Estyn

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Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

Wider choice and the learning core
– progress in implementing a wider option choice and the learning core for 14-19 learners

AUGUST 2010

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

- ↟ nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local authorities;
- ↟ primary schools;
- ↟ secondary schools;
- ↟ special schools;
- ↟ pupil referral units;
- ↟ independent schools;
- ↟ further education;
- ↟ adult community learning;
- ↟ youth support services;
- ↟ youth and community work training;
- ↟ local authority education services for children and young people;
- ↟ teacher education and training;
- ↟ work-based learning;
- ↟ careers companies;
- ↟ offender learning; and
- ↟ the education, guidance and training elements of the Department for Work and Pensions funded training programmes.

Estyn also:

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

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Introduction

1   This report has been produced in response to a request for advice from the Welsh Assembly Government in the Minister's annual remit to Estyn for 2009-2010. The report evaluates progress in implementing wider choice and flexibility (Element 2) and entitlement to the learning core (Element 3) of Learning Pathways 14-19[1].

2   The findings are based on an analysis of all the 14-19 networks'[2] three-year strategic plans for 2010-2013, visits to ten 14-19 networks, responses to questionnaires sent to other networks and data on the key stage 4 options available in secondary schools in Wales.

3   The report follows on from the Estyn report on choice and flexibility for 14-19 learners published in March 2008.[3]

Background

4   In 2001, the Welsh Assembly Government made a commitment in 'The Learning Country' to deliver better outcomes in schools, colleges, universities and work-based learning and set a goal that **'95 per cent of young people by the age of 25 will be ready for high-skilled employment or higher education by 2015.'**

5   In July 2004 and April 2006, the Welsh Assembly Government published Learning Pathways Guidance I and II, which set out expectations for transforming provision for 14-19 learners. The policy aims to extend choice and flexibility for learners by providing them with individual learning pathways that meet their needs. It also aims to provide opportunities and experiences that will help learners to develop the wider skills needed for life and work, and the support and guidance needed to help them reach their potential.

6   The Estyn report on choice and flexibility for 14-19 learners found that:

- choice within schools and colleges was increasing, but learner opportunities depended on what was on offer in their school or college;

- at key stage 4, there had been an increase in entry level or level 1 courses on offer, but little increase in the number of level 2 courses;

- many schools saw vocational courses as only suitable for less-able learners;

- many schools were reluctant to offer vocational courses because these did not contribute to the key performance indicator of five GCSE grades A* to C;
- many options menus at key stage 4 were based on a model for a broad and balanced curriculum, and only a minority of schools tried to meet the aspirations of Learning Pathways;

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[1] Learning Pathways 14-19 Guidance II. Welsh Assembly Government 2006.
[2] 14-19 networks are strategic groups of providers of education and training in a local authority area.
[3] http://estyn.co.uk/ThematicReports/0308_Learning_Pathways_Report.pdf

- at post-16, most of the limited expansion of courses was in level 2 courses for middle-ability or lower-ability learners;

- there was limited collaboration between providers, particularly at post-16;

- most developments had resulted from grant rather than mainstream funding;

- too little attention was paid to the entitlement of learners;

- there was tension between the need to work collaboratively and the funding and governance arrangements that focus on independent, individual providers; and

- networks lacked systems for quality assurance that draw conclusions about the effectiveness and efficiency of provision.

7   The Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure ('the Measure') received royal approval in May 2009. All maintained mainstream secondary schools must comply with part 1 (key stage 4) provisions by September 2010. Compliance with part 2 (post-16) provisions is not yet required. The Measure aims to ensure that the widest possible choice is available to learners in maintained schools and in colleges. It provides 14-19 learners with a legally binding entitlement to a specified minimum number of courses from which to choose their individual learning pathway, including the learning core. Access to support services, including the learning coach function are not entitlements required by the Measure, but they are an expectation, described in the 14-19 Learning Pathways Guidance document.

8   The Measure places a duty on local authorities to form local curricula for learners in key stage 4, and assist the Minister in establishing local curricula for post-16 learners. These local curricula are to contain a wide range of academic and vocational options. By 2012, all key stage 4 and post-16 local curricula must offer a minimum of thirty courses of which five must be eligible vocational courses. At key stage 4, these vocational courses should be at level 2 and at post-16 they should be up to level 3. In planning local curricula, networks should ensure progression routes are available key stage 4 to post-16.

9   The implementation of these requirements is being phased in and local authority areas were allocated to a band for the options that are to be available to learners at key stage 4. The Annex gives details of the bands and requirements.

10   Options should be from the five **domains** of learning:

- mathematics, science and all aspects of technology;

- business and management;

- services to people;

- creative arts and culture; and

- humanities and language.

11   The learning core identifies the skills, knowledge, understanding, values and experiences that all 14-19 learners will need whatever their chosen learning pathway. The aspects of learning set out in the learning core include minimum requirements and enhancements. The learning core involves wider learning consisting of skills, knowledge and understanding, attitudes and values, and common experiences. In Learning Pathways II, these are:

Skills	Knowledge and understanding	Attitudes and values	Common experiences
Key skills	Wales, Europe and the World	Respect for self, others and diversity	Work-focused experience
Welsh-language skills	Personal, social, sustainability and health matters	Responsibility for personal and social development, sustainability and health.	Community participation opportunities
Work-related skills	Careers education and guidance		Cultural, sporting, aesthetic, and creative experiences

12   In 2008, the 'Transforming Education and Training Provision in Wales' policy[4] was announced by the Welsh Assembly Government. This policy led to the establishment of learning partnerships to develop plans to improve learning opportunities for post-16 learners. The policy does not specify the structures needed to deliver the provision but challenges local authorities to use resources more effectively and efficiently.

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[4] Skills that Work for Wales Autumn 2008 – policy to transform education and training provision in Wales.

Main findings

13   There has been a great deal of progress in widening the choice for learners and in the provision of the learning core in the last two years. Learners can now choose from an increasing number of courses. There is much more collaboration too between providers. Despite this progress, there are still a number of shortcomings. These include:

- too wide a variation in the range and number of courses available to learners in different areas;

- too many courses that have limited viability because they attract only small numbers of learners and/or duplicate provision that is available elsewhere in the same catchment area;

- a lack of impartial advice at key points when learners make choices;

- too little evaluation of the quality, outcomes, efficiency and cost effectiveness of provision; and

- the doubtful sustainability of many vocational courses, particularly those that are provided collaboratively.

Progress at key stage 4

14   The number and range of general and vocational courses at level 2 at key stage 4 have increased significantly over the last two years. Nearly all schools met the requirements of the Measure for September 2009. By September 2010, all schools will meet the statutory requirement for their particular band. Most schools already meet the minimum requirements of the Measure for 2012. However, one fifth of schools just or only just meet the minimum.

15   The increased availability of vocational courses is having a positive impact on students. In most schools, the availability of level 1 and level 2 vocational courses has contributed to improvements in attainment, attendance and behaviour. There are new vocational courses in construction, vehicle maintenance, engineering, health and social care and salon services, for example, but too few in business and management.

16   Most collaborative working at this key stage is between schools and local further education colleges or work-based learning providers who can provide specialist facilities or expertise for courses that schools cannot offer. These courses are usually expensive to run. The funding of this new provision has largely come from grants,[5] instead of from mainstream funding, and the sustainability of the new provision is doubtful in the longer term.

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[5] Grants to networks to support their Annual Network Development Plans.

Progress at post-16

17 In all parts of Wales, post-16 learners can choose from a wide number and range of courses, as long as they are prepared to move to another institution to study.

18 In only a few cases are schools and colleges working together effectively. In these cases, providers have agreed joint funding and governance arrangements, share timetables and have set up practical arrangements for supporting learners. While most of these providers have established internal tracking systems to monitor learner progress on courses held elsewhere, they do not do enough to evaluate the quality and viability of provision for their learners when they are at other providers.

19 Schools do not always provide impartial advice to learners when they make their option choices. This makes it more likely that learners will choose what the school has to offer rather than choosing to study elsewhere. Many schools with sixth-form provision are reluctant to collaborate with other providers because of concerns over the potential loss of numbers in the sixth-form. Managers fear that loss of numbers would affect per capita funding and this would reduce their capacity to retain teachers.

Planning collaborative provision

20 Further education colleges and schools, and schools with other schools, can now collaborate formally by establishing joint committees. However, no such arrangements have yet been set up.

21 Even though increasing collaboration between providers at post-16 is a major priority for 14-19 networks, few networks have established joint quality assurance processes, or systems for sharing data to track learner progress, or joint evaluation of the impact of collaborative provision.

Welsh-medium provision

22 Most Welsh-medium schools meet the requirements for the number of courses required by the Measure for key stage 4. Most 14-19 networks aim to increase the number of courses for Welsh-speaking learners through the development of bilingual courses in further education colleges or through collaboration between Welsh-medium schools.

23 A few networks have established collaborative arrangements across local authority borders. There is increasing use of information and communication technology to provide teaching, learning and assessment materials, particularly across north Wales networks. Even so, in many parts of Wales, provision of Welsh-medium vocational courses that require specialist facilities remain inadequate. A shortage of Welsh-speaking tutors is impeding progression to further education college courses at post-16 from Welsh-medium or bilingual schools.

Non-formal and informal learning

24   The provision of non-formal[6] and informal learning[7] is a good or outstanding feature in many schools and colleges. Nearly all schools and colleges offer non-formal activities such as Duke of Edinburgh Award, first aid and food hygiene certificates. Providers also offer learners varied and interesting informal learning experiences that include cultural and sports activities, and educational visits. These enrichment activities contribute towards progress files, curriculum vitae and to the award of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification.

The learning core

25   Most schools and colleges plan and deliver the learning core effectively, although a majority of learners on extended work placements or other collaborative courses do not always gain their full entitlement. The learning core is especially effective where learners are involved in the Welsh Baccalaureate. The number of providers offering the Welsh Baccalaureate at key stage 4 and post-16 is increasing as providers see it as an ideal vehicle for meeting the requirements of the learning core. The number of centres offering the Welsh Baccalaureate is set to rise from 167 to 217 in September 2010, making the award available to an estimated 7,000 additional learners.

26   Where providers do not offer the Welsh Baccalaureate, provision for the learning core is not as good. Although generally sound, there are often weaknesses in the provision for key skills, Welsh-language skills and work-focused experience.

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[6] Non–formal learning experiences are programmes leading to accreditation but those that are normally outside of the National Qualifications Framework.
[7] Informal learning experiences are wider experiences that do not have accreditation.

Recommendations

In order to expand choice and flexibility and improve the learning core:

providers should:

R1   work more closely with other providers to maximise choice and flexibility;

R2   make sure that all learners get impartial advice when they make choices at age 14 and 16;

R3   deliver all aspects of the learning core, particularly key skills, Welsh-language skills and work-focused experience; and

R4   make sure that learners taking extended work placements or other collaborative courses receive their full entitlement to the learning core;

networks should:

R5   plan to make local options and collaborative arrangements sustainable;

R6   require a collaborative plan from providers to reduce travelling for learners;

R7   monitor and evaluate learner entitlement; and

R8   evaluate the quality and effectiveness of collaborative provision;

the Welsh Assembly Government should:

R9   further support the provision of Welsh-medium vocational courses.

Learning Pathways: wider choice and flexibility

Progress at key stage 4

27   The number and range of vocational courses offered at level 2 has increased since Estyn reported on choice and flexibility in 2008. We reported then that at key stage 4 there had been an increase in entry level or level 1 vocational courses, but little increase in the number of level 2 courses, and many schools saw vocational courses as only suitable for less-able learners. While this is still a perception in a minority of schools, level 2 vocational courses are now a prominent part of nearly all local curricula.

28   In 2008, we reported that many schools were reluctant to offer vocational courses because these did not contribute to the key performance indicator of five GCSE at grades A* to C. The revised performance indicators for key stage 4 attainments[8] now include these vocational courses and this is no longer a reason why schools should not include vocational courses in their curriculum.

29   Nearly all schools met the non-statutory key stage 4 requirements of the Measure for September 2009. In September 2010, all schools will meet the statutory requirement for their particular band. Most schools already meet the minimum requirements of the Measure for 2012. However, one fifth of schools just or only just meet the minimum.

30   There is a variation within and between 14-19 networks in how well they meet the requirements of the Measure. In nine networks, all the schools already meet the requirement for 2012, while in the other networks nearly all of the schools do so. In one network, fewer than half the schools currently meet the 2012 requirement.

31   In many schools, the greater availability of level 1 and level 2 vocational courses has contributed to improvements in attainment, attendance and behaviour. The table below provides an early indication of the impact on attainment of the widening of choice at key stage 4.

Key Stage 4 attainment[9]	2007	2008	2009
Percentages attaining the level 2 threshold	55.0	58.0	60.2
Percentages attaining the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh (first language) and Maths	44.4	45.6	47.2
Percentages attaining five GCSE at grades A* to C	54.2	55.8	57
Percentage point difference between Level 2 threshold and five GCSE at grades A* to C	0.8	2.2	3.2

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[8] Level 2 threshold – five GCSE at grades A* to C and vocational level 2 qualifications.
[9] National Statistics on Examination Results produced by the Welsh Assembly Government released on 26 November 2009.

32   The difference between the percentages attaining the level 2 threshold and the percentages attaining five GCSE passes at grades A* to C has increased from 0.8 percentage points in 2007 to 3.2 percentage points in 2009. This is the result of an increase in the proportion of pupils gaining qualifications at level 2 in vocational qualifications over the last three years. The gap between those gaining the level 2 threshold and those gaining the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh first language and mathematics has widened from just over ten percentage points in 2007 to thirteen percentage points in 2009. More pupils are gaining level 2, but too many are still not gaining qualifications in the key subjects of English or Welsh and mathematics.

33   The attendance and attitude of the minority of learners involved in the new vocational courses have improved because they enjoy their courses and do not wish to lose their places on them. These learners particularly enjoy the work-based elements of the courses and being part of a team at their employment placement.

34   Nearly all local curricula at key stage 4 include collaborative courses offered by more than one provider working together. Collaborative vocational courses in key stage 4 tend to be in the 'mathematics, science and technology' domain, and 'services to people' domain. There has been an expansion in the number of construction, vehicle maintenance, engineering, health and social care and salon services courses. There remain too few vocational courses in the 'business and management' domain and there is too little opportunity for progression in this domain.

35   In most cases, schools collaborate with further education institutions and only a few work with other schools. When pupils choose collaborative courses, they often need to travel to them. Most collaborative courses take place on a set day and many learners miss lessons in the learning core or the other courses they have chosen. Many schools make allowances for this and make time available for learners to catch up on missed work. Most learners taking these courses receive good support. A few schools assign learning coaches to these learners to help them to complete their work and keep up with their other work in school. However, where schools do not provide additional support, learners are disadvantaged, especially where they miss lessons in the core subjects of English or Welsh first language, mathematics and science.

36   Many schools have developed partnerships with local employers or work-based learning providers to offer learning pathways for small groups of pupils for whom the traditional curriculum is not motivating. These pathways are usually for pupils at risk of leaving education or training at sixteen. Level 2 work-based learning pathways are also available in a few areas and the majority of learners who completed these courses in 2009 achieved the level 2 threshold.

37   Most schools now start to plan the options they will offer following an open-choice survey of learners' interests. Courses are then organised into blocks based on the results and generally contain a mixture of general and vocational courses. Nearly all learners report that they have been able to choose the courses that they wanted. A few schools offer a completely free

choice from the courses they can offer and produce timetables for individual pupils based on their choices.

38   Many of the collaborative courses require expensive specialist facilities or work-based learning placements, such as the IMIAL[10] Level 2 Certificate in Vehicle Maintenance and Repair (equivalent to the level 2 threshold or five A* to C GCSE's). However, schools and network co-ordinators are concerned about the sustainability of these courses once funding ends. Nearly all schools will continue to run most of the courses they offer themselves even when the 14-19 grant funding ends. These courses rarely require specialist facilities, can be staffed from within existing resources and are not dependent on the continuation of grant funding.

Progress at post-16

39   In all parts of Wales, post-16 learners can choose from a very wide number and range of courses, as long as they are prepared to move to another institution to study. In many areas, however, if they decide to remain in their school sixth-form, their choice is often restricted.

40   Schools do not always provide impartial advice to learners when they make their option choices. Many schools with sixth-form provision are reluctant to collaborate with other providers because of concerns over the potential loss of numbers in the sixth-form. Managers fear that loss of numbers would affect per capita funding and this would reduce their capacity to retain teachers.

41   Nearly all sixth-form learners say that they choose to study at the same school because they know the staff and wish to stay where they feel well supported. These learners are prepared to compromise on their choice of courses in order to remain in the sixth-form. Most learners in college choose it because the style of learning suits them and they wish to take specialist vocational courses. A few learners choose college because their school does not offer the possibility of progression from their previous courses.

42   Many of these schools offer courses that attract only very small numbers of learners. These often represent an inefficient use of resources, especially where the courses duplicate provision is available elsewhere in the network catchment. Only a very few schools can meet the post-16 requirements of the Measure on their own. These are usually large schools with big sixth-forms. However, most schools will not be able to provide learners with enough choice at post-16 on their own. Most cannot provide vocational courses that require specialist facilities.

43   In 2008, Estyn reported that there was limited collaboration at post-16 between schools and colleges, and between schools and schools, and this is still the case. Collaboration plans have still not been fully developed in the majority of areas. In many areas, providers are awaiting decisions on local area transformation plans that are likely to lead to fundamental changes to the organisation of post-16 education.

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[10] IMIAL IMI Awards Limited is the leading awarding body for the retail motor industry.

44   In a few areas, providers have started to address the need to remove duplicated provision in order to free-up staff and resources, and develop additional new courses. In these cases, providers have often agreed funding and governance arrangements, share timetables and have set up practical arrangements for supporting learners. In these collaborative arrangements, providers share the teaching of courses.

Common key stage 4 and post-16 issues

45   Estyn reported in 2008 that leaders needed to be willing to compromise, give up some of their autonomy and show greater trust in each other. Most 11-18 schools recognise the need for collaboration to ensure learner entitlement, but they are also keen to retain their learners with the result that they discourage learners from choosing options in other providers. In 2008 we reported that there were tensions between the need to work collaboratively, and the funding and governance arrangements that focus on independent, individual providers. Since 2008[11] further education colleges and schools, and schools with other schools can collaborate formally by establishing joint committees. However, no such arrangements have yet been set up.

46   A few schools are still resistant to increasing collaboration because it might lead to the removal of courses, especially those that attract small numbers of learners. Thus, collaboration may result in a loss of staff that then has a knock-on effect on courses in other key stages. A few schools fear that allowing large numbers of their learners to follow a course in other schools or colleges at key stage 4 may eventually lead to smaller numbers remaining at their school at post-16. A few of these schools claim that it is difficult to ensure quality when the provision is elsewhere and they would prefer learners to take all their courses in their school. In these instances, the school actively discourages learners from choosing courses offered at other providers.

47   Key stage 4 and post-16 option evenings still focus almost exclusively on what the school provides and not what is available elsewhere. In a few 14-19 networks, there are common option booklets produced by all providers, and learners make good use of Careers Online[12] when choosing courses. In these networks, learners receive suitable information and advice when planning their learning pathway. This includes meeting with tutors, careers advisers, learning coaches and college staff, and having taster sessions for collaborative courses. However, many schools do not give learners impartial advice at the end of key stage 3 or key stage 4.

48   The cost, time-commitment and complexity of transporting learners to other providers are practical barriers to collaborative working and the rationalisation of courses. Many networks are exploring other means of offering courses collaboratively, including distance learning using virtual-learning environments, video conferencing and tutors travelling between sites. These arrangements are mostly at an early stage of development and there has been little evaluation of their effectiveness or how they can improve value for money.

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[11] Section 166 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
[12] Careers Wales website where learners can make their option choices.

Planning collaborative provision

49   There is little evaluation of the cost effectiveness of collaborative provision as a whole. Common data sets on attainment, achievement, attendance, exclusion rates, and completion and retention rates for collaborative provision are limited and do not present a reliable and valid picture of provision across partners or sectors. While most providers have established internal tracking systems to monitor learner progress on collaborative courses, networks do not yet have systems that can evaluate the impact of collaborative provision.

50   The Welsh Assembly Government is developing quality indicators for the evaluation of collaborative course provision and a self-assessment framework for 14-19 networks. Most 14-19 networks are beginning to plan how to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of collaborative provision. Quality champions are in place in each network and all networks have established a quality framework and protocols for collaborative working.

51   Currently only a minority of 14-19 network plans have a range of developments for post-16, while the majority focus on extending the range of courses at key stage 4. These plans are mainly concerned with how the Annual Network Development Plans grants will be used, and do not include developments that are paid for through mainstream funding and so give an overall picture of developments. As a result, few of these plans focus enough on post-16 developments.

52   In many areas, a widening range of partners is appropriately involved in the network. Careers services, youth services, voluntary groups, training providers and others are becoming increasingly important in ensuring the implementation of all aspects of Learning Pathways 14-19.

53   Nearly all 14-19 networks are working with local transformation planning groups to consider post-16 provision. Most are planning local consortia based on geographical proximity or language needs. A minority are considering closing school sixth-forms and moving to tertiary provision.

Welsh-medium provision

54   Most Welsh-medium schools are meeting the band requirements of the Measure in key stage 4. Even so, in many parts of Wales, there are still not enough Welsh-medium vocational courses, particularly for those that require specialist facilities. In addition, class sizes at post-16 are often small in Welsh-medium schools, and there is less scope for rationalisation and collaboration than in the English-medium sector.

55   Providing Welsh-medium vocational courses at post-16 is a particular challenge, and progression is difficult for learners who wish to continue their vocational studies through the medium of Welsh. Most Welsh-medium schools are unable to offer vocational courses that require specialist staff and equipment, and other Welsh-medium schools are often too far away to share provision. Colleges and work-based learning providers who have the facilities

often do not have Welsh-speaking tutors who are confident enough to deliver these courses in Welsh.

56   A few providers are tackling this issue by working across more than one 14-19 network. For example, in Anglesey and Gwynedd, there is joint planning between the two local authorities. In north Wales, Cynnal[13] co-ordinates the development of Welsh-medium resources, virtual learning environments and distance learning options for Welsh-medium schools in Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Wrexham and Flintshire. There are a further two Welsh-medium groups in south-east and south-west Wales. These groups facilitate cross-border working on a regional basis.

Non-formal and informal learning

57   Nearly all schools and colleges offer 14-19 learners a wide range of non-formal and informal learning activities. This provision is a good or outstanding feature in many schools and colleges. All learners say that their provider offers a varied and interesting range of opportunities outside the formal curriculum.

58   Nearly all schools and colleges offer non-formal activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award, ASDAN[14], Millennium Volunteers[15], OCN[16], first aid and food hygiene certificates. These often link to Welsh Baccalaureate work-focused experiences or specific subjects, such as catering.

59   Nearly all providers also offer learners varied and interesting informal learning experiences. These include community action events, debating societies, school and student councils, eco-committees, cultural events, sports and visits. These enrichment activities have a high priority because providers encourage participation as part of the production of progress files, for the development of strong curriculum vitae or the award of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification.

60   Schools and colleges have very good links with partners such as voluntary organisations, education business partnerships, community groups, fire and rescue services, Careers Wales and youth services to extend further the range of opportunities available for young people in their area.

61   Non-formal and informal learning activities are especially valuable in developing literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, engaging hard-to-reach learners, providing alternative learning experiences for less-able learners and offering enrichment activities for the more able and talented.

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[13] Cynnal provides the advisory service for Gwynedd and Anglesey local authorities.

[14] ASDAN's award programmes and qualifications accredit personal and social education, skills development and enrichment activities.

[15] Millennium Volunteers is a UK wide initiative designed to promote and recognise volunteering among young people aged 16–25.

[16] Now 'Agored Cymru' offering vocational and vocational related qualifications.

Learning Pathways: the learning core

62   Most schools and colleges have well-established provision for the learning core. More and more schools and colleges are offering the Welsh Baccalaureate because they believe that the requirements for the learning core match those of the Welsh Baccalaureate. At post-16, learners in many schools and colleges are able to take the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification. This has become increasingly popular with learners as more providers offer it, and employers and higher education institutions have come to value it. A growing number of schools also offer the Welsh Baccalaureate to learners in key stage 4. The number of centres offering the Welsh Baccalaureate is set to rise from 167 to 217 in September 2010, making the award available to an estimated 7,000 additional learners. Many providers who do not offer it are planning to do so.

63   Where providers do not offer the Welsh Baccalaureate, providers still make good progress in developing most of the learning core as much of it builds on existing provision, including that which is statutory at key stage 4. However, Welsh-language skills, particularly at post-16, key skills and work-focused experience are less well covered.

64   The few learners in key stage 4, who are on learning pathways that include extended work placements or other alternative programmes, often do not have enough access to all parts of the learning core. This is because they miss days in school to attend placements or college and there is no provision for them to catch-up the work covered in the lessons they missed.

Skills - key skills, Welsh-language skills and other work-related skills

65   Providers who offer the Welsh Baccalaureate deliver its skills component through a combination of designated Welsh Baccalaureate lessons and lessons in other subjects. In a majority of these providers, learners have between two and seven one-hour Welsh Baccalaureate lessons a fortnight. These lessons cover key skills, Wales, Europe and the World, personal and social education and an independent investigation. Many providers plan the delivery of key skills across the curriculum and use Welsh Baccalaureate lessons to compile the key skills portfolios that learners need to achieve key skills qualifications. This is especially the case at post-16.

66   Providers that do not offer the Welsh Baccalaureate often do not develop key skills systematically enough for learners on general courses. These providers have not mapped key skills provision across the curriculum and few learners achieve the key skills qualifications.

67   At key stage 4, nearly all English-medium schools provide Welsh-language skills through compulsory Welsh second language provision as part of the National Curriculum, although standards in Welsh second language are often low. At post-16, very few providers offer opportunities to develop Welsh-language skills, unless Welsh is part of the Welsh Baccalaureate.

68   Providers offer nearly all 14-19 learners a good range of enterprise activities and work-focused experiences that help to develop work-related skills. Providers usually deliver these in partnership with employers, Careers Wales and education business partnerships. Most deliver this element of the learning core within the lessons identified for Welsh Baccalaureate or personal and social education. In addition, most schools hold specific events where the school timetable is suspended. These 'enterprise' or 'focus' events are well received by learners in key stage 4 and post-16.

Knowledge and understanding - Wales, Europe and the World, personal, social, sustainability and health matters, and careers education and guidance

69   Most learners have timetabled lessons in personal, social and health education and careers, and these cover an appropriate range of topics for this aspect of the learning core. Learners enjoy and benefit from programmes that providers plan well and teach effectively. Learners in some of the providers visited as part of the survey gain a great deal from this part of their curriculum, particularly if it is part of the Welsh Baccalaureate programme.

70   There is good provision for Wales, Europe and the World, and sustainability in those providers that offer the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification. Learners undertake projects based on citizenship or politics. Provision is weak where the qualification is not offered.

71   Careers advice and guidance are available in all providers. Careers Wales advisers work with groups of learners and offer all learners at least one careers interview during key stage 4 and post-16. Nearly all learners interviewed knew how to access careers advice, though a few had not attended a careers interview.

Attitudes and values - respect for self, others and for diversity, and responsibility for personal and social development, sustainability and health

72   Nearly all schools and colleges give high priority to developing positive attitudes and values. Most providers encourage involvement in school councils, eco-committees, volunteering, fund raising for charities and peer mentoring. Most also do a great deal to encourage learners to challenge bullying, racism and anti-social attitudes. Many develop appropriate programmes to improve social and emotional skills. Many providers work well with partners to provide opportunities for learners to take on an extensive range of responsibilities. Learners are successfully encouraged to take care of themselves and others.

Common experiences - work-focused experience, community participation, and cultural, sporting, aesthetic and creative activities

73   The common experiences aspect of the learning core is a good feature in nearly all schools and colleges. Most provide specific events for work-related experiences and community participation, when providers suspend the timetable from one to five days. A wide range of cultural, sporting, aesthetic

and creative opportunities are also available, many provided in partnership with other organisations. Learners value these opportunities highly.

74 There are some innovative examples of schools and colleges' engagement with employers. These examples are often related to vocational courses that include a work-based experience or courses delivered by employers or training providers. Many providers organise events where local employers work with learners on enterprise activities. While these are effective in developing skills and knowledge about the world of work, they are less effective as a work-focused experience because they are not based in a workplace and therefore do not provide learners with a real feel for what it is like to be in the workplace.

75 The provision of a work-focused experience as an entitlement for all learners is difficult to meet in some areas. These areas are usually where employers are sparse or reluctant to take learners for short placements, for example in rural locations or where there is a depressed local economy. Health and safety regulations, rules on risk assessment and the requirement for Criminal Records Bureau checks demand careful and rigorous application, while also avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy that may deter further employer engagement.

76 Many schools require learners to undertake work experience in key stage 4, although a minority of schools cannot find placements for all learners. At post-16, only a few schools make work experience compulsory for all learners. Even when work experience is available, learners often feel that it is inappropriate to their needs. This is because learners want work experience that directly relates to their career interests or learning pathway, and schools cannot always provide this opportunity. Many vocational courses include a work placement element and so work experience is often less of an issue for learners at further education colleges.

Annex

Implementation of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure at key stage 4

Progression in the number of options that need to be offered in moving towards the full minimum entitlement for key stage 4 by 2012.

	2009	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**
Band A Blaenau Gwent Caerphilly Cardiff Denbighshire Monmouthshire Newport Swansea Vale of Glamorgan Wrexham	28 (4)	30 (5)	30 (5)	30 (5)
Band B Carmarthenshire Neath Pot Talbot Pembrokeshire Rhondda Cynon Taf Torfaen	26 (4)	28 (4)	30 (5)	30 (5)
Band C Anglesey Bridgend Ceredigion Conwy Flintshire Gwynedd Merthyr Tydfil Powys	24 (3)	26 (4)	28 (4)	30 (5)

The number in brackets shows the number of courses that have to be vocational.

The remit author and survey team

Sue Halliwell HMI	Author
Catherine Evans HMI	Survey team member
Jackie Gapper HMI	Survey team member
Jan Waldron AI	Survey team member