

Guidance on Area Inspections

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Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

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

- ▲ nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local authorities;
- ▲ primary schools;
- ▲ secondary schools;
- ▲ special schools;
- ▲ pupil referral units;
- ▲ independent schools;
- ▲ further education;
- ▲ adult community learning;
- ▲ youth and community work training;
- ▲ local authority education services for children and young people;
- ▲ teacher education and training;
- ▲ work-based learning;
- ▲ careers companies; and
- ▲ offender learning;

Estyn also:

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

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:

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Introduction

Area inspections are usually carried out in response to a request for advice from the Welsh Assembly Government in the Minister's annual remit to Estyn. However, the Chief Inspector for Wales may, without being asked to, also carry out an area inspection.

Purpose of this guidance

This guidance explains how inspectors will apply Estyn's Common Inspection Framework to area inspections.

The guidance is in two parts. The first part on carrying out inspections applies to all area inspections. The second part on making judgements is for area inspections that are concerned with Learning Pathways 14-19 in a single local authority area. At present and for the foreseeable future, Estyn's area inspections will concentrate on Learning Pathways 14-19.

Legal basis for area inspections

Area inspections are carried out under Section 83 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 (the Act) as amended by Section 178, Education Act 2002 and the National Council for Education and Training Wales (Transfer of Functions to the National Assembly for Wales and Abolition) Order 2005. This states that if asked to do so by the National Assembly, the Chief Inspector for Wales must inspect:

- the quality and availability of a specified description of education or training, in a specified area in Wales, for persons who are aged 15¹ or over;
- the standards achieved by those receiving that education or training; and
- whether the financial resources made available to those providing that education and training are managed efficiently and used in a way which provides value for money.

Any education or training within the remit of the Chief Inspector for Wales may be made the subject of an area inspection.

A provider of education or training that is the subject of an area inspection must provide such information as the Chief Inspector for Wales may reasonably require in connection with the inspection. The National Assembly and any local authority within the area which is the subject of an area inspection must provide such information as the Chief Inspector for Wales may reasonably require in connection with the inspection.

Section 84 of the Act empowers the National Assembly to direct a local authority, whose area is wholly or partly in the area covered by the report, to prepare a written

¹ Section 83 (11) provides that 'persons who are aged 15' includes persons for whom education is being provided at a school who will attain that age in the current school year.

statement of the action it proposes to take in the light of an area inspection report published by the Chief Inspector. The statement must set out when the action proposed is to be taken. In preparing such a statement, the local authority must consult with such persons as the National Assembly may direct. The action plan must be published within 50 days as prescribed under regulation 4 of the Inspection of Education and Training (Wales) Regulations 2001 and amended by the Inspection of Education and Training (Amendment) Regulations 2004. Estyn will evaluate the action plan and approve it if it clearly addresses the issues identified in the report and indicates how improvement is to be achieved. Estyn may also ask specific providers to prepare action plans in relation to matters that lie within their responsibility. The local authority must copy action plans to the Welsh Assembly Government.

Part 1: Carrying out area inspections

Introduction

This section is set out in a way that reflects the sequence of work before, during and after an area inspection.

The reporting inspector is responsible for the conduct and management of the inspection, and for the inspection report. While this guidance focuses mainly on the role of the reporting inspector, all team members must comply with the same inspection requirements.

Principles of inspection

Inspectors will:

- ensure that inspection is of high quality and responsive to the needs of all learners;
- ensure that judgements are secure, reliable, valid and based on first-hand evidence;
- involve providers fully in the inspection process, including the use of nominees;
- use a self-evaluation report as the starting point for the inspection and to identify key issues for investigation in order to make judgements on the validity of its findings;
- keep to a minimum any requirements for documentation and preparation by providers;
- gain the learners' perspective and that of other stakeholders;
- apply the principle of equality for Welsh and English to all our inspection work, providing bilingual services whenever they are appropriate; and
- be constructive in identifying and supporting providers with important areas for improvement.

Code of conduct for inspectors

Inspectors should uphold the highest possible standards in their work. All inspectors have to meet the standards of Estyn's Code of Conduct. When conducting the inspection, inspectors will:

- carry out their work with integrity, courtesy and due sensitivity;
- evaluate the work of the provider objectively;
- report honestly, fairly and impartially;
- communicate clearly and openly;
- act in the best interests of learners; and
- respect the confidentiality of all information received during the course of their work.

It is important that inspectors judge the effectiveness of provision and leadership on their contribution to outcomes and not on the basis of any preferences for particular methods. The key to the judgement is whether the methods and organisation are fit for the purpose of achieving high standards of work and behaviour for all learners.

Inspectors should be aware that requests for disclosure of information may be made for details contained in inspection evidence, letters and emails. All information (written or electronic) should be recorded in a way that is fit for the public domain.

Expectations of providers

In order that inspection is constructive and beneficial, it is important that inspectors and providers establish and maintain a professional working environment based on mutual courtesy, respect and professional behaviour. Inspectors are expected to uphold Estyn's Code of Conduct but we also expect providers to:

- be courteous and professional;
- apply their own codes of conduct in their dealings with inspectors;
- enable inspectors to conduct their inspection in an open and honest way;
- enable inspectors to evaluate the provision objectively;
- provide evidence that will enable inspectors to report honestly, fairly and reliably about provision;
- maintain a purposeful dialogue with the inspectors;
- recognise that inspectors need to talk to staff, learners, and other stakeholders without the presence of a manager or senior leader;
- draw any concerns about the inspection to the attention of inspectors in a timely and suitable manner through the nominee or a senior leader;
- work with inspectors to minimise disruption and stress throughout the inspection; and
- ensure the health and safety of inspectors while on their premises.

Health and safety

Inspectors will carry out inspections in accordance with the inspectorate's guidance on health and safety. If they observe anything that they think constitutes an obvious danger to the safety of staff, visitors or learners, they should alert managers at the provider being inspected. Inspectors should also notify them if less than obvious threats are noticed. In all cases inspectors should make a separate electronic note of the threat and that the managers were informed of it. This should be copied to the health and safety lead officer in the inspectorate.

Responding to a safeguarding allegation

If an inspector is alerted to an allegation/suspicion in respect of a child, young person or vulnerable adult, he/she should follow the procedures as set out in Section 4 of Estyn Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding 2009.

The reporting inspector has a crucial role in this process and is responsible for making a safeguarding referral, reporting to the inspectorate's safeguarding officer and informing the provider that a referral is being made.

As directed by the safeguarding policy and pocket guide, inspectors have a duty to:

- report any concerns to the inspectorate's safeguarding officer or deputy;
- follow their instructions regarding information sharing;
- record details on the Estyn safeguarding log; and
- avoid investigating matters relating to safeguarding concerns.

Area inspections

Area inspections can focus on the provision for learners aged 14 and over within a specific local authority area, within a number of local authority areas, or within a part of a local authority. Inspections can focus on all the provision in any area or on different aspects of it. They can also focus on the provision for any specific age group that is older than 14 years of age.

Area inspections take account not only of individual providers of education and training in the inspection area, but also the overall strategic direction, planning, leadership, management and delivery at the area level. Inspectors will evaluate how effective the local strategy for education and training is in raising achievement and increasing learner participation.

Area inspections do not take the place of other Estyn inspections that occur as part of established inspection cycles, or of thematic or other survey work. Estyn will use evidence derived from these, where appropriate and available, to inform an area inspection and avoid overburdening providers wherever possible.

The area being inspected will be announced when the Welsh Assembly Government publishes the Minister's annual remit to Estyn. About six months before the inspection, Estyn will send written confirmation to providers within the area selected for inspection. This notice will be given to the providers, the Welsh Assembly Government and the local authority.

For all area inspections, inspectors will use, as far as possible, the Common Inspection Framework. In all inspections, inspectors make judgements and report on three key questions:

- Key question 1: How good are 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 area provision's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

The inspection team

The composition and size of teams will depend on the nature and the scale of the work being inspected. The team will have a range of specialism's appropriate to the task.

Inspection teams will be led by an HMI who acts as the reporting inspector with other team members drawn from among HMI or additional inspectors. Additional inspectors may be on secondment or on contract to the inspectorate.

The reporting inspector manages the inspection team and the whole inspection process, and is the first point of reference for everyone involved in the inspection.

The provision being inspected will be invited to select a senior member of staff, called the nominee, to work with the inspection team. The nominee will have sufficient seniority to act as a link between the providers and the inspection team.

Before the inspection

Initial preparation

The reporting inspector should contact the nominee as soon as possible in order to explain the purpose, scope and format of the inspection.

The reporting inspector will also need to discuss an outline programme and set up any necessary arrangements for the inspection, for example:

- requesting and collecting evidence, including the self-evaluation report;
- arranging meetings before and during the inspection; and
- administrative matters, such as a base for inspectors and domestic arrangements.

Inspectors should be prepared to accept any additional documents that the providers in the area wish to provide, for example, documents that support the self-evaluation report.

There is also a need to request and collect evidence that relates to the scope of the inspection from the Welsh Assembly Government and Careers Wales.

Meetings before the inspection

About six weeks before the inspection, the reporting inspector will meet:

- representatives from all providers in the specified area to explain the inspection process; and
- key personnel, such as the Director of education, the Principal of the further education college and the Chief Executive of the local authority, from the area being inspected.

Self-evaluation report and other reports

One self-evaluation report on the 14 to 19 provision in the area is required for the inspection. Individual providers do not need to produce their own separate self-evaluation reports. About six weeks before the inspection, the reporting inspector will need to collect a copy of the self-evaluation report. It will be recommended to the area provision that the self-evaluation report should be based on the reporting requirements that are set out for each key question below.

Estyn will also request any position papers derived from internal quality assurance arrangements from the Welsh Assembly Government, or the local authority, that sets out their own overview of the provision being inspected.

Planning the inspection and preparing the team

About six weeks before the inspection, the reporting inspector will need to start to plan and agree with the nominee a programme of visits for the inspection. In the period leading up to the inspection, the reporting inspector will liaise with the nominee to discuss any changes to the sample, to inform him or her of the inspection team and to collect collated outcome evidence for the specified area of education.

Taking into account the self-evaluation report and any information already held by the inspectorate, the reporting inspector will plan the inspection and allocate responsibilities to members of the inspection team.

During the inspection

Inspection process

The inspection activity takes place over two consecutive weeks. The pattern of activity in the two weeks is broadly as follows:

- the first part of week one allows the inspection team to prepare for their designated tasks;
- the rest of week one and, if necessary, the first part of week two involves interviews with key people and with a selection of learners in a range of providers; and
- during the rest of week two, the inspection team collates findings, reaches corporate judgements and provides an oral feedback of the findings.

Gathering and reviewing inspection evidence

Inspectors will evaluate the provision and make two overall key judgements. These overall judgements will derive from the judgements made on the three key questions.

The team will plan the inspection so that they can cover the key questions and pursue the identified lines of enquiry that are specific to the topic and area being inspected.

The team will ensure that they have enough time to review the key evidence that is needed to make judgements. The team will need to make sure that it is focused on the key evidence that can be used to substantiate its judgements. The main forms of evidence may include:

- documentary evidence, including data on learners' performance and progress;
- discussion with officers, staff, leaders and managers, governors and others; and
- the views of learners and stakeholders.

In line with the Common Inspection Framework and associated arrangements, inspection teams will have fewer inspectors and less time to carry out area

inspections than in the past. Therefore, it is unlikely that inspectors will be able to visit all the providers in the area. Instead, inspectors will make focused visits to a sample of providers based on identified lines of enquiry. Also, they may hold focus group meetings with key people from the providers, for example with headteachers or curriculum planners.

Learner voice is a key source of evidence of achievement, attitudes and wellbeing. It may not be possible in the course of an area inspection to undertake interviews with learners during visits to providers. Instead, inspectors will expect the area provision being inspected to have collected the views of learners and inspectors will test out the validity of those views in order to inform judgements.

Recording inspection evidence

Evaluation forms should be used to record all evidence and judgements.

Judgement descriptions

The following descriptions are intended as guidance to help inspectors to make judgements by considering the relative balance and significance of strengths and areas for improvement.

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.

Inspectors will need to check which of the above descriptors is the best fit for each of the judgements that are made.

Team meetings

The main purpose of team meetings is to arrive at an accurate and thoroughly-tested corporate view of standards, quality and leadership. The whole inspection team will come to corporate judgements that are based upon sufficient valid and reliable evidence. Meetings will have clear agendas and there will be opportunities for inspectors to:

- test the judgements in the self-evaluation report;
- discuss emerging issues and lines of inquiry;
- resolve pre-inspection issues and hypotheses;
- discuss any gaps in the evidence base; and
- consider main inspection findings and recommendations.

Giving feedback

If there is a visit to a provider where a meeting with learners takes place, inspectors should give the provider a brief feedback about the learners' general views. Apart from this, there is no need for feedback to an individual provider.

The reporting inspector will offer leaders of the area provision the opportunity to hear and discuss emerging findings throughout the inspection period. These discussions could involve the nominee if the area provision so wishes. These meetings are very useful in ensuring the smooth running of an inspection. They provide the area provision with the opportunity to enter into a dialogue with the inspectors and to offer further evidence if requested or seen to be necessary.

Towards the end of the second week of the inspection, the inspection team will provide an oral feedback on the findings to representatives of the providers in the area. The feedback should convey the main judgements and the reasons for them. It is important that the format and arrangements for oral reporting are fully understood. The reporting inspector should ensure that there is a clear understanding of who receives feedback, and when.

When reporting back at the end of an inspection, inspectors should ensure that providers understand that issues may be discussed and factual matters may be clarified, but judgements are not negotiable. There should always be consistency between the evaluations that are fed back and what will appear in the written report. Inspectors will need to remind providers that the judgements are provisional and confidential until the report is published and that they may change as a result of Estyn's internal quality assurance procedures.

After the inspection

The inspection report

The reporting inspector is responsible for producing a final inspection report that is clear to a lay audience and helpful to the area provision. Estyn will publish reports bilingually in line with Estyn's Welsh Language Scheme.

When writing reports, inspectors should take account of Estyn's writing guidance which is available on our website www.estyn.gov.uk.

The structure of the inspection report is based on two overall summary judgements and three key questions, and will take the following form:

About the area

Summary

- Overall judgement on the area provision's current performance.
- Overall judgement on the area provision's prospects for improvement.

Recommendations

Main findings

Key question 1: How good are outcomes?

Key question 2: How good is provision?
Key question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Annexes

The two overall summary judgements and the judgements for the three key questions will be based on the four-point scale:

Excellent
Good
Adequate
Unsatisfactory

Reports must be produced within 65 working days from the last day of the inspection. The reporting inspector will give the area provision a late draft report to help check the factual accuracy of the content. The area provision has 10 working days in which to consider the draft report and identify any factual errors.

Guidance on writing specific sections of the report

About the area

This section of the report should contain a commentary on:

social and economic features, including:

- population of the area, including size, composition, trends and language;
- qualifications of the population;
- socio-economic characteristics, including information from the Welsh Assembly Government's index of multiple deprivation; and
- employment patterns, including structure, size and location of enterprises.

pattern of provision

This will depend on the topic being inspected, but all reports should describe the nature of the provision being inspected. This might include a commentary on:

- characteristics of the learners;
- range, types and sizes of providers;
- range and type of learning provided; and
- funding of the provision.

participation of 16-19 year olds in education and training

The report will need to comment on the pattern of participation at post 16, including some indication of where learners receive their education and training.

The content of this section is normally agreed with the area provision. Where there is disagreement about the content of this section, the reporting inspector will make the final decision about what to include in the report.

Summary

The summary contains the two overall judgements on the area provision's current performance and prospects for improvement. There should be a brief explanation of the reasons for these judgements. The summary must be consistent with the text in the body of the report and the oral feedback to the area provision.

Overall judgement on the area provision's current performance

The first overall judgement should be based on the judgements made on the three key questions. The greatest weight should be given to the judgement about Key Question 1.

Normally, this overall judgement should be no higher than the lowest judgement awarded to any key question. The overall judgement can be one level higher than the lowest level awarded to any key question, but the reasons for this exception must be explained clearly and fully in the report. During the process of moderating the inspection judgements, such exceptions will be considered carefully.

Overall judgement on the area provision's prospects for improvement

The second overall judgement represents inspectors' confidence in the area provision's ability to drive its own improvement in the future.

In coming to a judgement about the prospects for improvement, inspectors will consider whether leaders and managers have:

- the capacity and capability to make improvements and implement plans;
- a successful track record in managing change and securing improvement;
- clear priorities and challenging targets for improvement;
- coherent and practical plans to meet targets;
- resources to meet the identified priorities; and
- appropriate systems to review progress, identify areas for improvement and take effective action to remedy them.

The judgement on prospects for improvement should normally relate closely to the overall judgements for leadership and/or improving quality, or to significant aspects within those aspects that support the overall judgement.

Recommendations

The recommendations should give the area provision a clear and specific indication of the areas for improvement that it will need to address in its action plan. Inspectors should write the recommendations in order of priority. The recommendations should arise from the main judgements and should provide a clear and practicable basis on which the area provision can act. Inspectors must refer to any significant matters noted in the report where the area provisions practice does not comply with legal requirements.

Guidance on reporting on the key questions

These sections constitute the main body of the report and they are described in detail later under '**Making Judgements**'.

There is a strong link between outcomes, provision and leadership and management. If leaders and managers are working effectively then this should be reflected in the provision and in the standards that learners achieve. Hence, normally, the judgements for Key Questions 2 and 3 will not be at a level higher than the judgement for Key Question 1. Where there are differences between the judgements for Key Questions 1, 2 and 3, these should be explained in the text of the report.

Assuring the quality of inspections

Estyn is committed to:

- effective selection, training, briefing, support and deployment of inspectors;
- effective training, briefing and support to allow the nominee to play an active role;
- regular dialogue with relevant leaders during inspection;
- criteria and recording systems that comply with the Common Inspection Framework and guidance;
- careful review and analysis of evidence;
- unambiguous oral feedback on the summary judgements and key questions;
- consistently clear, accurate and well-presented reports; and
- maintaining appropriate internal moderation and quality improvement activities, including the occasional monitoring of inspections.

Providers should raise any concerns about an inspection with the reporting inspector during the inspection. Any objections to the findings of inspection should also be discussed with the reporting inspector as they arise during the inspection. The quality assurance of the inspection will always be carried out by the reporting inspector in the first instance.

If complaints about the inspection, inspection findings or the report cannot be resolved at this informal stage, then the area provision should write to the inspectorate's Feedback and Complaints Manager asking for their complaint to be considered further. A leaflet explaining the inspectorate's feedback and complaints procedure is available from the inspectorate's website www.estyn.gov.uk.

Part 2: Making Judgements

The guidance that follows is specific to the inspection of the provision for 14 to 19 year olds in each local authority area. Inspections will focus on the implementation and effect of Learning Pathways 14-19 (LP14-19).²

Estyn introduced a new Common Inspection Framework and new inspection arrangements in September 2010. The framework and arrangements apply to the inspection of providers as part of a six-year inspection cycle and do not apply directly to area inspections. However, the guidance that follows is based as far as possible on the Common Inspection Framework and arrangements. These have been adapted to suit the way that area inspections are carried out and the nature of the provision being inspected. The key features of the inspection arrangements from September 2010 are:

- a simplified Common Inspection Framework;
- greater emphasis on building capacity for self-improvement; and
- a stronger role for self-evaluation.

Although the 'about the area' section will contain the similar content for all area inspections, the detail for each of the key questions will vary depending on the topic being inspected. As Estyn's area inspections for the present and foreseeable future will concentrate on provision for 14 to 19 year olds in a single local authority area, this guidance sets out the specific aspects that need to be evaluated and reported for that specific topic.

² Learning Pathways 14-19 Guidance II was published in April 2006 and is available on the Welsh Assembly Government's web site www.wales.gov.uk.

Key question 1: How good are outcomes?

In judging this key question in area inspections, inspectors will evaluate:

- **results and trends in performance compared with national averages, similar providers and prior attainment;**
- **skills and Welsh language; and**
- **attendance and exclusions.**

Issues in inspecting the key question

Learning Pathways 14-19 is designed to raise standards by ensuring that learners follow appropriate courses that lead to qualifications that meet their capabilities, interests and needs. Results and trends in performance, including that in the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification, are therefore relevant to Learning Pathways 14-19.

It is important to consider the picture given by the whole range of analyses available over a period of time, usually three years. Inspectors should not base conclusions on one year's performance, on one individual indicator or on only one type of analysis.

Inspectors should give more weight to those analyses that present comparisons with similar local authority areas, those that compare the local authority area's schools with similar schools from the free-school-meal benchmarks, and those that compare the local authority area's performance with that of modelled expectations using free school meals.

Results and trends in performance compared with national averages, similar providers and prior attainment

Inspectors should consider:

- how well participation rates for learners across all sectors compare with national rates, including entry rates at Key Stage 4, completion rates for all learners and the proportion transferring between sectors or becoming NEETs³;
- the percentage of 14 to 16 year old learners that attains the level 2 threshold, including English or Welsh first language and mathematics, average wider points score and other key performance indicators compared with national averages, benchmark information and any other comparative data;
- the proportion of 16 year old learners that leave full-time education without a recognised qualification and how this compares to national averages;
- the percentage of 16 to 19 year old learners across the different sectors that attains the relevant qualifications compared with national averages and any comparative data;
- the performance for 14 to 16 year old learners and for 16 to 19 year old learners compared with any value-added measures which are available;
- the difference in the participation and performance of different groups of learners, particularly between boys and girls; and
- the proportion of learners that gains non-formal qualifications and participate in informal experiences.

³ Learners not engaged in education, employment or training.

Skills and Welsh language

Inspectors should consider:

- the proportion of learners in the different sectors who gains the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification and attains essential skills qualifications at each level compared with national data; and
- learners' attainment in Welsh and Welsh second language compared with national averages, benchmark data and other comparative data.

Attendance and exclusions

Inspectors should consider:

- the rates of attendance of learners in the different sectors and how they compare with national data; and
- the rates of permanent and fixed-term exclusions for 14 to 16 year old learners over the last three years, including the number of days lost, and how they compare with national data; and
- whether rates of attendance and exclusions are improving over time, including how they compare with national trends.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

In judging this key question in area inspections, inspectors will evaluate:

- **learning experiences; and**
- **care, support and guidance.**

Issues in inspecting the key question

The focus in this key question is on the six key elements of Learning Pathways 14-19. The Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure (the 'Measure') sets out statutory requirements, regulations and guidance that cover the elements. The Measure aims to develop further the implementation of Learning Pathways in Wales, and to ensure that the widest possible choice is available to all learners in schools and colleges.

The Measure creates a right for learners aged 14-19 to follow a course of study from a local curriculum. It also places a duty upon local authorities, schools and further education institutions to co-operate to ensure that young people have access to a wider choice of options that is better suited to their individual needs. This wider choice is offered at Key Stage 4 and at post 16.

In addition to a greater choice of courses, the Measure will ensure that, through their learning pathways, young people are able to access a range of learner support services through a learning coach, personal support services, and careers advice and guidance.

Learning experiences

This section is concerned with the first three key elements of Learning Pathways 14-19:

- key element 1: an individual learning pathway;
- key element 2: wider choice and flexibility; and
- key element 3: the learning core.

Inspectors should consider the quality of the curriculum on offer and the extent to which learners are able to gain access to their entitlement as set out in the Measure and associated regulations and guidance. This should help inspectors to evaluate the first two key elements. They need to see if learners have access to courses that cover the domains and are available at appropriate levels from entry level to level three.

Inspectors need to consider the impact of the local 14-19 Network on the development of individual learning pathways and wider choice and flexibility. In doing this, they should consider how well providers are working with partners in order to provide the full range of courses that are capable of meeting learners' interests and needs.

Inspectors also need to evaluate the provision for 'key element 3: the learning core'. This should involve considering the provision for the 'minimum requirements' and 'enhancements' of the different aspects of the learning core, namely:

- skills;
- knowledge and understanding;
- attitudes and value; and
- common experiences.

For **individual learning pathways** and **wider choice and flexibility**, inspectors should consider:

- the quality of the curriculum available to 14 to 16 year old learners, including access to domains, levels, general and applied options, and progression routes;
- the quality of the curriculum available to 16 to 19 year old learners, including access to domains, levels, general and applied options, and progression routes;
- the quality and effectiveness of the collaborative provision;
- how wide-ranging and effective the provision is for learners working through the medium of Welsh; and
- how good the provision is for non-formal and informal learning activities.

For **learning core** provision, inspectors should consider the provision for:

- skills (key skills, Welsh-language skills and other work-related skills);
- knowledge and understanding (Wales, Europe and the World, personal, social, sustainability and health education, and careers education and guidance);
- attitudes and values (respect for self, others and for diversity, and responsibility)

for personal and social development, sustainability and health); and

- common experiences (work-focused experience, community participation, and cultural, sporting, aesthetic and creative activities), including the engagement with employers, especially in relation to providing work-focused experience.

Listening to learners

For learning pathways, inspectors can gain a great deal from talking to learners, if appropriate. However, it may not be possible for inspectors to interview enough learners to gain a reliable evidence base. In these cases, inspectors will expect that networks, as part of their quality assurance arrangements, will have robust and reliable evidence of learners' views. This evidence should include information about:

- whether learners received full and impartial information about courses in their own provider and in other places;
- whether learners were able to take the courses that they wanted;
- learners' satisfaction with the choices they made; and
- the overall satisfaction with the quality of the range and quality of courses being taken.

Care, support and guidance

This section is concerned with the second three key elements of Learning Pathways 14-19:

- key element 4: learning coach support;
- key element 5: access to personal support; and
- key element 6: careers information, advice and guidance.

For **learning coach support**, inspectors should consider:

- the effectiveness of the arrangements to ensure that all learners receive their entitlement to learning coach support;
- the extent to which the learning coach support is impartial; and
- how effectively the network has planned the training and deployment of learning coaches.

For **access to personal support**, inspectors should consider:

- to what extent support and/or access to support meets the needs of individuals, especially in helping them to develop solutions to personal, social, emotional and physical problems.

For **careers information, advice and guidance**, inspectors should consider:

- whether there is high quality impartial information, advice and guidance, in particular from within individual providers and including informal advice and guidance.

Listening to learners

As with the learning pathways section of this key question, inspectors can gain a great deal from talking to learners, if appropriate. As stated above, inspectors will expect that networks will have robust and reliable evidence of learners' views. This evidence should include information about:

- the quality of guidance learners received before starting their courses, including whether it was clear, fair and provided full information about all the choices on offer in the locality;
- the quality of careers advice and guidance;
- the quality of guidance and support learners receive during courses;
- the availability and impact of learning coach support; and
- how well learners' problems and issues have been addressed.

Key question 3: How good are leadership and management?

In coming judging this key question, inspectors will evaluate:

- **leadership;**
- **improving quality;**
- **partnership working; and**
- **resource management.**

Issues in inspecting the key question

The main focus in this key question should be on the leadership and management of the 14-19 provision in the area rather than on individual providers. In evaluating the impact of leaders, inspectors should focus on the extent to which leadership and management are effective in sustaining high quality and improving provision and standards.

Leadership

Inspectors will evaluate how well the network and providers set out their priorities and strategic direction. In particular, they will need to consider how well the network and providers look at Learning Pathways 14-19 from the learners' point of view rather than simply looking at how Learning Pathways 14-19 affects the providers themselves. This means that providers should look at how they can contribute to expanding learners' choice and improving outcomes through their own provision and/or collaboration.

Inspectors should consider:

- whether the network has a clear vision and strategic priorities that are communicated effectively to all providers;
- how well the network is managed, including the effectiveness of the planning process;

- the extent to which the network has structures that help it to make progress;
- the effectiveness of management group(s) at a strategic and operational level;
- the degree to which providers are engaged with and involved in the network;
- the effectiveness of engagement with employers;
- the quality of leadership and management within the different sectors in relation to Learning Pathways 14-19; and
- the support from the children and young people's partnership and the local authority.

Improving quality

Inspectors should look at how the current provision is evaluated in the light of the Learning Pathways 14-19 requirements, and the quality of planning over the short term and long term.

Inspectors should consider:

- the quality of self-evaluation of the work of the network;
- the contribution of each sector to the network's self-evaluation;
- the monitoring and evaluation of collaborative provision;
- how well the network uses common and agreed performance indicators;
- the extent to which self-evaluation is informed by first-hand evidence;
- how well the views of learners contribute to self-evaluation and improvement planning;
- how well providers evaluate the quality of courses for their learners that are delivered elsewhere;
- the quality of the three-year strategic plans, the annual network development plan and any associated plans;
- the extent to which planning involves a clear analysis of the range of provision and performance, and aims to address identified gaps, duplication and areas for improvement;
- the extent to which the local authority's children and young people's plan reflects and supports network plans; and
- the track record of the network in making improvements.

Partnership working

Inspectors should evaluate the impact of the local network on providers and how well providers contribute to it. The focus should be on how strategically providers work with partners to improve standards and how well the network uses strategic partnerships to help to build its capacity for continuous improvement. This will include looking at how partners work together to plan, manage, and quality assure provision, for example through pooling their funding and resources.

Inspectors should consider:

- whether providers are clear about their roles and responsibilities within any formal partnerships;

- how well in practice the different sectors work together and with the network; and
- the extent to which there is real collaboration to reduce duplication of provision, combine non-viable classes and to specialise.

Resource management

The main focus in this section should be on the efficient use of resources for the 14-19 provision in the area. When inspecting the management of resources, inspectors will judge how well the network plans and carries out effective strategies to ensure and monitor that it delivers value for money in the way it manages resources.

In all providers, but especially where teaching groups are small, inspectors should assess whether providers and the network are providing value for money. Inspectors should investigate whether small teaching groups are cost effective. They should also investigate whether there is unnecessary duplication of courses. They will need to consider the extent to which providers in the network work with each other in order to increase their cost effectiveness.

Inspectors should consider:

- the extent to which the network has ensured that the 14 to 19 provision is appropriately resourced, suitably staffed and delivered in accommodation that is fit for purpose;
- the effectiveness of arrangements for continuing professional development, including that for leaders and managers;
- how well technology is used to increase learner choice and flexibility;
- the extent to which the network and providers deploy resources to ensure that every learner has access to their entitlement to the full range of general and vocational options;
- where provision is duplicated across the network, the extent to which consideration has been given to the most cost effective method of delivery;
- whether there are any gaps in provision that have not been filled;
- how well the network analyses the viability of curriculum provision;
- where there are small groups at post-16, whether this has:
 - caused large teaching groups in key stage 3 and key stage 4;
 - reduced the range of general and vocational options in key stage 4; or
 - adversely affected the availability of specialist teachers in key stage 3 or key stage 4;
- how well the network evaluates the value for money from any transport it has arranged; and
- the extent to which the network has ensured that all providers review the curriculum they offer to ensure best value for money, including pooling any resources.

Annex 1: Protocol and guidance for nominees

Background

Inspections will provide an opportunity to involve providers actively in the inspection process by enabling a nominee from the area provision to work with the inspection team. This will ensure greater involvement by the area provision and strengthen the partnership between the inspection team and area provision. It is not a requirement that the area provision has to put forward a nominee.

The area provision is invited to select a nominee who will:

- ensure that inspectors are fully informed about the context of the area's work;
- contribute to meetings of the inspection team; and
- hear emerging findings of the team.

The nominee

The nominee will usually be a sufficiently senior member of staff to act as a link between the providers and the inspection team.

Before the inspection, the reporting inspector, in discussion with the area provision will establish:

- whether the area provision wishes to take up the invitation of having a nominee; and
- the exact nature of the nominee's role.

If the area provision decides not to identify a nominee, the reporting inspector will still need to establish a climate in which providers value the inspection, and maintain a good working relationship with the senior staff.

If the area provision decides not to take up the offer of having a nominee, this should not prejudice the inspection. The fact that an area provision does not have a nominee will have no impact on the judgements made by the inspection team.

The rest of this annex sets out the:

- role of the nominee;
- responsibilities of the nominee, the reporting inspector and the area provision; and
- activities to be undertaken in the different stages of the inspection.

Role of the nominee

The role of the nominee is demanding and requires that person to exercise the objectivity essential to an external inspection process. The nominee will be required to respect the strict confidentiality of all inspection discussions. The role is not that of

an advocate or defender of the area provision. The exact nature of the role of the nominee can vary, depending on the circumstances and wishes of the area provision. It must be agreed before each inspection. The statement of agreement (see below) must be signed by all parties before the inspection.

The scope of the nominee's role should be negotiated between the area provision and the reporting inspector.

In all cases, the nominee will need to:

- liaise before and after the inspection with the reporting inspector about administrative aspects of the inspection such as coverage, documents and meetings;
- respond to team requests for additional information during the inspection; and
- assist in resolving any problems that arise throughout the inspection process.

In addition, where the area provision and the reporting inspector have agreed this, the nominee may also:

- participate in team meetings where strengths and areas for improvement are being discussed, but he or she must take no part in deciding judgements to be awarded;
- be involved in collecting evidence, where appropriate and agreed; and
- provide any additional evidence that is needed following the team meetings.

Responsibilities

The nominee will:

- agree the exact role of the nominee with the area provision and the reporting inspector;
- be familiar with the guidance on area inspections;
- be familiar with Estyn's guidance on the role of the nominee;
- have a thorough understanding of any self-evaluation reports and action plans;
- liaise with the reporting inspector about administrative aspects of the inspection such as coverage, documentation and meetings;
- ensure that inspectors are fully informed about the context of the area provision's work;
- be involved in collecting evidence, where appropriate and agreed;
- respond to team requests for additional information;
- respect the confidentiality of all information received during the course of the inspection;
- assist in resolving any problems that arise;
- contribute to meetings of the inspection team;
- avoid being defensive or an advocate for the area provision; and
- hear emerging findings.

The reporting inspector will:

- agree with the area provision and the nominee his or her exact role;
- keep the nominee fully briefed about the conduct of the inspection;
- brief the inspection team about the role of the nominee;
- make sure that the nominee feels fully involved with the inspection team;
- plan the work of the nominee during the inspection period through negotiation with the area provision;
- ensure that the nominee is aware of the arrangements for team meetings; and
- ensure that the nominee takes no active part in the awarding of judgements.

The area provision will:

- agree the exact role of the nominee with the nominee and with the reporting inspector;
- normally channel any issues, concerns and further evidence through the nominee to the inspection team;
- be sympathetic to the demands placed on the nominee;
- provide support for the nominee in undertaking his or her task;
- respect the confidentiality under which the nominee is working; and
- ensure that the nominee has played a key part in any self-evaluation procedures.

Activities in the inspection process

Before the inspection:

Nominee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become familiar with the guidance for area inspections. • Become familiar with Estyn's guidance on the role of the nominee. • Become familiar with the inspection documentation. • Take part in the discussions with the reporting inspector in the pre-inspection visit. • Attend pre-inspection meetings. • Make administrative arrangements for the inspection. • Collate documentation, as appropriate, required for the inspection.
Reporting inspector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the role of the nominee during the first contact with the area provision. • Ensure that the nominee is involved in discussions in the pre-inspection visit. • Brief the nominee fully in the same way as the other team members about the arrangements for the inspection. • Plan the work of the nominee during the inspection. • Ensure that the nominee receives all key inspection documents. • Fully brief the other team members about the role of the nominee.
Area provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish the role of the nominee during the first contact with the reporting inspector. • Ensure that the nominee is involved in discussions in the pre-inspection visit. • Clarify the role of the nominee with the reporting inspector and the nominee. • Ensure that the nominee attends the pre-inspection meetings.

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During the inspection:

Nominee	<p>All nominees will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • liaise with the reporting inspector about administrative arrangements; • respond to team requests for additional information; • assist in resolving any problems that arise; and • take no active part when judgements are being awarded. <p>Where agreed, nominees may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contribute to discussions about strengths and areas for improvement in team meetings; • be proactive in providing additional evidence following team meetings; • complete evaluation forms as appropriate; and • where appropriate, ask the inspection team to clarify its judgements.
Reporting inspector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the work of the nominee and provide support as appropriate. • Ensure that the nominee is as fully involved in the inspection as possible. • Normally, channel requests for additional information and evidence through the nominee. • Ensure that the nominee takes no active part in the awarding of judgements.
Area provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the nominee to liaise with the inspection team. • Normally, channel any issues or concerns through the nominee. • Provide support for the nominee in undertaking their task. • Respect the confidentiality under which the nominee is working.

After the inspection:

Nominee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to checking the factual accuracy of the draft of the report. • Play a full part in devising the action plan following the inspection.
Area provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve the nominee in checking the factual accuracy of the draft of the report. • Involve the nominee in devising the action plan.

Statement of agreement between the reporting inspector, area provision and nominee.

Agreed roles and responsibilities regarding the nominee (please tick where appropriate).

The nominee

Before the inspection	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become familiar with the guidance for area inspections. • Become familiar with Estyn's guidance on the role of the nominee. • Become familiar with the inspection documentation. • Take part in the discussions with the reporting inspector in the pre-inspection visit. • Attend pre-inspection meetings. • Make administrative arrangements for the inspection. • Collate documentation, as appropriate, required for the inspection. 	
During the inspection	
Liaise with the reporting inspector about administrative arrangements.	
Respond to team requests for additional information.	
Assist in resolving any problems that arise.	
Contribute to discussions about strengths and areas for improvement in team meetings, but take no active part when judgements are being awarded.	
Be proactive in providing additional evidence following team meetings.	
Complete evaluation forms as appropriate.	
Where appropriate, ask the inspection team to clarify its judgements.	
After the inspection	
Contribute to checking the factual accuracy of the draft of report.	
Play a full part in devising the action plan following the inspection.	

The reporting inspector

Before the inspection	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the role of the nominee during the first contact with the area provision. • Ensure that the nominee is involved in discussions in the pre-inspection visit. • Brief the nominee fully in the same way as the other team members about the arrangements for the inspection. • Plan the work of the nominee during the inspection. • Ensure that the nominee receives all key inspection documents. • Fully brief the other team members about the role of the nominee. 	
During the inspection	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the work of the nominee and provide support as appropriate. • Ensure that the nominee is as fully involved in the inspection as possible. • Normally, channel requests for additional information and evidence through the nominee. • Ensure that the nominee takes no active part in the awarding of judgements. 	

The area provision

Before the inspection	
Establish the role of the nominee during the first contact with the reporting inspector.	
Ensure that the nominee is involved in discussions in the pre-inspection visit.	
Clarify the role of the nominee with the reporting inspector and the nominee.	
Ensure that the nominee attends the pre-inspection meetings.	

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During the inspection	
Use the nominee to liaise with the inspection team.	
Normally, channel any issues or concerns through the nominee.	
Provide support for the nominee in undertaking their task.	
Respect the confidentiality under which the nominee is working.	
After the inspection	
Involve the nominee in checking the factual accuracy of the draft of the report.	
Involve the nominee in devising the action plan.	

Name of nominee: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Name of reporting inspector: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Name of senior representative of the area provision: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Annex 2: Reporting on performance data in area inspections focusing on Learning Pathways 14-19

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

The main focus should be on achievement rather than attainment.

Using the range of analyses when evaluating results and trends in performance compared with national averages, similar providers and prior attainment in schools;

It is important to consider the picture given by the whole range of analyses available over a period of time, usually three years. You should not base conclusions on one year's performance, on one individual indicator or on only one type of analysis.

How well participation rates for learners across all sectors compare with national rates, including entry rates at key stage 4, completion rates for all learners and the proportion transferring between sectors or becoming NEETs;

Inspectors should consider and comment on participation rates in education and training in the different sectors across the area and whether these are improving. This should include the entry rates for qualifications at key stage 4 compared to Wales and other local authority areas, and completion rates in all sectors and the level of partial completion for those who leave during a course.

It is important to consider the proportion of pupils in schools who transfer to vocational programmes at the colleges or go into work-based learning after year 12.

Inspectors should consider and comment on the proportion of young people not engaged in employment, education or training in the area compared to Wales and other LEAs and whether these are increasing or decreasing.

The percentage of 14 to 16 year old learners that attains the level 2 threshold, including English or Welsh first language and mathematics, average wider points score and other key performance indicators compared with national averages, benchmark information and any other comparative data;

Comparison to national averages should be used to identify whether the rate of progress in the area provision is better than the national improvement and to identify relative strengths or areas for improvement in trends in different indicators.

These comparisons should be made over at least three years since data trends over this period carry more weight than performance in a single year. Inspectors should comment on trends over the previous three years and whether performance is generally improving, fluctuating or declining.

In key stage 4, the indicators to be considered are the level 2 threshold, the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh first language and mathematics, the level 1 threshold, the CSI, and the average wider points score.

Inspectors should give more weight to those analyses that present comparisons with similar authorities, those that compare the authority's schools with similar schools from the FSM benchmarks and those that compare the authority's performance with that of modelled expectations using FSM.

Inspectors should compare performance in the authority with the 'expected benchmarks' for performance modelled on free-school-meal entitlement. These are published each year by WAG in the bulletin 'Academic Achievement and Entitlement to Free School Meals'. A statistical model calculated from the performance of all schools in Wales is used to estimate expected values, or 'benchmark comparisons' for each local authority. The measures used include the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh first language and mathematics and the average wider points score. If an authority area has consistently failed to reach all or most of these expected values over the last three years this could be an important area for improvement.

The proportion of 16 year old learners that leave full-time education without a recognised qualification and how this compares to national averages;

In key stage 4, the indicators to be considered are the percentage leaving full-time education without a recognised qualification.

The percentage of 16 to 19 year old learners across the different sectors that attains the relevant qualifications compared with national averages and any comparative data;

For schools with a sixth form, the indicators inspectors should consider the level 3 threshold and the average wider points score.

In colleges, inspectors use a four-point indicative scale when looking at data on performance, where such data is available. The scaling shows how well the provider is performing in relation to national benchmarks:

- Excellent = 15% or more above the national comparator.
- Good = 5% to 15% above the national comparator.
- Adequate = 5% above to 5% below the national comparator.
- Unsatisfactory = More than 5% below the national comparator.

Estyn produces tables of data for inspection teams based on the most up-to-date LLWR data available. These tables focus on outcomes at the level of the whole provider and at the level of each learning area. The tables also contain relevant national comparators and colour-coded indications of where the provider performance comes on the four-point scale outlined above.

The tables also indicate, for the internal scrutiny of inspectors, how the provider performance ranks against other providers in Wales. Inspectors should consider the rank ordering in order to calibrate their judgements further and to guide them in identifying potential lines of enquiry for the inspection.

Often the very latest information on learner performance may still not be verified. In these cases, inspectors should also ask providers to provide unverified data in

relation to completion, attainment and success rates. They should choose a small sample of the data and ask to see returns from examination and awarding bodies to check on the robustness of the sampled data.

Normally, inspectors should attach the greatest weight to verified data. Inspectors may, however, take account of unverified, recent data where they are able to check records from original sources, such as returns from awarding bodies.

The performance for 14 to 16 year old learners and for 16 to 19 year old learners compared with any value-added measures which are available;

For schools, inspectors should also consider analyses that show the progress pupils in the authority's schools make between key stages.

The value-added data from Fischer Family Trust (FFT) is also published at local authority level and provides value-added figures for key stage 4 to judge whether pupils in the authority's schools have made better than expected progress from key stage 2 and key stage 3. It indicates progress from key stage 2 to key stage 4 and also key stage 3 to key stage 4. Key stage 4 covers the five main indicators. The analyses are based on two models:

- Model 1 – takes into account each pupil's prior attainment only.
- Model 2 – as model one but also includes a wide range of pupil and school context indicators.

The analysis indicates whether the school's value added is in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th quarter compared to other schools. An 'S' next to this value indicates whether the value is significant – that is, it is unlikely to have arisen by chance.

However it is important that any value-added data is interpreted in the light of performance on other analyses. If there is a discrepancy between positive value-added figures for schools whose performance does not compare well to other schools on the FSM analyses, then this may be caused by significant under attainment at a previous key stage.

In colleges, inspectors may take account of any analyses of value-added performance by learners. This analysis looks at how well learners have performed compared to their starting points. This can provide important information on learner performance, especially where learners are not attaining the higher grades but nonetheless have performed very well from a low starting point.

The difference in the participation and performance of different groups of learners, particularly between boys and girls;

Inspectors should consider the attainment of particular groups of pupils including the performance of boys and girls, pupils entitled to FSM and those with additional learning needs (ALN). Inspectors should only comment on any gender differences if the gap in attainment is significantly different to national trends. The performance of boys and girls should also be separately compared to national trends because a smaller than average gap in attainment may be masking relatively low performance of girls.

In colleges, inspectors may also consider how well specific groups of learners perform, for example learners on long and short courses, male and female learners, full-time and part-time learners, learners from ethnic minority groups, learners from disadvantaged areas, learners at specific levels or learners following credit-based courses.

The proportion of learners that gains non-formal qualifications and participate in informal experiences.

Inspectors should ask the area provision for any analysis they have of the achievement of children and young people in a range of other qualifications. These outcomes could include, for example, accreditation and awards such as those offered through the ASDAN; OCN; Duke of Edinburgh and John Muir Awards. Where possible these should be compared to similar authorities and national trends. Inspectors should also assess progress on the performance indicators identified for the core aims of the Children and Young People's plan.