



Case study

# Adult Community Learning Partnerships Tool for Effective Practice and Delivery

## Effective Practice Vignettes: Adult Learning Wales

### Supporting progression

Scroll to Explore ↓





## Summary

Adult Learning Wales has strengthened its approach to analysing learner data, to gain a clearer understanding of learner journeys. Although still at an early stage, the work is already informing the development of new progression pathways from non-accredited to accredited provision and enabling improved progression advice and guidance for learners on non-accredited programmes.

## About the organisation


Adult Learning Wales (ALW) is unique in Wales, as a designated Further Education Institution with a mission to deliver adult learning across Wales. ALW is a delivery partner within each of the Adult Community Learning Partnerships and is a strategic partner in many of these.

## The challenge it faced

ALW was aware that progression routinely appears as a recommendation in Estyn inspection reports of ACL Partnerships, it had long been identified as a key area of development and features prominently within the organisation's Quality Development Plan. In 2024, as part of the annual self-evaluation cycle, the operational management team came together to review this area in more depth.

One Regional Manager had recently been involved in the inspection of Conwy & Denbighshire ACL Partnership and worked alongside Grŵp Llandrillo Menai, who had completed detailed work analysing progression data within the Partnership. This prompted ALW to consider what similar analysis might look like for its own national context.

ALW's 2025 inspection report included the recommendation to strengthen advice and guidance on progression pathways across non-accredited provision for learners, and this provided a further spur to prioritise it as a strategic priority for action and development.

A woman with glasses and a polka-dot top is speaking at a conference. She is gesturing with her hands. In the background, another woman with glasses and a dark blazer is standing. The image has a purple and blue gradient overlay.

As a national adult learning provider, Adult Learning Wales was keen to be able to **demonstrate clearly that learners were progressing through levels**, and from non-accredited to accredited learning.



## Effective practice response

As part of its self-assessment process, ALW used their Management Information System (MIS) data to identify learners who had enrolled over the previous four years. Curriculum managers were then able to use this data to track returning learners and analyse patterns of progression.

The data for 2023-24 showed that 37 per cent of learners had previously been enrolled with ALW. When the MIS team drilled down further into levels of study, analysis revealed that 51 per cent of returning learners were studying at the same level as before. This finding provided a clear starting point for further investigation.

The data was then analysed at a more granular level, first by sector subject area (SSA) and then by individual programme. These results were reviewed by the Curriculum and Quality team to understand the context behind the figures.

This deeper analysis helped identify SSAs where learners appeared to remain at the same or a lower level, but also highlighted where this was often entirely appropriate. For example, in Building and Construction (SSA 5), learners funded through the Personal Learning Account often complete multiple courses at the same level but in different occupational areas. In Trade Union Education (SSA 15), many learners appropriately undertake multiple level one courses, such as Workplace Representative and Health and Safety Representative training.

Further analysis was carried out in ESOL, where course design varies across regions in response to local need and delivery by other providers. The data initially appeared to suggest low progression rates between levels. However, closer scrutiny showed that learners often progress horizontally across different skills at the same level (for example, completing Speaking and Listening one year, followed by Reading or Writing in subsequent years).

These findings were summarised and included as illustrative examples within ALW's self-evaluation reports. This enabled the organisation to provide assurance to internal and external stakeholders that progression data had been robustly analysed and that the narrative behind the figures was well understood.



Although the methodology is not complex and relies on existing MIS reports, it has enabled ALW to examine progression at programme level and to analyse returning learners year on year using a single dataset. This work will be repeated for the 2024–25 data once it has been verified in Spring 2026, ensuring progression analysis remains an integral part of the annual self-evaluation process.

The findings are also informing wider development work, including mapping learning and progression pathways across accredited provision. In parallel, ALW has developed a digital brochure structured around subject areas, visually setting out progression pathways into and through accredited learning. For example, in British Sign Language, the pathway shows progression from taster sessions and non-accredited short courses through Agored Cymru unitised provision, and on to Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications accredited by Signature.

This work remains ongoing, with the next phase focusing more explicitly on learner progression from non-accredited entry points and exploring whether learners are progressing as intended in different curriculum areas.

## How it has made a difference

This work has enabled ALW to strengthen its learning and progression pathways and to develop a clearer organisational understanding of learner journeys. While the work is still evolving, it is already helping to address the Estyn recommendation around improving progression advice and guidance for learners on non-accredited programmes by providing clearer “line of sight” for learners to the available opportunities.

Analysing data on returning learners has supported the development of new accredited opportunities and clearer accredited pathways, as well as improved signposting to other providers and organisations where this better meets learners’ needs. The findings are informing course design, identifying gaps where new pathways are required, and clarifying appropriate routes beyond ALW provision.

The work is also helping to prioritise funding decisions and inform thinking around the use of alternative funding sources, including full cost recovery, ensuring maximum benefit is derived from public funding. It provides leaders with greater confidence that progression data is being scrutinised effectively and used purposefully to inform planning and improvement.