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Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

The effectiveness of learner-involvement strategies in further education institutions and Welsh for adults centres

July 2013



INVESTORS
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Introduction

This report is the second in a series of three reports requested by the Minister of Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills. It is intended to inform the review and further development of the Welsh Government's Learner Involvement Strategy guidance for post-16 learning providers and disseminate good practice case studies across the post-16 network.

The report focuses on how well further education institutions (FEIs) and Welsh for adults centres implement learner-involvement strategies.

As part of this survey inspectors have collected and evaluated a range of information. We have visited five further education institutions and five Welsh for adults centres (see Appendix 1) to follow up on the progress they have made since the introduction of the Welsh Government's Learner-involvement Strategy in 2010.

Background

In February 2010 the Welsh Government published guidance for post-16 providers on the implementation of learner-involvement strategies. The guidance helps providers to go beyond undertaking surveys of learners' views to give learners a key role in shaping decisions that affect their experience of learning.

The guidance sets out a framework for learner-involvement strategies. It calls on all providers of lifelong learning and skills to make sure that their own strategies include:

- a statement of commitment from the organisation's senior management to make sure that learners have direct involvement in shaping their own learning experiences;
- clear strategic aims for consulting with learners and for helping them to take part in decisions affecting their learning and environment;
- arrangements for formal and informal learner-involvement activities;
- arrangements for gathering the views of learners through structured systems, using them to improve the quality of learning, and feeding back to learners so that they can see how their views have made a difference;
- arrangements for seeking the views of 'hard to reach' learners;
- procedures for the recruitment and training of learner representatives so that they can fulfil their role effectively;
- arrangements for integrating learners' views into quality assurance systems, including self-assessment and quality development planning; and
- arrangements for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the implementation of the strategy and its effectiveness, including ways of informing learners of action taken in response to their feedback.

Estyn published a report titled 'The effectiveness of strategies for learner-involvement in post-16 learning' in May 2012, which evaluated the extent to which post-16 providers used learner-involvement strategies and whether they were having an impact on learner outcomes.

Inspectors found that providers in most post 16 sectors:

- make good use of the Welsh Government learner-involvement strategy in order to develop and implement their own strategy or make sure they are working to national guidelines; and
- use a wide range of learner-involvement activities in most post-16 sectors.

However, no providers in the post-16 sector had set up systems to monitor and evaluate the benefits of learner-involvement. Providers did not record how these activities improved formal outcomes for learners.

Nevertheless, most post-16 providers, and learners, could describe the benefits of taking part in learner-involvement activities. Learners had improved a range of skills associated with their chosen learning activity, as well as their personal and social skills and their participation in community activities. Providers considered that learners improved their confidence, gained a sense of belonging and ownership of their learning, and developed a greater understanding of the learning processes.

The report recommended that providers in post-16 sectors should:

- set up systems for recording the range of personal and social outcomes achieved by learners as a result of taking part in learner-involvement activities;
- improve the systems for monitoring learners in order to identify the impact of taking part in learner-involvement activities on individual learners; and
- support learners to get involved in learner-involvement networks at a local and national level.

This report evaluates the extent to which further education institutions and Welsh for adults centres have made progress to implement learner-involvement strategies and address the recommendations from the May 2012 report.

Since 2010, the Department for Children Education and Lifelong Learning and Skills has provided funding to the National Union of Students to set up student representation structures and learner-involvement in further education institutions throughout Wales. The project has provided training for student governors and class representatives to help them to fulfil their role. We have included the National Union of Students Further Education Student Representation Project in our evaluation of the impact of the Welsh Government's learner-involvement strategy. We met with some of the staff and learners involved in the student representation project during our visits to individual further education institutions and held a meeting with project staff.

Main findings

- 1 The Welsh Government's Learner Involvement Strategy guidance for post-16 learners and the National Union of Students learner representation project have helped further education institutions (FEIs) and Welsh for adults centres to improve how learners shape their learning experience.
- 2 Providers in both sectors have moved considerably beyond using learner surveys as the main ways of collecting and analysing learners' views and opinions. They involve learners well in activities that help them shape the curriculum, influence improvements in the quality of teaching, offer advice to providers regarding the quality of facilities and contribute to self-assessment and quality development planning. As a result, learners play an important role in improving provision.
- 3 Providers in both sectors have difficulty in measuring the impact of learner-involvement on learner attainment or skills. Providers are only beginning to implement formal systems for recording and recognising these outcomes for learners. In both sectors it is clear that learners' involvement in shaping their learning experience helps them to improve their personal and social skills and their wellbeing.
- 4 In the Welsh for adults sector, providers and learners consider that learners improve their Welsh language skills by using Welsh in a different context during their learner-involvement activities.
- 5 Providers in both sectors make good use of a wide range of learner-involvement activities. These include the use of class representatives, talking to learners as part of observations of teaching and learning, panels involving staff and learners, focus groups and formal discussions with individuals and enrichment activities that extend learners' skills. Importantly, providers adapt activities well to suit the needs of their own organisation and learners in order to maximise the benefits of learner involvement.
- 6 Learners have a positive view of the way that FEIs and Welsh for adults centres involve them in shaping their learning experience. They consider that providers listen to their views and opinions and take them seriously.
- 7 All providers in both sectors have appropriate arrangements in place to report back to learners what has happened as a result of their involvement. Generally, learners have a good understanding of how providers have responded to their views.
- 8 However, in many cases, Welsh for adults centres do not provide feedback about what learners in individual classes have said in surveys. As a result, tutors are unaware of what they could do to improve the quality of the learning experience for their learners. Similarly, learners do not know how their views have influenced improvements to their class or course.
- 9 Many Welsh for adults tutors are open to discussion with learners about how they can improve what they offer to learners. However, not all tutors understand the importance of canvassing the views and opinions of learners on an ongoing basis in order to make changes as courses progress.

- 10 Learners in FEIs consider that taking part in learner-involvement activities fosters skills that help them in their studies, for example the extra responsibilities they take on motivate them to work harder; or they improve their time management skills in order to complete all their activities successfully. However, learners in FEIs caution that acting as a class representative often takes time away from their studies and this can have a negative impact on their course outcomes.
- 11 Welsh for adults learners consider that taking part in focus groups or learner panels, or acting as a class representative, helps them to use all four language skills in a different context and thus contributes to improving their achievement. However, learners who undertake the role of class representatives consider that they would benefit from a more comprehensive briefing about the role of the class representative. Learners who take part in learner panels raise concerns about their capacity to attend panels in terms of time, care arrangements and travel costs.
- 12 The National Union of Students Student Representation Project helps learners to contribute their views and opinions on the shape of courses and the delivery of the curriculum. Class representatives work well with learners to discuss issues and ideas and to gain feedback for tutors. They work well with tutors and course managers to try and resolve issues, such as the timing of assignments. The project has been successful in improving how tutors consult with young people and encourages tutors to review how and what they teach.
- 13 Overall, effective learner-involvement strategies:
 - deploy a wide range of different involvement activities that move beyond learner questionnaires and surveys to help learners shape their learning experience;
 - improve the personal and social skills of learners and contribute to improving their subject skills;
 - encourage staff to listen to learners and take their views seriously; and
 - provide feedback to learners that help them to understand what action has been taken as a result of their involvement.

Recommendations

Further education institutions should:

- R1 put formal systems in place to record and recognise the range of personal and social outcomes achieved by learners as a result of taking part in learner-involvement activities; and
- R2 make sure that their arrangements for involving learners help learners to shape decisions that affect:
- learner outcomes;
 - teaching and assessment;
 - the curriculum;
 - resources, facilities and venues;
 - support for learners;
 - quality improvement; and
 - overall leadership and management of provision.

The National Union of Students should:

- R3 record and recognise the impact of class representatives or student governors on teaching and learning and the management and development of further education institutions.

Welsh for adults centres should:

- R4 put formal systems in place to record and recognise the range of personal and social outcomes achieved by learners as a result of taking part in learner-involvement activities;
- R5 improve their use of learner voice surveys or questionnaires to:
- improve the course for current learners;
 - provide feedback at class level; and
 - help learners to understand how their views and opinions have contributed to changes made to their course, the quality of teaching and assessment and the quality of provision;
- R6 improve class representatives' understanding of their role and what is expected of them;
- R7 improve arrangements for supporting learners to act as class representatives or take part in learner panels; and
- R8 improve tutors' understanding of their role in helping learners contribute to improving their course and learning experiences.

The effectiveness of strategies for learner-involvement in further education institutions and Welsh for adults centres

Further education institutions

- 14 Estyn carried out visits to five FEIs as part of this survey. We held in depth discussions with a representative sample of staff and about 100 learners. We found that all five institutions have effective strategies and activities for learner-involvement that are well embedded in the work of each institution. All learners considered that the institutions were approachable, listened to them and took their views seriously. Learners were emphatic that they were offered a good range of opportunities to become involved and those institutions took action on their views. FEIs give learners feedback on what they do as a result of learners input and, in general, learners have a good understanding about why some of their ideas may not have been taken forward.
- 15 Nevertheless, the strategies and activities deployed by individual institutions vary appropriately depending on the context of the institution and learners. In all cases, FEIs link learner-involvement to their quality systems well.
- 16 All FEIs have moved beyond the use of questionnaires or surveys as the main way of helping learners contribute to improve their learning experience. All institutions use a wider range of activities to gather opinion and inform decision-making. These include learner questionnaires and surveys, learner panels or committees, conferences, class and course representatives, learner ambassadors, a range of learner-led activities and enrichment activities.
- 17 Pembrokeshire College has created an online learner forum linked to the college's intranet site. The forum provides a platform for students to voice their opinions on various aspects of college life and a method for the college to capture these opinions in a very effective way. Every student in the college can contribute as the system integrates with the student computer logging systems. (During the implementation phase of this project in 2011-2012, the system logged 15,000 interactions.) Students can debate and vote on each other's ideas and every student can make an input, making the process very inclusive. The college has made a range of changes to its provision as a result of feedback from the forum. These include changes to its induction programme, tutorial programme and laptop policy.
- 18 Overall, we found that learners and staff have worked well together to effect changes in:
 - learner outcomes;
 - teaching and assessment;
 - curriculum;
 - resources, facilities and venues;
 - support for learners;
 - quality improvement; and
 - the management of provision.

Learner outcomes

- 19 Learners achieve a range of outcomes that improve their personal and social skills and their wellbeing. However, it is less clear whether taking part in learner-involvement activities contributes to an improvement in the qualifications they attain.
- 20 FEIs are only beginning to put formal systems in place to record and recognise the range of personal and social outcomes achieved by learners as a result of taking part in learner-involvement activities.
- 21 Coleg Sir Gâr has undertaken some analysis of outcomes for learners who take part in college learner voice activities. For this cohort of learners, their success rate is 90%, compared with the national comparator of 81%, and the college's own success rate of 82% in 2010-2011. However, the college feels that careful consideration should be given to this data in terms of drawing conclusions about success rates. Learners who take part in learner voice activities, by their nature, are usually more confident and articulate than their peers.
- 22 Coleg Gwent prepares a report detailing the impact for student union officers and elected class representatives in terms of success rates, as compared to the general learner body. Slightly fewer (0.68%) of the class representatives successfully complete their courses than the general learner body.
- 23 Coleg Morgannwg considers that helping learners get involved in shaping their learning experience has contributed towards an increasing trend in retention rates. However, the college has found it difficult to measure the impact for individual learners.
- 24 All learners and staff report that learners who take part in involvement activities improve and develop their personal and interpersonal skills. These skills include communication, listening to others, evaluating and synthesising information. Learners also gain general confidence in their ability to represent others and have increased motivation as a result of being listened to and action being undertaken. Learners also improve their time-management skills.
- 25 St David's Catholic Sixth Form College has introduced a wellbeing portfolio that helps learners record and reflect on their activities in order to evaluate what they have learnt and how they can improve on their achievements. Outcomes from the wellbeing portfolio link well to individual learning plans in order to help learners and staff to evaluate the overall progress made by individual learners.
- 26 Other FEIs are beginning to recognise the wider skills gained by young people through learner-involvement activities through the Welsh Baccalaureate or Essential Skills Wales qualifications, or through the awards of local certificates. Coleg Gwent is piloting the use of credit based awards to recognise the skills and knowledge gained by class representatives.

Importantly, learners have realised that they can make a difference to their subject area and course curriculum. They have learnt that they have the ability to effect changes in their lives, and those of their peers by taking action on issues that concern them.

For example, learners at St David's Catholic Sixth Form College have gained a better understanding of how to achieve political change by getting involved in the work of the Student Union. They have successfully persuaded Cardiff Council to adopt a living wage agenda, which has improved the conditions of employment for the council's employees. Learners involved with the college's Citizens UK project have undertaken a listening project with other learners in Cardiff and used the outcomes of the project to inform political parties in Cardiff about the issues that are important to young people.

Teaching and assessment

- 27 In most FEIs, learners have changed the way that teachers teach. For example, in Coleg Morgannwg, learners have provided evaluations of what makes for good and bad teaching and what constitutes a good lesson. Learners have also provided feedback on teacher punctuality and attendance. The college includes these evaluations in teacher training about differentiated learning and assessment for learning. It also links the feedback to its process for teacher observations and has strengthened its monitoring of teacher punctuality and attendance.
- 28 At St David's Catholic Sixth Form college, learners consider that feedback from class representatives has helped teachers to change habits in what they teach. Feedback from learners has encouraged teachers to include different topics in their courses and use different materials. For example, one tutor introduced a new module to a psychology course as a result of feedback from learners. At Coleg Sir Gâr, learners have improved the quality of the feedback teachers provide to learners, particularly in relation to how they could improve their work. Learners have also influenced how teachers schedule assignments and have contributed to changes in teaching methods. At Coleg Gwent, the Student Union delivers a 45 minute 'Inspire session' to teaching staff during their training days, to help them to understand how they can facilitate the Learner Voice within their teaching.

The curriculum

- 29 Learners have contributed to a range of curriculum improvements in FEIs. Following feedback from learners at its learner parliament and learning conference, Coleg Morgannwg has introduced modern foreign languages into its A-level programme. It has also offered extra GCSE English and mathematics courses to help learners improve their grades and provides more English as a foreign language support for learners who need this support.
- 30 Course representatives at St David's Catholic Sixth Form College have been successful in persuading tutors to introduce new modules to the psychology A-level course. They considered that the course needed refreshing in order to appeal to today's learners. Learners have also been successful in influencing teachers to use different curriculum materials, including new course books and films.
- 31 Learners at both Coleg Morgannwg and Pembrokeshire College have influenced the introduction of a new range of enrichment activities.

- 32 Coleg Morgannwg has worked well with learners to organise the 'Boost' programme of enrichment activities. It has reorganised its timetable to free up Wednesday afternoons to make sure that all learners can take part in these activities. The college plans to develop 'Boost' to help learners to take more responsibility for its organisation and promotion.
- 33 Pembrokeshire College has introduced a similar programme of informal activities which are led by learners. One learner has helped to set up a gaming society which meets on a weekly basis in a disused computer suite. The college provides the necessary cabling network equipment to allow learners to play on their consoles using the college network. Similarly, the college has supported a group of students to set up a chess club and a student governor has set up a socialist society where learners discuss current affairs and contemporary issues.
- 34 At Coleg Sir Gâr, performing arts learners have been centrally involved in improving the understanding of learners and staff about equality and diversity issues. Learners devised and staged a series of performances using the "forum theatre"¹ technique of audience involvement and ideas to resolve social issues. The learners used their own experiences from school and college to deliver a set of pieces around the themes of homophobia, racism, sexism and disability. Learners performed to over 1,000 learners at each of the college's campuses. In each case the audience was asked to take part in helping to resolve the situation. The impact of this learner-led approach was key to the success of engaging with other learners and improving their understanding of diversity and equality issues.
- 35 As a result of the impact on learners, the college Equality and Diversity Committee asked the actors to repeat the performances as a staff development exercise. Learners delivered sessions to over 300 staff and raised their awareness about issues to do with respect and diversity.
- 36 Following a series of focus group meetings with learners, Coleg Gwent restructured its tutorial enrichment programme to make it more relevant to learners' main programmes of study. Improved timetabling has also increased the time available for pastoral support in the tutorial programmes. Learners continue to be involved in an annual review of the tutorial-enrichment programme.

Resources, facilities and venues

- 37 In general, learners have influenced how their FEIs develop better resources, facilities and venues. As a result, Pembrokeshire College has installed extra water fountains and cash machines and set up a new coffee shop as a result of learner feedback. At St David's Sixth Form College, learners persuaded the college to increase the amount of Welsh signage around the college.

¹ **Forum theatre** is a type of [theatre](#) created by the innovative and influential [practitioner Augusto Boal](#) as part of what he calls his "[Theatre of the Oppressed](#)." Boal created Forum theatre as a forum for teaching people how to change their world. While practising earlier in his career, Boal would apply 'simultaneous dramaturgy'. In this process the actors or audience members could stop a performance, often a short scene in which a character was being oppressed in some way. The audience would suggest different actions for the actors to carry out on-stage in an attempt to change the outcome of what they were seeing.

- 38 Learners at Coleg Morgannwg influenced the college to improve the environment and resources in the college's learning centres. The college has increased the number of computers and created quiet study spaces in all its learning centres. It has also introduced informal seating areas in two of its learning centres.
- 39 At Coleg Sir Gâr, learners have helped to secure similar improvements to learning centres across the college's estate. Learners were actively involved in the design and refurbishment of refectory areas across the college and persuaded the college to provide a cash machine in one of its refectory areas. The college works well with learners to involve them in discussions about developing new facilities such as an animal and equine centre, the relocation of library facilities and the establishment of an art shop run by a third-party provider.

Learners at Coleg Gwent voiced concern over the suitability and condition of the student services accommodation. As a result, the college refurbished its student services accommodation, which now provides more open plan, friendly and welcoming facilities.

Support for learners

- 40 In a few cases learners have influenced the type of support that FEIs provide. Learners at both Coleg Morgannwg and Coleg Sir Gar have influenced revisions to bus pass schemes. Coleg Morgannwg has also reviewed how it provides support for learners with dyslexia and reorganised the way it provides support for developing skills.
- 41 Coleg Gwent has reviewed its model for student support as a result of feedback from learners. It has recently implemented a single model of support across all its sites that provides:
- information, advice and guidance (IAG) and welfare and financial support;
 - skills support, including literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT), and language and study skills; and
 - additional learning support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Quality improvement

- 42 In general, FEIs include feedback from learners well in their quality development planning. Managers use the information provided by learners effectively in the self-assessment and action planning process.
- 43 Coleg Sir Gâr's quality handbook emphasises the role of its learner voice panels in driving the development of cross-college issues. Similarly its curriculum area learner voice panels inform the assessment of teaching and learning and curriculum area self-assessment reports and quality development plans. These panels are organised by curriculum managers and meet formally each term. Staff have devised a set of structured questions for each meeting and involve learners in discussions about teaching and learning. An action plan is developed after each meeting and shared with members of staff in the curriculum area. Responses to the actions are then fed back to learners in the tutorial programme.

- 44 Coleg Morgannwg holds an annual learner conference. The conference focuses on the quality of the college's service to learners. It is attended by around 80 class representatives from across the college together with senior managers and NUS regional representatives. The conference prioritises the areas of improvement most valued by learners. The Principal works with other staff to prepare an action plan, which incorporates the results of the conference. The college's curriculum and quality committee monitors progress against the action plan.
- 45 The quality team at Coleg Gwent worked with learners and staff representatives, to agree a protocol for involving learners in observations of teaching and learning. The quality team used the protocol to devise a standard set of questions to ask learners and piloted their use at the City of Newport Campus in September 2010. The observer recorded learners' evaluations on the observation form. The quality team used these evaluations to inform judgements about the quality of teaching. The college subsequently cascaded this work across all campuses from September 2011.

Management of provision

- 46 In general, FEIs involve learners well in the management of the institution. Learners are involved in a range of management meetings including governors meetings, campus committees and curriculum and quality meetings. As a result, learners provide the student perspective on the issues discussed.

National Union of Students: Further Education Student Representation Project

- 47 Since September 2010 the Department for Education and Skills has funded the National Union of Students to deliver a student representation project in FEIs. The project provides an opportunity to develop and support student representation structures and learner-involvement in FEIs throughout Wales. The project supports the Welsh Government's learner-involvement Strategy for post-16 learning. The project has brought FEIs into the project on an incremental basis. It started with seven FEIs in the academic year 2010-2011 and worked with a further six FEIs in 2011-2012. The project has moved into its third and final year and has recruited the remaining five FEIs.
- 48 The project aims to:
- develop and support student representation structures and learner-involvement in FEIs throughout Wales;
 - tackle the challenges of student representation by working on a local level with FEIs; and
 - create a change in the culture amongst students, college staff and procedures to ensure that Wales maintains its position as a nation investing in the learner voice.
- 49 In order to achieve these aims the project has provided a range of training and advice to FEIs including:
- training learners as student governors;
 - training student liaison officers and other relevant support staff;
 - advice and support to help FEIs to independently support and develop student engagement structures; and
 - advice and support to class representatives.
- 50 The project monitors and reports on outputs from the project, for example the number of class representatives or student governors trained or how well FEIs have adopted the concept of student representation. However, the project has not itself monitored the impact of class representatives or student governors on teaching and learning or the management and development of FEIs.
- 51 Nevertheless, inspectors found that the project has been successful in:
- influencing FEIs to introduce a greater degree of student participation in the management of their institutions;
 - supporting FEIs to develop and implement learner-involvement strategies;
 - helping learners to gain personal (organisation, social contact and listening) and political skills;
 - assisting class and course representatives to secure changes to courses and curriculum;
 - training student governors to provide a learner perspective at governing body meetings;

- improving how teachers consult with young people and encouraging teachers to review how and what they teach; and
- providing training to student support liaison officers.

Welsh for adults centres

- 52 The Welsh Government set up six regional Welsh for adults centres in 2006. In 2010-2011 there were 18,205 adults learning Welsh through the six centres. Estyn carried out visits to five of the Welsh for adults as part of this survey. We held discussions with a representative sample of managers and tutors in each of these centres and with about 50 learners in total.
- 53 We found that all five institutions have strategies and activities for learner-involvement that are embedded in the work of each institution. All the language centres have worked well together to develop a common learner-involvement strategy. The strategy provides a framework for individual learning centres to implement a range of activities that are adapted to respond to the characteristics of their region.
- 54 All the centres use learner satisfaction surveys to canvass the views of learners, including those learners in provision delivered by contractors. All centres have appropriate arrangements for analysing the outcomes of these surveys. In general, most use the outcomes of the surveys to make changes and improvements to the curriculum and provision. However, a few language centres undertake the survey at the end of the course. This means that these centres miss an opportunity to review provision for current learners in order to change the courses or curriculum if necessary.
- 55 All centres provide feedback to learners about the overall outcomes of these surveys to let them know what has happened as a result. Centres use a variety of ways to publicise the overall outcomes of these surveys – via websites, in learner magazines or by providing feedback to learners via tutors.
- 56 For example, the mid-Wales language centre makes good use of its learners' magazine to feed back the outcomes of learner surveys and promote the concept of learner-involvement. The magazine also provides good examples of how learners can use their language skills in their communities and daily life. The Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan centre promotes learner-involvement through its Facebook page and encourages learners to get involved in the centre's activities.
- 57 However, in many cases Welsh for adults centres do not provide feedback about what learners in individual classes have said in surveys. As a result, tutors are unaware of what they could do to improve the quality of the learning experience for their learners. Similarly, learners do not know how their views have influenced improvements to their class or course.
- 58 In common with FEIs most Welsh for adults centres have moved beyond the use of questionnaires or surveys as the main way of helping learners contribute to improving their learning experience. All centres deploy a wide range of useful methods for capturing the learner voice. These include talking to learners during

observations of teaching and learning, and holding learner/staff panels, focus groups and discussions with individuals or groups of learners.

- 59 Most centres use a mix of class representatives or learner and staff panels to facilitate discussion with learners. Learners consider these arrangements very useful. Learners are able to say what is good or otherwise about their course and can influence changes to their courses and curriculum or how the provision is delivered. Nevertheless, learners who undertake the role of class representatives consider that they would benefit from a more comprehensive briefing about the role of the class representative. Learners who take part in learner panels raise concerns about their capacity to attend panels in terms of time, care arrangements and travel cost.
- 60 Welsh for adults learners consider that taking part in focus groups, learner panels or acting as a class representative helps them use all four language skills in a different context and with different people, and thus contributes to improving their achievement. All the centres use individual learning plans to help learners set targets for improvement, record the activities they undertake and review their progress. However, by their very nature, individual learning plans focus on short term targets – usually on a termly or annual basis. The centres do not enable learners or tutors to record and recognise progress over longer periods of time. As a result, learners do not always recognise the cumulative impact of taking part in involvement activities on their language acquisition and development.
- 61 Overall, learners play an active role in shaping their learning experience. Inspectors found that learners and staff work well together to improve:
- learners' language skills;
 - the quality of teaching;
 - curriculum and resources;
 - procedures, facilities and venues;
 - quality improvement; and
 - the management of provision.

Learners' language skills

- 62 Learners take responsibility for developing their Welsh language skills by getting involved in learner panels or focus groups, social media networks, acting as class representatives and organising a wide range of informal learning activities. They actively use these experiences to improve their language skills in different and more challenging contexts.
- 63 Adults who take part in learner panels or act as class representatives enjoy the challenge of using all four language skills – speaking, listening, reading and writing – in a new situation. They say it extends their vocabulary and helps their understanding of the written language. The Glamorgan Welsh for adults centre organises a number of learner panels. Panels have been established in five areas across the region and for its intensive course. Panels offer learners the opportunity to provide feedback about the course, materials and resources, curriculum and the suitability of venues etc. Panels also provide staff with the opportunity to discuss issues with learners and report on progress.

- 64 Welsh for adults centres encourage learners to make use of social media to help learners express their views and opinions and organise activities. This also helps learners to practise their reading and writing skills and to set up contact points for other learners. This is particularly important in areas of Wales where learners cannot travel easily to attend meetings.
- 65 One learner in Gwent has set up a Facebook page for other learners across the region. She did this in partnership with the centre as a way of helping learners to use their language skills in a virtual context. She monitors and manages the page to promote the work of the centre and communicate information about extra-curricular activities. This means that other learners can practise their reading and writing skills and post information about their own activities. A learner in Lampeter has also set up a Facebook page specifically for her class so members can practise their skills and keep in contact with each other outside of class.

The quality of teaching

- 66 Most of the centres visited use different ways of involving learners to improve the quality of teaching.
- 67 The north Wales centre worked well with learners to revise and develop a new format for individual learning plans. Learners had previously expressed a lot of concern about the ineffectiveness of the individual learning plan. They contributed to the new design and a new format for the plan. This plan has since been adopted by all centres across Wales.
- 68 All centres use individual learning plans to help learners set personal targets and review their progress. However, only a few of the centres make good use of these individual learning plans to help learners to influence the nature of their learning. One centre ensures that tutors incorporate learners' personal targets into their schemes of work to make sure that course planning takes account of these targets.
- 69 A very few learners are concerned that individual learning plans do not take enough account of individual learning styles, and differences in the first language of learners. These learners are multilingual and do not have English as a first language. They have different ways of learning new languages. As a result these learners are concerned that centres do not use individual learning plans well enough to inform teaching and course planning and help them to learn Welsh quickly.
- 70 Many centres use observations of teaching and learning to discuss the quality of their learning experience with learners. These centres have found this to be a useful way of gathering the views and opinions of a wide range of learners across the region and to help improve teaching and learning.
- 71 Tutors are an important contact point for learners to offer feedback about the quality of their learning experience. Most centres provide training or briefings for tutors to help them implement learner voice activities. Many tutors are open to discussion with learners about how they can improve what they offer to learners. However, a few tutors do not take the opportunity to canvass the views and opinions of learners on an ongoing basis in order to make changes as the course progresses.

Curriculum and resources

- 72 All centres work well with learners to encourage them to organise a range of learning activities outside of the classroom so that learners can practise their skills in a different context. Learners actively organise social activities such as reading groups, walking groups, coffee mornings, social evenings, trips to places of interest and seasonal events. In two centres learners also make arrangements for visiting speakers to their class. Generally, learners are motivated to get involved in organising these activities as a way of improving their own language skills and to use these skills in a different situation.
- 73 Welsh for adults centres have made good use of feedback from learners to revise course materials and handbooks and make changes to course curricula. For example, the north Wales centre worked well with learners to develop the Welsh for the Family course. The Glamorgan centre adapted its curriculum for both intermediate and higher level courses following feedback from learners. It also revamped its intensive course. The centre introduced more opportunities for learners to practise their speaking skills on higher level courses by introducing workshops and arranging for visiting speakers. The centre also introduced English translations to course material for its intensive courses.
- 74 In Gwent, learners have been able to influence the introduction of new courses to help prepare them for higher levels of learning. Learners were concerned that the move to higher levels of learning – for example from level 2 to level 3 – was often too big a step. As a result, the centre introduced bridging courses that help learners to improve their grammar, extend their vocabulary and increase their confidence to help them make the move to the next level of learning.#
- 75 The mid-Wales centre has worked well with learners to improve opportunities for reading Welsh literature. It has helped to establish reading clubs and has bought books for learners to borrow. It is also working with local library services to keep a stock of Welsh books.

Procedures, facilities and venues

- 76 All the centres visited respond well to learner feedback about the quality of facilities and venues. Learners often express concern about the quality of venues, heating and the facilities available at venues. All centres work appropriately to resolve these issues.
- 77 In north Wales, learners have influenced the introduction of streamlined enrolment procedures. They had expressed criticism about the onus nature of enrolment and the need to provide details every time they enrolled on a new course.

Quality improvement

- 78 All of the centres visited make appropriate use of the outcomes of learner-involvement activities to inform their quality improvement activities. This includes discussing issues at course committees in order to implement changes, including learner feedback in self-assessment and quality development planning.

- 79 In Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan, staff make good use of the outcomes of learner surveys to inform self-assessment and quality improvement planning and to revise its curriculum. The north Wales centre provides a termly report on the outcomes of its learner-involvement work to its Quality Panel. The report covers significant changes to the programme and curriculum as a result of these activities. It also includes how staff report outcomes to learners. The Gwent centre uses a database to analyse outcomes of learner surveys and inform self-assessment. The centre also provides details of learner evaluations to its third party contractors to help them improve their provision.

Management of provision

- 80 In general, the Welsh for adults centres actively involve learners in improving the management of provision. In most centres learners are involved in a range of management meetings including learner voice panels and conferences, which provide direction to the work of centres.
- 81 The north Wales centre involves learners in the work of the centre's committee. As a result, learners are able to provide the learner perspective on the issues discussed. In Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan centre, learner involvement activities have had a positive impact on a range of the centres business activities, for example marketing, self-assessment, strategic planning and the development of web-based learning opportunities. In the Glamorgan centre, learner panels are effective in influencing improvements to the curriculum and provision. Other learners are encouraged to organise classroom activities such as making arrangements for visiting speakers.

Appendix 1: Evidence base

As part of this survey inspectors have collected and evaluated a range of information. We have visited five further education institutions and five Welsh for adults language centres to follow up on the progress they have made implement learner-involvement strategies.

We met with staff, tutors and learners in:

- Coleg Gwent;
- Coleg Morgannwg;
- Pembrokeshire College;
- Coleg Powys;
- Coleg Sir Gar;
- Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Welsh for Adults Centre;
- Glamorgan Welsh for Adults Centre;
- Gwent Welsh for Adults Centre;
- Mid Wales Welsh for Adults Centre; and
- North Wales Welsh for Adults Centre.

The reporting inspector also met with staff at the National Union of Students about the Further Education Student Representation Project.

The team reviewed the learner-involvement strategies provided by these organisations and a range of other documents pertaining to specific learner-involvement activities.

Inspectors conducted interviews with staff, tutors and learners in order to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of learner-involvement activities.

Appendix 2: Survey team

Liam Kealy HMI	Reporting Inspector
Christine Hooper HMI	Team Inspector
Sandra Barnard HMI	Team Inspector
Gill Sims HMI	Post 16 Link Inspector
Bernard Hayward	Post 16 Link Inspector