



Delivering Skills that Work for Wales

A new approach to Adult Community Learning



Consultation

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A new approach to Adult Community Learning

- Audience** All bodies concerned with education and training in Wales, Heads of Secondary Schools with Sixth Forms, Local Education Authorities, 14-19 Networks, Children and Young People's Partnerships, statutory and voluntary Youth Service, Estyn, Further Education Institutions, work-based learning providers, employer organisations and forums, Trades Unions, Sector Skills Councils, Jobcentre Plus, Careers Wales, voluntary and community organisations, Prison and Probation Services, Youth Offending Teams, the Welsh Local Government Association, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.
- Overview** This document consults on the Welsh Assembly Government's draft adult community learning policy. It is part of a series of themed papers which address issues identified in Skills that Work for Wales.
- Action required** Responses to this draft consultation document should be sent to Alison Bryant or Trish Hopkins, by 31 December 2008, at the address below or emailed to learning.policy@wales.gsi.gov.uk.
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- Related documents** One Wales
Promise and Performance – the independent review of the vision and purpose of further education
Skills that Work for Wales



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Ministerial Foreword

One Wales: a progressive agenda for the government of Wales (2007) includes a commitment to develop adult learning. This strategic policy aims to improve the way we plan, fund and deliver adult community learning, resulting in demonstrable benefits for learners. This includes increasing its responsiveness to the needs of individual learners, local communities and modern Welsh society more generally.

The adult community learning policy consultation presents proposals in response to issues identified in *Skills that Work for Wales*, our Skills and Employment Strategy. It is set firmly within the broader context of the Welsh Assembly Government's vision for more joined up, responsive public services set out in *Making the Connections – Delivering Beyond Boundaries* (2006).

The breadth of adult community learning reflects the wide range of needs to which it responds. Clearly, it has a role to play in supporting skills development for use in the workplace or wider community development activities but also provides equally valuable benefits for individuals and their communities, opening up new pathways and learning, promoting social inclusion, health and well-being.

The value of adult community learning lies in its potential to reach individuals and communities 'close to home', particularly those who might not otherwise engage in learning. This is particularly evident in the informal learning opportunities which it offers. This is one of the strengths that we intend to build on through this policy.

We look forward to receiving your views and comments on our proposals.

**Jane Hutt, Minister for Children,
Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills**

**John Griffiths, Deputy
Minister for Skills**

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Executive Summary

Why do we need a New Policy for Adult Community Learning?

Adult community learning is a diverse area of provision. This policy sets out a strategic response to the key issues which have been raised by stakeholders, including a need for a more strategic approach to the planning, delivery and funding of adult community learning. We aim to encourage more strategic and effective use of limited public resources by working in partnership with a range of organisations.

The policy sits under *Skills that Work for Wales*, our headline skills and employment strategy. It also takes account of *Promise and Performance*: the outcome of the Webb Review of the Mission and Purpose of Further Education in Wales.

This policy has relevance for all providers of adult community learning supported by the Welsh Assembly Government, as well as through other agencies. It aims to provide a clear direction and set of actions for building the capacity and effectiveness of adult community learning in Wales. It focuses on adult community learning provision for those aged 19+ which is not specifically vocational in nature. Its initial focus for planning and funding will be on adult community learning provision which is funded through the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills and which has been offered to date predominantly by local authorities and further education institutions. The policy also recognises that there are other routes into community-based learning, such as those supported in local art galleries and libraries.

Proposed Main Policy Themes

The policy is built around five main themes.

Section 1: Definition

Adult community learning embraces a wide range of learning opportunities, which do not lend themselves easily to a short definition. The lack of a commonly agreed definition of community learning can make it difficult to plan and fund this type of provision with consistency.

This policy proposes the following definition of adult community learning: ***learning provision for adults aged 19+, which is offered in local community settings and which is not occupation-specific in nature***. This means it can include, for example, basic skills provision but not training covered in more vocationally targeted programmes.

Section 2: Reconfiguration

The policy responds to a clearly identified need for a planning and delivery model which can be applied consistently throughout Wales. Our proposals are set within the context of our wider programme for transforming education and training provision in Wales.

We will explore opportunities to influence other community-related planning processes, where appropriate. We will promote synergy between the elements in this broader planning context where possible in order to strengthen the links to, and relevance for, adult community learning. The policy also creates a framework which will allow third sector organisations to play a more strategic role in planning and delivering adult community learning.

We recognise that strong partnership arrangements for the delivery of adult community learning have already been developing in some areas of Wales. We want to build on this development in a way that will benefit all adult community learning learners. We propose to create Adult Community Learning Partnerships across Wales for the delivery of this provision, building on identified examples of best practice.

Each Adult Community Learning Partnership will be responsible for planning and funding adult community learning provision in a specified geographical area. It is envisaged that the Partnerships will include representation from further education institutions, local authorities and third sector organisations. We will expect Partnerships to put in place mechanisms for consulting their local communities on the kinds of learning opportunities that they would wish to see addressed through adult community learning.

There will be a phased introduction of the new approach over two years beginning from autumn 2009. Funding of activities through the new arrangements will be introduced more widely across Wales from autumn 2011. The model will continue to be reviewed within the context of any wider reconfiguration of education and training arising from our proposals to 'Transform Learning Provision for Wales'.

Section 3: Priorities for Adult Community Learning

We will fund through Adult Community Learning Partnerships provision for learners aged 19+ who meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Representative of under-represented groups, including both geographical communities and communities of interest.
- Undertaking provision which may enable progression into further learning activities or employment, whether paid or involving volunteering.
- Undertaking provision which offers demonstrable wider benefits for individuals or communities, such as social inclusion or improved health and wellbeing.

We will issue guidance to Adult Community Learning Partnerships on the priorities that they should aim to address in the planning and delivery of this provision. The following priorities will be addressed in the first instance:

- Provision which is at or below level 2 and which also meets one or more of the following priorities.
- Opportunities for widening participation amongst disadvantaged or under-represented groups.
- Basic skills and English for Speakers of Other Languages.
- Developmental training to enable progression into employment or further training, but which is not covered by our main vocational programmes.

In addition to the above, we will continue to support Access to HE courses as one of the signature qualifications and progression routes for adult community learning.

The policy aims to ensure that adult community learning can respond flexibly to the diverse needs of particular groups of learners. This includes supporting adult community learning providers to identify and work to overcome barriers to learning for particular learners, for example disabled learners. We will develop, where relevant, a strategic response where available data highlights particular issues or inequities in learner participation patterns, for example relating to age or gender. In addition, the policy recognises the need for a more structured and responsive approach to the provision of Welsh-medium learning opportunities in adult community learning.

We recognise the need to support opportunities for progression by learners into other forms of learning or, where relevant, into employment. The Adult Community Learning Partnerships will have a key role to play in supporting such progression by providing more joined-up approaches to delivery and providing opportunities to move into more mainstream or advanced provision, where appropriate.

Financial support for learners engaged in adult community learning can come from a variety of sources. For those learners who are able to pay for their chosen provision, it is reasonable to expect providers to put in place fees for adult community learning courses which are commensurate with costs and level of demand. We will, therefore, work within the wider development of a contributions policy for post-16 education and training.

The Welsh Assembly Government provides support for adult community learning and development through a variety of other funding streams which will fall outside the Partnerships' remit, including Communities Next and the Reaching Wider Partnerships. We will explore the potential for creating more synergy between these discrete strands of activity and funding.

We will explore opportunities for providing longer term, more sustainable funding, beyond specific projects. This includes working with stakeholders to establish the best means of accessing and deploying European funding, as well as supporting providers to work together strategically to meet the wider needs of learners.

Section 4: Quality Standards

The policy is intended to support consistent improvements in the level of quality of adult community learning provision. We will introduce a coherent approach to promoting and developing existing examples of best practice, and to addressing a range of identified areas for improvement.

The introduction of Adult Community Learning Partnerships will strengthen strategic planning for adult community learning at an area-wide level and ensure that resources are matched to designated priorities. The role of the Partnerships in strengthening coherent self-assessment and planning for improvement will also be developed in the longer term.

We will strengthen the role of informal learning as a key aspect of adult community learning provision, building strategically on the work of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). We will, therefore, introduce a more consistent approach to measuring outcomes for learners in this type of provision. This approach will also support providers in meeting the quality thresholds set out by Estyn in the Common Inspection Framework.

We will continue to explore other opportunities for developing the skills and knowledge of staff at all levels in adult community learning, including the provision of training for Welsh-speaking tutors to reinforce language skills. We will also consider how we ensure that all staff are able to identify and address equality and diversity issues arising in the context of adult community learning.

Section 5: Building Links Across Policy Agendas

The adult community learning policy reflects the aim of *Making the Connections*, which is to ensure that public services work in a more joined-up way to deliver effective services for citizens.

Adult community learning can and should have strong links with a wide range of other Welsh Assembly Government strategies and initiatives beyond community development. It has a key role to play in contributing to policy priorities such as social inclusion and health and wellbeing. We will support opportunities to focus on and develop this role in a more structured and strategic manner.

Introduction

Why do we need a New Policy for Adult Community Learning?

1. Adult community learning is a diverse area of provision, which is as varied as the learners it attracts. By its very nature, it has links with a wide range of key agendas, including health and wellbeing, as well as the development of skills and employability. It also has a long history of addressing the needs of learners which might not otherwise be met through more mainstream learning activities. However, there is a danger that stretching limited resources in too many directions will undermine the effectiveness with which it meets such needs.

2. Research and discussions with stakeholders indicate that there is a widespread recognition of the need for a more strategic approach to the planning, delivery and funding of adult community learning.¹ This is supported by evidence from Estyn that a lack of clear national policy, and strategic planning on a geographical basis, have resulted in fragmented delivery, duplication of effort and variable quality in community learning.² Our proposed policy aims to address these issues by building on existing strands of work, as well as instigating new ones.

3. We want to provide a more coherent approach to adult community learning which sets out a strategic response to the following issues:

- Adult community learning is funded from multiple sources, which often have few demonstrable links.
- The role of voluntary and community sector organisations ('the third sector') in commissioning, negotiating and delivering adult community learning is often not recognised or as integrated as it could be.
- There is need for more clarity on the role of informal learning in adult community learning.
- There are quality and staff development issues particular to adult community learning.
- The data on what is funded as adult community learning is often inconsistent and incomplete.
- There is uneven distribution of high quality adult community learning provision across Wales.

4. The policy also reflects the need for adult community learning to respond to a changing policy environment. *Skills that Work for Wales* provides our headline skills and employment strategy, under which the adult community learning policy sits. In drafting the policy, we have taken account of *Promise and Performance*: the outcome of the Webb Review of the Mission and Purpose of Further Education in Wales. The policy also provides a basis for strengthening the strategic links with other relevant Assembly Government strategies, such as *Words Talk, Numbers Count*, and the *Strategy for Older People*. We recognise the key role that adult community learning can play in equipping individuals with the skills that will enable

¹ Welsh Assembly Government review of Adult and Community Learning - A perspective from NIACE Dysgu Cymru, 2007

² Widening participation in adult community-based learning: A survey of best practice, Estyn, 2003

them to remain in, or re-enter, the workforce. It also builds on the wider benefits and opportunities that adult community learning can bring to both individuals and their local communities.

5. The policy will build on the work of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, which provides a framework for the recognition of achievement which is entirely appropriate for adult and community learning.³ In Wales, we have over 20 years of rich and diverse recognised achievement leading to the award of credit. It is important that we maintain support for recognising achievement and enabling progression.

6. Our aim is to encourage more strategic and effective use of limited public resources by working in partnership with a range of organisations. Focusing public funding for adult community learning more strategically on particular policy priorities will mean pulling back from others. This will involve difficult decisions about what we fund through public resources for this provision.

Scope of this Policy

7. This policy has relevance for all providers of adult community learning supported by the Welsh Assembly Government, as well as through other agencies. The policy aims to provide a clear direction and set of actions for building the capacity and effectiveness of adult community learning in Wales. It focuses on adult community learning provision for those aged 19+ which is not specifically vocational in nature. Its initial focus for planning and funding will be on adult community learning provision which is funded through the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills and which has been offered to date predominantly by local authorities and further education institutions. However, the policy also recognises that there are other routes into community-based learning, such as those supported in local art galleries and libraries by Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries Wales (CyMAL), our Sponsor Division for the National Library of Wales and the National Museum of Wales. Although they are not the immediate focus for the planning and funding proposals presented in Section 3, we are seeking to build strategic links with these areas of activity through the adult community learning policy.

8. An indication of current provision is provided by the following statistics for adult community learning offered by local authorities:

- In 2006/07, there were 67,675 enrolments on LEA community learning programmes.
- The most popular were Cultural Studies (27% of provision), Information and Communications Technology (ICT) (21%), Information Technology (IT) (19%), Arts and Crafts (18%) and Care/Basic Skills (17%).
- Just over half of the enrolments (51%) were of learners aged over 50.
- 6% of learners represented black, Asian, mixed and other groups.
- 8% of learners were disabled.
- 73% of learners were female and 27% were male.⁴

³ Implementation Plan, Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, 2003

⁴ Further Education, Work-based Learning and Community Learning in Wales, 2006/07, First Release SDR 68/2008

9. In addition, adult community learning cannot be entirely separated from other community-based initiatives which aim to strengthen and enhance the social resources of local communities. If the planning and delivery of adult community learning is truly to become more strategic, we need to develop a more joined-up, holistic approach towards these different strands of funding and activity. The policy provides a first step towards building more strategic links between adult community learning and related policy areas such as community development, as well as a range of activities led and supported by other organisations, including learning providers.

What Will Success Look Like?

10. We want to see the following outcomes for adult community learning:

- Clarity about what is planned and funded as adult community learning.
- An effective, consistent planning and delivery model.
- Access for learners to high quality provision across all areas of Wales.
- A more integrated approach to planning adult community learning and related community developments.
- Consistent approaches to measuring learner outcomes.
- A clear role for voluntary and community organisations.
- An effective quality assurance and improvement framework.

11. We can only achieve these outcomes by supporting more effective partnership working between all those who have a stake in improving adult community learning. This includes all relevant Welsh Assembly Government Departments, together with key representative bodies and learning providers themselves. We will commission an evaluation of the policy after five years in order to be clear about the progress that we have made as a result of its introduction.

Proposed Main Policy Themes

The policy is built around five main themes:

(Section 1) Definition – establishing a common understanding of what adult community learning is.

(Section 2) Reconfiguration – strengthening the strategic planning, funding and delivery of adult community learning.

(Section 3) Funding Priorities for Adult Community Learning – setting clear priorities for this area of provision.

(Section 4) Quality Standards – supporting more evenly distributed access to high quality provision across Wales.

(Section 5) Links across Policy Agendas – developing adult community learning in a broader policy context.

Section 1: Definition

1. We recognise that adult community learning embraces a wide range of learning opportunities, which do not lend themselves easily to a short definition. However, the lack of a commonly agreed definition of community learning can make it difficult to plan and fund this type of provision with consistency. It also complicates attempts to gauge exactly what learning activities are being offered as adult community learning.

2. There already exists a range of definitions of 'community learning' that we can build on. For example, Estyn has described adult community learning as 'learning that is provided for adults in local community venues and which is particularly designed to reach out to places and people which other forms of learning do not reach'⁵. Estyn's adult community learning inspections have covered the following learning areas: adult learning, adult basic education, English for Speakers of Other Languages, Welsh for Adults, and community development. Since Welsh for Adults and community development are the focus of other strategic agendas led by the Assembly Government, they are not included in this policy. However, there is a need to take account of them in planning adult community learning provision.

3. In addition, the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) has identified six purposes for learning that adults undertake: Skills for Life and Embedded Basic Skills; Skills for Independent Living; Skills for Work; First Steps Learning; Personal Development and Well Being; and Learning for Active Citizenship and/or Community Development. This is a useful way of describing what community learning can constitute. It captures the range of motivations and priorities for skills development, in the wider sense, which community learning encapsulates.

4. This policy proposes the following definition of adult community learning: ***learning provision for adults aged 19+, which is offered in local community settings and which is not occupation-specific in nature.*** This means it can include, for example, basic skills provision but not training covered in more vocationally targeted programmes. This allows scope for links with broader learning developments, such as family learning and skills development, while maintaining the focus on general adult education. What we will fund specifically under this heading is set out in Section 2: Planning and Funding.

Q1. DO YOU AGREE WITH OUR PROPOSED DEFINITION OF ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING FOR THE POLICY?

⁵ Widening participation in adult community-based learning: A survey of best practice, Estyn, 2003

Section 2: Reconfiguration

Strengthening Delivery

1. The policy responds to a clearly identified need for a planning and delivery model which can be applied consistently throughout Wales. This will benefit learners, who will have more evenly distributed access to adult community learning provision. It will also benefit providers, who will be able to operate within more consistent and transparent arrangements across Wales. Our proposals are set within the context of our wider programme for transforming education and training provision in Wales.
2. There are currently wide variations in the pattern of adult community learning delivery in Wales. In North Wales, adult community learning provision is delivered predominantly by further education institutions, although we recognise that local authorities play an important strategic role in the planning of provision across the region. In South Wales, on the other hand, local authorities are much more active in delivering directly. We need better strategic planning, funding and delivery of adult community learning in order to help us to develop a more consistent approach within Wales. This should still allow scope to reflect the specific needs of local communities.
3. We need to ensure that any changes in the planning of adult community learning provision support it to operate effectively within the broader context for community planning. We will explore opportunities to influence other planning processes, where appropriate. Currently, there exists a variety of planning mechanisms and fora which have relevance for adult community learning. These operate at various levels – local, regional and national – with varying impact on the planning of this provision. They range from local authorities' production of adult community learning strategic plans and community strategies to the advent of Local Service Boards and the continued development of Spatial Plan areas. We will promote synergy between the elements in this broader planning context where possible in order to strengthen the links to, and relevance for, adult community learning.
4. In conjunction with planning, there is a need for a more strategic approach to funding for adult community learning. Currently, we provide recurrent funding for local authorities and further education institutions to deliver adult community learning provision using the National Planning and Funding System.
5. We recognise the active role that third sector organisations play in delivering community-based learning activities, often to learners who, for a variety of reasons, do not enter more mainstream provision. Many of these activities could be classed as adult community learning, although they may not be funded through the National Planning and Funding System. Instead, funding for these organisations has often been provided mainly through a variety of projects, such as the Learning Community Account pilot. The policy creates a framework which will allow third sector organisations to play a more strategic role in planning and delivering adult community learning.

Action: Build strategic links between the planning of adult community learning and the wider community planning framework at both local and national levels – from 2009.

Adult Community Learning Partnerships

6. We recognise that strong partnership arrangements for the delivery of adult community learning have already been developing in some areas of Wales. Estyn's 2006/07 Annual Report noted that adult community learning providers have improved how they work together, for example in planning and assessing the quality of provision.⁶ We now want to build on this development in a way that will benefit all adult community learning learners. Our proposed option is to create Adult Community Learning Partnerships across Wales for the delivery of this provision. In doing so, we will build on examples of best practice identified in research undertaken as part of Estyn's 2007-08 remit,⁷ together with research commissioned from NIACE Dysgu Cymru.⁸

7. Each Adult Community Learning Partnership will be responsible for planning and funding adult community learning provision in a specified geographical area. It is envisaged that the Partnerships will include representation from further education institutions, local authorities and third sector organisations. This will provide greater opportunity to extend partnership working in the delivery of adult community learning. The partnerships will be expected to build on the ethos and duty of promoting equality and diversity through the public sector.

8. We propose the following geographical boundaries for partnerships as the most effective configuration to support a more strategic approach :

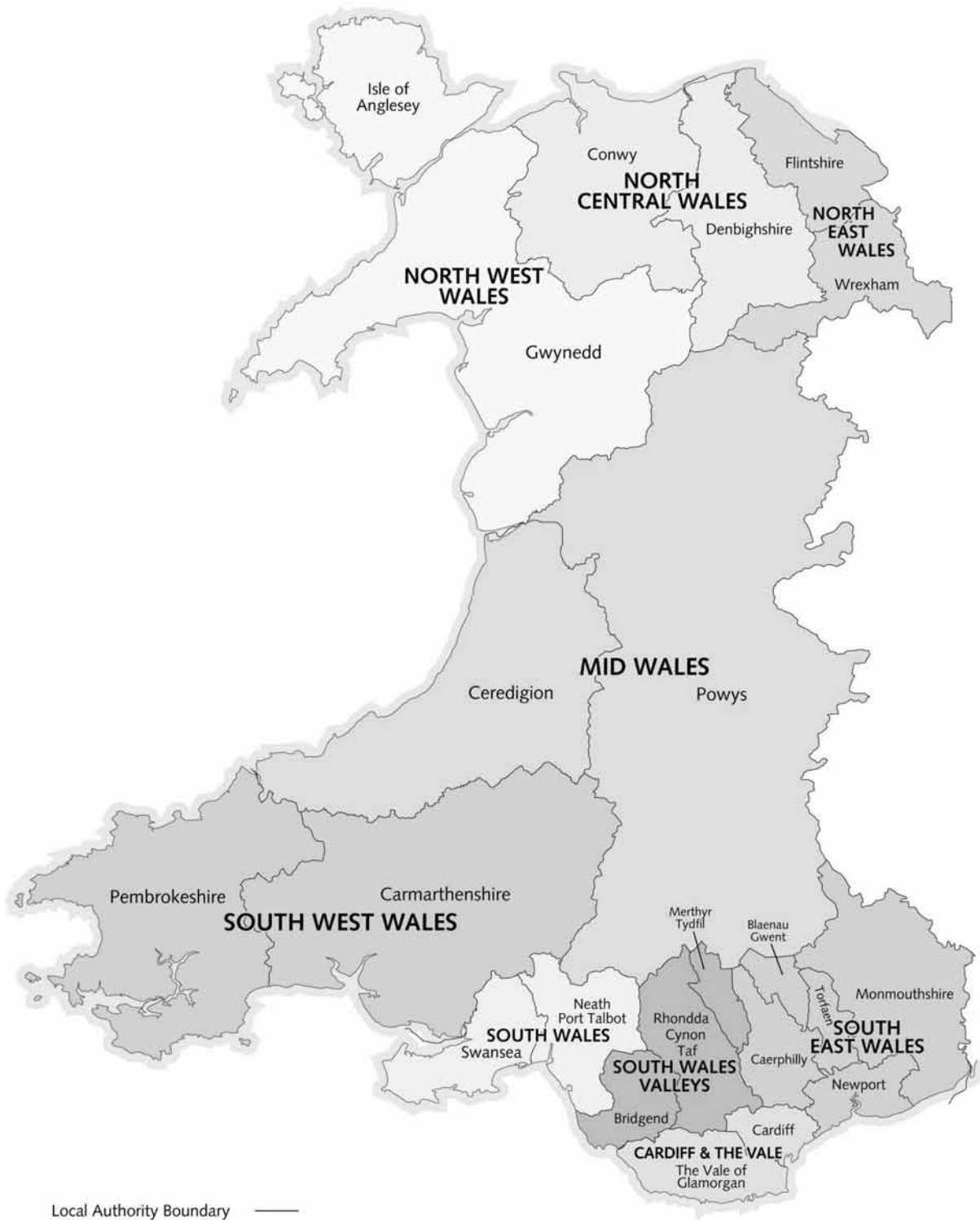
- Cardiff and the Vale.
- South East Wales.
- The South Wales Valleys (to include Bridgend).
- South Wales (Swansea, Neath Port Talbot).
- South West Wales (Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire).
- Mid Wales.
- North East Wales.
- North Central Wales.
- North West Wales.

⁶ The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales 2006-07

⁷ Merging the boundaries in adult community-based learning, Estyn 2008

⁸ Partnerships for planning and delivering Adult and Community Learning in Wales, NIACE Dysgu Cymru 2008

Proposed ACL Partnership Areas



9. These groupings were proposed to the Webb Review team, which chose to publish them in its final report. The rationale for this configuration is based on what is workable in terms of planning, funding and delivery. It also allows us to reflect some of the current partnership arrangements which have been developing to deliver adult community learning.

10. We will provide guidance to Partnerships on governance issues and the policy priorities that we wish to see addressed through adult community learning. In turn, the Partnerships will identify current learning needs in the local community and will plan provision accordingly. They will make provisional funding allocations on this basis. These will be submitted for Assembly Government approval to ensure consistency across Adult Community Learning Partnerships and alignment with Assembly Government priorities. We will also expect Partnerships to put in place mechanisms for consulting their local communities on the kinds of learning opportunities that they would wish to see addressed through adult community learning.

11. Adult Community Learning Partnerships will be expected to operate effectively within the broader community planning context. This will mean building strategic links with relevant organisations and fora, including Local Service Boards, particularly where there is duplication of membership. We want the Adult Community Learning Partnerships to add value to existing arrangements and to avoid unnecessary additional bureaucracy.

12. There is potential for strong links with the existing Reaching Wider Partnerships led by higher education institutions. Membership of the Adult Community Learning Partnerships will be extended to local higher education institutions. Although the Adult Community Learning Partnerships will not have responsibility for deploying higher education-based community learning funding, it is intended that the model will facilitate better strategic links with this sector. The involvement of higher education institutions, together with other providers, will provide scope for more joined-up opportunities for learners to progress into further provision, if they choose to do so. This includes mainstream provision, where relevant.

13. The new arrangements will support a more strategic overview of community learning activities. This includes more robust data on what is being offered as adult community learning through the Partnerships, which will be responsible for monitoring and reporting on the provision which they deliver.

14. Each Adult Community Learning Partnership will be responsible for the deployment of two streams of funding for adult community learning:

- (i) **A new informal learning grant scheme.** This will support informal, non-accredited learning activities not eligible for formula funding (eg preparatory work to equip individuals to undertake learning).
- (ii) **Recurrent funding through the National Planning and Funding System** (as outlined in paragraph 4 Section 2). This will support accredited learning opportunities.

15. The proposed grant scheme responds to an identified need for a more flexible approach to funding informal learning beyond the confines of the National Planning and Funding System. It represents a portion of the total budget apportioned for adult community learning, rather than additional funding. It will provide more opportunity to support the type of provision which adult community learning participants often demand.

Introducing the New Arrangements

16. We recognise that this move to create a more unified approach to the delivery of adult community learning will mean substantial change for many providers. There will be a phased introduction of this model, therefore, over two years beginning from autumn 2009. This will provide an opportunity to test the effectiveness of the approach before it is introduced more widely. From early 2009, we will invite bids from existing partnerships to take part in this first phase of development. We will commission an ongoing evaluation of the initial phase of activity to inform future developments. Following completion of this phase, funding of activities through the new arrangements will be introduced more widely across Wales from autumn 2011. The model will continue to be reviewed within the context of any wider reconfiguration of education and training arising from our proposals to 'Transform Learning Provision for Wales'.

Action: Establish first phase of development for Adult Community Learning Partnerships to plan and commission delivery of this provision – from 2009-10.

Action: Create a grant scheme to support informal learning – to be introduced from 2010-11.

Action: Establish robust data collection arrangements for Adult Community Learning Partnerships – from 2009-10.

Q2. IS THE ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP THE BEST MODEL FOR PLANNING AND FUNDING ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING?

Q3. DO YOU AGREE WITH THE PROPOSED NUMBER AND LOCATION OF ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS?

Q4. HOW CAN THE PROPOSED ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS WORK MOST EFFECTIVELY WITH EXISTING PARTNERSHIPS AND PLANNING ARRANGEMENTS?

Q5. DO YOU AGREE WITH THE AIM OF INCREASING FLEXIBILITY TO SUPPORT INFORMAL LEARNING THROUGH THE GRANT SCHEME?

Section 3: Priorities for Adult Community Learning

Who We Will Fund

1. The range of activities offered currently as adult community learning reflects the diversity of learners which this provision attracts. These include learners who are able and willing to pay for leisure-type courses, as well as those whose engagement provides a means of addressing economic inactivity and social exclusion. Adult community learning also needs to reflect the new perspectives which are influencing policy development in Wales. These include emerging strategic priorities in relation to older learners, English for Speakers of Other Languages and migrant workers, for example, as well as Welsh-medium and bilingual opportunities, which need to be taken into account when planning provision.

2. However, there is also a need to clarify who and what we will fund as adult community learning through this policy. Under the headline definition of adult community learning that we present in paragraph 4 Section 1, we will fund through Adult Community Learning Partnerships provision for learners aged 19+ who meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Representative of under-represented groups, including both geographical communities and communities of interest.
- Undertaking provision which may enable progression into further learning activities or employment, whether paid or involving volunteering.
- Undertaking provision which offers demonstrable wider benefits for individuals or communities, such as social inclusion or improved health and wellbeing.

What We Will Fund

3. We will issue guidance to Adult Community Learning Partnerships on the priorities that they should aim to address in the planning and delivery of this provision. This will mean focusing public resources on provision which is demonstrated to have the greatest impact in terms of benefits to the individuals and their communities. In order to do this effectively the guidance will ensure the closer alignment of funding priorities for adult community learning provision with broader Assembly Government priorities, including economic development and community regeneration. There is a need for clarity given the limited resources which are available. This will ensure a more consistent approach which should be of benefit to both individuals and their wider communities.

4. The agreement of priorities for publicly funded adult community learning provision should take into account evidence of need and learner demand, as well as links with other Assembly Government policy agendas. For example, adult community learning has a particular contribution to make to the engagement of disadvantaged groups. We know that adult community learning also provides a means of engaging a range of learners who are less likely to take part in more formal learning activities. Estyn has noted that adults develop personal and social skills through engaging in learning in community-based settings. In addition, there is a wide range of anecdotal evidence of the broader benefits of engaging in community

learning. For individuals, these can include improved health and wellbeing, better access to information and support, and increased confidence in taking part in community-based activities. This needs to be substantiated further, where possible. This aspect of adult community learning provision should be seen, therefore, as a specific priority, whether it leads to progression into employment or to wider benefits for individual learners.

5. Priority should also be given to activities which provide learners with skills to enable progression into further learning or employment. This provides a basis for building on links with existing Assembly Government strategies, such as *Words Talk, Numbers Count* and the *Strategy for Older People*. It is expected that funding priorities for adult community learning should be reviewed annually in order to ensure that they remain up to date and relevant. This approach will build on current arrangements for providers' submission of strategic plans.

6. In view of the above considerations, the following priorities will be addressed in the first instance:

- Provision which is at or below level 2 and which also meets one or more of the following priorities.
- Opportunities for widening participation amongst disadvantaged or under-represented groups.
- Basic skills and English for Speakers of Other Languages.
- Developmental training to enable progression into employment or further training, but which is not covered by our main vocational programmes.

This provision can be informal or formal, non-accredited or accredited, and will be funded through the grant scheme or recurrent formula funding as appropriate.

7. In addition to the above, we will continue to support Access to HE courses. Access to HE is one of the signature qualifications and progression routes for adult community learning, and has been particularly successful in Wales.

8. Placing the responsibility on each Adult Community Learning Partnership for data collection and reporting on funded learning activities will help to lessen the administrative burden on those providers which have struggled to manage this process as individual organisations. It will also enable us to maintain a better overview of what is funded as adult community learning, and where. We recognise that recording data for those courses which are short-term or which run for only a few hours each week can be an onerous process. We will, therefore, explore opportunities to lessen the burden of data collection by introducing an abridged version of the current Lifelong Learning Wales (LLWR) record for such courses.

Action: Explore opportunities to introduce simpler data collection arrangements for short-term and some part-time courses – from 2009.

Action: Support further research on the wider benefits that adult community learning can bring to individuals and communities – from 2009 onwards.

Q6. DO YOU AGREE WITH THE CRITERIA OUTLINED IN PARAGRAPH 2 SECTION 3 FOR WHICH LEARNERS WILL BE FUNDED THROUGH ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING?

Q7. DO YOU AGREE WITH THE PRIORITIES THAT ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING SHOULD SEEK TO ADDRESS OUTLINED IN PARAGRAPH 6 SECTION 3?

Meeting Learners' Needs

9. The policy aims to ensure that adult community learning can respond flexibly to the diverse needs of particular groups of learners. This includes supporting adult community learning providers to identify and work to overcome barriers to learning for particular learners. This could include, for instance, taking steps to enable access for disabled learners. Our guidance to Adult Community Learning Partnerships will make clear the need to ensure that equality issues must be considered in the planning of provision.

10. We will develop, where relevant, a strategic response where available data highlights particular issues or inequities in learner participation patterns. For example, around half of all adult community learning participants are aged 50+, although it is important to recognise that older learners represent a diverse group, and includes those who wish to pursue work-related skills, as well as those who are learning for broader, more social reasons. In addition, overall participation data for adult community learning provision offered through local authorities for 2006/07 indicate a wide gender gap, with 73% of participants being female. The gender gap increases up to the age of 65, after which it decreases although still remains fairly substantial. We need to consider the reasons for this gap, and to ensure that there are sufficient learning opportunities available that are relevant and of interest to male learners.

11. Language barriers continue to be a problem in terms of proficiency in English and/or Welsh for refugees, asylum seekers, migrant workers and settled ethnic minority communities. The acquisition of the English or Welsh language is key to achieving community cohesion. Language provision should be targeted to meet local needs and adult community learning can be well placed to do this. Needs relating to English for Speakers of Other Languages should be considered as part of a wider local planning arrangement to align against community needs.

12. The learning of the Welsh language by adults through Welsh for Adults is the focus of another strategic agenda. However, the issue of Welsh-medium adult community learning is also important throughout Wales, in particular, but not exclusively, in the historical heartlands in North and West Wales where Welsh is still a community language. There is little evidence of a strategic approach to Welsh-medium adult community learning in many parts of Wales, and the development of such provision is patchy. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a shortage of adult community learning practitioners who are able to work through the medium of Welsh or bilingually. Further research has been commissioned to gain accurate statistics on Welsh-speaking staff in the lifelong learning sector as a whole.

Further analysis of needs and demand from learners for Welsh-medium provision will also be needed as a basis for future development. Current pilot projects in North and South Wales are likely to show that there is some latent demand for learning through the medium of Welsh that is not currently being met in many areas. A more structured and responsive approach to the provision of Welsh-medium learning opportunities in adult community learning will be developed.

13. We also recognise the need to support opportunities for progression by learners into other forms of learning or, where relevant, into employment. The Adult Community Learning Partnerships will have a key role to play in supporting such progression by providing more joined-up approaches to delivery and providing opportunities to move into more mainstream or advanced provision, where appropriate.

14. Progression beyond learning could include participation in voluntary and community-based activities, as well as entry into paid employment. While we recognise the wider benefits that adult community learning can bring to learners, we also wish to encourage those who wish to do so to move on to other courses which might, for example, present greater challenges for them or provide opportunities to acquire particular skills or qualifications. The impact of the Partnerships in supporting such progression will be supported through a range of processes, including the development of benchmarking for the sector and the monitoring of Partnerships' delivery of provision. It will also be included in the five-year evaluation of the policy as a whole.

15. In addition, we recognise the role that e-learning can play in enhancing the quality and availability of adult community learning provision for many learners. We will build, therefore, on the work of the JISC Regional Support Centre Wales and Community Learning Wales in developing an e-learning strategy for the adult community learning sector.⁹

Action: Support and promote opportunities for learner progression from adult community learning to other provision – from 2010.

Action: Introduce benchmarking processes for adult community learning providers – from 2009.

Action: Build on opportunities to enhance the role of e-learning in the delivery of adult community learning – from 2009.

Action: Support and promote adult community learning provision which is of interest to both male and female learners – from 2009.

Action: Develop the Welsh Assembly Government's policy for learners wishing to access Welsh-medium learning opportunities. This will also be included in

⁹ The Regional Support Centre Wales is one of 13 such centres covering the UK. It supports the development of e-learning and Information Learning Technology in further education, sixth forms, adult and community learning and aspects of higher education. Community Learning Wales is the representative body for local authorities in Wales which deliver adult community learning.

the all-age Welsh-medium education and training policy of the Welsh Assembly Government – from 2009.

Q8. ARE THERE SPECIFIC GROUPS OF LEARNERS, NOT MENTIONED HERE, WHICH THE POLICY SHOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT?

Financial Support for Learners

16. Financial support for learners engaged in adult community learning can come from a variety of sources, including the Individual Learning Account. These depend upon the individual's employment status and relevance of the chosen course of learning to, for example, a current job role.

17. For those learners who are able to pay for their chosen provision, it is reasonable to expect providers to put in place fees for adult community learning courses which are commensurate with costs and level of demand. This will augment public support for this provision and allow more strategic targeting of resources in line with Assembly Government priorities. We will promote consistency across providers in order to ensure that fees are set at reasonable levels, which do not disadvantage learners in some geographical areas when compared with others. In doing so, we will work within the wider development of a contributions policy for post-16 education and training.

Working Strategically with other Sources of Funding

18. The Welsh Assembly Government provides support for adult community learning and development through a variety of other funding streams which will fall outside the Partnerships' remit. The most prominent of these are:

- Support for adult community learning activities through Higher Education institutions, which is distributed by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, in particular the Reaching Wider and Widening Access initiatives.
- Communities First (and latterly Communities Next), the Welsh Assembly Government's flagship programme to improve the living conditions and prospects for people in the most disadvantaged communities across Wales.
- Communities@One, launched in January 2006 to support access to new technologies amongst Wales' most deprived communities. It is administered by the Wales Co-operative Centre.

19. We need to build on the strategic links with community development activities, particularly those led through Communities Next. The definition of adult community learning which forms the basis of this policy should provide greater clarity on the boundaries between the provision that DCELLS funds and those which are supported through the Communities Next initiative, amongst others.

20. Additional funding for community-based learning activities is provided from a range of other sources, for example Lottery funding and Job Centre Plus, each with its own particular remit. We will explore the potential for creating more synergy between these discrete strands of funding.

21. We will also explore opportunities for providing longer term, more sustainable funding, beyond specific projects. This includes working with stakeholders to establish the best means of accessing and deploying European funding to deliver adult community learning and community development activities strategically. It includes using the funding made available through adult community learning partnerships as match funding to support more strategic large-scale developments for this area of provision. It also entails supporting providers to work together strategically to meet the wider needs of learners, such as additional support needs or childcare, which enable participation in adult community learning by those who face such barriers.

Action: Develop an integrated approach to accessing European funding to support adult community learning – from 2009.

Action: Monitor the effectiveness of current sources of learner support – from 2009.

Action: Issue guidance on fee setting for adult community learning provision – by 2009.

Q9. WHAT IS THE BEST WAY OF CREATING MORE SYNERGY BETWEEN DIFFERENT STRANDS OF SUPPORT FOR ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING?
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Section 4: Quality Standards

Building on Current Evidence

1. The policy is intended to support consistent improvements in the level of quality of adult community learning provision. In doing so, we will build on a variety of existing strengths as identified in Estyn's inspections and our own Provider Performance Review.¹⁰ In particular, these include: generally good standards for learner achievement; collaboration with other providers and agencies, and responsiveness to the needs of particular groups, such as ethnic minority learners. We will introduce a coherent approach to promoting and developing existing examples of best practice.

2. We will also address a range of identified areas for improvement. These include: ensuring that learners on non-accredited courses are helped to record their progress; promoting effective use of resources for Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) and Information Learning Technology (ILT); the need to strengthen planning and management; and ensuring that self-assessment processes are comprehensive, with clear targets for improvement.

3. Estyn's 2007 survey of leadership and strategic management in post-16 learning found that in community learning, most leaders and managers have clear plans for their organisations and respond well to local and national priorities. Their greatest challenge is to work with colleagues in other providers to ensure that collective use of public funding to secure better value for money. The introduction of Adult Community Learning Partnerships will strengthen strategic planning for adult community learning at an area-wide level and ensure that resources are matched to designated priorities. The role of the Partnerships in strengthening coherent self-assessment and planning for improvement will also be developed in the longer term.

Action: Support improved quality standards for provision in the context of the Quality Effectiveness Framework – from 2009.

Action: Support more effective use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) and Information Learning Technology (ILT) in the delivery of adult community learning provision – from 2009.

Action: Strengthen self-assessment arrangements for adult community learning providers – from 2009.

Measuring Informal Learning

4. We recognise that credit can provide an important tool for personal reward and progression and for measuring achievement. Any adult community learning which is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government should be recognised within

¹⁰ The Provider Performance Review (PPR) was introduced in autumn 2005 to assess quality, standards and performance in post-16 learning in Wales. PPR is carried out by the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) as part of its statutory responsibility to ensure that young people and adults in Wales have access to learning of adequate quality.

the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). Any learner should be entitled to credit for his or her achievement, if this is what they wish. Any adult community learning not wholly funded by the Assembly Government should, wherever possible, be recognised within the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales. We aim to make it as easy as possible for learners to use credit accumulation to recognise their individual achievement towards progression and, where possible, towards incremental achievement of relevant qualifications or recognised learning programmes.

5. We recognise the role of informal learning as a key aspect of adult community learning provision. We know that adult community learning can help individuals with significant barriers to learning to begin to acquire the life skills that will build confidence, develop knowledge and help move them to a point where they are ready to participate in volunteering, employment or more formal learning. Clarifying the funding for informal learning through the introduction of the grant scheme will increase opportunities to widen participation by such learners. This area of provision provides a means of engaging a range of learners who are less likely to participate in more formal learning activities. We have explored different approaches to identifying and supporting informal learning needs through the Learning Community Account pilot.¹¹ We are now seeking to build on what we have learned in the implementation of this policy.

6. Evidence from Estyn and our own Provider Performance Review suggests that there is a need for more consistency in the measurement of gains for learners undertaking informal learning. As part of the introduction of the informal learning grant scheme, therefore, we will introduce a more consistent approach to measuring outcomes for learners in this type of provision. This will benefit learners, who are better able to gauge their progress and, thus, gain more involvement in their learning. It will also assist providers and the Assembly Government in monitoring the effectiveness of this provision.

7. This approach will also support providers in meeting the quality thresholds set out by Estyn in the Common Inspection Framework, in particular the following Key Questions:

1. How well do learners achieve?
2. How effective are teaching, training and assessment?
3. How well do learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?
4. How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?

8. We will build on the work undertaken by NIACE Dysgu Cymru in developing a Value Added Tool Kit, which utilises the existing RARPA¹² model. This incorporates five key steps which represent good practice in managing non-accredited learning, and which can be related directly to the Common Inspection Framework.

9. We have commissioned NIACE Dygsu Cymru to run dissemination events on the Value Added Tool Kit. We will encourage all providers in receipt of informal

¹¹ The final evaluation reports of the Learning Community Account project are available on the Welsh Assembly Government website.

¹² Recognition and Recording of Progress and Achievement

learning grant funding to put in place arrangements for measuring learner outcomes. As a minimum, these should demonstrate alignment with the five stages on which RARPA is based. They should provide a basis for assessing the impact of non-accredited learning on individuals and, where relevant, their wider community. The five stages are:

- (i) Clear statement of course aims.
- (ii) Initial assessment of learners' starting points and needs.
- (iii) Discussion and negotiation to identify appropriately challenging objectives.
- (iv) Formative assessment, checking on progress and giving feedback.
- (v) Final recognition of progress, recording and celebration of achievement.

Action: Work with the Credit and Qualification Framework for Wales to build on opportunities for recognising achievement through the award of credit in adult community learning – from 2009.

Action: Introduce a more consistent approach to measuring progress in informal learning – from 2009.

Q10. DO YOU AGREE WITH THE NEED FOR A MORE CONSISTENT APPROACH TO THE MEASUREMENT OF PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENT IN INFORMAL LEARNING?

Continuing Professional Development

10. In 2005/06, we commissioned NIACE Dysgu Cymru to identify the major roles undertaken by managers, tutors and support staff in adult community learning, and to identify opportunities for continuing professional development at each level. The research established that the effectiveness of Community Learning networks in their planning, management and delivery of continuing professional development varies considerably. There is a lack of consistent data collection in many networks and scope for improved competences in project management, course costing, marketing and quality system reviewing.

11. Although staff development opportunities are available through a range of providers, much training is ad hoc, on-the-job, locally focused and unaccredited. There is a clear need for all staff, particularly tutors and middle managers to be multi-skilled. In particular, administrative, management and quality issue competences and entrepreneurial approaches are now essential for adult community learning staff to master.

12. We have supported several individual projects for quality improvement and staff development through our Investing in Quality programme, which was created to raise standards and performance in post-16 learning providers and we will continue to explore other opportunities for developing the skills and knowledge of staff at all levels in adult community learning, including the provision of training for

Welsh-speaking tutors to reinforce language skills. We will also consider how we ensure that all staff are able to identify and address equality and diversity issues arising in the context of adult community learning.

Action: Explore ways of improving opportunities for staff development for adult community learning practitioners in Wales, including Welsh-speaking practitioners.

Q11. ARE THESE THE RIGHT ACTIONS FOR IMPROVING QUALITY IN ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING? SHOULD WE INCLUDE ANY OTHERS?

Section 5: Building Links across Policy Agendas

1. The adult community learning policy reflects the aim of *Making the Connections*, which is to ensure that public services work in a more joined-up way to deliver effective services for citizens. In the spirit of *Making the Connections*, the evaluation of the policy will consider whether services have improved for learners on the ground.
2. Adult community learning can and should have strong links with a wide range of other Welsh Assembly Government strategies and initiatives beyond community development. For example, it is recognised that adult community learning has a key role to play in contributing to policy priorities such as social inclusion and health and wellbeing. There are opportunities, therefore, to support the development of other policy agendas to which adult community learning can be closely linked. This policy should provide a means of focusing on and developing this role in a more structured and strategic manner.
3. There is a need, therefore, for better planning and integration between related Assembly Government policies and initiatives, such as Communities Next, *Iaith Pawb* and the Strategic Action Plan for the Voluntary Sector Scheme. The latter, as a mandatory scheme, requires the Assembly Government to support voluntary sector work in Wales. Owing to the nature of the provision which the voluntary sector offers, it plays a key role in the delivery of adult community learning.

<p>Q12. ARE THERE ANY PARTICULAR AREAS WHERE LINKS WITH ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING SHOULD BE DEVELOPED?</p>
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4. Following the close of this consultation we shall produce a final policy document. This will be followed by an action plan describing the steps we will take to deliver our new policy for adult community learning in Wales. We invite your responses to the questions contained in the document. A consultation response form may be downloaded from <http://new.wales.gov.uk/consultations> or sent on request.

Annex A

Policy Gateway Summary

The results below represent the agreed outcomes of this consultation document being tested against the Assembly's Integration Tool that involved representatives from the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, the Department for the Economy and Transport, the Department for the Environment, Sustainability and Housing, the Department for Social Justice and Regeneration, CyMAL, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, NIACE Dysgu Cymru and Estyn. *Those representatives agree this is an accurate overview of their collective comments.*

Key: U – Undermining; **N** – Neutral; **P** – Potential; **F** – Fair; **G** – Good

One Wales Commitment	Overall Contribution					Explanation
	U	N	P	F	G	
1. A Healthy Future			X			Thought to have a potential contribution, with scope for a stronger steer with regard to the health benefits of learning and links with the Assembly Government's Health agenda
2. A Prosperous Society			X			Considered to have a potential contribution, with links to the Skills Strategy subsequently strengthened. There is scope to build more explicit links with Communities Next.
3. Living communities			X			A potential contribution, with consideration needing to be given to communities of interest and under-represented groups. There is a direct link with the movement of individuals into community employment, volunteering and community-based business.
4. Learning for Life					X	Considered to make a good contribution, with links to wider Government agendas such as health and wellbeing, economic inactivity and inclusion.
5. A Fair and Just Society				X		A fair contribution. The policy should reflect the inclusion agenda. It represents an opportunity to develop potential inter-Departmental links and to progress the Making the Connections agenda. Opportunities to develop and strengthen the learner voice should be explored when it is implemented.
6. A Sustainable Environment		X				A neutral contribution. There is a link to sustainability issues through procurement and commissioning for the adult community learning curriculum.
7. A rich and diverse culture				X		A fair contribution. There is a need for a joined-up approach with CyMAL's Gateway to Learning programme.