



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Response to the Estyn thematic review on adult community learning in Wales

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.



Digital ISBN 978 1 4734 8023 0
© Crown copyright December 2016
WG27868

Report title:

Adult Community Learning in Wales 2015-2016

Report details:

The Welsh Government commissioned Estyn to undertake a study of Adult Community Learning, to provide Welsh Government with a clearer picture of provision in light of the cuts to funding.

Summary of main findings:

Estyn consider that there are a number of significant challenges affecting the future of ACL.

The report states the following are needed:

- a government strategy identifying a clear role for ACL in improving the employability skills of adults with poor basic skills.
- Long-term funding to enable better strategy and planning of ACL – the current funding is vulnerable to continued reductions in public finance

The report raises concerns over the sustainability of the sector with funding impacts being felt within staffing levels and expertise - through redundancies and job changes – especially in the areas of Essential Skills, Digital Literacy and ESOL – which is of significant concern as these are priority areas for ACL. The number of staff is declining, while the level of need is increasing.

Estyn recognises the unique nature and value of ACL in delivering for those hardest to reach and learners with additional learning needs. A key strength being its delivery within the locality where learners feel safe. Staffing cuts mean that expertise in these specialist areas is being lost and professional development opportunities for those tutors who remain are also reduced.

Furthermore, the report highlights concerns over the reduction in the availability of affordable 'leisure' courses – especially for older learners (in particular older women) and less affluent learners where these courses are often engagement activity. ACL partnerships are committed and find creative ways to provide classes that engage people at all stages of their life in learning and in healthy living, but it is difficult to sustain these classes in the longer term.

Similar issues are raised over the availability of courses through the medium of Welsh.

Recommendation 1**The Welsh Government should:**

R1 - review its policy and funding strategy for the ACL sector

Welsh Government response:

This work is already underway. The Welsh Government commissioned ARAD Research to undertake a review of ACL in Wales – the report of the review has been published. The review included a number of recommendations relating to the policy, funding and structure of delivery of ACL in Wales. In response, we intend to revise the policy for Adult Learning in Wales over the next few months and consult with the sector on a revised funding and delivery structure for Adult Learning in Wales.

Recommendation 2**ACL partnerships should:**

- continue to assure the quality of the teaching and learning to provide all adult learners with value for money

Welsh Government response:

We will write to providers to ensure that they are aware of Estyn's recommendation and will discuss the outcomes of the review with them at the Adult Learning Wales Partnership meeting.

Publication details:

The report was published on the Estyn Website on 23 November 2016.