

London Borough of Hillingdon Adult and Community Learning



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Assessment Information

Assessment Type	Accreditation Review
Assessor's Decision	Standard Met
Assessor's Name	Graham Pickup
Visit Date	22/02/2022 – 24/02/2022
Client ID	C18985
Assessment Reference	PN201070
Continuous Improvement Check Year 1 due by	11/02/2023
Continuous Improvement Check Year 2 due by	11/02/2024
Accreditation Review onsite visit to be conducted by	11/02/2025

Organisation – Introduction, Aims, Objectives and Outcomes

The London Borough of Hillingdon Adult and Community Learning (hereafter referred to as the Service or HACL) is a local authority service that provides training courses for adults, particularly for residents of the Borough, but does provide its services for everyone. The Service operates from five Adult Learning Centres across the Borough and from other outreach sites, such as Children's Centres and Libraries. The courses provided aim to help people to get work or move closer to getting work, personal development including developing skills for independent living and wellbeing, as well as providing courses for people with leisure interests.

The Service is led by the Service Manager, who is supported by two Quality Managers, the Curriculum Development Manager, the ILT Development Manager and the Learner Engagement Officer. The Quality Managers manage the Programme Area Leads (PALs), who manage the Tutor Co-ordinators, who supervise the teams of sessional Tutors and Learner Support Assistants (LSAs). The ILT Development Manager manages the Student Services Manager, who manages the Student Services Officers (SSOs), who work in the daytime, and the Student Services Administrators (SSAs), who work in the evenings.

The Service's vision is that every learner,

'...receives an outstanding learning experience that supports them towards clearly identified and ambitious goals and encourages their economic, social and emotional wellbeing.'

The Service has 7 aims, which are,

- 1. Put learners at the heart of everything we do, providing a safe, purposeful and focused environment in which to learn.*
- 2. Provide consistently outstanding learning opportunities for all residents*
- 3. Increase the engagement of disadvantaged groups and residents from deprived areas in learning*
- 4. Improve the English, maths and digital literacy skills of residents*
- 5. Provide robust and successful vocational and second chance learning opportunities for residents, offering a clear line of sight to work*
- 6. Promote residents health, wellbeing and independent living through bespoke learning opportunities*
- 7. Provide free, high-quality information, advice and guidance for every adult who requests it, whether or not they are enrolled with us.'*

And it has actions identified against each of these areas in its Strategic Action Plan 2020-2023, including these summarised actions, amongst others,

- Developing the reporting to support learner progression.
- Identify learners at risk of not achieving in a timely way to effectively make interventions.
- To develop working with Local Authority partners to extend services provided to residents.
- To build stronger links with employers to support learners with their progression into work.

Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) is provided through the website, including the Careers Advice Hub, other information documentation, by staff at events the Service attends, and at several points in the learner journey with the Service. Staff also provide briefings, online or face to face, for some courses for learners. The SSOs and SSAs provide initial IAG when people first enquire, the

PALs, Tutor Coordinators, and Tutors give IAG at pre-course interviews with potential learners, and Tutors provide IAG throughout the time of the course.

Learners come to the Service through the website, from partner organisations, through events, social media, and word of mouth. The SSO or SSA will take the initial contact, by phone or face to face. They will answer any queries about courses the Service offers, provide information documentation and, where appropriate, book a learner onto an initial assessment. The SSO/SSA will refer a learner to their manager or a PAL if they need more detailed IAG regarding a course they are interested in, and to the National Careers Service if they are looking for more detailed careers advice. For learners who enquire about how they could progress after the course they are doing, the SSO/SSA will refer them to a PAL or Tutor Coordinator for further IAG.

Learners who are looking to take a qualification are required to take an initial assessment to ensure they get onto the right level of course for them. The PAL, Tutor Coordinator or Tutor will have a pre course interview, for courses requiring an initial assessment, to discuss with the learner what options are available to them, to help them choose the right course for them and ensure they are right for the course. The learner is then taken through an induction, when they are informed about how the course will work, what is involved and provided with more detailed information about the course. Any additional support required by the learner will be identified and notified to the Tutor to ensure appropriate support is in place, and a LSA is available if required.

Once a learner has started a course, they will receive IAG from their Tutor through employability sessions, when the learner receives support with their CV, cover letters, job searching, job applications, and interview techniques. The Tutor will refer a learner to the National Careers Service for more in-depth careers advice, and to the Jobs Board for job opportunities. The Tutor develops an Individual Learner Plan (ILP) with the learner, which identifies the learner's goals, and is used to monitor the learner's progress as they go through their course. The ILP is reviewed in Tutorials when the Tutor will discuss their progress with the learner, what progression the learner may be considering, and what options and pathways the learner could consider. The Tutor will signpost the learner to other training providers for courses not provided by the Service. The LSA will have informal IAG conversations with a learner and may help the learner with their research. For more detailed IAG support the LSA will refer the learner to the Tutor or PAL.

The Service monitors its performance at management and staff meetings. It monitors attendance, retention, success rates and achievement rates. In 2021/22 it is aiming to achieve 95% attendance, 95% retention, and between 89% and 92% achievement levels. In 2020/21 it achieved 92% retention, 94% success rates and 86% achievement levels.

The IAG provided to learners supports the Service's performance by initially ensuring that learners go on the right course for them, help them to develop their skills and knowledge, and then help to ensure the learners are clear about the options available to them during, and post their time on their course, thereby helping them make the best decision for their progression. It is felt that the IAG helps to improve attendance and retention, which enables higher success and achievement rates, thereby enabling learners to progress towards their goals more effectively.

The Service aims to help learners develop their soft skills, who reported that they had experienced development of their soft skills during their time with the Service, to enable them to progress towards their goals. Comments received from learners include,

"We talked about how my confidence is improving, which really helps."

"I took the course to change my career, and to help build my confidence, which it did."

"Doing this course has really helped build my confidence to go on to higher qualifications."

“I was advised to do a lower-level course, which was right for me.”

“I am clear about what qualifications I need to get the job I want.”

The Service receives feedback from learners, partner organisations and staff, it also monitors quality of provision as well as monitoring performance as discussed above. From these inputs it identifies areas for development. Examples of changes made include the following: introduction of the pre course briefing sessions to help ensure the learners choose the right course for them; introduction of the ‘long ILP’, which covers multiple courses, enabling staff across different courses to more effectively support a learner towards their goals; the provision of online, face to face or blended learning and support to suit the learner’s preference; and the rotation of SSOs across the different centres to improve their understanding of all areas of the Service, and to improve standardisation of support provided across the centres.

Strengths

Three strengths were identified during the assessment, which are detailed below. The numbers in brackets refer to the element and criteria of the **matrix** Standard.

- The Service runs a Learner Council, which enables learners to have a clear communication link to staff and the senior management of the Service. There are learner representatives from all areas on the Council, which meets regularly to discuss issues the learners wish to raise. Learners, who sit on the Council, reported that they felt it was an effective way for learners to raise issues with the Service management, and that the Service responded quickly and effectively to those issues. (1.7, 4.3)
- The Service continues to have many strong partnerships in the region, including libraries, children's' centres, and schools as well as other service providers such as GPs. This has enabled the Service to maintain delivery throughout the Covid-19 restrictions, and to quickly restart its face to face delivery to people who would otherwise be hard to reach, after the Covid-19 restrictions were relaxed. (1.8)
- Staff are clear about the aims of the Service and how they contribute to those aims. It is also clear that there is a consistent ethos, throughout the Service, of providing friendly support to learners in all areas. Staff reported that they felt they received clear communication from the management and that they are well supported in delivering their roles. This enables them to deliver effectively to the learners, enabling them to progress to their potential. Comments received from learners included,

"My Tutor was really friendly and helped me to gain more confidence."

"The feedback I had from my Tutor really helped my confidence."

"The staff are fantastic and really hold your hand."

"I felt listened to."

"They push you and support you at the same time." (1.2)

Areas for Development

Areas for development are offered in the spirit of continuous improvement and a way for an Assessor to add value e.g., where the service is of a high quality, development areas are offered to help the service be even better than it already is, or to give insight into practices seen elsewhere. There is no correlation between the number of strengths and areas for development. Where development areas are greater in number this is not intended to indicate that the information, advice and guidance service is in any way lacking. These will form the basis for discussion at the Continuous Improvement Checks (CIC) conducted twelve and twenty-four months from the date of this Assessment, along with any other notable developments. The numbers in brackets refer to the element and criteria of the **matrix** Standard.

- The Service has effective quality assurance (QA) processes in place, including observations, standardisation meetings and document reviews, when IAG is covered. It may wish to consider developing an IAG section within the QA processes, to ensure that the IAG provision is covered in all QA meetings and reviews. This may help the Service to identify further areas of development for the IAG provision. (4.5)
- Staff are aware of the value of the IAG provision, and were able to describe several purposes for it, but there was some inconsistency. The Service may wish to consider developing a 'statement of service' for the IAG provision, which would describe the purpose of the IAG provision and what learners can expect to receive from it. This may help to ensure there is a consistent understanding of what the IAG provision aims to help learners achieve, help to ensure learners are clear about the IAG they can expect to receive, and ensure all staff have a consistent understanding of what is expected from them. (3.1)
- The Service uses Volunteers to support learners from the initial assessments to classroom delivery. The Volunteers were able to describe their role and when they needed to refer learners to a member of staff. There were some areas where they had not received training or support and had to 'work it out'. The Service may wish to consider developing a review process for Volunteers, to help identify those areas where Volunteers require some training, and to cover any other issues they may have. This may help to ensure that Volunteers are as fully supported as possible in fulfilling their role. (1.2, 2.4)
- The Service works with learners to help them identify their goals/outcomes, and monitors learner progress regularly. It may wish to consider developing a way to measure learner development in the 'soft skills' included in the ILPs, the Outcome Star is one tool use to do this. For many of the Service's learners, soft skill development is a major outcome for them, and monitoring the development in a more objective way may help learners develop them even more effectively. (1.5, 4.2)
- Some staff have taken IAG courses, and others reported they had attended IAG training sessions in staff meetings. The Service may wish to consider developing regular IAG CPD sessions/workshops for staff. This may help to ensure that staff continue to further strengthen their skills and knowledge of IAG, which may help them to further develop the way they provide IAG to learners. (2.4)

The annual **matrix** Continuous Improvement Check will allow the organisation to demonstrate on an ongoing basis the developments they are continuing to make in order to support individuals. These may include the Areas for Development above. <https://matrixstandard.com/assessment-journey/continuous-improvement-checks/>

Please note that annual Continuous Improvement Checks are mandatory and non-completion within the required timescale will impact on your organisation's accreditation, please see the section Assessment Information for dates.

Methodology

The following methods were used to gather evidence against the **matrix** Standard during the assessment process.

Telephone conversations and emails with the Learner Engagement Officer in preparation for the visit including an understanding of the Service.

Site visit Interviews were held by Google Meet, Teams, and phone.

Staff 20 staff interviews, plus 2 Volunteers.

Clients 21 client interviews.

Partners 3 partner interviews.

Document review including the website, strategic planning documentation, performance monitoring documentation, the IAG policy, learner progress monitoring documentation, and the Self-Assessment Report.

The Service Manager, Quality Manager and Learner Engagement Officer attended the feedback meeting at the end of the Review.

Conditions of Accreditation

Holders of the **matrix** Standard Accreditation must:

1. Maintain and continually improve upon their services.
2. Throughout the period of accreditation satisfy The Growth Company that the organisation continues to meet the requirements of the **matrix** Standard via the annual continuous improvement checks and the three-year accreditation review.
3. Complete annual continuous improvement checks in a timely way, it is expected these will be carried out annually by the accreditation anniversary date.
4. Inform The Growth Company or their Assessor if the key contact name/contact details change.
5. Submit their Booking Form for re-accreditation to the **matrix** Standard at least 3 months prior to the accreditation anniversary date ensuring all pre on-site activity is completed in a timely way including planning, payment and interview scheduling. Accreditation Reviews are due 3 years from the anniversary accreditation date; it is expected that organisations will be assessed by this date or will risk being de-accredited.
6. Inform The Growth Company of any significant changes made to the organisational structure, senior management or systems that may impact on their accreditation; email: matrixStandard@growthco.uk.
7. Inform The Growth Company immediately if they wish to extend or reduce the scope of their accreditation.
8. Inform The Growth Company of any serious complaint or rise in numbers of complaints received (within the scope of the accreditation).
9. Not undertake or omit to undertake any activity that may be misleading and/or may cause The Growth Company and/or the **matrix** Standard to be brought into disrepute.
10. Only use the **matrix** Standard Quality Mark for the areas within the scope of the accreditation and in accordance with the guidelines. For example, if a certain department is successfully **matrix** accredited, the Quality Mark can only be used on that department's letterhead or on that department's page on their internet homepage.
11. Ensure in cases where accreditation is withdrawn or where they do not come forward for accreditation review, remove from display any certificates or plaques issued by The Growth Company and do not display the **matrix** Standard Quality Mark nor refer to be a former holder of the **matrix** Standard.
12. Be aware that The Growth Company reserves the right to remove any accreditation and/or certification previously applied if payment is not received for services provided.