

## ***Success for all***

***Support in further education colleges and work based learning companies for 16-19 year olds with additional learning needs.***



...Rhagoriaeth i bawb... ...Excellence for all...



**BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL  
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- ▲ LEAs;
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## 1 Background

'Better Wales' sets out the Welsh Assembly's core values of social inclusion, equality of opportunity and the promotion of a tolerant society in which diversity is valued. The Welsh Assembly Government intends to make Wales truly inclusive and to make its economy and communities sustainable. If this is to be achieved, all learners must be helped to achieve their maximum potential in education and training.

'The Learning Country' and 'Learning Pathways 14-19' recognise the different learning approaches that different people need and the contributions that all people can make to society if their learning has been successful.

The Learning Pathways 14-19 guidance circular, 'Support for Young People', sets out the support that is to be put in place for learners. This aims to provide learners with the advice and guidance they need to make good choices and overcome barriers to learning. This advice and guidance will 'enable them to appreciate that their physical, social and emotional health is as essential to realising their potential as their intellectual development.

'Extending Entitlement'<sup>1</sup> and the 'Frameworks for Partnerships'<sup>2</sup> set out basic universal entitlements for all young people between the ages of 11 and 25. These entitlements include education, training and work experience that are tailored to their needs.

The Tomlinson (1996) and the Kennedy reports (1997) made a strong case for introducing more inclusive approaches to education and for widening the participation of under-represented groups in colleges, to include all learners.

The Disability Discrimination Act of 1995 and Special Educational Needs and Disability Act of 2001 focus attention on improving resources and facilities and supporting and protecting all learners with impairments in all aspects of their studies.

In 2002 the Assembly voted unanimously to accept the validity of the social model of disability and acknowledged the need to mainstream this principle in the policies of the National Assembly for Wales. This social model focuses on the barriers created by society that disabled people face, rather than an individual's physical, sensory or learning impairments, or mental health issues. These barriers are created because those responsible for designing facilities and for arranging activities have not acknowledged the personal requirements resulting from impairment. This leads to disabled people being excluded and prevents them from having equality of opportunity in many important areas of their lives, such as education and employment.

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<sup>1</sup> Extending Entitlement: supporting young people in Wales, Wales Assembly Government 2002

<sup>2</sup> The overarching children and young people's framework planning guidance, Wales Assembly Government 2002

## 2 Introduction

Estyn's remit from the Welsh Assembly Government for 2003-04 included a request for a survey of provision for learners in the Independent Living Skills (including Communication Skills) programme area in further education colleges, with emphasis on transition planning arrangements from further education into training and employment. This report is available on [www.estyn.gsi.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gsi.gov.uk)

This year's remit builds on this survey and focuses on learners with moderate learning difficulties, between the ages of 16 and 19 in other areas of education and training. The Welsh Assembly Government requires information about the quality of the support and information provided to these learners that enables them to learn alongside their peers and benefit fully from mainstream placements.

Some of these learners attended special schools. Others received support from school action plus or school action and remained in their mainstream school. Learners with support at school action plus and school action receive extra help from their teachers who act on advice from the special educational needs co-ordinator within the school or the SEN named officer within the LEA. The arrangements for this support and the outcomes for the learner are set out in an individual education plan.

A learning difficulty, as described in section 41 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, exists where an individual has significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of people of the same age. Learners who have moderate learning difficulties may also have additional needs.

Having identified these learners and their impairments, we will, in the main, refer to them throughout the rest of the report generally as learners and focus on how their personal requirements are met, rather than, their impairments. This is in line with the social model of disability set out on page 2 in the background section. However, where there is a particular issue it may be necessary to identify the learner's impairment so that the issue can be better explained.

Given appropriate attention to their individual requirements, most of these learners can access the same educational settings as their peers and many may achieve the same qualifications, although they may take longer to do so. This report comments on the standards that these learners achieve. It also identifies and evaluates the support and guidance that they receive in further education colleges, work based learning and schools so that they can:

- participate effectively in education and training;
- take advantage of opportunities for employment; and
- participate effectively in the life of their communities.

ELWa data indicates that in further education in 2002/2003 (the latest year for which we have data), 10,704 learners were recorded as having a disability. This represents just over 4 per cent of all learners. Colleges claimed additional funding for 824 learners with moderate learning difficulties who were studying on mainstream programmes. This represents 0.3 per cent of learners. In work-based learning, ELWa data shows that there are 2,311 learners registered as having a disability on work-based learning programmes. This represents 4 per cent of the total number of learners. ELWa's PLASC database for September 2003 indicates that in schools 26,541 post 16 learners were recorded as having a disability. Of these learners, only 151 had moderate learning difficulties. This represents 0.6% of learners.

## **2.1 The evidence base of the survey**

Between July and November 2004, Estyn conducted a survey of provision for and support given to these learners in post 16 provision. As most of these learners do not stay on at school we focused our attention on colleges and work based learning companies.

We held discussions with providers in further education colleges, work-based learning providers, LEAs and Careers Wales about the support needs of these learners and how their needs are met. We drew on evidence from Estyn inspection reports and information from visits made by Estyn college general inspectors.

During our visits to providers, we examined documents and held discussions with teachers, learners, parents, employers, key partners and agencies, all of whom gave us a great deal of useful information. Learners were keen to talk to us about their positive experiences, their achievements and their plans and hopes for the future. We have provided good practice case studies in appendix 1.

## **3 Main findings**

Standards of achievement are good and learners make progress in their learning. Generally, the quality of teaching, training and assessment is also good. In a few cases, it is excellent. Most learners are well supported but a few do not receive the health or psychological support they need. Close working with parents/carers and voluntary agencies, Careers Wales advisers, employers, social services and other external agencies is weaker in work-based learning. There are too many significant barriers which can prevent learners from accessing an appropriate curriculum and adequate support. These barriers can hinder their effective integration into vocational areas of colleges and into work-based learning. The result is that these learners too often do not have equality of opportunity and therefore they do not achieve as well as they might.

### **3.1 Standards of achievement**

- Generally standards of achievement are good and most learners make good progress in their learning.

### **3.2 The support needs of learners**

- For these learners to achieve well they need to gain confidence and self-esteem and improve their basic skills and key skills. They need work that has been carefully matched to their ability and appropriate targets in order to progress.
- They sometimes need more time and support to access the curriculum and to complete their assignments. These learners need to learn to meet deadlines and develop the research and study skills necessary to produce work of an appropriate standard and at the right time.
- So that these learners' parents/ carers are reassured, they need to be fully involved in the planning for the support learners will receive.

### **3.3 The quality and effectiveness of the support learners receive**

- Generally, the quality of the care and support offered to these learners is good. In a few cases it is very good. Learners recognise and appreciate the quality of the support they receive.
- Most providers are committed to making sure that all learners are fully included and recognise that strong and effective pastoral support is a key factor in ensuring that these learners succeed.
- In the best provision, learners' support is carefully monitored to make sure that learners receive the support they are entitled to.
- Overall, learners who need counselling and/or psychological help receive prompt and sensitive support. However, providers sometimes find it difficult to give appropriate support to learners with mental health issues. This is because these learners do not always disclose these difficulties before joining their programmes.
- Learners with challenging behaviour do not always receive support with managing their anger.
- Generally, learners in post-16 settings, with health support needs such as physiotherapy or speech therapy, do not receive this support unless they attend specialist colleges.



### **3.4 How well providers work in partnership with parent/carers and agencies**

- There are many good examples in colleges of close working with parents/carers and voluntary agencies, employers, social services and other external agencies. This is weaker in work-based learning. Overall, links between work-based learning providers and Careers Wales advisers, across the careers companies, are not as effective as they should be.
- There is no joint work with Community Consortia for Education and Training and the Young People's Partnerships.

### **3.5 The quality of the information available to learners on-line.**

- Generally, the quality of information and advice on offer on-line is not generally good enough. Nor is it easily accessible to learners and their parents/carers.
- Colleges have very good intranets offering a range of useful information and helpful programmes to support learners in their coursework and study skills. The Skill website provides the most comprehensive and useful information and support service for both learners and parents. However, too few providers are aware of it.

### **3.6 The quality of access to an appropriate curriculum**

- Generally, the quality of teaching, training and assessment is good. In a few cases, it is excellent. Learning experiences are generally well matched to the needs and interests of learners.
- Teachers, in all settings, pay good attention to developing basic and key skills.
- Most providers offer a good range of programmes, leading to accreditation at a variety of levels.
- Learners benefit from a good range of interesting work placements which prepare them well for working life.
- In work-based learning, the main focus is on immediate programme outcomes, such as securing employment or a qualification. Less attention is given to the need to develop learners' interests and offer them social activities.
- In a few cases teachers do not manage challenging behaviour well. On occasion, teachers are insensitive to disability issues.

- In a few instances, teachers do not plan carefully enough to make sure that the work set matches all learners' abilities and needs. On a few occasions the work set lacks appropriate challenge.
- Providers do not collect and make enough use of data on learners' destinations and outcomes in employment and training.

### **3.7 The barriers that prevent these learners from accessing an appropriate curriculum and adequate support**

- Significant barriers hinder the effective integration of these learners into vocational areas of colleges and work-based learning. This means that these learners do not all receive their entitlement to equality of opportunity. As a result they do not do as well as they might.
- Lines of communication are not clear and exchange of information between providers is not effective. This can mean that learners do not receive the support that they are entitled to and need in order to succeed.
- Learners with statements do have the benefit of a thorough and written assessment of their training needs by a careers adviser. However, this is not the case for those placed on school action or school action plus.
- The time allocated to learners on Skillbuild programmes is too short to allow for all their needs to be addressed. Few learners can attain the new basic skills qualification within the time available.
- There is limited funding and expertise across Wales for teaching basic skills.
- New constraints in work based learning on the number of qualifications learners can be funded for can lead to the learners being entered straight into higher qualifications, rather than allowing them to work their way through lower, more appropriate levels, to build their confidence.
- Careers advisers are unable to recommend an extension where training providers do not keep comprehensive records of the additional support given to endorsed learners. This means that in some cases, learners may be refused the additional time and the support they need to access appropriate learning and achieve qualifications.
- Providers are confused about who is responsible for the cost of diagnostic testing for dyslexia.

#### **4 Standards of achievement**

Generally, learners' standards of achievement are good. This is because most of them receive the appropriate support. Most learners complete their individual learning plans and gain appropriate accreditation, although they sometimes take longer to achieve this than their peers. They may also require more support from staff than their peers.

On the whole, learners know where their courses will lead them and what accreditation they will attain. Their course files are generally neat and well organised. Learners not only gain vocational qualifications, they also gain certificates in literacy and numeracy, IT and key skills.

Many learners make clear personal gains such as increased confidence, being able to speak up for themselves and to work independently. They enjoy their learning programmes, recognise and are proud of their achievements. Many make new friends and improve their social lives. Teachers and parents/carers report improvements in learners' personal and social skills. Deaf learners in colleges, in particular, sometimes speak of an end to isolation. For example, in one college, two deaf learners speak highly of the how they have benefited from a British sign language course at level one. They can now communicate with other deaf learners. They say that they feel that the world has opened up to them.

Most learners acquire new skills which they use at home and in their communities. For example, they learn to design web-page links to research personal interests such as finding out about horses. They learn to make PowerPoint presentations. For example, one learner made a presentation called 'This is me', which he presented to other learners as part of his foundation level IT and business course. In art and design, learners on the BTEC First Diploma learn to criticise their own work in preparation for writing course evaluations. One learner listened carefully to the teacher's explanation and then successfully applied a colour wash. In a foundation level IT and business course, learners use menus from local take-aways, to plan and cost accurately a meal for a special occasion. Learners taking BTEC Hospitality and Tourism at level 1, plan a trip to a theme park abroad. They make good use of timetables, websites and the college travel agent to research their project.

Most learners make good progress in their learning. For example, learners in the workplace progress well through their NVQs. They know what units they have achieved and what they still have to do and they go on to gain employment.

#### **5 The support needs of learners**

The learners in our survey have often received a great deal of support in their schools. Many have benefited from one-to-one support. However, they have often become over reliant on the support and have difficulty in working

independently. In colleges and work based learning learners are expected to organise themselves, to take responsibility for their own work and to meet deadlines. They undertake assignments that require them to research and present information. Other members of their vocational groups generally cope with this well. The learners in our survey can also do this, but they sometimes need more time and support to do their work and complete their assignments. They need careful guidance so that they learn to meet deadlines and develop the research and study skills necessary to produce work of an appropriate standard and at the right time.

Many of these learners need opportunities to develop and improve their basic skills and key skills. For example, they need to be more confident in working with others and understand how they can improve their own learning. These skills are essential, if they are to move on successfully to employment.

Many of the learners also lack confidence and have low self-esteem. Moving on from school can be a difficult step. Teachers and learning support assistants must build learners' confidence and self esteem so that these learners can achieve in their courses.

These learners have often benefited from close and supportive relationships with their teachers, particularly in special schools, and have received help with personal difficulties. They have often worked in small groups and have had a supportive peer group with similar needs. This means that they, and their parents/carers, are often very anxious about the possibility of leaving this level of support behind. It is important that providers recognise this anxiety, provide reassurance and liaise well with the learners' schools. Providers need to involve learners and their parents/carers in their discussion and planning for the learners' successful integration into their vocational courses.

Learners who do not behave well need clear rules and guidance to help them learn to manage their behaviour. In some cases, they need access to psychological support and counselling and in a few cases anger management training.

Learners sometimes need support so that they can be fully involved in all activities in every session. In their schools, many of these learners have become used to and have benefited from, working towards clear and appropriate targets within an individual education plan. It is important that post-16 settings make use of and build on this experience to provide continuity.

There is a need for all teachers and learning support assistants to understand how to match work to ability and set appropriate targets in order for these learners to progress.

## **6 The quality and effectiveness of the support learners receive**

### **6.1 The quality and effectiveness of support**

Overall, the quality of the care and support offered to learners is good. In a few cases it is very good. Learners recognise and appreciate the quality of the support they receive. They benefit from working with teachers and learning support assistants who pay good attention to their individual requirements, set high expectations and establish extremely good and supportive relationships with them. Most providers are committed to inclusive practice and recognise that strong and effective pastoral care is a key factor in ensuring these learners' success.

Teachers generally give learners good support with study skills to help them achieve better outcomes. For example, one faculty of service industries is piloting a useful study skills pack. This is a CD Rom delivered through weekly tutorials. It covers time management, reading, note taking, using the library, assignment writing, presentations and research skills.

Many learners have good opportunities to improve their personal and social skills and their confidence by attending short courses such as Pacific Institute motivational programmes and completing qualifications such as the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network Awards (ASDAN) Workright. However, on occasion, learners have already completed the Pacific Institute programmes with another provider or at school. This does not provide good value for money.

Life skills are an integral part of Skillbuild courses in work-based learning. For example, learners learn how to use the telephone, fill in forms and how to budget. This prepares them well for living independently.

Teachers often give learners very good guidance and support with personal difficulties such as housing, claiming benefits, maintaining personal hygiene and behavioural issues. They encourage learners to take advantage of the support available to acquire basic and key skills.

In one college, teachers aim to match the support offered to learners during their first term with what they have received in school. Teachers do this in order to reassure parents/carers who are anxious about the loss of the statement of special educational needs. As learners become more secure, the college gradually 'weans' them off support.

In the best provision, learners' support needs are carefully monitored to make sure that learners receive the support they are entitled to. Learners in colleges and work-based learning generally receive good information on their providers' equal opportunity policies as part of their induction. In the best provision, these policies are regularly revisited so that learners maintain a clear understanding of the issues.

Overall, learners who need counselling and/or psychological help receive prompt and sensitive support. Providers make good use of in-house counselling, external agencies, such as social services, and educational psychology services to meet learners' needs. A number of providers set up buddying or mentoring schemes to support these learners. However, learners with mental health issues are often reluctant to disclose this at interview, perhaps in part due to society's negative perception and fear of mental illness. They may also be fearful of being rejected by the provider. This means that the provider cannot pre-empt problems or offer the necessary support until the learner is in obvious difficulty. Where learners present extremely challenging behaviour, it is often difficult for providers to access support to help the learners to manage their anger. However, more providers are offering their staff appropriate training so that they can become better skilled in effective behaviour management.

Learners who attended special schools often received in-house physiotherapy and speech and language therapy support. However, in a few cases, schools do not pass this on important information about learners' health needs. In addition, post-16 settings other than specialist colleges do not continue this support. This is due to the lack of arrangements for funding health support, suitability of accommodation and the difficulty with fitting in therapies to the college timetable.

## **6.2 How well providers work in partnership with parents/carers**

Schools and colleges work closely with parents and carers. In some cases, they establish excellent relationships and parents are fully consulted and informed. In colleges and schools, parents and carers usually attend reviews, receive reports and attend open evenings to discuss learners' progress.

Providers generally recognise that parents can be very helpful, in that they have a good understanding of the learner's particular needs and abilities. However, work-based learning providers do not make enough use of information from parents and carers to inform their planning for the learner. One provider of work-based learning has recently identified the need to involve parents/carers. It is reviewing current arrangements to see how it can involve parents/carers more. This is a useful development.

## **6.3 How well providers work in partnership with other agencies**

There are many good examples of close working with external agencies. However, links with Careers Wales across the work based learning companies are not always as good as they should be. There is no joint work with Community Consortia for Education and Training (CCET) and the Young People's Partnerships (YPPs). There is often a long wait for support from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

## **Careers Wales**

Learners in schools generally have good support from Careers Wales advisers. Advisers attend transition reviews and then remain involved as necessary to guide and support learners in finding work experience and training placements and in their progression to post-16 courses. Careers Wales advisers generally maintain good contact with parents/carers and give them useful advice and support on choosing further options. Although many providers, particularly schools and colleges, work closely with Careers Wales, there are too many instances where the partnership is not working as effectively as it should be. Partnerships between post-16 work-based learning providers and Careers Wales are uneven. This means that a few learners do not receive the support that they are entitled to.

Colleges generally receive clear and informative referrals from Careers Wales. In response to the requirements of the Learning and Skills Act, careers advisers now produce clear summaries (Training and Skills Plans) of the needs of learners who received a statement of special educational needs whilst at school. These assessments were introduced for the group of school leavers progressing into further education in 2004. They take good account of prior school assessments, educational psychologists' assessments and the assessments of other health and education specialists. These assessments have considerably improved the quality of communication about learners' needs between careers advisers and further education providers. Careers advisers attend colleges regularly and are easily available to learners. Advice from specialist careers advisers is usually available on request. In one college, Careers Wales advisers provide an information day for learners and their parents/carers. In this college, these advisers provide useful information on such issues as employment rights and responsibilities. Learners and their parents/carers receive helpful and attractive publications.

Very few training providers have yet benefited from the improved Training and Skills Plans. This is because most of the learners progress first into further education before going on to work-based learning.

Where partnership working between Careers Wales and providers is good, a Careers Wales adviser makes regular visits to the provider. Where learners are already in employment and are experiencing difficulties, a few Careers Wales advisers do not always provide immediate support. On occasion, careers advisers refer learners who want to work in specific occupational areas to training providers who do not offer that occupational area.

## **Employers**

Providers generally work well with employers. There are early signs that links are becoming well established through partnerships within local 14-19 learning networks. This is having a positive impact on work experience opportunities and on widening the curriculum for these learners. For example, schools in one authority are developing courses in construction in partnership with the Construction Industry Training Board.

One college has established work experience focus groups. These provide a good opportunity for local employers to meet with college staff. College staff use these meetings as a useful forum to explore and address issues around work-experience. One local authority work-based learning provider has established good links with other departments within the authority, such as the housing department, to identify employment opportunities for their learners.

### **CCETs**

Overall, providers' links with the CCETS are not productive. Although most providers are represented on their local CCET, discussion tends to be centred on general issues about local provision of full-time post-16 learning opportunities. Few CCETS have specifically discussed provision for the learners included in this report. A few work-based learning providers perceive that the CCET agenda is very much driven by schools' interests.

### **Young People's Partnerships**

There is little close working with Young Peoples' Partnerships. One local authority has demonstrated commitment to making sure issues are discussed by making the needs and provision to meet those needs for these learners an agenda item.

### **Social Services**

Where necessary, providers work well with their local social services department to provide extra support. For example, one college makes good use of social services officers with responsibility for hearing and visual impairments to support individual learners. These officers also attend college reviews, provide useful equipment and set up information days for learners and their families. They have made valuable contributions to raising the awareness of college staff and their understanding of disability issues.

### **Voluntary Agencies**

Colleges have good relationships with voluntary agencies to access the appropriate support for learners. For example, one college makes good use of the local Royal National Institute for the Deaf field worker to complete a full environmental assessment in order to identify the equipment and signing equipment learners need. Another college has good links with the local Autistic Society and makes use of field workers in college staff development events. Colleges have developed strong relationships with Scope, Epilepsy Cymru, Agoriad in Gwynedd and the Princes Trust. However, generally work-based learning providers do not make enough use of voluntary agencies.

### **Housing departments**

A few providers have good links with these departments so that they can support homeless or looked after learners with their housing needs.

### **Health services and Child and Adolescent Mental Health services (CAMHS)**

A few providers use their local health services to provide sessions for learners on issues such as drugs, sexual health and healthy living. Providers



often find that CAMHS has a long waiting list. This means that they cannot get timely support for learners with mental health difficulties.

#### **6.4 The quality of the information available to learners on-line.**

In a few providers learners have email and Internet access. Colleges have very good intranets. These offer good quality information and helpful programmes to support learners in their coursework and to develop their study skills. However, learners rarely access information from the Internet. This is because there is very little useful information and advice on offer to them on the Internet. What there is, requires high levels of literacy, is not visually stimulating and is therefore not easily accessible to learners and their parents/carers. There is very little in Welsh.

The Skill website provides the most comprehensive and useful information and support service for both learners and parents. However, too few providers are aware of it. Very few of the staff and learners we talked to during our visits had made use of it. The site is clearly labelled. Learners can access useful and clear fact sheets, advice and links to both national and local support agencies. However, the Wales section of the site is less helpful compared to the rest of the site. The site is not available bilingually and does not reflect the differences between Wales and England.

### **7 The quality of access to an appropriate curriculum**

#### **7.1 How effective are teaching, training and assessment**

Generally, the quality of teaching, training and assessment is good. In a few cases it is excellent. There are some very good examples of realistic and meaningful assignments that relate to learners' lives and their needs. These assignments, in their vocational areas, are of interest to learners. They prepare learners well to participate effectively in education and training, take advantage of opportunities for employment and participate effectively in the life of their communities. However, providers do not collect and make enough use of data on learners' destinations and outcomes in employment and training. This makes it difficult for staff to monitor how well learners are progressing and how well they prepare learners to match employers' needs.

Where teaching, training and assessment are good or better, teachers use rigorous assessment to identify learners' needs and inform their individual learning plans. This means that they can carefully match work to the abilities of the learners and devise tailor made resources. Working with the learner, they regularly review progress and agree realistic, but challenging targets for improvement. In one case, teachers make good use of the same standard template for lesson plans across the provision. The template requires the teacher to show how s/he will match work to individual learners' abilities. This means that all teachers are reminded of the need for this and their arrangements can be monitored.

In colleges where teaching is most effective, there is a strong emphasis placed on all teachers taking responsibility for improving their learners' basic and key skills. These colleges make very good use of learning support assistants in class. A few colleges have made good in-roads into changing the perception that learning support assistants are there to deal with individual support needs so that the teacher can teach the rest of the group, rather than the teacher needing to match work to the needs of all learners. In these colleges learners have good access to their teachers as well as the learning support assistants. However, there is more work to be done. In the best sessions, the teacher and the learning support assistant work as a team and the learning support assistants support learners in the group, as well as to the individual learner. This means that learners who require support feel less singled out amongst their peers. However, it is difficult to recruit Welsh speaking learning support assistants.

There are good examples of teachers using technical support well to widen learners' opportunities and enable them to participate fully in learning and in the workplace. These include hearing loops, specialist software and dictaphones.

Generally, teachers are careful to set work on key skills in the context of the vocational area. For example, in one animal care course, at foundation level, learners work on a stocktaking exercise set in a pet shop. The teacher uses this opportunity to explain the decimal system of numbers and to give learners practice in preparing bar charts.

Work-based learning providers generally make good use of Basic Skills Agency initial assessment and undertake further diagnosis when necessary. In one provider, these assessments inform a useful personal profile. This identifies learners' additional learning needs and if they have previously held a statement of special educational needs. Another provider uses team-teaching well to improve the quality of delivery and the support offered to learners. Learners also receive one-to-one and peer support in class. For example, in an exercise where learners prepared presentations, the teacher used other members of the group to give advice, support and encouragement.

Work-based learning providers often make flexible arrangements to suit learners' personal requirements. For example, arranging transport to work placements, and finding funding to provide assistive technology.

In a few cases, teachers do not manage challenging behaviour well. On occasion, teachers are insensitive to disability issues, such as the need for facing the class when speaking to groups which include deaf learners.

## **7.2 How well do their learning experiences meet learners' needs and interests**

Learning experiences are generally well matched to the needs and interests of learners. The teaching often meets the needs of learners by being flexible, relevant and responsive to their individual and group needs. However, in colleges and in work-based learning settings there are a few instances where teachers are not careful to make sure that the work set matches the full range of learners' abilities and needs. On a few occasions the work set is not challenging enough.

Teachers generally provide learners with good opportunities to explore and discuss areas that interest them. For example, in foundation engineering where learners are working towards an OCN unit in communications, their coursework involves writing a letter to ask about employment opportunities at a local engineering company. Learners prepare for this activity by working in pairs to proof read two different covering letters for the same job. They decide between them which person they would employ.

A few colleges are developing programmes for Welsh speaking learners to improve their skills in both languages. However, in work-based learning this is rare.

### **7.3 The range of appropriate accreditation available**

Most providers offer a good range of programmes, leading to accreditation at a variety of levels. In much of the provision, this accreditation extends from pre-entry level through to courses at level 3. In the best provision, teachers recognise that there is no single awarding body that serves all these learners' needs. Teachers take care to find appropriate qualifications, or units within them, that include enough small steps of achievement to motivate learners.

However, the more popular vocational area courses can become oversubscribed. In order to meet ELWa's expectations, it is easier for colleges to take learners they are confident will secure the full qualification. This may work against learners who wish to enrol but may not be able to complete the whole qualification.

Providers are also flexible in allowing learners more time to complete their awards, when necessary.

### **7.4 How well these learners access work placements and activities in their community**

Learners benefit from a good range of interesting placements. Careers Wales companies are often involved in the identification of these placements. A few colleges have specialist staff to help learners gain work experience. This means that learners have better access to appropriate work placements. For example, one college has created the post of 'Work placement officer' for disabled learners, funded by the European Social Fund. However, this is short term funding and the college has concerns about the sustainability of this important service.

Where learners are harder to place, providers often make good use of their own facilities, for example in-house restaurants, travel agencies and reception areas. These environments usually offer learners more protection and support than they would experience in work placements in external organisations. Where work-based learning providers are parts of larger organisations, for example the training branch of local authorities, they often take advantage of the opportunities to place learners in other parts of the parent organisation.

Wherever possible, learners undertake work experience to match their aspirations. However, on a few occasions, their aspirations may be unrealistic. In these cases there is good support from staff. Together, staff and learners identify and discuss more appropriate options.

Learners often take part in community projects. These include fundraising and environmental work.

### **7.5 How well these learners access social activities**

Learners in schools and colleges are more able to access social activities than those in work-based learning. This is because schools and colleges are generally larger organisations and they often play a more important part in the social life of the community than do most work-based learning providers. These social activities include drama productions, visits to theatres, museums and art galleries and sporting events. There are often opportunities for residential visits. On these visits, learners have good opportunities to practice their social skills.

Although teachers in work-based learning recognise the need to encourage lifelong learning and develop learners' interests, these are given a low priority compared with immediate programme outcomes, such as securing employment or a gaining a qualification.

### **7.6 How well these learners access support with basic and key skills**

Basic and key skills are generally an important part of the curriculum for these learners. Teachers pay good attention to developing these skills. In a few providers, key and basic skills are fully integrated into all vocational work. For example, a learner in a college was able to understand and apply fractions for the first time, having learned how they are used in the vocational context. He now uses them in his employment.

However, many learners on programmes in work-based learning or at college find it difficult to accept that they are in need of basic skills support. They often do not take advantage of additional opportunities made available to them, such as visits to learning centres or local libraries. In one college, only half of those learners identified as needing extra support took it up last year. The best providers address this by making sure that the basic skills support is included in learners' everyday activities and other coursework. In these cases, senior staff carefully monitor this work to make sure that learners do

have appropriate access to basic skills support.

## **8 The barriers that prevent these learners from accessing an appropriate curriculum and adequate support**

There are significant barriers which can hinder the effective integration of these learners into vocational areas of college and work-based training. These are as follows:

- The lack of clear lines of communication and effective exchange of information work against the provision of appropriate support for all learners.

In schools, learners identified as having impairments have the benefit of individual education plans with clear targets to guide their progress. These are regularly reviewed and recorded. If a learner stays on at a school, his or her teachers have full access to his or her educational history and the strategies that work well to engage him or her in learning. However, providers at post-16 do not always receive this valuable information. This can impede effective planning an appropriate curriculum and support for all learners.

Providers are sometimes reluctant to exchange information with one another. This is because some providers see themselves in competition with others, for example schools with colleges and colleges with work-based learning providers.

Where learners have had statements of special educational needs or been given extra support through school action plus or school action, there is a wealth of important information relating to their educational experience and needs. These learners have had the benefit of individual education plans. These are used to record strategies to help the learner progress. Teachers in schools collect and record a great deal of information about and have comprehensive knowledge of these learners' needs, abilities and interests. This work and information is wasted if it is not passed on and used by the next provider. This practice of not passing information on runs counter to the Welsh Assembly Government's aspiration for professionals to work together to improve the outcomes for vulnerable children and young people.

In one case, a school refused to pass on a learner's statement, citing the Data Protection Act as the reason. In other cases, providers receive information, but it is too out of date to be of use. For example, a parent attending an interview at the local college with her son brought in a report diagnosing his dyslexia when he was ten. In this case, the college had not received any more up-to-date information from the school. Another learner received physiotherapy three times a week at his special school. This information was not passed on to his college, therefore the college was unaware of the need to make arrangements for this to continue.

Sometimes, when the statements do eventually arrive, they are photocopies of a photocopy and/or illegible because they are not typed. This was also sometimes the case with Careers Skillbuild referral documentation.

When information gained from diagnostic testing is not passed on it can lead to the unnecessary duplication of tests. This is poor use of limited resources. One work-based learning company does not always receive the results of the Basic Skills Agency Initial Assessment tool from Careers Wales for its preparatory learners. This process should be conducted by Careers Wales before the interview by the work-based learning provider. The information is not always passed to providers from Careers Wales. This means that providers assess learners again. This is not only unnecessary but it also puts undue pressure on the learner and valuable time is wasted.

Although Careers Wales often make careful written summaries of learners' needs and abilities when learners leave school, this is not as useful as the actual records from the learner's school. Without these records, providers can spend a great deal of unnecessary time and resources diagnosing learners' needs and abilities when the information is already available. In a few cases, when Careers Wales advisers refer learners to work-based learning providers, the provider is given a summary of the learner's interests and reasons for referral, but the only reference to any previous statement is a box ticked on the summary. School action plus or school action is not mentioned on the form. This again is a waste of time and resources as the provider then has to seek out the statement from the school.

This poor exchange of information is a matter of concern, as it can mean that learners do not receive the support they are entitled to and need in order to succeed. This works against the provision of equal opportunities across the post 16 sector.

If there is no information accompanying the learner and the learner chooses not to disclose any additional needs, providers cannot ask for ELWa for supplementary funding early. If these additional needs become apparent later, providers can apply, but it means that there has been an unnecessary delay. During this time, learners are likely to be particularly vulnerable. Without the necessary support, the learner could become poorly motivated and lose interest in his or her course.

- Inequality of provision between learners who have received support at school action and action plus and those learners with statements of special educational needs

There is undue variation between LEAs within Wales in the percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs.<sup>3</sup> Learners with statements in some areas have very similar levels of need to learners without statements elsewhere. All authorities that have a low percentage of statements, compared with the Welsh average, are in south-east and south-west Wales. This means that there are more learners on school action plus and school action in these areas. These learners do not benefit from a written assessment of their training needs by Careers Wales advisers. Learners in school with statements of special educational needs have a statutory right to a thorough and written assessment of their training needs by a careers adviser, in order to comply with Section 140 of the Learning and Skills Act. However, those without statements but placed on school action or school action plus do not have the benefit of this assessment.

- Time and resource constraints

In almost all provision, teachers pay good attention to learners' individual needs. However, this becomes an expensive use of staff resource where learners are off site and in work placements (and this does not usually attract additional funding). This is a particular issue when providers are subject to basic budget cut-backs by ELWa and are looking hard for cost savings.

Where learners in work placements are asked to attend college, or a local library, for basic skills support, this is usually in the learner's own time and not supported by employers. Learners attending these sessions have to do so on top of their working week. This is a disincentive, especially where the learner is already reluctant to admit the need for additional support.

The time allowed for learners in work-based learning on Skillbuild programmes is too short to allow for all their needs to be addressed. The new basic skills for adults qualification requires more time to deliver, not less. There are also new constraints on the number of qualifications for which learners can be funded. This can lead to learners being restricted to entering only for the highest qualifications for which they are deemed capable, rather than building confidence and self-esteem by allowing them to succeed first at lower and more appropriate levels.

Current programmes funded by ELWa are time constrained (as of September 2004) and targeted at qualifications. Training providers often seek extensions in order to give learners extra time to achieve these qualifications. However, careers advisers require clear evidence of the additional support the provider has given to the endorsed learner. Without this evidence, they are unable to recommend an extension. This means

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<sup>3</sup> Best Practice in the development of statements of special educational needs and delivery by schools of the action agreed. Estyn 2004

that in some cases, learners may be refused the additional time and support that they need to access appropriate learning.

- Limited funding and expertise for teaching basic skills

ELWa expects colleges and work-based learning providers to identify learners' basic skills needs. Although providers have an increased awareness of the need for good basic skills support, there is a concern that they do not always have the capacity to deal with all basic skills needs identified. There is limited funding available for basic skills support. What extra funding can be accessed is not necessarily ring-fenced, clearly identified for basic skills and is often short term. There is also a national shortage of qualified basic skills staff.

- Confusion about one-to-one funding and who should pay for diagnostic tests for dyslexia

Dyslexia is not always diagnosed before a learner reaches a college or work-based learning provider. In order for providers to receive supplementary funding, learners need a diagnostic test. These tests are expensive. Providers can claim for a contribution from ELWa towards the assessment. However, generally providers are unclear about who should pay for this assessment.

## **9 Key issues for action**

Although provision is generally good, there are too many significant barriers to learners receiving their entitlement to equal opportunities. For further progress at a national level, there is a need for the Welsh Assembly Government, Careers Wales and the National-Council ELWa, where appropriate, to consider:

- giving urgent attention to improving lines of communication and the exchange of information between LEAs, schools, colleges and work-based learning providers;
- clarifying providers' responsibilities in relation to the Data Protection Act and the sharing of learners' school records;
- arranging for statements of special educational need and documentation relating to school action and action plus to automatically follow learners throughout their education and training provision;
- strengthening the arrangements for health support across the post 16 provision, including mental health services;
- improving links between Careers Wales companies and all post 16 providers and the quality of all Careers Wales referrals;



- extending the assessment by Careers Wales advisers to those learners on school action and school action plus;
- making sure that training providers keep comprehensive records of the additional support given to learners;
- reviewing the funding for support in work placements;
- monitoring the impact on learners of the changes to the ELWa frameworks for learners on work-based learning programmes;
- reviewing the funding made available for teaching basic skills; and
- giving clear guidance on one-to-one funding for dyslexic support and clarifying who should pay for diagnostic tests for dyslexia.

In providing for all learners, post 16 providers should:

- continue to raise everyone's awareness of disability and equal opportunities issues;
- take more account of learners' prior learning when planning their programmes;
- improve the collection and use of data on learners' destinations and outcomes in employment and training;
- make sure that learners have not already completed motivational programmes with another provider;
- encourage all teachers to take responsibility for supporting all learners;
- continue to develop programmes for Welsh speaking learners to improve their skills in both languages and make every effort to recruit Welsh speaking learning support assistants;
- give teachers more opportunities to learn about behaviour management strategies;
- make sure that all teachers set challenging work according to learners' needs and abilities; and
- find ways of incorporating basic skills support into all programmes.

In providing for all learners, work-based learning providers should:

- recognise the need to encourage lifelong learning and develop learners' interests;

- offer learners more opportunities for social activities;
- record carefully the support given to learners; and
- work more closely with parents/carers and the voluntary sector to identify and provide appropriate support for learners.

When working with partners, providers should:

- work more closely with Careers Wales, CCETs and YPPs to widen opportunities for learners.

## Appendix 1.

The following case study shows the importance of building a learner's confidence alongside offering appropriate accreditation.

### Case study 1

#### **A learner gaining accreditation and increasing in confidence.**

A learner joined Skillbuild, in the work-based learning department of Coleg Llandrillo, having been unsuccessful in gaining formal qualifications from school. He had very poor self-esteem. His lack of confidence was due to him being bullied at school. His statement of special educational needs was for dyslexia. He found written work and socialising particularly difficult. His careers adviser assessed him as 'not work ready'. During his Skillbuild course he received one to one and small group support. This made him feel less threatened and therefore he became more confident. As a result, he gained certificates in literacy and numeracy, IT and key skills. He also attended a work placement in the community where he gained additional qualifications in Life Skills. He played a key role in creating the first Skillbuild magazine and took part in a presentation where he spoke in front of the College Governors. This was a major personal achievement for him. Having gained several qualifications (and friends), he decided that he would like to continue with IT. He later went on to gain an NVQ at level 2 in IT after leaving the Skillbuild programme. He was also student of the year that particular year. Key factors in his success were:

- one to one small group support;
- a successful work placement;
- opportunities for accreditation; and
- taking part in college activities.

The following case study shows the commitment and often innovative arrangements that teachers and learning support assistants make to help learners gain new skills.

### Case study 2

#### Gaining new and important skills.

A deaf learner at Pembrokeshire College is receiving innovative support to pass her driving test. She works on her driving theory in college and a learning support assistant accompanies her during her driving lesson to interpret for the instructor. The learning support assistant has designed and made a dial for the dashboard. This means that the instructor is able to use the dial to indicate which exit he wants the learner to take off a roundabout. Key factors in the learner's success are;

- personal support;
- tailor made resources; and
- relevant course content.

The following two case studies give good examples of careful monitoring of the support learners receive

#### Case Study 3

##### **Internal monitoring to make sure learners' needs are met**

Pembrokeshire Colleges make good use of a comprehensive individual student learning agreement (ISLA). Staff ensure that the study support agreed is actually in place. Tutors are required to check the ISLA of their learners and confirm that the learner is receiving the agreed support. Senior staff carefully monitor this process.

Staff at North Wales Training also internally audit individual learning plans to make sure that they correctly identify learners needs and that these are being met. Key factors in successful internal monitoring are;

- good use of ISLAs to indentify support needs;
- regular checking of ISLAs; and
- involvement of senior staff.

#### Case study 4

##### **Making sure that learners receive the support they are entitled to**

Coleg Llandrillo has identified the need to make sure that learners receive the support they are entitled to. To address this, the college has recently created a useful new post of Skills for Life officer. The role of this officer is to provide an effective link between programme and vocational areas. Her role is to maximise opportunities for learners eligible for additional funding and support because of their learning difficulties and disabilities. She is responsible for initiatives to raise the awareness of teachers, across the college, to learning support opportunities and how they can be accessed. She makes sure that bids for support are filled in appropriately and that learners receive the support they need from college staff. Key factors in the success of this initiative are:

- a willingness to look at new solutions;
- concern for learners; and
- an imaginative approach

The following case study shows how one college supports its staff so that they can offer comprehensive support to learners.

#### Case Study 5

##### **Good central support for those in contact with learners**

At Coleg Llandrillo, the central support unit acts as a one-stop shop for those

that have regular contact with learners (either in college or in the workplace). Tutors and assessors can refer to the central support unit for advice and intervention. The unit will also act as broker with external agencies when this is appropriate to the needs of the learner. Key factors in the success of central support are:

- regular contact;
  - availability of support for staff; and
- access for learners to external agencies when needed.

The following case study shows the inclusive practice of a new 14-19 learning network.

#### Case study 6

##### **Working inclusively and in partnership, to improve local provision.**

In Gwynedd the 14-19 network partnership takes an inclusive approach. It is beginning to improve provision for all learners. Although this network has concentrated its efforts so far on 'disengaged' learners, it includes all learners.

Developments include:

- arrangements for extended work experience;
- a successful bid to run a trial mentoring scheme;

a successful bid to set up schemes for simulated work experience, led by Careers Wales and delivered in local colleges and with employers. The challenge at present is how to simulate higher risk areas, such as building sites. This work experience is in high demand from learners.

Key factors in the success of this local provision are;

- an inclusive approach; and
- partnership working.

The following two case studies show how working closely with external agencies can give learners opportunities within the community to increase their confidence and offer them extra support.

#### Case study 7

##### **Working closely with external agencies to improve opportunities for learners and build their confidence**

Pembrokeshire College has a strong and productive partnership with the Princes Trust. This is a very good link. The Trust runs a summer programme for learners about to start college. Working as a small team, learners undertake challenges designed to increase their confidence. This is in response to the concern that the summer period, between leaving school and starting college, can mean the loss of important routines. These include getting up early and arriving on time.

Key factors in the success of this initiative are:

- learners working in small teams;

- increasing confidence; and
- maintaining routine.

#### Case study 8

##### **Working closely with external agencies to improve opportunities for learners and build their confidence**

A youth worker from the LEA youth action team makes regular visits to Pembrokeshire College. Her LEA role is to support the inclusion of disabled children and young people aged 11-25. Most of these learners at the college are aged 16-22. The worker does a lot of work on issues faced by the learners. This work is linked to the Cymorth youth forum. The forum uses the college as a base for consultation work for the Welsh Assembly Government. Learners from this group represent Pembrokeshire on the All Wales Network for Disabled Young People. The college makes good use of this worker when they need an advocate for a learner.

The following case study is a good example of a work-based learning provider making flexible arrangements to suit learners' personal requirements.

#### Case Study 9

##### **Flexible work-based arrangements meeting learners' needs**

In Coleg Llandrillo work-based training department, most training and assessment is work-based and designed to meet the needs of learners and their employers. The college is developing an approach in engineering and motor vehicle engineering that entails an initial year off the job followed by subsequent periods in placement/employment. This approach means that learners gain a sound background before progressing into work. It also allows the college flexibility to cater for learners' additional needs. This allows learners to begin programmes and to see if they can make enough progress to go into work-placement.

Key factors in the success of these arrangements are:

- meeting individual needs;
  - a flexible approach; and
- working closely with employers.

The following case study shows the benefits, to staff and learners, of an innovative approach to curriculum.

#### Case study 10

##### **Providing an appropriate and relevant curriculum to suit all learners.**

Pembrokeshire College has recently introduced a tailor made course, 'countdown to achievement'. This stimulating course is at foundation level, for learners aged 16-19, who do not have the qualifications or the confidence to move on to higher courses. The course includes a number of Open College Network awards in business administration, leisure and tourism.

The course has three levels. This means that learners can work at their own pace and at their own level. They have good opportunities to access taster sessions in other vocational areas such as catering, hairdressing and hospitality.

Half of the learners on the course have support needs. These were identified in the college's initial screening, although not all learners had statements. Learners receive additional support with basic and key skills. Teachers involved in this course usually work in vocational areas. This means that the course has strong links with vocational areas. Teaching on this course means that vocational area staff learn more about the need for careful matching of learners' work to their ability and the use of contextualised work. These teachers feedback to their colleagues in their vocational areas. This helps raise staff awareness of how to match work to learners' abilities. Learners enjoy the course and make good progress.

Key factors in the success of this course are:

- appropriate accreditation with a choice of levels;
- careful initial screening;
- additional support with basic skills;
- strong links across the college;
- matching work to ability.

The following case study is an example of schools working together to provide a wider choice of appropriate courses for learners.

#### Case study 11

##### **Providing an appropriate range of options at Post - 16 to suit all learners' needs and abilities.**

Syr Hugh Owen Secondary School, Gwynedd, has provided a wide range of courses at Post - 16. Subjects are offered in four option blocks to give learners more choice. These include academic advanced subsidiary and advanced options and vocational courses to meet learners' varying needs, abilities and interests. The option blocks are offered in a form that maximises the choices for the learners and it is possible to combine advanced subsidiary and advanced options and vocational courses; this arrangement is valuable. In addition, in year 12, learners can opt to join accredited key skill groups in communication, application of number and information and communication technology. All learners follow a course in games and physical education and there is a personal and social education course in year 12. It is also possible to study drama and electronics by special consortium arrangements. This

flexibility makes it possible for all learners to stay on in their school and gain appropriate qualifications, if they wish.

Key factors in the success of this initiative are:

- maximising learners' choices;
- meeting learners' needs and interests; and
- working with other schools.

The following case study shows how providers make available high quality work placements and equipment to suit learners' personal requirements.

#### Case study 12

##### **Giving learners good access to quality work placements and providing appropriate equipment.**

A Careers Wales adviser referred a learner with cerebral palsy to the City and County of Swansea work-based learning provider. The learner was entitled to extra time to complete his individualised learning plan due to his disability. This provider secured an interesting work placement within one of the authority's departments. The provider made special arrangements to pick the learner up from home so that he could attend the training placement. He was placed with the transport section in County Hall. He eventually achieved an NVQ level 2 in IT. The local authority made good use of funding from Jobcentre Plus in order to keep the learner on after he completed his NVQ, until a paid post came up. Once employed, the local authority used other Jobcentre Plus funding to purchase him an appropriate key-board and mouse. This meant that he could complete the same tasks as other employees. He is currently continuing with the work-based learning provider in order to achieve an NVQ level 2 in customer service. Key factors for success are:

- making special arrangements to suit individual needs;
- making good use of funding from Job Centre Plus; and
- using appropriate assistive technology.