



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Cardiff and Vale Quality Skills Alliance (WBL)
Colcot Road
Barry
CF62 8YJ**

Date of inspection: November 2012

by

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



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

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

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

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

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

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

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

Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.uk

© Crown Copyright 2013: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 27/02/2013

Context

Cardiff and Vale College Apprenticeships (CAVCA) is the consortium lead for the Cardiff and Vale College Consortium which is branded as the Quality Skills Alliance. The consortium is a collaboration of a number of work-based learning and further education college partners. These are:

- Cardiff and Vale College Apprenticeships;
- Bridgend College;
- Coleg Gwent;
- The College Ystrad Mynach;
- Building Engineering Services Training Ltd;
- Remit Ltd;
- Icon Training;
- Focus On;
- People Business Wales and
- Newport and District GTA.

The consortium offers learners training programmes in Foundation Apprenticeships, Apprenticeships, Traineeships and Steps to Employment programmes. Learners can choose from occupational areas such as:

- Health, Public Services and Care;
- Agriculture;
- Hairdressing and Beauty;
- Construction and the Built Environment;
- Engineering; and
- Preparation for Life and Work

At the time of inspection the consortium has 2200 learners following these programmes. Many apprentices are clustered around the Capital region and the Vale of Glamorgan. In these areas, approximately 65% of the population are employed in full or part time work. Nine per cent of working age people do not have any qualifications and 15% of the population can speak Welsh.

Summary

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

Current performance

Overall, the rate at which learners attain their qualifications and achieve the targets set out in their individual learning plans is unsatisfactory. Recent unverified data from August 2012 to October 2012 shows that the consortium partners have not improved learner outcomes during the past few months.

The consortium does not have strong enough partnership arrangements with its sub-contractors and employers. Leadership and management are not effective enough, and the developments of the consortium working arrangements and practices have been too slow. Quality assurance procedures and processes are underdeveloped and not fully embedded across the consortium. The consortium partners and its sub-contractor give unsatisfactory value for money.

Prospects for improvement

- Managers and staff are working hard to improve learners' attainment rates;
- senior managers are starting to roll out standardised processes and procedures across the consortium;
- data management and collection systems are starting to improve;
- consortium partners are beginning to work together with a common aim;
- the consortium is developing new quality improvement processes and procedures; and
- communication between consortium partners and sub-contractors is starting to improve.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the rates at which all learners achieve their full framework qualifications
- R2 Fully plan and embed strategies to improve learners' literacy and numeracy skills
- R3 Promote and enhance the learning experience to include the development of Welsh language skills, the culture of Wales and education for sustainable development and global citizenship (ESDGC)
- R4 Improve the quality and consistency of learning and assessment across the consortium
- R5 Make sure that the consortium puts in place an appropriate overarching strategy for monitoring and managing safeguarding
- R6 Make sure that managers at all levels implement the consortium's strategic objectives as effective operational activities
- R7 Make sure that the implementation of new quality processes are effective in improving learner outcomes

What happens next?

Estyn requires the consortium partners to address the recommendations from the inspection in its improvement plan to DfES as part of the regular improvement planning cycle. Estyn will re-inspect the consortium in about a year from this inspection. Also, Estyn link officers will monitor the progress of the consortium leading up to the re-inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Unsatisfactory

Standards: Unsatisfactory

Overall, in the period 2008 to 2011 the rates at which learners gained their qualification framework were adequate. However, in 2010-2011, success rates for the majority of consortium partners were below national comparators and success rates for almost half of the occupational sectors were below sector averages within both Apprenticeship programmes.

Success rates within individual subject areas vary widely between consortium partners. For example, in Construction, Planning and the Built Environment Apprenticeships, in 2010-2011 the success rate in Building Engineering Services Training Ltd was 100%, but in Coleg Glan Hafren it was 47%.

Similarly, success rates within individual consortium partners have also been also inconsistent. For example, in Retail Motor Industry Training Ltd, in Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies, the success rate for Apprentices in 2010-11 was 100%, but for Foundation Modern Apprentices it was 35%.

Overall, in the period 2008 to 2011 the number of Skill Build learners achieving positive progressions was unsatisfactory and inconsistent across consortium partners. However, unverified data from August 2011 to date shows an improvement in employability programmes.

Unverified data from August 2011 to date shows that learners' success rates, across all programmes, have declined. Almost all partners within the consortium show success rates that are below last years' national comparators and overall performance is significantly below national comparators for Foundation Modern Apprenticeships and just below for Apprenticeships.

A few of the current learners make good progress in their training programmes. Most learners are clear about how much progress they have made and what they need to do to complete their training programme. Many learners quickly acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding and apply these in their practical and theory work.

Learners' portfolios are generally of an adequate standard. They contain an appropriate range of diverse evidence including witness testimonies, completed worksheets, DVDs and photographic evidence. However, a minority of portfolios contain examples of poor spelling, punctuation or grammar.

In most learning areas, learners gain additional qualifications that widen their job choice and improve their employability.

The majority of learners work well independently and in groups. They use technical language confidently and with understanding. They give clear explanations about

their work and show confidence in using the skills they learn. A very few show a good awareness of sustainable development and global citizenship.

A minority of learners, mainly those on higher level training programmes write well. They use punctuation appropriately and sentence structure is good. They spell technical words accurately within their work. However, across almost all other levels learners do not develop their literacy skills consistently. A majority of learners rely too heavily on their assessor correcting work for them and do not develop effective proof reading skills.

Only a minority of learners use numeracy skills well within their training programmes. A few learners are not able to carry out higher-level mathematics calculations due to a lack of basic numeracy skills.

A minority of learners take Essential Skills Wales qualifications at a level that is not matched well enough to their current skills level. A few learners repeat qualifications at a level they already hold. Higher ability learners are not challenged well enough to achieve to the best of their ability.

Most learners do not have specific literacy and numeracy targets and are not aware of the specific skills they need to develop.

The consortium members do not analyse learners' Welsh language needs well enough. A few learners benefit from being assessed in the Welsh language. Overall, the consortium members do not do enough to extend learners' knowledge of Wales and the Welsh language and culture.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all learners feel confident and safe in their workplace and training centre environments. They show a good understanding of the health and safety requirements of their work. The majority of learners have developed an improved understanding of healthy lifestyles and healthy eating from their training programme. Learners on traineeships improve their confidence sometimes from a very low base. They learn to work together well, and provide good support to each other in team tasks.

All learners interviewed said they are enjoying their training programme and would recommend the programme to others. A majority are positive about the impact the training is having on their employment skills and most are developing good relationships with employers and assessors. Attendance is good in both on and off-the-job training.

A very few learners work on a community project linked to employment. This project includes designing and manufacturing sculptures which will be placed in the local community. In a few cases learners could give examples of where they had influenced assessment and the timetable of activities in off-the-job training. Most learners recognise that they are asked for their views. In a few cases they received feedback about how the consortium partners had used this information to improve the training and learning experience.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Adequate

Learning experiences: Adequate

For all learners, the consortium partners and sub-contractors offer a flexible learning journey. It is available in all learning areas, at different levels and with a choice of location. Learners can move easily around provision to achieve skills within their training programme. The availability of additional qualifications in subjects like manual handling and construction site safety enhances learners' employment opportunities.

Many employers value the work of the consortium in helping them achieve their business goals. It is responsive to their needs and as result has developed useful, new courses. Some of these are in specialist areas, such as air conditioning and refrigeration.

There are a few good examples of the consortium developing learners' essential skills. For example, around half of foundation apprentices achieve essential skills at a higher level than required for their qualification framework. However, overall the consortium's arrangements for improving learners' essential skills are not effective enough. It has made slow progress in standardising assessment arrangements and using the results of these for planning purposes. Tutors and training staff do not pay enough attention to skills development and miss too many opportunities to contextualise literacy and numeracy within learning areas.

Overall, the consortium partners do not analyse learners' Welsh language needs well enough. A few learners benefit from being assessed in the Welsh language. However, this is not consistent across the consortium partners. There are missed opportunities in many cases for Welsh speaking learners to complete course work and assessments in Welsh.

Bilingual champions collaborate well to share good practice. However, initiatives are in the early stages of development and are not cascaded across the consortium to provide the same opportunities for all learners.

A few learners have good opportunities to learn about education for sustainable development and global citizenship (ESDGC). For example, they take part in international visits or undertake fundraising events for charity. This broadens their experiences well. Overall, however, this aspect of the consortium's work is not embedded well enough across all consortium partners and in only a few examples is ESDGC contextualised effectively in the learning areas.

Teaching: Unsatisfactory

Overall, the quality of teaching and assessment is unsatisfactory.

Many tutors and training staff plan a good range of off-the-job and on-the-job learning experiences for learners. However, many lesson plans do not reference essential skill opportunities to help learners develop their skills. In many sessions, tutors do not check learners work for accuracy and insufficient attention is paid to correcting spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Nearly all tutors and assessors have up-to-date subject knowledge and skills. Many assessors use their industrial experience well and provide learners with good levels of support. Most tutors and assessors have a good rapport with learners. However, in a few taught sessions targets are not always specific and sufficiently challenging for learners.

Resources for training and teaching are generally of a good quality. However, a minority of these resources are not well presented. Many written documents are not at a suitable readability level to enable learners to understand them.

In most training sessions tutors use a variety of teaching methods well. However, a few opportunities to link the wider curriculum and learner skills together are missed. In a few sessions the use of closed questions limits the tutors' opportunity to check that learners understand what is being taught. Only a very few tutors encouraged higher level thinking skills and use probing questions to assess and challenge learners.

However, many learners acquire new practical skills suitable for the workplace. For example, one learner described how the skills learnt in off-job-training sessions enabled him to undertake more complex work with his employer. In another example, an employer described how his apprentice was now able to undertake electrical fault finding on heavy goods vehicles.

Assessment of learning is unsatisfactory. Many assessors and training staff do not involve learners well enough in setting and agreeing assessment targets, and as a result learners often do not complete their qualifications on time. Many assessors do not give learners enough formal evaluative written feedback to help them improve and progress. Where written feedback is given, it is not always sufficiently specific, time bound and challenging. Overall, assessors do not set enough targets for literacy and numeracy. Where targets are set for learners, they are often not followed up.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate

Overall, the consortium partners promote health and wellbeing to an appropriate standard. Many assessors and tutors discuss important issues such as bullying and harassment, health and safety and healthy lifestyle choices routinely with learners. Assessors use the recently updated progress review documentation well to promote discussion and raise the learners' awareness and understanding of general welfare issues.

The consortium partners give learners appropriate advice and guidance before they start their training. The majority of learners interviewed understand the requirements of their individual programme and take responsibility for their learning. However, a minority of learners do not consistently use the information in their induction handbooks and are not aware of support services available.

Assessors and tutors support learners well to achieve their training and learning goals. However, support for learners to progress in their literacy and numeracy skills is inconsistent.

Staff do not identify learners' additional learning needs well enough at the start of their training programme. Support for learners is not systematically planned between assessors, coordinators and support departments. This means learners do not always benefit from more specialised learning support to enable them to develop and progress to the best of their ability.

Consortium partners offer a wide variety of support options for those learners who have been identified as needing additional support. However, very few learners take up the offer.

Currently the consortium partners do not plan well enough to monitor and track the number of learners requiring and obtaining additional learning support or the impact of support provision on learner achievement and outcomes.

All consortium members have their own individual policies and procedures for managing safeguarding, including safe recruitment, and their own arrangements for training staff. The consortium has recently begun an audit of these. It is too early for the consortium to judge if these arrangements are appropriate.

The consortium has produced a common 'procedures' document for safeguarding which outlines at a basic level actions individuals should or should not take. This document lacks sufficient detail to act as a corporate lead for all consortium members and sub-contractors.

A few tutors and assessors either do not know well enough what they need to do if they have safeguarding concerns, or have not received any training in safeguarding. Individual consortium partners undertake their own safeguarding training. Overall, arrangements within the consortium are not yet robust enough in monitoring the uptake of training to ensure that all relevant staff have attended safeguarding courses at appropriate levels.

There has been good progress by most individual consortium partners against recommendations for safeguarding identified for them in previous inspections.

Learning environment: Adequate

Although each consortium partner has policies covering equality and diversity, there is no overarching policy for the consortium as a whole.

All courses and most training sessions include modules on equal opportunities, diversity and cultural awareness. The consortium's quality-monitoring group monitors all learner review records to ensure that these areas are noted and are recorded as having been discussed. Whenever this is missing from the record, the quality group follow this through with the tutor, assessor and employer. However, the consortium does not have an effective process in place to monitor learners' understanding of equality and diversity as a result of their programme.

These same monitoring procedures are also used to assess learners' experiences including identifying discrimination and harassment. Learner satisfaction is also measured by evaluating the results of consortium partners' learner questionnaires. However, the results of this monitoring are not shared well enough through regular reports to the consortium partners.

There has been very recent monitoring of the consortium's equality data with some limited evaluation. However, the resulting analysis is simple and superficial. It lacks an in depth interrogation of the data in order to identify challenges and lessons to partners. It does not identify clearly enough how well learners from minority groups are progressing in their occupational area or how their attainment compares to that of their peers.

College campuses make good use of noticeboards and walls in public places to promote personal safety, equal opportunities and diversity through informative, well-designed posters. Similarly, in most classrooms and workplaces, good use is made of display spaces for posters promoting health and safety and good work practices. In a few cases, resource materials in classrooms are appropriate and all learners have access to course textbooks and learning materials.

College based provision is generally in good quality classrooms with access to appropriate information and communication technology and other specialist equipment. However, this is not always the case in work placements. For example, there has been a poor standard of cleanliness in one kitchen and lack of attention to general housekeeping in a storage area.

Workplace training is generally good. Learners have good access to the tools and equipment they need to support their learning.

Work placements generally provide good opportunities for the development of practical skills that allow learners to broaden their knowledge and understanding of their occupational route.

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

Leadership: Unsatisfactory

The consortium has established, and is led by, a Strategic Management Board. A representative from each consortium partner makes up the membership of the Strategic Board. The Strategic Board is supported by an Operational Management Board with clear aims and objectives to take the consortium forward. A range of useful working groups have been set up with responsibility for developing key aspects of the consortium's work. Both Boards demonstrate a strong commitment to improving standards and the performance of the consortium. However, this is not reflected in learner attainment and there has been little impact of this work to date.

The Strategic Management Board meets bi-monthly to review progress against targets and receive detailed reports from the monthly Operational Board meetings. It has developed and established a comprehensive 'collaboration agreement' which is used across the consortium. The Strategic Management Board has developed a three year vision of what 'what will success look like' as part of an overarching strategic plan. The recently established quality group monitor progress against this plan through the quality development plan and progress reports. However, it is too early to evaluate the full Impact of these strategies on the wide range of training activities across the consortium.

Since the consortium was established there has been an insufficient focus on improving learner standards and the rates at which they achieve their full qualification frameworks and other qualifications.

Communication across consortium partners and the sub-contractors is improving. The consortium partners are working well together to develop an ethos of trust and support. A useful range of regular meetings are effective in sharing information across partners. However, many staff, at all levels, are not aware they are working within a consortium partnership or of the benefits this partnership has to offer. For example, training staff do not have opportunities to share best practice or teaching and learning resources.

The consortium partners have responded well to local and national priorities for education and training. Members of the consortium partnership contribute to a wide range of Welsh Government local and national initiatives. Managers within the consortium partnership are actively involved in local and national bodies that include the local 14-19 network and the National Training Federation for Wales (NTfW). However this activity has not yet improved the outcomes for learners or their readiness to move on to higher levels of training or into employment.

Improving quality: Unsatisfactory

Following a recent review of the organisational structure of the consortium, new processes for quality monitoring and development have been put in place. As a result the consortium partners have developed a number of useful and appropriate procedures for standardising quality assurance activities. These include a standardised application form, individual learning plan, self-assessment template and health and safety procedures.

All sub-contractors and consortium partners have used standardised core questions to consult learners and employers about the quality of provision. Managers and staff analyse the results of these questionnaires well. However, they do not always use the results of the survey to develop improvements, particularly learners' attainment.

The self-assessment processes for the consortium is in the early stages of development. The self-assessment report produced prior to this inspection is very detailed and too descriptive. It does not set out evaluative comments with supporting evidence. The data used to make the evaluations is inaccurate and many of the evaluations are speculative.

Consortium partners are not doing enough to monitor performance or address issues relating to learners' framework qualifications not being achieved on time.

The quality development plan has aspirations for improvement, which if fully achieved should have resulted in an improvement in the qualifications achieved by learners. The recent progress update of the quality development plan recognises that few of these targets have been achieved and that a limited number of actions have been implemented.

The new organisational structure of the consortium has enabled consortium partners to work together and aid the development of the skills of consortium staff. This networking is starting to enable staff and teams to work more closely together for the future benefit of the whole consortium.

Partnership working: Adequate

The consortium has an appropriate range of partners and sub-contractors that meet the needs of learners and employers well. The consortium partners have developed an effective strategic group which builds on trust and works in an open and inclusive way. The consortium seeks to put the interests of the learner at the centre of the consortium partnership working arrangements; but this aspiration is not resulting in the timely completion or attainment of qualifications. The consortium partners work well with local employers. This includes involvement with a number of strategic projects of regional importance, such as the development of a knowledge economy to provide focussed support to help develop small businesses. The consortium's work with schools is less well developed.

The consortium partner's relationship with its sub-contractors is still work in progress. Only a few of the 15 sub-contractors made themselves available for a meeting with the inspection team. Those who attended the meeting, felt their involvement in the consortium has enabled them to concentrate more on addressing the needs of learners. This is due mainly to improvements in the practical administrative aspects of their business, such as the introduction of generic documentation and the good use of the individual learning plan and review form in the induction process.

As a result of the establishment of the consortium, a wider range of opportunities are now available for learners. Sub-contractors and consortium partners feel better able to refer learners and employers to the most appropriate organisation to meet their needs. However, staff in some consortium partners, sub-contractors and employers do not have a clear understanding of the aims and objectives of the consortium. Sharing of good practice to improve delivery of training and raising standards for learners is underdeveloped.

Resource management: Unsatisfactory

The management of resources, financial planning and contractual arrangements are not effective enough in raising learners' standards. There are firm arrangements in place to ensure that all consortium partners and sub-contractors have appropriate funding in this early period of the consortium operation. The consortium lead has plans in place for future allocations to be more closely linked to learner standards, quality performance and the number of learners on the training programme.

Consortium partners and subcontractors have long-established staff development programmes in place. Consortium partners have started to attend workshops and seminars together, which is helping improve cross-partner working. They have also started to introduce standardised documentation. All partners have an 'open door' policy for their staff to attend training events. However, a cross-consortium staff development programme is yet to be fully established.

The consortium partners have plans in place to co-ordinate the arrangements for staff development across the consortium and make more efficient use of resources. The current progress in implementing these plans is unclear, and it is too early to judge the quality and impact.

There is an appropriate number of qualified and experienced staff across the consortium. Many staff have long standing industrial and commercial experience. However, very few staff have the skills to support numeracy and literacy teaching and training across the consortium partners or sub-contractors.

The deployment of staff is carried out appropriately by the consortium partners and sub-contractors.

Overall standards and the rates at which learners attain their qualifications in the consortium partners' and sub-contractors' provision are unsatisfactory. As a result, the consortium and its sub-contractors offer unsatisfactory value for money.

Appendix 1

Learner Satisfaction

Approximately 25% of learners currently in training with the consortium partners and the sub-contractors completed the learner questionnaire.

A majority of these learners said they get good support and this helps them improve their life skills. Many learners said they have good quality work-placements and they enjoy their learning. Only half the learners said they get good advice when they leave their training programme.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Sandra Barnard	Reporting Inspector
Stephen Davies	Team Inspector
Eleanor Davies	Team Inspector
Bernard Hayward	Team Inspector
Bernard O'Reilly	Team Inspector
Rachael Bubalo	Team Inspector
Mark Evans	Team Inspector
Gerard Kerslake	Team Inspector
Gill Sims	Team Inspector
Steve Bell	Team Inspector
James Nelson	Peer Inspector
Alma Noelle Williams	Peer Inspector
Lawrence Wood	Peer Inspector
Siân Wyn Thomas	Peer Inspector
Lewis Wynne Roberts	Peer Inspector
Vanessa Morgan	Provider Nominee