



Case study

# Adult Community Learning Partnerships Tool for Effective Practice and Delivery

## Effective Practice Vignettes: North East Wales ACL Partnership

### Using data to track progression and impact.

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DCiO Gogledd Ddwyrain Cymru  
North East Wales ACL





## Summary

The North East Wales ACL Partnership has adopted Upshot, a data monitoring and evaluation system, as the management information system (MIS) for provision funded through its community learning grant. This new approach provides robust data on patterns of engagement and progression, significantly enhancing the Partnership's planning, performance monitoring, and strategic reporting capabilities.

## About the Partnership

The North East Wales Partnership was established in April 2021 with the merger of Flintshire County Council and Wrexham County Borough Council's ACL Partnerships. It delivers a diverse curriculum including Family Learning and Essential Skills, aligned to local economic and wellbeing priorities. The majority of delivery is sub-contracted to Groundwork North Wales through a procurement model. In addition to the two lead partners and Groundwork, the Partnership has a wide membership which includes representatives from Adult Learning Wales, Coleg Cambria, the Department for Work and Pensions, Communities for Work, and a range of service providers and voluntary sector organisations delivering health and wellbeing support.

## The challenge it faced

Previously the Partnership relied on data generated through LLWR, with its MIS being maintained and hosted by Coleg Cambria. However, this did not provide the kind of insights that the Partnership needed to inform effective planning and development. In particular, it offered limited analytical capability to produce robust evidence on learner progression and patterns of reach and engagement in priority areas.



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## Effective practice response

The Partnership acquired Upshot in April 2024. At the same time, it agreed to invest in a data analyst to oversee its implementation and maximise the benefits it delivers, and this has been critical to its success. Providers upload learner details onto the system and quality assurance, analysis and reporting are carried out centrally. As it is still early days, work is on-going to understand the full range of insights that the data can provide.

Upshot can capture a wide range of information such as initial contact; referrals in and out; initial assessments; session attendance; engagement levels; and progression. It includes functionality to:

- Track learner journeys and progression from the first point of contact.
- Create timelines of activity for individual learners, giving tutors and managers a clear view of the sequence and duration of all learning and support engagements.
- Map provision geographically (with Welsh Indices of Multiple Deprivation overlays) to show where learners are, density of learning activity and gaps.
- Conduct learner surveys.

Although Upshot is widely used in youth services, its application in adult learning is relatively innovative, so the Partnership has funded some bespoke adaptations. Data sharing between partners is supported through long-standing information sharing protocols and secure systems. For example, Egress is used to share sensitive data such as learners' personal details.

Nonetheless, the process for ensuring compliance with GDPR has been substantial, due in particular to the complexity of migrating such a large volume of data from the old system to Upshot. The Partnership also identified how Upshot's data sharing capability could be improved to reflect best practice in relation to GDPR, and has worked with Upshot to develop new, enhanced functionality.

Upshot has an initial set-up fee and annual maintenance charge, which have been funded from the two lead partners' community learning grant allocations.



## How it has made a difference

For the first time, the Partnership has reliable data on both new learners entering the system and the progression of existing learners within its provision and has the freedom to explore its own data. It is gaining a better understanding of the learning delivered through the Partnership and is able to do more effective and critical self-evaluation of its provision. The data generated through Upshot supports the ACL contract manager for the Partnership to have meaningful conversations with providers about who they are reaching, what difference they are making, gaps and unmet needs.

While recognising that statistical data alone does not provide the whole picture, the Partnership sees the new system as key to enabling a strategic shift towards evidence-based, collaborative curriculum planning. For example, partners can drill down into the data to identify the number of Welsh speakers accessing learning in a particular area and understand where there is potential to develop more Welsh-medium provision.

As Upshot becomes embedded into its ways of working, the Partnership intends to use it to further strengthen its approach to collecting and analysing learner data. For instance, it will be able to do learner voice surveys quickly, and to capture data on the wider outcomes of learning such as improved confidence and wellbeing that learners currently record on individual learning plans.

In addition, it is anticipated that the evidence generated through Upshot will enhance the Partnership's ability to make the case for ACL by demonstrating the returns it delivers for relatively modest funding and showing how it contributes to the local authorities' wider strategic priorities.