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Final Evaluation of the Leadership and Management Wales (LMW) Centre for Excellence

Executive Summary

1. About LMW

- 1.1 The Leadership and Management Wales Centre for Excellence (LMW) forms part of the Enhancing Leadership and Management Skills (ELMS) Programme funded by the Welsh Government and the European Social Fund (ESF).
- 1.2 The ELMS programme consisted of a number of discrete leadership and management training interventions and was originally intended to run for six years between 2009 and 2015. However a decision was taken by the Welsh Government to withdraw it in 2014 more than a year earlier than planned.
- 1.3 LMW is a parallel service to ELMS delivered under contract by a consortium led by Cardiff University. It does not itself deliver training in leadership and management but acts as a central hub for businesses and individuals, providing up to date leadership and management research and signposting them to the most appropriate provision. LMW also provides expert advice and challenge to the delivery of leadership and management training in Wales.

2. LMW evaluation

- 2.1 Old Bell 3 Ltd. in association with York Consulting LLP and IFF Research Ltd. was commissioned by the Welsh Government in May 2012 to undertake a long-term evaluation of ELMS and LMW. A stand-alone evaluation report of the impact and effectiveness of LMW was published in 2013 with the recommendation that 'there is sufficient justification to recommend that the Welsh Government extends the contract for LMW to 2015, tying it in with the timeframe for delivery of ELMS'. Separate interim and update evaluation reports on ELMS have also been published.

This final evaluation of LMW has involved reviewing various documents to update the strategic context and evidence base for LMW as well as research material and performance monitoring information supplied by the Centre. It has also involved a series of qualitative interviews with various LMW stakeholders as well as a telephone survey with LMW supported organisations and a web survey of the Centre's eNewsletter recipients.

3. Key findings

- 3.1 In terms of the policy context for LMW, the report finds that there is a more nuanced approach to leadership and management skills in recent Welsh Government policy statements than was the case when ELMS and LMW were originally conceived.
- 3.2 The 2013 Wales Employer Skills Survey shows that relatively little has changed in terms of the demand for, and supply of leadership and management skills compared to the situation reported in our 2013 evaluation.
- 3.3 In-line with its reduced emphasis on leadership and management skills, Welsh Government took a policy decision to withdraw ELMS early in 2014 as part of a phased transition into the priorities for the 2014-2020 EU Structural Fund Programmes. The policy decision to withdraw ELMS fundamentally altered the nature of LMW's service and meant that it became less focused on generating interest in ELMS.
- 3.4 The report finds that LMW has continued to discharge appropriate activity and has supported an appropriate customer base (focused mainly on Welsh SMEs) which has been in-line with its aims and objectives. Where quantifiable targets existed, the evidence shows that LMW has generally succeeded in meeting and in some cases has exceeded these. However, for several of the Centre's objectives, no quantifiable targets existed and little progress had been made in adding specificity to these since our earlier evaluation which also highlighted this issue. The result is that the extent to which LMW's cumulative performance and in particular the level of progression between LMW and other forms of leadership and management training (including ELMS) can be assessed is limited.
- 3.5 There continue to have been a wide range of reasons as to why organisations make contact with LMW. They are most likely to have done so because they were looking to delegate more responsibility within their business and were actively looking for support in doing so. Organisations are most likely to have heard about LMW from proactive approaches by Centre staff including presentations, networking or correspondence.
- 3.6 In terms of the leadership and management events organised by LMW, these have evolved and have been refined since 2013 and the evaluation evidence shows positive feedback from attendees and stakeholders. The survey data shows that most organisations attend LMW events to generate more sales and to network with other businesses.
- 3.7 The majority (90 percent) of the LMW supported organisations that responded to our telephone survey said that they had visited LMW's website, considerably higher than for the previous evaluation. As with the previous evaluation, the main purpose for organisations visiting the website was to access information about forthcoming LMW events. The evaluation evidence shows positive feedback on the website itself.
- 3.8 Consistent with our earlier (2013) evaluation findings, while its reach has been positive (with a recipient database of over 5,000 contacts) the usage and impact of LMW's eNewsletter continues to be modest with this having been a means of keeping in touch rather than influencing behaviour.
- 3.9 In terms of direct advice and guidance services, the report shows evidence of LMW having deployed more of this on a one to one basis for a short period during 2014

(since the withdrawal of ELMS) and that these services had been well received by supported organisations. However, LMW was instructed by Welsh Government not to proactively promote this aspect of its service to avoid confusion with the role of other publicly funded business and skills advisory services. The evaluation report concludes that this reflected a lack of clarity in terms of what LMW's role needed to be post-ELMS.

- 3.10 The report also draws attention to the fact that there had been five different contract managers overseeing LMW's work during a four year period. This contributed to a lack of continuity which has not been efficient for either party and should be a key learning point in terms of how external contracts of this nature are managed by Welsh Government in future.
- 3.11 Since the previous evaluation in 2013, LMW has produced four research papers three of which have been published and the report finds that feedback from stakeholders on these products has been positive. However, the report also finds that opportunities were missed by Welsh Government to involve internal social research colleagues more in setting the research agenda for LMW to help fill specific gaps in knowledge.
- 3.12 The report finds that LMW's work around quality assurance of leadership and management training has been well received by training providers and stakeholders. The Welsh Government could however have made more use of LMW as independent expert advisers on leadership and management, particularly in the early stages of implementing ELMS and approving its courses.
- 3.13 In terms of the effectiveness and impact of the Centre's work, the report finds that while a higher proportion of survey respondents claimed that LMW had affected the degree of importance they attach to leadership and management skills (than in our previous evaluation), the overall proportion was still relatively low at 44 percent.
- 3.14 Less than half (45 percent) of those organisations that progressed from LMW into ELMS attributed this to the Centre's work while 38 percent of the organisations that progressed from LMW into other leadership and management training attributed this to the Centre. This suggests that to a degree, LMW has been working with organisations that were already 'switched on' to leadership and management development rather than those who were arguably in real need of convincing.
- 3.15 In this context, the report concludes that there is little evidence at the macro level to suggest that there has been transformational change and that LMW has been more effective in its work on enhancing awareness, access to and quality of the supply side than it has in terms of affecting attitudes and behaviours in relation to demand.
- 3.16 Finally, in terms of the future, employer evidence reviewed in this evaluation suggests that skills gaps remain around strategic management skills in Wales indicating that the problems and market failures that ELMS/LMW were conceived to address have not been solved. The report concludes that should the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) take forward leadership and management support in 2014-2020, then the constructive lessons learned from the LMW experience should be at the forefront of their minds in terms of packaging 'front of house' information, advice, research and quality assurance services that enhance the overall customer journey.

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Full Research Report: Final Evaluation of the Leadership and Management Wales (LMW)
Centre for Excellence

Available at: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/evaluation-enhancing-leadership-management-skills-programme/?lang=en>

Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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