

CF 18

Ymchwiliad i dlodi yng Nghymru: Cymunedau yn Gyntaf – yr hyn a ddysgwyd

Inquiry into poverty in Wales: Communities First – lessons learnt

Ymateb gan: Addysg Oedolion Cymru

Response from: Adult Learning Wales

Response to Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

Inquiry into poverty in Wales: Communities First – lessons learnt

Date: 19/05/2017

- **The Organisation**

1. Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales is the result of a merger between WEA Cymru and YMCA Wales Community College in August 2015 to form the largest all-Wales provider of, and voluntary movement for, adult learning. It brings together two high profile and high performing institutions with a national outlook. Last year, the organisation engaged with 18,000 learners, 54% of whom were in the top four deciles of deprivation (according to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation).
2. In 2015-2016, 39% of our overall learners were engaged on courses running in Communities First areas, with over 86% achieving a successful outcome such as a qualifications or accredited unit of learning. During this academic year, 4,937 learners from Communities First areas have engaged to date, equating to 10,462 enrolments, of which over 90% have been successful in achieving an accredited outcome.
3. The organisation provides access to education from entry level units to basic skills qualifications as well as qualifications at CQFW (Credit and Qualification Framework for Wales) levels two and three for adults from all backgrounds, but with a particular focus on those who have missed out on learning or for those who need a second chance. Specialising in providing learning opportunities in the community and in the workplace, the organisation works in partnership with local, regional and national bodies in the statutory, private and third sectors.

- **Terms of Reference**

4. ***What worked and didn't work about the Communities First programme***

5. Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales has worked for several years with a number of individual clusters to varying degrees across Wales to provide educational courses, engagement activities and training to upskill Communities First staff. Our curriculum provision has increased in response to the Communities First programme, growing the proportion of learners who have lived in those areas.
6. The range of support and partnership work has varied from cluster to cluster. Where partnership arrangements worked well, there were effective staff who were keen to work with Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales, who recognised and understood the potential of adult education to help meet their aims and co-operated enthusiastically to make things work.

7. Collaborative working has enabled the effective recruitment activities and engagement of learners (who we may not have been able to engage with otherwise), the provision of free venues, crèche and childcare provision and Communities First hubs provided an opportunity to meet and work with other organisations.
8. An example of effective partnership working with Communities First includes the provision of a 'Pathway to Construction' course, which was run in partnership with Communities First, offering learners the opportunity to gain recognised qualifications in Health and Safety, and First Aid for example, as well as having the opportunity to visit construction sites which in turn enabled them to gain their CSCS card. On completion, the learners were fully prepared to apply for opportunities and work within the Construction industry. This programme was developed in response to regional needs as identified by the North Wales Economic Board's priorities for the region.
9. Opportunities which have enabled learner to progress to Further Education have been successfully provided through partnership working. For example, in partnership with Communities First in North East Wales, an Access to Further Education course is delivered, which offers Communities First learners the opportunity to move onto Further Education and a level 4 Counselling programme, enabling learners the opportunity to progress from Foundation to a Level 4 Diploma.
10. However, in a number of clusters, it has been difficult to establish a similar level of collaboration and there has been a lack of interest in engaging with Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales or its legacy organisations. Therefore it would be justifiable to comment that there could have been a more effective steer to Communities First partnerships about the importance of working with organisations such as ourselves.
11. In best practice models, the strategic objectives of the Communities First programme have been successful in creating closer communities, stronger communities and healthier communities. Engagement and trust has been established between learners, communities, Communities First clusters and Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales as a direct result of close and effective partnership working and co-investment, which has been evident with learners engaging and participating in programmes of learning.
12. Where Communities First clusters have been most effective, they have recognised the needs of their potential learners and have supported them with free training opportunities to be able to build their skills and access employment, developing their confidence and encouraging them to be financially independent and active citizens within their community.

13. How local authorities will decide which projects continue to receive funding after June 2017

14. Our view is that this should be based on a proven track record of achieving successful outcomes, examples of good practice and case studies which clearly evidence the positive impact of the Communities First clusters within local authorities.
15. Models that have worked especially well are those that have involved a wide range of partners using co-production and co-investment to deliver successful outcomes to learners and their communities. For example, the Volunteering As A Route To Employment (VARTE) project in partnership with Communities First and local employers within Blaenau Gwent provided learners with essential work related education in order for them to progress into volunteering and employment.
16. Other examples of good practice involve collaboration with Rhondda Cynon Taff Adult Community Learning service and Communities First to provide bespoke training for businesses within the local authority.
17. A successful film making project with Communities First West cluster in Swansea, arts charity LOCWS international and Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales culminated in a successful film festival in July 2016.
18. Recognition of those projects which have invested in providing activities and resources for communities, which have created independent, self-directed, active citizens.
19. A consultation exercise to identify best practice models and recognise all learning providers and their scope to deliver educational programmes of learning within local authorities should be undertaken. This would better ensure that those projects which receive funding are the most effective at delivering key government priorities and strategic objectives through a multi-agency collaborative approach, which has the greatest impact on the communities they serve.

20. How different poverty reduction programmes (Communities for Work, Lift, Flying Start etc.) will change as a result of the end of Communities First

21. Significant loss of tacit knowledge and experienced engagement staff within Communities First who are successful at referring to other poverty reduction programmes.

22. Reduced opportunities to work collaboratively across multi-agencies with a focus on poverty reduction through education and specialist support for those individuals most in need across local authorities.
23. Reduced support for individuals and communities across Wales.
24. More ground work will have to be undertaken by other programmes to engage people, which takes time and in turn could hamper their ability to meet targets and outcomes and which could affect future funding.

Response submitted on behalf of Addysg Oedolion Cymru | Adult Learning Wales