

Quality and Standards in Post-16 Education and Training in Wales

A Report on the Quality of Adult Community-Based Learning

in

YMCA Wales Community College

December 2006

by

Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales



Rhagoriaeth i bawb....Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales



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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 education authorities (LEAs);
- ▲ primary schools;
- ▲ secondary schools;
- ▲ special schools;
- ▲ pupil referral units;
- ▲ independent schools;
- ▲ further education;
- ▲ adult community-based learning;
- ▲ youth support services;
- ▲ LEAs;
- ▲ teacher education and training;
- ▲ work-based learning;
- ▲ careers companies; and
- ▲ the education, guidance and training elements of Jobcentre plus.

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

Adult community-based learning is defined as educational provision for adults made by:

- local authorities;
- voluntary organisations including the WEAs and YMCA;
- further education colleges; and
- higher education institutions.

The provision is funded by DELLS, the local authority and/or the National Assembly for Wales. It includes learning which is funded by DELLS through the local authority, but delivered by a further education institution. It also includes learning which is funded by DELLS through the further education college, but delivered by the local authority.

The adult community-based learning in YMCA Wales Community College was inspected as part of a six-year (2004-2010) national programme of inspections of all post-16 providers in Wales. The purpose of the programme is to identify good features and shortcomings of adult community-based learning in order that the provider may improve the quality of education and training offered and raise the standards achieved by learners. The outcomes of the inspection are intended to give learners more information about the quality of providers of adult community-based learning.

All inspections conducted under the arrangements apply the following principles:

- the use of a common inspection framework which is common to all sectors of education and training in Wales;
- an emphasis on the providers' evaluations of their work;
- the involvement of a provider nominee who works with the inspection team; and
- the inspection of a sample of provision.

This inspection took place from 29 November to 6 December 2006. A team of Her Majesty's Inspectors from Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the Welsh Assembly Government, undertook the inspection. The team included additional inspectors seconded to Estyn.

The team has reported on standards achieved by learners, the quality of education and training provided, the quality of leadership and management and whether the provider delivers value for money.

The report was produced in accordance with Section 77 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

Grade descriptors

The five-point scale used to represent all inspection judgements in this report is as follows:

- Grade 1** good with outstanding features
- Grade 2** good features and no important shortcomings
- Grade 3** good features outweigh shortcomings
- Grade 4** some good features but shortcomings in important areas
- Grade 5** many important shortcomings

The Learning and Skills Act 2000 requires the college to prepare a written statement of the action that it proposes to take to address the recommendations in the inspection report and the timescales for completing the proposed actions.

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Context

The nature of the provider

- 1 YMCA Wales Community College (the college) is a division of the National Council of YMCAs of Wales. YMCA Wales is a Christian ecumenical movement devoted to providing social and education opportunities for people without regard to their ethnicity, religious affiliation or gender. YMCA Wales Community College is a further education institution dedicated to providing community-based learning opportunities for people in Wales wishing to re-engage with education, in particular those who do not wish to follow traditional education routes.
- 2 The college is working closely with the Welsh Assembly Government to become an independent designated body, separate from and not controlled by the National Council of YMCAs of Wales. The college will agree a new Instrument and Articles for its governance with the Welsh Assembly Government over the next few months.
- 3 The college previously defined itself within the further education sector as a provider of learning in non-threatening environments. It is now in the process of returning to this definition by withdrawing provision where there is duplication with the work of other providers. The college's new strategic aims focus on developing key strategic partnerships to provide co-ordinated education initiatives and reflect the institution's commitment to delivering high quality learning and providing equality of opportunity.
- 4 The college operates across Wales but most of its learners live in south-east Wales. It provides learning opportunities in community settings for people wishing to re-engage with education. In particular, it works with people who have rejected traditional education routes. It also provides training opportunities for workers within the youth sector. In 2005/2006 the college had 4032 enrolments.
- 5 The college owns its headquarters in Cardiff but has no college campus. It delivers provision through a network of well-established community venues and through its partner organisations. The college works directly with 28 partner organisations. In particular, the college works closely with the National Probation Services for Wales to deliver learning to offenders serving community punishment sentences.
- 6 Estyn inspected provision in the following learning areas:
 - Welsh for Adults;
 - Adult Learning; and
 - Community Development.
- 7 However, due to the small number of courses on offer in these learning areas during the inspection there are no learning area sections in the report. The key question 1 section of the report combines the inspection grades and evidence gathered across all learning areas.

Summary

Table of grades awarded

8 The inspection team judged the college's work as follows:

Key Question	Inspection grade
1 How well do learners achieve?	1
2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	1
3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	1
4 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1
5 How effective are leadership and strategic management?	1
6 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	1
7 How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	1

Standards

9 All learners achieve very high standards of work across a range of courses and levels. Overall there are outstanding retention, completion and attainment rates for adult learners. All learners make good to very good use of their individual learning plans and all make very good progress. All learners take ownership of their learning and are very proud of their achievements. This is the first time that many of the learners have achieved within the education system.

The quality of education and training

10 All tutors work very well with learners to establish outstanding working relationships. They are very effective in helping learners overcome poor learning experiences. All tutors manage sessions very well and ensure that all learners participate fully and get the best out of their learning. Tutors use good or very good resources to support their learners. Many tutors give their own time to provide additional opportunities for learners to practise their skills. Tutors provide learners with good and regular feedback that helps them improve.

11 College managers plan the curriculum very well to ensure that courses reflect the college mission. They provide learners with a good and diverse programme which is suited to their needs. The college's work with specialist partners to reach individuals that generally do not participate in education is excellent.

- 12 The college provides good and appropriate accreditation opportunities. It also ensures that learners have good information about progression routes in the college and other further education providers. There are good, appropriate opportunities for learners to study bilingually or through the medium of Welsh.
- 13 The provision for existing learners is very good. However, there are not enough opportunities for learners across all parts of Wales to benefit from the college's outstanding work.
- 14 The quality of care, guidance and support for learners is very good. Tutors support their learners very well to raise learners' sense of self-worth. The college has clear policies and procedures for the support of learners which all staff understand and use very effectively. Managers communicate information about support procedures very successfully to all staff. Learners with additional learning needs receive good support.
- 15 College staff use individual learning plans very effectively to identify learners' needs and to provide learners with good additional support. However, a few learners do not always receive appropriate advice to support and develop their basic skills.

Leadership and management

- 16 College leaders and managers are very effective. Senior managers are very good at making sure that all staff and partners understand the mission of the college. They take very good account of national and regional strategies in their planning and have set up good partnerships with a wide range of organisations. Managers work well with staff to improve performance and make good use of statistics to set challenging and realistic targets. Governors and staff are working well on new arrangements for governance. However, governors do not consider enough information about outcomes to gain a full understanding of how well the college is performing.
- 17 The college has a very effective quality assurance system. It consults stakeholders about the quality of its provision very well and uses the feedback it receives thoroughly. The college regularly reviews its progress against its action points through a very good shared progress document. However, a few action points are not specific enough. Managers use data very well to set challenging but achievable completion and attainment targets. Tutors reflect on their individual course data against these targets. Tutors and managers use data very effectively to improve the quality of provision.
- 18 The self-assessment report is honest, self-critical and evaluative and the college involves stakeholders well in contributing to this report. The college has also made very good progress against the recommendations made in previous inspection reports.
- 19 The college employs well qualified staff and has an appropriate staffing structure. The college works very well with partners to maximise its resources. It identifies opportunities to bid for additional resources well. It makes very good use of specialist services that partner organisations can provide.

- 20 The college has good, clear criteria in place to identify its spending priorities. College managers have very good financial procedures in place. However, not all management staff are fully involved in financial planning.
- 21 The college uses its resources very effectively to ensure that learners have a good, positive and inclusive learning experience. It provides very good value for money.

Recommendations

- 22 In order to maintain and improve on its high standards, the college needs to:
- R1 extend its provision to ensure that more learners across Wales benefit from the specialist learning opportunities the college has to offer;
 - R2 improve links with basic skills networks and ensure that all learners have appropriate support to develop their basic skills;
 - R3 increase the amount of detail that governors receive about learner and course outcomes so that they provide guidance for the college based on a full understanding of how well the college is performing;
 - R4 ensure that all targets for action within the quality development plan are specific;
and
 - R5 extend managers' involvement in financial management to share current good practice and to assist the college in planning for the future.

Standards

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

23 Overall, learners' standards of achievement in the sessions inspected are as follows:

Learners' standards of achievement	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
	58%	42%	0%	0%	0%

- 24 All learners achieve very high standards of work across a range of courses and levels. Learners on the offender management programme produce outstanding work. Learners on counselling courses develop good specialist skills in areas such as substance misuse, adolescent counselling and bereavement counselling. Learners who work with Powys Dance demonstrate very good standards at Entry level and Level 1.
- 25 Overall, completion and attainment rates are outstanding. Learner attainment is significantly well above national comparators in all learning areas. The average attainment rate across all subjects is 92%. Learner attainment rates on offender management programmes are exceptional. Over the past two years, the attainment rate for this provision is at 100%.
- 26 All learners make good or very good use of their individual learning plans. All learners use their plans well to record their abilities at the start of their course and to identify what they would like to learn. Learners monitor their progress towards their learning goals on a regular basis very well. This enables them to understand how well they are doing.
- 27 All learners keep a record of their very good progress in files and portfolios. These are of very high quality. Many learners use these files as working documents. They use them well as a point of reference when working on new units. This means that learners retain their knowledge well.
- 28 All learners discuss with their tutor what they have already learnt and what they plan to do next. Learners who have not taken advantage of learning opportunities in the past now take ownership of their learning. All learners on the offender management programme submit portfolios of their work. They receive a certificate to confirm their achievements. In many cases, this is the first time that these learners have received an award for their achievements. This increases their motivation and sense of self-worth.
- 29 Many learners in Powys Dance classes make very good progress. These learners include people with additional needs and their carers. They build on what they learn and create their own dance patterns and sequences. A few learners make good enough progress to move from Entry Level to Level 1 work.

- 30 Learners on Welsh for Adults courses use their language skills well without prompting from the tutor. In one second year beginners' class, learners use an extensive range of language patterns and vocabulary to maintain the use of Welsh throughout the session. One learner has begun to use his Welsh language skills to speak to first language Welsh speakers on a building site where he works.
- 31 All learners are highly motivated and very enthusiastic about their learning. They are very proud of their work. In many cases, learners use their skills to benefit their communities. Learners on the offender management programme produce very good quality artefacts. These are often bought and displayed by local authorities and other public bodies. Learners take pleasure in seeing their work on show in public places. Learners in dance sessions produce dance programmes at community venues and invite members of the public to their performances. Learners in counselling courses use their improved counselling skills to work as volunteers in a range of organisations.
- 32 Many learners increase their confidence by attending classes. In many cases this enables them to participate effectively in the development of their communities.

The YMCA College empowers learners to work within their own communities

Learners in North Wales work well with the college's partner Sylfaen Cymunedol Cyf. All learners come from isolated groups and communities. Many learners have had a long gap in their learning and lack confidence. By attending a confidence building course they gain skills to become more active in their communities. They develop their own very good community development skills. A group of learners recently used their skills to seek out additional funding to improve services in their local community. As a consequence, the community has benefited from a £250,000 children's nursery. The nursery is now run as a community enterprise.

- 33 Overall, attendance patterns are very good. In almost all cases, when learners cannot attend they let their tutor know. The 79% attendance seen during this inspection is good. The average attendance recorded during other ACL inspections in this cycle is 75%.

The quality of education and training

Key Question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

The quality of teaching in the learning areas inspected	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
	58%	42%	0%	0%	0%

34 The quality of teaching, training and assessment is good or outstanding across the provision.

35 All tutors work very well with learners to establish outstanding working relationships. They create very good, supportive learning environments for their learners. Many tutors are very effective in helping vulnerable learners to overcome poor learning experiences and to develop a more positive attitude towards education. This helps learners to achieve well.

Outstanding tutoring skills which help offenders to improve their education

Tutors who deliver the offender management programme also work as supervisors for the National Probation Services for Wales. These tutors apply the training they receive from the YMCA college and the probation service very well to provide the right level of tuition for a specialist group of learners. These tutors use a very wide range of methods and resources which help individual learners move on in small steps, appropriate to their need. They help learners to develop their basic skills well, alongside their vocational skills.

These tutors have outstanding success in motivating their learners to achieve. They provide learners with the right level of challenge. They support their learners to grow and to succeed. Learner attainment on these courses is outstanding.

36 All tutors prepare very good schemes of work and lesson plans. They consider the needs of their learners well in planning their lessons. Tutors manage their sessions very well and ensure that all learners, including the most nervous, participate well. Tutors are good at maintaining the right level of teaching support so that they can move individual learners on at the learner's pace. By slowly increasing learners' knowledge and carefully developing their skills, tutors develop learners' confidence in learning well. When learners are ready, tutors increase the pace of learning and learners move on to other courses. By planning and delivering the learning in this way tutors enable learners to increase their confidence and take responsibility for their own learning.

37 All tutors provide the appropriate level of challenge for their learners. Most sessions have good variety and pace. Tutors use a very good range of teaching methods to maintain the interest of learners. They use good role-play, group discussion, demonstration and good questioning to engage and include learners.

- 38 All tutors make good or very good use of teaching resources. Many tutors create their own very good teaching materials and they also plan very good practical tasks for their learning groups. Tutors also make good use of the college's website to access standardised learning and assessment materials.
- 39 Many tutors provide good additional opportunities for learners to extend and use their skills outside the session. One Welsh for adults tutor arranges regular visits to a Welsh-medium club. The same tutor has also helped to set up a library in an isolated village which provides learners with additional resources. Counselling tutors use their experience and knowledge well to support their learners to find volunteering opportunities.
- 40 All tutors make very good use of individual learning plans to set out learners' personal objectives at the start of the course. Tutors refer to these plans regularly throughout the course. This ensures that all work is relevant to learners' individual needs.
- 41 All tutors ensure that learners have good and appropriate opportunities to attain credit. Tutors are very skilled at recognising learners' achievements and encouraging learners to turn those achievements into the attainment of credit. Tutors in Powys Dance offer a wide range of courses at Entry Level. These tutors work very well to identify those able to progress to Level 1 courses.
- 42 All tutors provide learners with good and regular feedback that helps them improve. Where homework is set, tutors give very good evaluative written feedback.

Key Question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
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- 43 College managers plan the curriculum very well to ensure that many courses target under-represented groups. They ensure that the curriculum has a strong and appropriate link to the college mission. They work very well with specialist partners across Wales to reach individuals and communities who generally do not participate in education.
- 44 Learners benefit from a good and diverse range of courses that are suited to their needs. Often, the college provides specialist courses for groups such as with offenders and reluctant learners. In almost all cases, the college makes sure that its provision does not duplicate what is already available for learners in their community.
- 45 Through its work with the National Probation Services for Wales, the college is able to provide learning opportunities for offenders serving a community punishment sentence. Many of these learners have low aspirations and do not want to learn. By joining a college course, these learners increase their confidence and self-worth.
- 46 The college responds appropriately to the bilingual needs of learners. There are good opportunities for learners to use their Welsh language skills in community development courses in North Wales. A few learners on offender management programmes in Ceredigion and in North Wales choose to study through the medium

of Welsh. There are limited opportunities for learners to undertake IT courses through the medium of Welsh. The college has a very good partnership with representatives from the voluntary youth sector. This helps the college to provide courses to increase the number of youth workers able to train other youth workers through the medium of Welsh. There are good opportunities for learners in Cardiff's Chinese community to learn new skills through Cantonese. The college is working well with its partners to develop new opportunities for learners to learn new skills through British Sign Language.

- 47 All learners have a good or very good learning experience that enriches their lives. Learners on many courses learn about their local communities, Welsh history and traditions whilst gaining new skills. For example, learners on the offender management programme in Cardiff learnt about crafting Welsh lovespoons. Learners on an email and internet course used their new skills to find out information about events in their local community.
- 48 There are good progression opportunities for learners. All learners receive good information about further learning opportunities available to them. The college provides this information through good, course-specific flow charts. These charts provide excellent information about sideways progression opportunities as well as progression on to higher level courses. The college also promotes learning opportunities available through other education providers as well as its own provision.
- 49 There is an appropriate range of accreditation opportunities for almost all learners. Learners on counselling courses access specialist Open College Network units. These units include substance misuse counselling, bereavement counselling and counselling adolescents. Many learners add these specialist skills courses to their main counselling qualifications. Learners on youth work 'train the trainer' courses gain City and Guilds qualifications which are appropriate to their work. Many learners on offender management programmes receive certificates to recognise their achievements.
- 50 The college is active and effective in supporting education for sustainable development. All learners, tutors and stakeholders receive good information about sustainability on a regular basis through the college newsletter. Learners on offender management programmes regularly recycle materials to produce and sell very high quality items such as garden ornaments and lovespoons.
- 51 Many learners become tutors for the college. This not only develops the learners but increases the college's capacity to deliver courses.

Learners become tutors, building capacity for the learner and the college

A Welsh speaking learner joined a confidence building class in North Wales. After completing the course successfully, the college encouraged the learner to become a tutor for the same type of course. This learner is now a tutor and also delivers the course bilingually. The college is successful in developing the individual and its own capacity to provide bilingual learning.

- 52 The college has very effective partnerships across Wales. Although the college works well with a small number of partners in north and west Wales, there are not enough opportunities for learners to benefit from the college's outstanding work beyond south-east Wales.

Key Question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

- 53 The quality of care and support for all learners is very good. There are good, clear procedures and guidance for tutors to support learners with additional learning needs. The college has produced a good additional learning support guide. This gives tutors good guidance on how to support learners with visual, hearing and mobility impairments and dyslexia. All tutors adapt their learning resources well to meet the needs of their learners. For example, they use information in the guide to design worksheets with clear fonts and layouts for learners with dyslexia.
- 54 The college has a good structure in place for tutors to secure additional support for their learners. Tutors know how to request additional support from college managers for their learners when it is required. Managers respond quickly and effectively when tutors identify an additional need. Learners with visual impairments on a counselling course make good use of specialist computer software. Large screen monitors are available for learners in IT sessions and learners with hand mobility problems benefit from the provision of tracker balls. Senior managers have recently introduced procedures to monitor the take up of learner support in order to extend good practice in this area.
- 55 Tutors make extensive use of learners' individual learning plans. Tutors and learners use these plans very effectively both for accredited and non-accredited learning to record learners' needs. Tutors use enrolment forms, individual learning plans and evaluation forms very well to help them understand their learners' additional needs and to provide appropriate support to help them learn. However, a few learners do not always have appropriate support to develop their basic skills.
- 56 Tutors provide a supportive learning environment. They know their learners well and offer them good informal support. The college provides learners with very good information about the support available to them. All learners have information about the college's health and safety, equal opportunities and vulnerable adults policies. The college has good arrangements in place to help learners pay for crèche facilities for their children.
- 57 Tutors and senior managers monitor attendance effectively and tutors are aware of the reasons for learner absences. In almost every case, learners tell their tutors if they will miss a class. The college has a very good system to follow up learner absences. As a result, overall, learner attendance is very good. In the few cases where learners withdraw from courses, the college has a good system to identify why learners have not completed their course. This helps college managers to identify areas where support and initial guidance needs to be improved.

- 58 Managers communicate information about support procedures very successfully to all staff through staff meetings, training events, observations and via the college website. The website and college newsletter are of high quality and are excellent tools for providing guidance and support. They effectively inform learners and tutors about courses provided and give very useful links to sources of support, including financial assistance. The college website provides clear and direct links to Careers Wales guidance.
- 59 The college has a good Equal Opportunities Policy which sets out its commitment to promoting diversity, inclusivity and positive race relations. The college welcomes learners with disabilities and responds well to their needs. All tutors have a good checklist which they use well to ensure that their sessions are inclusive.

Effective inclusive learning

Tutors in Powys Dance are also professional dancers. They work very skilfully with a group of learners with additional learning needs. Tutors manage their sessions very well and ensure that all learners are included in the activities. They work in more than one language. These include Welsh, English, British Sign Language and Makaton¹.

Many carers attend these sessions. Tutors give their own time to run a course to help carers participate in sessions. The carers learn how to work alongside the tutors safely with those in their care. Carers also develop their own dance skills and have become learners themselves. The tutors build both the confidence and the dance skills of all the learners very well.

- 60 There is a very good staff training programme to raise tutors' awareness of support issues such as equal opportunities, health and safety, 'Giving Advice to Learners', deaf awareness and first aid. As a result, tutors are confident and effective when providing learners with advice and guidance. It also means that learners receive good support from their tutor.
- 61 The college has appropriate policies in place for the protection of children and vulnerable adults.
- 62 The college works very well with its partners such as Sylfaen Cymunedol Cyf and Powys Dance to make sure that all learners receive the right level of support from the first day learners start of their course. In particular, college managers work well with tutors and managers from the National Probation Services for Wales to ensure that learners on the offender management programme have appropriate support. As a consequence, learner outcomes on these programmes are very good. The college also works well with the Deaf Association Wales to increase learning opportunities using British Sign Language.

¹ The Makaton vocabulary uses signs, symbols and speech to develop communication skills in children and adults with communication and learning difficulties. Signs from British Sign Language (BSL), matched to Makaton words and concepts, are used in spoken and written word order and do not follow BSL grammar as used by deaf people.

Leadership and management

Key Question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

- 63 The college has a clear mission statement. Leaders and managers are very good at communicating the mission to staff and stakeholders. All staff understand the mission well and are committed to it. The college sets up partnerships in line with its mission. College managers regularly review partnerships to make sure that they continue to match the college's purpose.
- 64 The college meets its aims and objectives very well by targeting groups who are under-represented in learning such as offenders and learners from disadvantaged communities.
- 65 The college has very good processes in place for strategic and operational planning. These plans are effective in setting the direction of the organisation and contain enough detail for managers to monitor progress. There are good systems in place for managers to review progress.
- 66 College managers have successfully set up purposeful partnerships with a range of organisations at local and national level. The college works well with the Welsh Assembly Government and national voluntary youth organisations to deliver training to youth workers in line with the Extending Entitlement² policy initiative. The college is very successful in delivering learning to offenders as part of Joining Together in Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy to reduce re-offending. It works successfully with the four regions of the National Probation Services for Wales to secure a wide range of learning opportunities for offenders. The college also works well to deliver ICT learning to older learners from the Chinese Community in Cardiff as part of the Older People's strategy³.
- 67 Overall, the college takes good account of the priorities of each of the four Welsh Assembly Government's regional statements of need and priority in their planning. However, the college does not have strong enough links to the national strategy for basic skills through basic skills networks.
- 68 Senior managers use data very well to analyse learner outcomes. They compare the performance of individual courses with each other and with overall college benchmarks. They identify strengths and weaknesses at programme and course level well and set targets for improvement. They make good use of data about learners to analyse progression to higher levels of learning or to different courses at the same level. This helps managers plan to make sure that learners can move on to learning which is appropriate to their needs.

² Extending Entitlement is a Welsh Assembly Government policy which sets out the framework for the provision of youth support services in Wales.

³ The Welsh Assembly Government has developed a strategy for older people that was launched in January 2003. It provides a framework for all statutory bodies in Wales to plan for an ageing society and improve services for older people.

- 69 Senior managers work very well with tutors to help them collect and analyse data about completion and attainment for each of their courses and compare outcomes to the overall college benchmarks. This helps tutors to have a good understanding of how well their learners are achieving and what they can do to improve outcomes for learners.

The whole college works to improve its performance

The college has very good procedures for reporting on performance. Managers compare the performance of courses with both national comparators and the outcomes of similar courses run by the Workers Educational Association (S). This helps the college understand better how well they perform against the national picture. It also helps the college to compare its performance with a similar organisation. As a result, managers are able to identify and act on areas for improvement.

- 70 Senior managers make good use of data about learners to consider how many men, women and learners from ethnic communities go to classes. They use this information well to monitor progress against targets for widening participation and to set targets for new work.
- 71 The college has very good procedures for the performance appraisal of all staff. This performance appraisal takes account of monthly supervision records, assessments of teaching and learning and learner outcomes. All staff have personal objectives and understand how they relate to strategic and operational plans well. Senior managers meet tutors regularly in order to make sure they are delivering high quality work and in order to support them. Tutors value this good level of support and deliver high quality teaching and outcomes for learners as a result. As a result of the performance appraisal system staff participate in training to develop their skills in line with the college's strategic and operational objectives.
- 72 Current arrangements for governance are effective in ensuring high standards of management and financial accounting. However, governors do not currently consider enough detailed information about outcomes for learners, the quality of teaching and the outcomes of course reviews, on a regular basis, to gain a full understanding of how well the college is performing.

Key Question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

- 73 The college has a very effective and thorough quality assurance system. The system allows leaders and managers to step in early on to improve the quality of teaching and learning if standards fall below the quality threshold. All tutors have a very clear understanding of the system. All staff work very well together to bring about improvement. The college has a robust system of classroom observations carried out by senior managers and tutors. All tutors are observed on each course they teach. This means that many tutors are observed several times in a year. They receive good and regular feedback on their performance.

- 74 The self-assessment process is systematic and draws on a very wide range of evidence to measure performance against the seven key questions in Estyn's Common Inspection Framework. This process has helped the college re-evaluate what it offers to learners in order to deliver its mission.
- 75 The college has an excellent system to consult learners, tutors and partners about their views on the quality of the provision. Managers make very good use of the feedback received. They use the website very effectively to publish their responses to this feedback. Stakeholders can see how the college will improve quality where it identifies shortcomings. The college has made very good use of the Welsh Assembly Government's Quality Improvement Fund to develop this system.

Good action planning leads to improvement in the delivery of a key part of the college's mission

Through its annual self-assessment exercise the college identified the need to improve the implementation of equal opportunities policies. The college wanted to make sure that its policies had a good effect on learners. The college ran a well attended staff training event on equal opportunities. All staff contributed well to the event and the college published the actions it will take in response to issues raised by the staff. As a result, tutors now have a simple but comprehensive checklist to help them ensure that they are not excluding any learners. The success of this can be seen in classes such as counselling and IT.

- 76 The college's self-assessment report is honest, self-critical and evaluative. It identifies similar issues to those highlighted by Estyn. However, inspectors awarded higher grades than the provider for all but one key question. The grade match between Estyn grades for teaching and learning and the college graded observations is very good. The self-assessment report was written several months ago. The college has already responded to many of the shortcomings it identified. This demonstrates the strength of the quality assurance system in place and the responsiveness of the organisation.
- 77 The college involves stakeholders well in contributing to the self-assessment report. It invites all partners, its governing body and 20% of the part-time tutors to give feedback on the draft self-assessment report. Tutors' contributions add first hand evidence about their groups to the report and tutors involved in this process play an important part in improving quality in the college.
- 78 Members of the senior management team understand their areas of responsibility very well. They use the self-assessment process effectively to identify action points from the self-assessment report, the strategic plan and operational plans. Most of the targets linked to action points are specific, measurable, achievable, resourced and timely (SMART) although a few action points in the quality development plan are not specific enough.
- 79 The college has an excellent system to regularly review its progress against its action points. It uses a shared, progress document to achieve this. The senior management or administration team member responsible for the action point regularly updates this document with information about the progress made. As a

consequence, staff know how well the organisation is progressing against its action points.

- 80 Internal moderation processes are very good. Open College Network (OCN) Cymru assessors meet once a term to maintain and improve quality. Learners are involved in the internal moderation so that they can understand the process. External moderation reports recognise the high quality of the college's OCN moderation process. As a consequence of this exemplary high quality, OCN Cymru has asked the college to act as a quality reference centre.
- 81 The college uses data very effectively to set challenging but achievable completion and attainment targets. It uses an outstanding system to enable tutors to reflect on their individual course data and compare it with overall college targets for retention and attainment. This is a part of tutors' preparation for appraisal and allows tutors to take ownership of their data. This also enables tutors to contribute to the overall college improvement of retention and attainment rates.
- 82 The YMCA Community College has made very good progress against the recommendations made in previous Adult Community Learning inspection reports.

Key Question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
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- 83 The college employs well qualified staff who have good subject knowledge. Many of the tutors observed have appropriate teaching qualifications. The remaining staff are working towards a teaching award.
- 84 There is an appropriate staffing structure in place. Managers regularly review job descriptions and all staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. There are good arrangements in place for covering tutor absences. All tutors observed have a recent Criminal Records Bureau check.
- 85 The college works well with its partners to make the most effective use of resources. It works well with partners to prepare joint bids for additional funding to benefit learners. Through working in partnership the college has secured additional Welsh Assembly Government funding through the Common Investment Fund and the Quality Improvement Fund. These funds have enabled the college to develop a learner satisfaction toolkit to improve the quality of feedback received from learners.
- 86 The college makes good use of its resources. The college is good at recognising opportunities to buy specialist services, such as payroll facilities from other providers. It also has very good arrangements in place with its partners to use specialist staff from other organisations very effectively to deliver many courses. Examples include the good partnership work with Youth Cymru to deliver part-time youth worker training and the use of workshop supervisors employed by the National Probation Services for Wales to deliver the offender management programme.
- 87 The college works well with partner organisations to produce very good teaching and learning materials. The college has developed very good literacy workbooks for use

with learners on the offender management programme. These are used to deliver basic skills to learners on vocational courses. The workbooks are linked to national basic skills levels. A few workbooks are available in Welsh. The college is currently working closely with OCN Cymru and the Deaf Association Wales to develop good online learning materials in simplified language and BSL. In a few cases, there are good learning materials available in Welsh and Cantonese.

- 88 The college offers a very good staff development programme. Almost all staff are able to access a wide range of courses. These include first aid, using PowerPoint, using the internet and working with visually impaired learners. Training documents produced for staff are attractive and give good, clear information. These benefit staff as they are easy to use. However, tutors based in North Wales do not always benefit enough from this provision.
- 89 The college makes very good use of accommodation that partners have to offer. It also uses other community venues well. It has an effective policy to ensure that it pays a very small fee for venue hire. This enables the college keeps its costs to a minimum.
- 90 Overall, accommodation is fit for purpose and meets the needs of learners. The college applies its own good standards to make sure that learners with disabilities have access to venues. Most classes take place near to where people live.
- 91 There are good health and safety and risk assessment procedures in place. All staff carry out risk assessments of venues and activities.
- 92 The college's financial procedures are effective. There are very good, clear criteria in place which senior managers use well to identify spending priorities and allocate resources and funding. The college's financial record keeping is thorough. Managers have very good financial procedures in place. Managers are thorough in their financial planning. However not all management staff are fully involved in financial planning. This means that they do not develop the new skills needed to assist the college in planning for the future.
- 93 Resources are very well matched to the college's priorities for development and to the mission statement. Through careful use of its funds, the college has built up a financial reserve in line with Welsh Assembly Government advice. This enables the head of the college to plan a good exit strategy for the organisation if funding is withdrawn from specific projects.
- 94 Overall, the college provides very good value for money. It uses its resources very effectively to ensure that learners have a good, positive and inclusive learning experience. It responds quickly to recommendations made by external bodies and implements actions effectively. This leads to a culture of continuous improvement. All provision inspected was judged to be good or excellent.

Provider's response to the report findings

YMCA Wales Community College is pleased to receive the findings in the Estyn Report on the quality of adult community-based learning in the institution.

It is most pleasing to note the very good cross-college grading profile with respect to all seven key questions. In particular the College welcomes the report's endorsement of its quality systems, its partnership working practices and the distance it has travelled to improve support for learners.

The recommendations provide guidance on how the College can further improve on its high standards.

Appendix 1

Evidence base of the inspection

The inspection team consisted of HMI and additional inspectors seconded to Estyn.

The team carried out 12 inspection visits and 17 meetings in November and December 2006.

The team visited:

- teaching sessions;
- a variety of learner activities; and
- community venues.

Members of the team had meetings with:

- learners;
- tutors;
- managers;
- the head of the college;
- National Probation Services for Wales representatives;
- National Council of YMCAs of Wales representatives;
- acting chair of the FE Committee of the National Council of YMCAs of Wales;
- Welsh Assembly Government officers; and
- college partners and stakeholders.

The team also considered:

- a wide selection of examples of learners' work; and
- comprehensive documentation made available by the provider, both before and during the inspection.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Mererid Wyn Williams HMI	Reporting Inspector
Enid Hankins HMI	Deputy Reporting Inspector
Liam Kealy HMI	Team Inspector
Carolyn Currie HMI	Team Inspector
Zena Cooper AI	Team Inspector
Angharad Reed AI	Team Inspector
Sarah Lewis AI	Team Inspector
Nicola Campbell	Provider nominee