners and keep them sufficiently challenged and stimulated. However, in a few sessions, tutors do not recognise or adapt quickly enough to learners that are ready to progress to their next phase of learning and learners spend too long working on tasks or concepts they have already understood.

The provision and processes for supporting learners with additional learning needs (ALN) across the partnership is underdeveloped. Staff and learners are unclear of what support is available to learners who are diagnosed with an additional learning need.

Overall, current partnership working approaches are not effective. There is currently no formal adult learning community partnership structure in place with representation from all partners to organise and support the work of the partnership. The partnership does not have a shared vision, partnership values or strategic plan.

Partners do not routinely collaborate in evaluating the partnership's provision and as a result they do not have a full and cohesive understanding of the partnership's strengths and areas for improvement. The partnership has a useful quality development plan, but leaders do not currently have a structured monitoring process in place to support them in working towards achieving the targets in the plan, or of measuring impact.

Strategic leaders from all three main providers recognise these shortcomings and are at the very early stages of beginning to address them.

## Recommendations

- R1 Develop a strategic plan for the partnership, underpinned by a shared vision
- R2 Develop a partnership approach to self-evaluation and structured quality monitoring in order to meet targets and capture impact

- R3 Ensure that potential and existing learners can easily access an overview of the full partnership's course offer and progression pathways
- R4 Implement effective systems and processes across the partnership to support and track the progress of learners with additional learning needs (ALN)
- R5 Ensure that learners are given opportunities to work towards accreditation or qualifications where appropriate
- R6 Increase opportunities for Welsh speakers and Welsh learners to access adult learning in the community programmes through the medium of Welsh

## What happens next

The provider will be placed in follow up and will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will review the provider's progress.

## Main findings

### Learning

Many learners across the range of the partnership's courses work at a standard appropriate to their starting points. For example, in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes, learners who start with very different prior knowledge and experience of English work together and discuss health and well-being using sentence structure, tenses and vocabulary appropriate to their level. They improve over time and develop increasing confidence to speak English in their everyday lives, to gain work, help their children and participate in their communities. Many ESOL learners also know and use basic Welsh words and phrases and show a positive attitude to learning and using Welsh. ESOL learners at the partnership have not had an accredited qualification or progression pathway, and so these learners have not had the opportunity to gain qualifications that evidence their progress or achievement.

Learners on the partnership's range of digital literacy courses develop skills that enable them to use digital technology more confidently and more effectively. For example, older learners on short, accredited courses on using spreadsheets, presentation and office software learn or revisit skills that allow them to keep track of their accounts, manage emails online or prepare newsletters. Learners on courses on using tablet computers are confident in making video calls to friends and family or attend church services online.

Learners on courses to develop literacy or numeracy skills work at standards appropriate to their starting points. These learners value working in the small group or one-to-one settings offered by the partnership. They describe benefits to them in

their lives such as increased confidence, improved spelling and punctuation and a new ability to read fiction books for pleasure. In a few cases, learners' written work is underdeveloped, and learners do not receive sufficient feedback from tutors to help them improve and a few errors in their work go uncorrected.

The partnership's offer includes courses delivered online. Learners on these courses value the convenience of online learning, especially where travel times or access to public transport across the county make it challenging to attend an in-person session. On the whole, learners in online classes engage and contribute well to the session and make suitable progress. Learners in an online British Sign Language (BSL) class make particularly strong progress and demonstrate strong BSL skills, complemented by fluent use of online learning tools such as collaborative workspaces. The partnership also has a very few hybrid courses where some learners attend a class in-person and some attend online. While in many online and hybrid sessions, many learners participate well and make good progress, a few learners respond only through short verbal answers or short responses in the chat. When this happens, the pace of learning and level of challenge for the whole group drops and learners' progress in the session becomes slow.

No learners were studying on wholly Welsh-medium courses at the time of the inspection. Apart from ESOL learners, the majority of learners in the partnership speak some Welsh. The language of learning in many classes is largely English. Learners occasionally use Welsh in their day-to-day or learning interactions with fellow learners and with Welsh speaking tutors. Learners who are not Welsh speakers practise using Welsh words and phrases they have learnt in interactions with their tutors and peers. A few very learners choose to take complete their work or qualifications through the medium of Welsh.

In the partnership's few craft or creative sessions, many learners demonstrate strong art or craft skills. They develop confidence and a useful range of approaches over time, for example, using etching and printing techniques on packaging materials. A few learners exhibit their work at art exhibitions or use their newly learnt skills to make flower arrangements for family and friends. In addition to the craft and creative skills, learners practise transferable numeracy skills through their craft work.

Overall, learners make suitable progress in their individual lessons, although, particularly in non-accredited courses, learners are often unaware of their short-term targets for improvement, or their longer-term options for future courses or progression. The partnership does not systematically record or evaluate learners' progress into or through the provision or movement between the partners, or learners' destinations on conclusion of their study. It is therefore not possible to evaluate the overall impact of the provision on learners' outcomes over time.

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

Learners feel a sense of belonging in learning environments where their tutors have established good relationships and fostered a sense of community. For example, in a basic information technology (IT) class the session begins with informal discussions on welfare and community issues and, in ESOL provision for refugees, a safe, supportive learning environment has been established. Learners are proud of their progress and are express an interest in completing qualifications and gaining

certificates that evidence progress. One learner stated: 'it feels like home, it is comfortable and you can see how I speak now'.

Across the partnership, most learners report that their course has improved their confidence and well-being. They talk about the positive impact of their learning and describe situations where they can use their skills in their wider lives. For example, in an 'art for mental health' class, learners say the course provides a friendship group and helps their creative thinking for other parts of their life. Learners in a BSL class describe increased confidence in using their learning in their wider lives, for example in their work in a primary school, in a theatre and also in teaching a partner to sign.

In ESOL classes, learners benefit from a range of opportunities that build a sense of community and belonging. These include coffee mornings with members of the wider community, guest speakers, such as the dentist and doctor, and weekly visits from the council's resettlement team to access help with finance, housing or accessing voluntary work. In a worthwhile example of partnership working, a group of learners were supported by the British Red Cross to start a Syrian Dinner Club which has resulted in significant engagement with the wider community, with over 100 guests at some events. Learners practise speaking in English in taught sessions to boost their confidence in advance of the Dinner Club events.

During the week of the inspection, learners' attendance was variable across the partnership, with only a minority of sessions with full attendance. Adult learners face many challenges to attending sessions, such as travel, family and caring responsibilities or work obligations, but learners who are absent miss important opportunities to interact and to benefit from the support for their well-being that regular attendance provides.

Nearly all learners show enthusiasm for their own work and are keen to participate. Many learners demonstrate positive attitudes to each other's learning too by praising and encouraging each other.

Many learners enrolled on online classes appreciate this mode of learning and, in many cases, this provision supports their individual needs and enables regular attendance. However, in those hybrid and online sessions where a minority of learners keep their cameras turned off, the quality of interaction with the tutor and with other learners is weak and opportunities for peer learning and support are reduced.

Most learners have a clear purpose for their learning and enjoy developing their new skills. In ESOL classes, learners show perseverance as they work to achieve citizenship tests, driving theory tests, volunteering roles and employment. In a BSL class, learners describe enjoying the 'push' from their tutor to improve and succeed, and all want to progress to the next level. Most learners are motivated to progress but too few know what courses are available to progress to.

## **Teaching and learning experiences**

The partnership's provision offer is appropriate and includes programmes funded by both the Welsh and UK Governments, as well as fee-paying courses. Funded programmes focus primarily on essential skills, well-being and ESOL, in line with

Welsh Government priorities. Fee-paying options focus on employability courses such as customer service, first aid, and the essential skills practitioner programme. There are no Welsh-medium programmes included in the current offer.

Around half of the partnership's programmes are accredited. Partners' decisions about accreditation are influenced by historical trends, demand from learners and employers, and the readiness of learners to undertake formal qualifications. One provider does not offer ESOL learners the chance to obtain qualifications or certification, despite their desire to do so.

The approach to planning provision and mapping progression currently lacks a formal partnership framework, relying instead on informal connections between partner organisations. Although providers have some awareness of employer and local needs through bodies such as the regional skills partnership, the partnership does not systematically gather or share information to determine demand and plan collaboratively.

Partners deliver programmes in a range of welcoming community venues across the region including libraries, community centres, a college site, a theatre and a castle. The partnership's approach of taking learning to learners, given the rurality and the limited public transport across the region, is worthwhile. A minority of the partnership provision is delivered online, to accommodate learner need due to transport issues, learners with childcare commitments, and meeting the needs of those who feel unable to learn in face-to-face settings.

Nearly all tutors have developed an excellent rapport and mutual respect with their learners. They create warm and welcoming learning environments and adapt tasks and activities to suit learners' specific needs. Tutors are encouraging and supportive and readily praise and value learners' contributions. As a result, most learners engage well in sessions and talk positively about the teaching on their course.

In online sessions, most tutors demonstrate strong online pedagogy, making use of a range of appropriate devices and platforms which support learning and progress. In hybrid sessions, delivered simultaneously to learners attending in-person and online, tutors find it more challenging to keep learners engaged and to check their understanding, particularly where learners have their cameras off.

Many tutors use naturally occurring opportunities to integrate Welsh language and culture into their sessions through, for example, using bilingual terminology or presentation slides.

In many cases, tutors develop well-planned and well-structured sessions that build on previous learning and work towards clear outcomes for learners. In accredited groups, most learners are involved in setting their individual targets and, in the best cases, tutors track their progress throughout their learning well, using suitable assessment approaches. However, in many non-accredited sessions, learners are not set individual targets and, as a result, tutors are not always able to demonstrate or track the progress of learners from their individual starting points.

Across the partnership, the pace of most sessions is appropriate and adapted to learners' abilities. Most tutors use a variety of resources, digital technologies and



speaking and listening tasks which effectively engage learners and keep them sufficiently challenged and stimulated. However, in few sessions, tutors do not recognise or adapt quickly enough to learners that are ready to progress to their next phase of learning. Where this happens, learners spend too long working on tasks or concepts they have already understood.

Most tutors use questioning techniques well to engage learners and check their understanding and knowledge. They allow learners appropriate time to respond and formulate answers. For example, in an ESOL class, the tutor makes good use of open questioning to encourage learners to explain the meaning of unfamiliar words to the group. However, in a few cases, tutors do not target their questioning well enough to allow all learners in the group the opportunity to answer.

Many tutors structure their classes well to ensure that learners of varying abilities remain motivated and engaged throughout the session. They balance their time appropriately between learners and offer extension tasks for those that finish activities early. However, in a few ESOL classes, tasks and questioning techniques are not adapted to learners with mixed abilities, resulting in some learners making slower progress than they could.

Across the partnership, most tutors give constructive and supportive verbal feedback within sessions that gives learners clear guidance on their progress in learning. However, where learners submit written work, a few tutors do not consistently provide feedback and, where they do, it is too brief and not constructive.

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

Providers within the partnership advertise their own courses through a range of methods including social media channels, open days and leaflets. However, there is currently no overall partnership approach to promoting the breadth of provision in the partnership, or any single source where information about all courses is available. As a result, it is complicated for prospective learners to find what provision is available to them. Partners provide only very limited information to existing learners regarding their possible progression routes.

Tutors create an environment where learners from diverse backgrounds engage well with each other and demonstrate mutual respect. For example, in an 'art for mental health' class, learners with wide age differences interact freely with each other in groups and pair working, offering care, empathy and support to one another.

Well-being support for nearly all learners is provided by their course tutors. Most tutors know their learners well and make adjustments and adaptations to suit their learners' needs. In the best cases, tutors have developed useful group profiles which outline the different needs of the group and the interventions that would support the group to progress. Nearly all tutors act as the key point of contact for learners and often offer useful support for the wellbeing of their learners.

The provision and processes for supporting learners with additional learning needs (ALN) across the partnership are underdeveloped. In one partner, procedures for how to support learners with ALN are informal and too heavily reliant on tutors to offer support based on their own experiences. ALN support in most cases is limited

to additional one-to-one time with the tutor and, where this support is offered, it is not recorded or shared, and no tracking of subsequent learner progress takes place. As a result, staff and learners are unclear of what support is available to learners who are diagnosed with an additional learning need.

Each provider has their own individual processes for gathering the views of learners through a variety of methods, such as learner surveys, post-course evaluations, learner forums and learning walks. Learner response rates to post-course evaluations are reasonable and providers feed back any actions taken as a result of learner voice at a local level. For example, in response to learner feedback, Adult Learning Wales holds online mental health forums and produces a monthly mental health newsletter for staff and learners which signposts to their online self-referral service for counselling. Partners do not currently work together to analyse learner voice feedback across the partnership to identify trends or opportunities for joint areas of intervention.

Each provider within the partnership has the necessary policies and procedures in place in relation to safeguarding, including safe recruitment practices. All staff undertake appropriate regular mandatory online training, and designated safeguarding leads have had the necessary training at higher levels. Partners regularly monitor and track mandatory training records of staff to ensure that they are up to date.

Nearly all learners say that they feel safe and free from harassment in their place of learning. The partnership's arrangements for the safeguarding of learners meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

### **Leadership and management**

The partnership does not currently have a shared vision, values or strategic plan. There is currently no formal structure in place with representation from all partners to organise and support the work of the partnership. The partnership is not operating effectively or cohesively. Strategic leaders from all three main providers recognise these shortcomings and are at the very early stages of beginning to address them.

Partners do not routinely collaborate in evaluating the partnership's provision and as a result they do not have a full understanding of the partnership's strengths and areas for improvement. The current approach to self-evaluation is disjointed and lacks consistency, and this is exemplified by variations in reporting learner attendance.

The partnership has a useful 'quality development plan' that includes a set of appropriate high-level targets, all of which are identified as high or medium level priority. They include actions in relation to implementing an effective partnership structure, committing to a clear vision and priorities, and a partnership approach to targeting learners from more disadvantaged areas of the county. However, leaders do not currently have a structured monitoring process in place to support them in working towards achieving these targets, or of measuring impact.

Each partner has their own appropriate quality processes in place, many of which are common across all providers. Examples include learner voice activities, a programme

of observations and learning walks, monitoring attendance, internal and external quality assurance processes, and staff questionnaires. However, there is no cohesive partnership approach to quality monitoring and no sharing of information about quality processes, outcomes, and associated actions.

Leaders, managers, and tutors actively identify professional learning needs via a range of appropriate mechanisms including appraisals, observations, and staff feedback. Across all main delivery providers, leaders and managers ensure staff have good access to professional learning opportunities whether these are formal, informal, met through internal support mechanisms, through external training organisations, or online learning. Examples include sessions on enhancing digital skills in teaching and learning, embedding Welsh into the curriculum, or training delivered by an external provider with a focus on staff and learner mental health and well-being.

There are a very few examples of partnership-wide professional learning activities. These include a shared approach between two main delivery partners to an action research project that is ongoing, and meaningful cross-county professional learning events for tutors that focused on Prevent, the ALN Act, and the essential skills core curriculum.

The partnership reports that it is on target to spend the community learning grant.

## Evidence base of the report

Before the inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the learner and staff questionnaires

During the inspection, inspectors normally:

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

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

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

## Copies of the report

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

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

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

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