

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 14 th June 2023
Report Subject	Estyn Inspection of Adult Community Learning (ACL) within the North East Wales Adult Community Learning Partnership
Cabinet Member	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is to inform members of the Governance and Audit Committee with the findings of the recent Estyn inspection of the North East Wales Adult Community Learning Partnership. Adult Learning in Flintshire is delivered in partnership with Wrexham local authority.

Estyn inspected the Partnership in May 2022, and the report was published on 7th September 2022.

Estyn judged the Partnership to be well led, with strong support from both local authorities in delivering provision for adults in the community across Flintshire and Wrexham. They found that leaders set very high aspirations for the partnership, the providers and for learners. The vision for the partnership is ambitious, and reflects Welsh Government policies for community learning.

The findings of the inspection mean that there is no requirement for any follow up by Estyn.

Estyn invited the Partnership to prepare two case studies to inform the sector of the positive practice being delivered. The first was on its work in relation to family learning and the second on establishing a new Adult Learning Community partnership. These have been published on Estyn's website.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	The Governance and Audit Committee is asked to note the findings of the Estyn Inspection and be assured by the positive outcomes for adult community learning provision in Flintshire.
---	--

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE ESTYN INSPECTION OF ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING
1.01	<p>In 2021-2022, both Flintshire and Wrexham received significant increases in their Community Learning Grant (CLG) funding. This enabled both local authorities to look to further develop the provision offered to adult learners.</p> <p>The North East Wales Adult Community Learning Partnership was established in April 2021. It is a partnership between Flintshire County Council and Wrexham County Borough Council. The partnership has commissioned five lead providers to deliver most of its Welsh Government funded provision. These are Aura Leisure and Libraries (employability courses in Flintshire), Caia Park Partnership (employability courses in Wrexham), Coleg Cambria (essential skills in Wrexham), Deeside Community Trust (engagement courses in Flintshire) and Groundwork North Wales (essential skills in Flintshire).</p> <p>In addition to the five lead providers, the partnership benefits from a wider partner base. This includes representation from Adult Learning Wales, Coleg Cambria, the Department for Work and Pensions, Communities for Work, voluntary sector organisations and other providers for health and well-being support.</p> <p>In 2021-2022, despite the challenges of the pandemic, 2,100 learners enrolled on the partnership's courses.</p>
1.02	<p>Key findings from the inspection were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Partnership, established in April 2021, is well led and has strong support from both local authorities;• Leaders set very high aspirations for the partnership, its leaders, the providers and learners;• The vision for the partnership is ambitious, and reflects Welsh Government policies for community learning;• There is a good balance and useful range of courses for adults;• Learners make sound progress in their literacy, numeracy, digital and ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) sessions;• Many learners experience an increase in their confidence and willingness to go on to more formal learning;• Tutors establish a good rapport with their learners;• The Partnership has a realistic understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement.

1.03	<p>Estyn recognised that the Partnership understands its own strengths and areas for improvement and has clear quality improvement planning processes. Areas for improvement are identified appropriately, including more consistent approaches to quality assuring teaching and learning across the wider Partnership and developing a data management system to track outcomes and learner progression that will support the rapid growth of learners accessing provision.</p> <p>There were four recommendations from the inspection:</p> <p>R1. Increase opportunities for adult learning in the community bilingually and through the medium of Welsh R2. Track, monitor and evaluate learners' long-term progress through the partnership's provision R3. Develop a partnership approach to self-evaluation and improvement of learning and teaching across all the partnership's provision R4. Improve opportunities for learners to receive advice and guidance about joining the partnership's provision</p>
1.04	<p>Each year, the Welsh Government provides local authorities with funding for Adult Community Learning for people over 19. The Welsh Government provides guidance on the use of the funding and local authorities are required to submit a service delivery plan to the Welsh Government annually. Local authorities must demonstrate that they are working in partnership with local providers to deliver adult learning in their area. The Welsh Government analyses and discusses these plans with the local authority.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Welsh Government provides local authorities with funding for ACL and provides guidance on the use of the funding in an annual letter (Adult Community Learning Service Delivery Plans Guidance). Local authorities are required to submit an ACL service delivery plan and a strategic plan to Welsh Government annually. Local authorities must demonstrate that they are working in partnership with local providers to deliver adult learning in their area. The Welsh Government analyses and discusses these plans with the local authority.</p> <p>The Partnership is also very active in looking for additional funding to innovate and further enhance provision. This is noted by Estyn in their report.</p>
2.02	<p>The strategic responsibility for ACL provision within Flintshire sits within the Education and Youth Portfolio. The Community Learning Grant enables some provision for a co-ordinator role across both local authorities but this is not sufficient for the resource requirements of delivering an effective service. Capacity within the school improvement service was, therefore, increased in 2021 to enable the portfolio to meet the growing demands of this valuable provision, through additional Learning Adviser support for Adult Learning.</p>

	Estyn noted that senior officials and managers from both authorities play an important role in managing and overseeing the Partnership.
3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>There are no specific risks arising from this report and subsequent actions. The Education Portfolio has a detailed risk assessment which outlines key risks related to the delivery of education services and method statements which describe how these risks are managed. These are regularly reported to the Education, Youth and Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The partnership has also established a quality committee to monitor and review the partnership's self-evaluation processes and evaluate outcomes across the partnership. The quality committee contains appropriate senior leader representation and membership from partnership organisations.</p>
3.02	<p>Anti-poverty Impact – Flintshire County Council seeks to mitigate the impact of poverty through its partnership work programme. Adult Community Learning is key to delivering priorities which aim to support the wellbeing and mental health of citizens and to alleviate poverty and inequality.</p> <p>Adult Community Learning supports the Welsh Government's agenda for tackling poverty and its wellbeing agenda set out in the Well Being of Future Generations Act (Wales) (2015), particularly in meeting the needs of older learners.</p> <p>The Adult Community Learning Partnership seeks to contribute to this by supporting adult learners to have positive aspirations and to learn and achieve their potential. It will help ensure that specified groups of learners have access to a range of provision that will help them to develop the skills and knowledge to secure a better future for themselves.</p>
3.03	<p>Equalities Impact – The 2019 inspection of Flintshire's education services undertaken by Estyn recognised good practice in provision for pupils' wellbeing and additional learning needs. This continues to be reflected in Flintshire's values, strategy, provision and outcomes.</p> <p>The 2022 Estyn inspection of the ACL partnership identified that provision is focused on the needs of learners in their communities. The report provides assurance that "<i>senior leaders and partnership members work closely to develop provision that focuses on hard-to-reach learners and those in need of considerable support before they can progress to more formal learning opportunities.</i>"</p>
3.04	Use of the grant funding and quality of provision will continue to be monitored by the Flintshire and Wrexham ACL Partnership and by Welsh Government. Regular update reports will be provided to Education and Youth Portfolio and an annual report to the Education, Youth and Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	None required.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 - Estyn Inspection Report.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>The priorities for the delivery of Adult Community Learning are set out in the Welsh Government Adult Learning in Wales (2017) guidance. https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-08/adult-learning-in-wales.pdf</p> <p>Estyn Thematic Report/ Engagement work: Further education and adult learning in the community sectors update – autumn 2021 https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-report/engagement-work-further-education-and-adult-learning-community-sectors-update</p> <p>Effective Practice; Establishing a new adult learning in the community partnership in Wrexham and Flintshire https://www.estyn.gov.wales/effective-practice/establishing-new-adult-learning-community-partnership-wrexham-and-flintshire</p> <p>Effective Practice; Family Learning https://www.estyn.gov.wales/effective-practice/family-learning</p>

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Vicky Barlow, Senior Manager for School Improvement Telephone: 01352 704054 Cymraeg/ Welsh 01267 224923 E-mail: vicky.barlow@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Estyn - Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales</p> <p>Adult Community Learning (ACL) – non statutory education of people over the age of 19 in adult basic education (literacy and numeracy), digital literacy) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).</p> <p>Community Learning Grant CLG) - Welsh Government provides funding each year for the provision of ACL through this grant to local authorities.</p>