

Surrey Adult Learning



Table of Contents

Assessment Information.....	3
Organisation – Introduction, Aims, Objectives and Outcomes.....	4
Strengths	6
Areas for Development	7
Methodology	8
Conditions of Accreditation	9

Assessment Information

Assessment Type	Accreditation Review
Assessor's Decision	Standard Met
Assessor's Name	Stuart McRill
Visit Date	01/02/2022 – 03/02/2022
Client ID	C18917
Assessment Reference	PN201101
Continuous Improvement Check Year 1 due by	05/02/2023
Continuous Improvement Check Year 2 due by	05/02/2024
Accreditation Review onsite visit to be conducted by	05/02/2025

Organisation – Introduction, Aims, Objectives and Outcomes

Surrey Adult Learning (hereafter SAL or the organisation) sits within Surrey County Council's Children, Families and Learning Directorate and has a mission to *'promote learning pathways that enable all learners to achieve their career aspirations and fulfil their potential'*. The organisation has a key purpose to support the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Community Vision whereby in 2030, *'We want Surrey to be a uniquely special place where everyone has a great start to life, people live healthy and fulfilling lives, are enabled to achieve their full potential and contribute to their community, and no one is left behind'*. This purpose is translated into a diverse curriculum offer for communities that includes accredited courses in English, maths and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), a supported learning offer to provide opportunities for adults with learning disabilities, family learning and outreach, a community learning programme of non-accredited programmes and a growing apprenticeship pathway.

The organisation last met the **matrix** Standard in 2019 with the last three years being ones of much change largely brought about by the covid-19 pandemic. Over this timeframe the organisation has moved from a 100% face to face learning centre approach into an entirely remote delivery solution (with Zoom being agreed as the preferred platform). Increasingly now though, as pandemic recovery plans take hold, SAL implementation approaches are blended, with most adults skills training remaining on Zoom and community learning increasingly returning to the centres, always in compliance with all covid-19 safety guidelines.

Over the last six years of **matrix** accreditation, the organisation's planning, delivery and continuous review of IAG has developed into what today is a clearly defined service that is at the heart of the SAL learner journey. There is an understanding by all staff that IAG as a service is one that they all play a part in. IAG approaches are designed for applicability for each curriculum area and are always then customised to be learner centred. In the broadest sense the IAG journey is centred upon three key stages of pre entry IAG, on programme support and exit progression and transition advice. This framework is as it was in 2019. However, the extent to which staff are skilfully supporting a broader range of needs (especially anxiety and health and wellbeing matters), whilst keeping learners motivated to stay, achieve and thrive, is much enhanced. Underpinning IAG training and development has ensured consistency of understanding with the internally designed IAG training impacting on new and existing staff.

Managers and staff made a very clear case for how IAG is impacting upon the ten Strategic Targets 2020/21 such as retention and achievement to be above last published national benchmarks for maths and English. In particular, there was recognition that for the organisation to return to the pre pandemic learner profile of over 10,000 adults (it is currently around 50% of this), IAG approaches need to re-engage, remotivate and excite Surrey residents to return to a SAL learning experience.

The extent to which IAG implementation and its wider impact is understood by the delivery teams was evident in staff discussions and in key documents such as this taken from the current self-assessment report:

'Leaders, managers and tutors successfully maintained learner engagement through this COVID-19 impacted year by instilling confidence in learners, supporting them to build their resilience and by good attendance management that follows up unexplained learner absences. This is reflected in the very good retention rates of 92.7% for Adult Skills learners, 94.4% on the apprenticeship programme and 95.4% for Community Learning'.

The IAG policy outlines the key stages of support across each learner pathway, with staff bringing the policy to life by describing and showing individual learning plans, and outlining the learner induction and progression practices. The SAL approach to service delivery is empowering and motivational. From the outset the customer services team skilfully presents options and choices in a manner that was clearly described by one learner:

“The customer services lady was patient and compassionate on the phone. She gave me some opportunities to think about, and left me to make my decision. I liked this approach”.

On programme IAG is reflective of the provision and this differentiated approach is highlighted as a key strength. For instance, in delivering IAG whilst supporting learners on calligraphy or drawing and watercolours, tutors skilfully weave in support to address loneliness and isolation. Elsewhere across apprenticeships monthly Hot Topics bring to life a theme such as Prevent, British Values or LGBT History Month.

Exit IAG has developed since the last assessment with English, Maths and ESOL provision showcasing how in their final review the tutor presents students with a range of progression options. Feedback from tutors, and later confirmed by students, highlights the IAG is impartial and firmly focused upon looking forward, with options ranging from reading groups to higher education. Here staff described usage of careers software including Kudos, as well as signposting to the National Careers Service.

Staff are empowered to use findings from IAG to shape curriculum development and *‘ensure no-one is left behind’*. A strong example of this was captured within the apprenticeship team where the interest in apprenticeships at level 2 in business administration (which does not exist) led to the team investing time in planning and providing a level 2 in customer service with a natural progression pathway to business administration at level 3 if still desired. This is just one illustration of how SAL is continually reviewing and taking action as part of its striving for excellence approaches.

Feedback from a range of students at the assessment provided many examples of how IAG delivered throughout the SAL learner journey was transforming learner skills, attitudes and behaviours with many examples of gained soft outcomes. Monitoring and evaluation approaches have been maintained throughout the three years with some recent report findings highlighting realisation of intended impact. For instance, an evaluation of SAL’s outreach programme confirmed 90.8% of learners have more confidence to learn new skills and 89.2% feel more positive. Across Family Learning 95.17% feel more motivated to do more learning and 77.56% of students cited the learning as an enabler to *‘do more with my family’*.

Feedback from apprentices confirmed the wider impact of their trainer/assessor:

“My trainer and the programme has not only improved my self-awareness and skills, such as time management, it has also helped me to define, and shape, the kind of manager that I want to be to get the best from my team”;

“My assessor has given me the confidence to believe I can do it. She has helped me to understand how to create a high performance team”.

In summary, this accreditation review confirmed that SAL continues to deliver a high quality IAG offer that is making a real difference to learners. The assessment was evidence rich with examples of learning, work, career and life outcomes. These are being realised through a skilled workforce that is especially adept at customising end to end IAG to raise aspirations and create opportunities for progression and *‘change people’s lives through inclusive and inspirational adult learning’*.

Strengths

A number of 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 end to end IAG model is skilfully implemented by tutors, with a clear focus upon impact. From the outset, Adult Skills tutors capture motivational statements that lay the foundation of learners' intent. Individual learning plans are refreshed to keep the learner journey on point and act as a framework to monitor and capture progress, and IAG delivery builds upon previous interventions. Staff are inspiring and raising aspirations in their approaches to equipping students to realise greater health and well-being and/or employment and skills outcomes with one tutor stating "*We are here to move to the student closer to their long term destination*". (1.5, 3.1, 3.2, 4.2)
- Staff were effusive in highlighting the support that they have received from the leadership team over the last 2 years and the ongoing communication practices which they highly value. Despite many of the Adult Skills workforce working remotely, they feel connected to SAL and this includes many part time/bank staff. Tutors cited Principal Update Forums, the staff newsletter and recently introduced performance conversations as all making a difference to their well-being. Staff feel empowered, trusted and that their ideas shape delivery methodologies with change management "*done with us, not to us*". (1.2, 1.7)
- SAL is a values based organisation and this was brought to life by every staff member whose commitment to the organisation and the learner is at the core of their motivation. The covid-19 pandemic posed unforeseen challenges but values of passion and high achievement, high standards and quality, inclusivity and fairness, flexibility and responsiveness were brought to the fore to keep the organisation supporting its diverse learner base. These values are taking a new form as recovery plan implementation is underway with the organisation exploring new curriculum options to talent build locally and contribute to wider balanced and inclusive economy goals. (1.3)
- IAG delivery is seamless, with the customer services team, course administrators and tutors working especially well. In essence there is one IAG model and this acts as a framework that is suitably flexible to impact upon the full range of learners from supported learning and short courses through to level 5 apprenticeships. The increased usage of technology over the last 2 years has been embedded with a clear focus upon accessibility and inclusion, with blended learning and IAG presenting learners with more options and choices. (3.2, 3.4, 4.7)
- End to end IAG across the apprenticeship team is robust with tutor/assessors bringing to life a deep understanding of the importance of IAG to keep apprentices on target. Caseload management is working especially well, with an apprenticeship journey that has explicit IAG touch points. The result of this investment is evident in achievement rates that include a 100% end point assessment positive outcome at the first attempt. (1.2, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2)
- Embedded IAG is outcome focused with tutors showing confidence and competence in delivering IAG and learning online. Underpinning this approach has been a commitment from managers to seek out appropriate training that is engaging and focused upon safe and ethical pedagogy approaches. The organisation presented a clear 'plan, do and review' approach to continuously developing video conferencing teaching, learning and IAG. The impact of this approach is especially transparent across ESOL delivery where achievement data has increased from 40.7% in 2019/20 to 86.2% in 2020/21. (2.4, 4.8)

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 sense of looking forward and plans to ‘transform’ and develop new strands of delivery has been highlighted earlier within this report. The positivity underpinning the assessment bodes well for future business development and presents the leadership team with the opportunity to outline more fully a plan for service expansion. During the assessment, a number of staff highlighted a desire to come together as a whole service and doing so could not only act as a showcasing of staff and learner achievements during a challenging two years, but also lay out plans for the future academic year and beyond. (1.2)
- The growth focus of the business development team was transparent at the assessment and so too their energy and commitment to increase learner numbers and realise aims and objectives within recovery plans. The continued update of the organisation’s website is part of an enhanced marketing and promotional strategy that will also seek to enhance partnership working with key stakeholders such as Jobcentre Plus. This team’s role will also be business critical to apprenticeship growth across defined sectors and seek to maintain the market share of SAL in what is an increasingly competitive sector. (1.6, 1.8)
- Learner feedback was consistently very positive and showcased the difference that a SAL experience is having upon adults skills. A small number of remote learners were keen to see greater clarity in who to contact with any concerns as well as compliments. Elsewhere, some learners described how they are thriving through Zoom delivery but that they miss the sense of ‘student community’ and peer social engagement. Given that SAL seeks to continue with blended face to face and digital training, it is worthwhile exploring opportunities for capturing the student voice digitally as well as hosting a theme or two around community/citizenship to keep the SAL community spirit alive in the digital world. (1.7, 4.7, 4.8)
- In the coming months, the organisation is encouraged to review and, where relevant, update existing job descriptions. Over the last two years in particular, some staff roles have naturally evolved as the workforce showed agility and responsiveness to maintain high standards of service delivery during the pandemic. In reviewing job descriptions managers are encouraged to focus upon the extent to which roles provide IAG and update any essential and desirable skills and qualifications. (2.3)

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.

Microsoft Teams interviews with the leadership team (8)

Microsoft Teams interviews with a range of managers and staff delivering IAG (22)

Microsoft Teams and telephone discussions with partners (3)

Zoom discussions with a sample of learners (17)

A review of planning, implementation and impact documentation including self-assessment report and quality improvement plan, monitoring and performance data, job descriptions, examples of marketing resources, a demonstration of Moodle and an array of supporting evidence made available on a SharePoint platform

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.