Estyn

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Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

Effective strategies for learners to achieve key skills within qualification frameworks

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The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting:

- ⚘ nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local authorities (LAs);
- ⚘ primary schools;
- ⚘ secondary schools;
- ⚘ special schools;
- ⚘ pupil referral units;
- ⚘ independent schools;
- ⚘ further education;
- ⚘ adult community-based learning;
- ⚘ youth support services;
- ⚘ youth and community work training;
- ⚘ LAs;
- ⚘ teacher education and training;
- ⚘ work-based learning;
- ⚘ careers companies;
- ⚘ offender learning; and
- ⚘ the education, guidance and training elements of The Department for Work and Pensions funded training programmes.

Estyn also:

- ⚘ provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others; and
- ⚘ makes public good practice based on inspection evidence.

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Introduction

Context

1. In 2004-2005, the Welsh Assembly Government asked Estyn for advice on the barriers that were preventing work-based learners from achieving their qualification frameworks (see Appendix 1 for an explanation of qualification frameworks). Estyn's report found that the main barrier was learners failing to achieve the key skills required in the frameworks.

2. The 2005-2006 Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales again highlighted that:

   'it was still a cause for concern that over half of the learners on apprenticeship programmes did not attain all the qualifications they were working for. Although this was an improvement on the previous year, the fact remained that not enough learners completed the key skills and technical certificate that they needed to gain the full qualification training framework for a Foundation Modern Apprenticeship (FMA) or a Modern Apprenticeship (MA)'.

The purpose and scope of this report

3. As a result, in April 2006, the Welsh Assembly Government asked Estyn to undertake further work to:

   - identify the strategies that work-based learning providers are using to improve learners' attainment of key skills and qualification frameworks;

   - explore providers' reasons for selecting these methods;

   - evaluate learners' perceptions of the ways that they develop their key skills;

   - evaluate employers' perceptions of the ways their learners develop key skills;

   - report on how well these strategies work in terms of increasing the number of learners who gain full qualification frameworks;

   - make recommendations to the work-based learning sector to help raise the standards of attainment of learners undertaking FMA and MA programmes; and

   - make recommendations as to how the Welsh Assembly Government can help to improve the education and training for learners undertaking apprenticeship qualification frameworks.

Methodology

4. Between May 2006 and December 2007, inspectors visited 17 work-based learning providers. These included providers where recent Estyn inspection found evidence of good attainment of key skills and qualification frameworks or where there was a need to improve learners' key skills attainment.

5   In their initial visits, inspectors talked to managers and staff in order to investigate the methods they were using to increase learners' key skills attainment and to identify any examples of good practice. Inspectors also held interviews with learners and their employers to explore how well they understood key skills requirements and how these were developed and assessed during their learning programme.

6   Inspectors made return visits to just over half of the providers sampled initially. During these visits, inspectors evaluated the impact of the key skills strategies providers had put in place to improve learners' attainment of qualification frameworks.

7   A desk review of Estyn's work-based learning inspection reports also contributes to the evidence base for this report. It includes an analysis and comparison of the grades awarded for standards in the learning areas inspected in the period from September 2004 to February 2008 (see Appendix 2). The inspection reports and other relevant publications can be viewed on Estyn's website www.estyn.gsi.gov.uk

8   A number of case studies of the strategies used by providers to improve key skills and the attainment of qualification frameworks can be found at Appendix 3.

Main findings

9   Since May 2006, there has been a significant improvement in the number of learners who complete the key skills, technical certificate and National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) that they need to gain the full qualification framework for a FMA or MA.

10   In the table below, the grades awarded for standards in the learning areas inspected reflect the improvement in learners' attainment of FMA and MA qualification frameworks in the period from September 2004 to February 2008. (Tables in Appendix 2 show the grades awarded in learning areas for each of the periods below.)

2004-2008: Standards in learning areas inspected

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
2007-2008 (February)	45%	45%	10%	0%	0%
2006-2007	38%	27%	18%	18%	0%
2005-2006	28%	21%	10%	38%	3%
2004-2005	6%	25%	47%	22%	0%

11   The key skills that learners must achieve for their qualification frameworks, and the levels at which they must achieve them, vary according to the sector in which they work. In recent years, key skills requirements for qualification frameworks have changed so that they are not as demanding as they were previously, particularly for MA learners.

12   Other factors that have helped to improve the attainment of qualification frameworks include the removal of key skills external tests and the work undertaken by training staff to integrate key skills into learners' NVQs and technical certificates. Learners now collect much of the evidence needed for their key skills portfolios through their everyday work and/or contextualised assignments.

13   All providers have taken part in a wide range of well-planned training events and conferences run by Dysg. These events, and the one-to-one support provided by Dysg consultants, have improved providers' understanding and expertise in key skills. The training provided has played a valuable role in clarifying issues of concern and the sharing of good practice in the delivery and assessment of key skills with other work-based learning providers.

14   The improved standards in work-based learning are also the direct result of the many effective strategies put in place by providers to improve the quality, delivery and attainment of key skills and qualification frameworks. Providers have worked hard to improve learners' and employers' perceptions of the value of key skills to individuals and the companies in which they work.

Recommendations

The Welsh Assembly Government should:

R1 make sure that robust contractual arrangements are in place with work-based learning providers to ensure the attainment of qualification frameworks;

R2 continue to provide on-going support and training for key skills at a national level to help work-based learning providers to improve the quality of their training and to increase the number of learners attaining qualification frameworks; and

R3 improve the collection, analysis and use of data to enable work-based learning providers to benchmark their performance accurately and to identify areas of their work which need to improve.

Work-based learning providers should:

R4 further develop strategies to increase learners' attainment of key skills and qualification frameworks;

R5 make sure that off-the-job training, including key skills, is a compulsory part of learning programmes;

R6 improve learners' access to information and communications technology (ICT) facilities;

R7 work with employers to identify further opportunities for learners to develop and collect key skills evidence in their day-to-day work;

R8 provide learners with more opportunities to use and improve their Welsh and bilingual skills when working on key skills and improve the support and resources available to enable them to do so;

R9 set challenging medium and long-term targets for learners to complete key skills by specific dates within their overall period of training;

R10 increase the use of observations of training to improve the quality and consistency of key skills delivery and assessment; and

R11 rigorously analyse key skills data and benchmark it to identify strengths and areas which need to improve.

Effective strategies for learners to achieve key skills within qualification frameworks

15   The sections that follow outline the effective strategies used by the work-based learning providers in our sample to improve the management, quality, delivery and attainment of key skills and qualification frameworks.

The management of key skills

16   Almost all providers have developed useful and comprehensive key skills policies or other policy documentation and staff handbooks which address the management of key skills delivery, including assessment and monitoring of learners' progress.

17   All providers invest in and make good use of new or revised job roles which focus on improving the overall achievement of key skills. Most providers have a key skills co-ordinator and assessors, key skills 'champions' or small teams within the organisation who have clear roles and responsibilities for the different aspects of key skills delivery, assessment or monitoring of learners' progress.

18   Many providers have established overall targets in their quality development plans for an increase in key skills and qualification framework attainment. They also have separate key skills targets for individual learning areas.

19   In the best cases, providers set measurable targets and use these milestones well to judge the success or otherwise of their improvement strategies. They benchmark attainment in different learning areas within the company and with other work-based learning providers to identify strengths and areas which need to improve. A minority of providers have also established good challenging interim or mid-term targets for individual learning areas, training staff and learners. Managers review these thoroughly with staff on a regular one-to-one basis.

20   All providers have good procedures for tracking learners' progress towards achieving their qualification frameworks. This often involves one member of staff with responsibility for maintaining an overview of all learners' progress towards achieving their key skills and qualification frameworks. Many providers have useful paper-based or computerised tracking systems which give a clear indication of learners' progress. Providers use these systems well to identify potential problems at an early stage.

21   Most learners start working on their key skills qualifications early in their programme and often benefit from a compulsory period of off-the-job training. Employers and supervisors often work closely with training staff to plan the delivery and assessment of key skills to meet the specific needs of learners and their workplaces. Where compulsory off-the-job training takes place, providers keep attendance records and inform employers promptly about learner absences. As a result of this co-ordinated approach, learners' attainment of key skills and qualification frameworks has improved significantly in recent years.

22   The way in which work-based learning providers deliver and assess key skills varies considerably. Most providers are making good progress in integrating key skills into learners' NVQ and technical certificate from the beginning of their learning programme. Training staff work hard to identify opportunities to assess learners' key skills within naturally occurring opportunities during their day-to-day tasks in work. Work undertaken for an NVQ or technical certificate can also be cross-referenced into learners' key skills portfolios. This approach is very effective as it not only enables learners to use workplace evidence and to see the relevance of key skills to their work, but also increases their motivation and the pace at which they achieve key skills qualifications.

23   Where it is difficult to integrate key skills into an NVQ or technical certificate, training staff work closely with employers and workplace supervisors to develop suitable contextualised assignments and projects which enable learners to meet key skills requirements and improve their performance at work. However, very few providers offer learners opportunities to use their Welsh or bilingual skills when working on key skills.

24   Other models of key skills delivery and assessment are also effective. For example, in a college-based work-based learning provider, engineering learners spend one year full-time in college as part of their MA programme. During this period, learners attain five key skills at a level appropriate to or above that required for their qualification framework before they start on-the-job training. Learners benefit from weekly one hour discreet sessions for each of the main key skills (Communication, Application of Number and Information and Communications Technology). Two of the wider key skills (Improving Own Learning and Performance and Working With Others) are successfully integrated into their NVQ engineering programme. All of the key skills work that learners undertake relates very well to engineering and they enjoy the fact that they attain key skills qualifications by completing work-related tasks.

25   Another work-based learning provider focuses on learners attaining the three wider key skills qualifications during an initial 12 week training period. Training staff plan this by carefully integrating key skills into the highly specialised off-the-job training programme that all new entrants must complete. At the end of this period, learners begin on-the-job training in different locations across South Wales, where they focus on the three main key skills by completing well-designed work-related assignments and projects to develop their key skills and collect suitable evidence.

| **The quality and evaluation of key skills delivery** |

26 The following paragraphs highlight the strategies which work-based learning providers use to improve the quality and evaluation of key skills delivery.

27 At the time of inspectors' initial visits, all providers had identified the need to improve staff understanding and expertise in key skills as a priority. Since then, an increasing number of staff have benefited from their involvement in a wide range of useful training and development activities. As a result, providers are now in a much stronger position to give learners the support they need to achieve their key skills qualifications.

28 In 2006, Dysg's Key Skills Support Programme for Work-based Learning carried out a survey to measure the level of training need for work-based learning staff. The analysis from this survey indicated that the work-based learning sector needed a high level of staff training. This was mainly due to most organisations only providing their training staff with training to raise their awareness of key skills rather than training in how to plan and manage key skills provision.

29 All providers have now taken part in a wide range of well-planned training events and conferences run by Dysg. These events, and the one-to-one support provided by Dysg consultants, made a very positive impact on improving providers' understanding and expertise in key skills. The training provided played a valuable role in clarifying issues of concern and the sharing of good practice in the delivery and assessment of key skills across the work-based learning sector. Awarding bodies have also made a useful contribution to supporting the development of providers' key skills expertise by working with training staff to identify opportunities to integrate key skills into on-the-job and off-the-job training.

30 Many training staff develop their expertise further by taking the key skills qualifications themselves. Almost all providers have members of staff who are undertaking the Key Skills Professional Development Award or Coaching and Mentoring Award.

31 Most providers have good arrangements for in-house training events which include key skills. On return to their own organisations after attending external training courses, participants share the information and materials provided at these events with their colleagues.

32 A small number of the work-based learning providers in our sample are members of Dysg's Key Skills Expert Panel. This gives them valuable opportunities to network with other providers and to share good practice. They use this experience well to bring considerable expertise and insight into their own organisations for the benefit of learners.

33 Providers regularly review their learning resources for key skills. An increasing number use good quality learning resources, including those available from the Basic Skills Agency, the Key Skills Support Programme and awarding bodies. As their expertise increases, many training staff also develop good quality learning materials themselves to support learners in areas such as Application of Number.

34   Almost all of the providers in our sample have made a significant investment in ICT facilities and equipment. Training staff use interactive whiteboards confidently in off-the-job training sessions. Many providers have dedicated ICT suites and enough computers to enable learners to undertake independent research or prepare PowerPoint presentations for their peers. When working on key skills assignments, learners often make good use of the wide range of information available on their company intranet systems. Many learners also have good access to laptop computers and portable printers when training staff visit them in work. This is particularly useful where learners remain in their workplaces for off-the-job training rather than attend the providers' premises. However, in a minority of cases, learners who have difficulty attending off-the-job training sessions do not have enough access to ICT facilities.

35   All providers hold a range of regular staff meetings which focus on key skills and learners' attainment. These meetings include standardisation meetings between staff who deliver and assess key skills, key skills co-ordinators and internal verifiers. They effectively enable staff to share good practice and to develop a collective approach to the promotion of high standards. In the best cases, managers also have detailed discussions on a one-to-one basis with staff who have responsibility for learners' key skills progress. These discussions have been particularly effective in promoting staff responsibility for key skills and improving the attainment of qualification frameworks.

36   Most providers have a suitable number of key skills internal verifiers. Where providers have introduced internal observations of training, this has helped to improve the quality and consistency of key skills delivery and assessment. Many providers also ask learners about their key skills experiences to identify areas for improvement.

37   Most providers analyse performance data rigorously to gain specific information on individual key skills and other elements of the qualification frameworks. In the best cases, providers use this information well to compare performance across different learning areas, key skills qualifications and levels. This analysis helps providers to evaluate performance and identify areas which need to improve much more accurately than in the past when data analysis was often limited to the completion of full qualification frameworks. A growing number of providers are also beginning to benchmark attainment data with other work-based learning providers.

Learners' attitudes to key skills

38   The strategies used by work-based learning providers to improve learners' attitudes to key skills have been particularly effective. All providers introduce learners to the qualification frameworks that they will be working towards at interview or during induction at the start of their learning programme.

39   Providers place greater emphasis than previously on the importance of learners' attaining a qualification framework rather than an NVQ and technical certificate with key skills 'bolted-on' towards the end of their training period. Where this occurred, learners were often unable to see the relevance of key skills to their work or to understand why they had more work to complete before achieving their qualification framework.

40   Most learners have a clear overview of all the elements of their learning programme from the beginning. They have a good understanding of key skills and know that these are an essential part of their qualification framework. Most learners know which aspects of key skills they can complete as part of their NVQ or where they need to complete additional work-related assignments and projects. Most learners describe the benefits of key skills in improving their every day lives and helping promotion and career prospects.

41   Learners' positive attitudes to key skills have had a big impact on improving their motivation to attain their qualification framework. Learners see key skills as being very relevant to their job roles. For example, in one provider, the skills that learners undertaking a modern apprenticeship in engineering develop appropriately in Application of Number have improved their ability to calculate more accurately. Their report writing and presentation skills have also improved as a result of the skills developed when working towards other key skills such as Communication and Information and Communications Technology. Many learners also prepare good quality PowerPoint presentations which they use in discussions with their peers and workplace staff.

42   Training staff use initial assessment well to identify learners' strengths and weaknesses and arrange suitable support to help them. As learners are more aware of key skills requirements than previously and the evidence they need to generate for their key skills portfolios, they often take responsibility themselves for identifying suitable assessment opportunities early on in their learning programme.

43   Most learners generate suitable key skills evidence through the completion of specific tasks in their normal job role. Where learners are unable to collect evidence in this way, they often complete good quality work-related assignments and/or projects that relate well to the commercial or industrial setting in which they work. Learners appreciate the relevance of these assignments and indicate that their performance in work has improved as a result.

44   Many learners indicate that they thoroughly enjoy these activities, many of which can generate a wide range of key skills evidence. In one provider, learners undertaking a childcare programme enjoyed the challenge involved in setting targets for the completion of a work-related project on opening a children's nursery, which

integrated all six key skills. Learners also put forward useful suggestions which helped training staff and employers to design other suitable work-related assignments or projects. These factors play a major role in motivating learners to work towards their key skills qualifications.

45   At the start of their programme, learners' individual learning plans contain targets for the completion of key skills as well an NVQ and technical certificate. On an on-going basis, training staff negotiate realistic 'bite-sized' short-term targets with learners and their employers which help them to focus on achieving specific aspects of the qualification framework before their next review. This motivates learners and helps them to see their progress from one review to the next.

46   However, learners do not always have mid-term or long-term targets which show what aspects of their key skills, technical certificate and NVQ that they need to achieve throughout their programme. As a result, learners do not always fully appreciate the effect that missing short-term targets will have on their ability to achieve their qualification framework within agreed timescales.

47   Learners generally make good use of their targets and are motivated by the useful verbal feedback and advice provided by training staff on how to improve the standard of their work further. In the best cases, assessors and key skills co-ordinators track learners' achievements very carefully and pick up potential problems quickly.

Employers' attitudes to and support for key skills

48   At the time of inspectors' initial visits, all providers had introduced strategies to improve employers' attitudes to and support for key skills. As a result, most employers indicate that key skills now have a much higher profile within their workplace than previously. Many employers also indicate that learners' involvement in key skills has helped to improve their self-confidence and enabled them to make a more effective contribution to the companies where they work.

49   Employers make good use of the written information sheets or employer handbooks that almost all work-based learning providers have developed to raise awareness of key skills issues.

50   All employers are aware that key skills are an essential element of qualification frameworks. Employers and workplace supervisors now have a better understanding than previously of the key skills their learners are undertaking and the levels at which they are working. In a few cases, employers have committed their learners to undertaking additional key skills which are not included in the qualification framework as they see the clear benefits to individual learners and their company.

51   Most employers have signed formal written agreements with providers which outline the expectations and responsibilities of both parties for the delivery of training. In most cases, these agreements make it clear that learners' attendance at off-the-job training sessions, including for key skills, is compulsory.

52   Employers often change learners' shift patterns to enable them to attend off-the-job training. In order to facilitate learners' attendance at off-the-job training, one provider rents an office within the employer's premises to deliver training. This strategy enables learners to quickly transfer skills gained through off-the-job training into the workplace situation when they return to their workstations.

53   Although employers in areas such as manufacturing are sometimes reluctant to release learners from work to attend off-the-job training, providers have developed useful strategies to overcome this. For example, one provider offers financial incentives which encourage learners to attend training sessions.

54   Training staff have also made a significant contribution to improving employers' understanding of key skills. In their regular visits to learners in work, they monitor learners' progress and help employers to identify their role in developing learners' key skills. An increasing number of employers and workplace supervisors work closely with training staff to examine learners' job roles. This enables them to identify where learners have opportunities to develop key skills and gain the evidence they need for their portfolios from day-to-day activities in work. Many employers rotate learners' job roles so that learners benefit from the specific assessment opportunities available. Employers work with training staff to plan assessment visits to learners during evening or early morning shifts. Where workplace staff are qualified assessors, they often assess learners whenever a suitable opportunity arises. This helps learners to make good progress.

55   Employers work closely with assessors to enable learners to complete work-based
      assignments or projects designed to help them collect key skills evidence, while, at
      the same time, addressing the specific needs of the company. Employers find this
      beneficial as their learners often gain new skills which, in some cases, can lead to a
      change of job roles and promotion. In many cases, employers are also involved
      when learners make good quality presentations about aspects of work to their peers.

Appendix 1

Qualification frameworks

By qualification framework we mean: the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ), specified key skills and technical certificates that the occupational sector requires. This paper concentrates on learners on the Foundation Modern Apprenticeship (FMA) and Modern Apprenticeship (MA) programmes. Other work-based learning routes, which are designed around individual learners' needs, do not have a specified learning framework which learners are expected to attain.

All learners on FMA and MA programmes are expected to complete a specified NVQ related to the industry in which they are working. In addition, they must also complete a portfolio of key skills. There are six key skills, all available at levels 1, 2 and 3. Most are also available at level 4. The key skills are:

- Application of Number;

- Communication;

- Information and Communications Technology;

- Improving Own Learning and Performance;

- Working With Others; and

- Problem Solving.

Appendix 2

Table 1: shows the frequency of grades 1 to 5 achieved for standards in learning areas in the period between September 2007 and February 2008.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Total number of times inspected
Learning area						
Health, public services and care	2	2	1	0	0	5
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	2	2	1	0	0	5
Construction, planning and the built environment	2	2	0	0	0	4
Retail and customer services	2	2	0	0	0	4
Business, administration and law	2	2	0	0	0	4
Totals	10	10	2	0	0	22
Percentages	45%	45%	10%	0%	0%	

Note 1: the grades awarded for standards in the learning areas inspected reflect learners' attainment of FMA and MA qualification frameworks, including key skills.

Table 2: shows the frequency of grades 1 to 5 achieved for standards in learning areas in the period between September 2006 and August 2007.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Total number of times inspected
Learning area						
Health, public services and care	0	3	0	1	0	4
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	5	2	1	0	0	8
Agriculture	0	0	1	0	0	1
Construction, planning and the built environment	0	0	2	0	0	2
Information and communications technology	2	1	1	1	0	5
Hair and beauty	0	1	0	1	0	2
Hospitality and catering	1	2	0	0	0	3
Retail and customer services	3	1	2	1	0	7
Education and training: classroom assistants	1	0	0	0	0	1
Leisure, travel and tourism	0	1	0	0	0	1
Business, administration and law	5	1	1	4	0	11
Totals	17	12	8	8	0	45
Percentages	38%	27%	18%	18%	0%	

Note 1: the grades awarded for standards in the learning areas inspected reflect learners' attainment of FMA and MA qualification frameworks, including key skills.

Table 3: shows the frequency of grades 1 to 5 achieved for standards in learning areas in the period between September 2005 and August 2006.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Total number of times inspected
Learning area						
Health, public services and care	1	0	1	0	1	3
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	1	3	0	2	0	6
Agriculture	2	1	1	0	0	4
Construction, planning and the built environment	0	0	1	2	0	3
Information and communications technology	0	0	0	2	0	2
Hair and beauty	1	0	0	0	0	1
Hospitality and catering	0	1	0	1	0	2
Retail and customer services	1	0	0	1	0	2
Business, administration and law	2	1	0	3	0	6
Totals	8	6	3	11	1	29
Percentages	28%	21%	10%	38%	3%	

Note 1: the grades awarded for standards in the learning areas inspected reflect learners' attainment of FMA and MA qualification frameworks, including key skills.

Table 4: shows the frequency of grades 1 to 5 achieved for standards in learning areas in the period between September 2004 and August 2005.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Total number of times inspected
Learning area						
Health, public services and care	0	1	3	2	0	6
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	1	2	2	1	0	6
Construction, planning and the built environment	0	1	2	2	0	5
Information and communications technology	0	1	1	0	0	2
Hair and beauty	0	2	0	1	0	3
Hospitality and catering	0	0	1	0	0	1
Retailing and customer services	0	0	1	0	0	1
Business, administration and law	1	1	5	1	0	8
Totals	2	8	15	7	0	32
Percentages	6%	25%	47%	22%	0%	

Note 1: the grades awarded for standards in the learning areas inspected reflect learners' attainment of FMA and MA qualification frameworks, including key skills.

Appendix 3

Case studies

Case study 1: Starting work on key skills early

Most learners worked towards and achieved key skills qualifications early in their programme. This helped them to understand the importance of key skills to their work role. Many learners worked towards key skills beyond the minimum requirements of their apprenticeship. For example, they achieved wider key skills, such as Improving Own Learning and Performance, as well as the key skills required to achieve their qualification framework.

The provider offered learners well-planned off-the-job training sessions which helped them to develop key skills alongside their occupational skills. All learners valued the opportunity to take part in off-the-job training sessions as they were able to share learning experiences with colleagues who worked in different environments. A few learners achieved accreditation for key skills at a higher level than the framework required.

Case study 2: Challenging learners to achieve

Training staff had high expectations of what learners could achieve. At every opportunity, they challenged and extended learners well. This helped learners to achieve very high standards in their work roles and written work. As well as helping learners to reach high levels of professional competence, training staff worked successfully with them to improve their transferable and key skills. This resulted in learners improving their oral communication skills, punctuation and grammar. These strategies made a significant impact on improving learners' self confidence and motivation to achieve their qualification frameworks.

Case study 3: Integrating key skills into learners' day-to-day work

All learners started work on key skills at the beginning of their learning programme. Training staff integrated key skills well into their NVQ and technical certificate and encouraged learners to collect a range of naturally occurring portfolio evidence from the tasks they undertook at work. One learner produced a useful guide to mail merge for colleagues working on their ICT key skills project. When working on his Communication key skills project, another learner produced a well-written and illustrated guide to the services offered to clients by his company. A business administration learner who works in a hospital produced a comprehensive appointment card and information system for patients. The hospital now uses this system to schedule patients' appointments.

In addition to the key skills identified in their individual learning plans, many business administration learners also achieved the wider key skills which are highly valued by the learners and their employers. These achievements enabled learners to develop their social skills and to be more effective when working with colleagues in work and with customers. Learners' attainment of qualification frameworks was outstanding.

Case study 4: Identifying workplace opportunities to develop and assess key skills

All learners benefited from good or very good quality work placements which supported the development of their occupational and key skills. All training staff integrated key skills well into learners' work. Where learners encountered difficulty in covering the range of work needed to meet awarding body requirements, training staff worked closely with employers to provide these learners with opportunities for gathering the evidence they needed. Where this was not possible, they arranged for these learners to have a temporary placement with another contractor who carried out this work.

Case study 5: Using on-the-job and off-the-job training to develop and assess key skills

All learners had very good opportunities to develop and improve their key skills in the workplace. Learners also benefited from well-planned off-the-job sessions which helped them to develop their key skills alongside their dental nursing skills. Learners completed detailed and occupationally relevant assignments that helped them develop key skills well in the context of their work. Many learners completed key skills at a higher level than that needed for their apprenticeship and achieved additional key skills which were not required as part of their qualification framework.

Case study 6: Using projects to develop and assess key skills

The provider planned the delivery of key skills very well. Training staff integrated key skills into all aspects of learners' programmes. This helped many learners to achieve level 1 key skills qualifications instead of basic skills qualifications. All learners were involved in fund-raising events for local, national and international charities. Training staff arranged these events as projects that encouraged learners to interact with other learners and members of the community. This had a significant impact on developing learners' self-confidence. The provider also made excellent use of the fund raising activities to develop learners' entrepreneurial awareness when they evaluated the financial success of their team. Learners' involvement in these projects contributed well to their attainment of key skills and qualification frameworks

Case study 7: Setting and monitoring challenging targets

All learners, training staff and employers agreed challenging but realistic targets at regular and frequent assessment meetings. Many learners set goals for themselves that were additional to those needed to complete their training programme successfully. For example, a business administration learner was working towards five key skills qualifications at level 3 and the key skill in Communication at level 4, when the qualification framework only required two key skills at level 2. Learners' key skills portfolios were of a high standard and learners applied their key skills well to other aspects of their learning programmes.

Target setting for staff performance and learners' achievements was a key activity throughout the company. Managers agreed and set strategic targets for the business and themselves that were challenging, yet realistic. They formally monitored all

business and personal targets closely and evaluated performance against set objectives. Managers continually reviewed and analysed the targets that they set with learners and staff. They took speedy action if performance outcomes were not as planned. Attainment of qualification frameworks was very good.

Case study 8: Tracking learners' progress using a 'traffic light' system

The provider used a colour-coded computerised tracking system to record the attainment of each element of key skills and other components of the qualification framework. These attainments were linked to learners' agreed timescales for the completion of their qualification frameworks.

Where a learner was 'on track' to complete on time, training staff used the colour green to record their progress. Training staff used amber to record where a learner was 'at risk' of falling behind schedule and red to alert them to learners who needed immediate support to ensure they completed their qualification framework within agreed timescales.

Glossary

Basic skills
The ability to speak, read and write in Welsh or English and to use mathematics at a level needed to function at work and in society

Basic Skills Agency
The Basic Skills Agency (Wales), which has merged with the Welsh Assembly Government, implements the National Basic Skills Strategy for Wales.

Coaching and Mentoring Certificate and Diploma
The level 3 Certificate in Coaching and Mentoring is designed for key skills specialists with a minimum of one year's successful experience in delivering and assessing one or more key skills. The focus of the qualification is on using coaching as an improvement tool, helping key skills specialists to pass on their experience and expertise to others.

The level 5 Diploma in Management Coaching and Mentoring is designed for experienced key skills co-ordinators and managers to actively support the growth and development of key skills within their organisation.

DCELLS
Department for Children, Lifelong Learning and Skills

Dysg
Until recently, Dysg was a division within the Department for Children, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS), which focuses on improving the quality of teaching and learning in the post-14 education and training sector. Dysg has now merged with the new Learning and Teaching Strategies Branch within the Learning and Professional Development Division of DCELLS.

Foundation Modern Apprenticeships
Employed learners can receive training to NVQ level 2. They also need to complete key skills and technical certificates.

Internal verification
Internal verification or standardisation is the process whereby a centre ensures it operates consistently and to national standards in interpreting and assessing the key skills.

Key Skills Expert Panel	The Key Skills Support for Work Based Learning project has set up the Key Skills Expert Panel for Wales. Currently 17 work-based learning providers are represented on the Expert Panel. The panel represents the needs of work-based learning to the Welsh Assembly Government, thereby contributing to establishing policy and practice in Wales.

Key skills qualifications

The key skills are:

- Communication;
- Application of Number; and
- Information and Communications Technology.

The wider key skills are:

- Problem Solving;
- Improving Own Learning and Performance; and
- Working With Others.

These key skills are available from level 1 to level 4. As learners progress through the levels, they move from straightforward to more complicated tasks. They also have to show an increasing ability to use higher level skills such as analysis, evaluation and justification.

Key Skills Professional Development Certificate

This level 5 qualification develops critical awareness of the national key skills standards for teaching, learning and assessing key skills. The certificate has been modified for use in Wales and includes a specific unit in Key Skills and the Welsh Baccalaureate.

Key Skills Support Programme

There are two key skills programmes, the KSSPC for schools and colleges and KSWBL for work-based learning. Together these programmes provide support for key skills provision across Wales.

Modern Apprenticeships

These give employed learners training to National Vocational Qualification level 3 or higher. The learners also need to complete key skills and technical certificates.

NVQ

A National Vocational Qualification is a work-related qualification that reflects the skills and knowledge needed to do a job effectively. These qualifications are organised into five levels based on the knowledge and skills needed for a particular job.