

Westminster City Council – WAES



Table of Contents

Assessment Information.....	3
Organisation – Introduction, Aims, Objectives and Outcomes.....	4
Strengths	7
Areas for Development	8
Methodology	10
Conditions of Accreditation	11

Assessment Information

Assessment Type	Accreditation Review
Assessor's Decision	Standard Met
Assessor's Name	Kathy Leahy
Visit Date	06/12/2022 – 08/12/2022 2.5 days remote
Client ID	C12021
Assessment Reference	PN201525
Continuous Improvement Check Year 1 due by	01/12/2023
Continuous Improvement Check Year 2 due by	01/12/2024
Accreditation Review onsite visit to be conducted by	01/12/2025

Organisation – Introduction, Aims, Objectives and Outcomes

Westminster Adult Education Service is part of Westminster City Council and located at the heart of central London; the service operates from three main buildings in Lisson Grove (close to Marylebone), Pimlico and Amberley (near Paddington), plus a range of outreach venues through partner organisations. They provide a range of courses for adults, with the largest area being ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages), functional skills, information technology and vocational programmes. The courses are both AEB (Adult Education Budget) accredited learning and non-accredited Community and Family Learning, they also have a small apprenticeship programme. It is one of the largest adult education providers in the country and is mainly funded through the devolved combined authority funding.

The organisation sets out its vision as:

‘To transform our learner’s lives through inclusive, inspirational lifelong learning’

With a mission of:

‘To provide learning pathways that enable all learners to achieve their career aspirations and fulfil their potential’

Staff spoke of how the service’s provision is aligned to strategic ambitions for Westminster City Council and the Mayor’s Skills for Londoners Strategy.

“It has to be in line with the strategy for economic growth” (staff)

The strategic plan states: *‘It aims to help Londoners into better jobs and develop social outcomes, recognising the wider benefits of learning to a person’s health and wellbeing, confidence and ability to participate in society.’* It links three core themes:

Careers: Supporting our learners to gain skills for the future

Community: Supporting our community to actively participate in society, build skills and confidence, combat isolation and improve their health and wellbeing

Culture: Supporting our community to enrich their lives and explore creative learning opportunities through London’s artistic and cultural economy.

“We have access to a quality training provider who is flexible, can meet the needs of the local residents – a localised offer” (partner)

Learners continue to be identified two types of learners: those that are engaging in learning as part of their career aspirations, and those who want to learn as part of their broader cultural and wellbeing aims. This leads to learners following one of these plans.

“[name] was very perceptive, it was a chance to help me move on in my career” (learner)

Information, advice and guidance (IAG) is provided from initial engagement and throughout the learning journey. Since the last assessment, there have been some changes to the main admissions process with the work of the Learning Experience Officers being split with some a new role of Careers and Learning Development Officers. Staff described how there was a much smoother admissions process in the main September enrolment period. Learning Experience Officers provide the initial contact with potential learners, which may be by a variety of channels – telephone, email, face to face – and provide information relating to courses, availability and times/dates etc. If an enquirer wishes to take their application further, they are invited to meet with one of the Careers and Learning Development Officers who conduct initial assessments and explore the motivation for wanting to undertake the course and check previous qualifications/experience. For ESOL provision, initial assessment is conducted by a member of the ESOL curriculum team.

It was identified during the last two years that a number of learners had some challenges that, once on programme, were affecting their ability to progress. Therefore, an additional stage has been included in the admissions process, where a welfare assessment is conducted to ensure that the potential learners are 'fit to learn' and explore any additional support needs. The aim is to identify support needs earlier and also check that the learning is the right time in the learner's life. At this stage learners are RAG rated, to identify the level of their support needs.

Once these stages are complete, potential learners speak with a curriculum specialist who will have all of the background information about them and able to have detailed conversations about the programme. Using a robust initial assessment, was described as enabling staff to have objective discussions relating to the suitability of course and level. Staff described how they felt this change had led to the current 98% retention of learners and 75% fewer complaints.

For community learning the team work closely with partners, who provide premises for community-based delivery. Partners are often involved in promoting the opportunities available to people known to them and using their centres. Staff also attend community festivals and events to further promote the offer. Enrolment sessions are conducted at each venue, with any initial assessment taking place (mainly for ESOL provision), identify their needs, ensure they can access the provision e.g. days, times, venues, and discuss the offer suitable to their needs. Staff described how the provision is not for the "hard to reach", but for those "that find it hard to reach us". Staff described how the provision supports people who are making their first steps back into education or are not currently in a position to undertake 'mainstream' provision. The curriculum has been developed based on local needs and supporting the post-Covid London-wide Recovery Plan which includes a number of 'missions'. Work has supported the recent refugees from Afghanistan and Ukraine, in navigating the UK systems, along with ESOL provision and wellbeing support.

"It's about helping them with their next steps" (staff)

Apprenticeships are a small part of the provision, but the service has supported the first apprentices in the country to complete the library, information and archive standard. The IAG within the apprenticeship area starts with discussions with the employer to understand their needs, explore the relevance of the apprenticeship standards and the rules/regulations surrounding the programme. The team provide a bronze/silver/gold offer to recruitment, from the employer conducting all recruitment activity to the team being involved at all stages. Apprentice candidates conduct an initial assessment, skillscan and previous qualifications/experience.

"I love to work with the learners and see them accomplish", "It's about seeing the learners achieve" (staff)

Once on programme all learners on all types of provision, are supported throughout by their tutor who monitors progress and signposts to other internal support mechanisms. Progression weeks provide a series of activities that focus on supporting learners to consider their next steps, with workshops on areas such as CV writing, considering an apprenticeship and an HE fair with a number of universities attending. Staff also spoke of trips, industry talks and Alumni providing insight into the workplace, along with vocational staff providing information linked to their own experience about working in particular sectors. Curriculum based staff described the features of the IAG in their area of delivery, which is tailored to the needs of the learners.

"Their [staff] input has been really valuable. They talked about their experience of transitioning to different careers and about leveraging transferable skills" (learner)

One of the plans described is the establishment of a careers and employability hub which will provide a focus for learners to gain access to employability support at any time during their programme.

The 2021 Impact Report provides the key highlights of the delivery, for example 88% overall achievement, 93% who applied to higher education gained an offer, and 96% would recommend WAES.

The Careers Strategy states the purpose of the support is to encourage learners to be independent and develop social, personal and enterprise skills and knowledge necessary to help make informed decision, to find and keep work, to progress and ultimately play an effective role in the economic life and community. Staff and learners described the difference the support made to them in their own words, which included providing focus, overcoming barriers, achieving their potential, greater awareness of opportunities, growth in confidence, accomplish their goals. These aims were echoed through the discussions with staff and learners who described the difference the support made to them.

“It [the support] really focusses them, helps overcome barriers, achieve their best potential, have greater awareness of the opportunities available and you see the grow in confidence” (staff)

“I feel WAES gave me a second chance at life. They are just there for you” (learner)

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 changes to the main admissions and enrolment process have been well received and shown some clear benefits through the currently high level of retention. The process is now clear, with dedicated staff at each of the stages, guiding potential learners to make informed decisions on their learning choices. (3.1)
- WAES have increased the careers and employability capacity through the team of careers and learning officers and provided a higher profile to this area of support. It will be interesting to hear how these roles develop over the coming years. (2.1)
- The Careers Minimum Entitlement document clearly sets out the careers support available to learners on different programmes. This provides a very clear description of the careers and employability offer (this will be valuable for when the revised **matrix** Standard is launched). (3.1)
- Staff are passionate about the work they do and are committed to supporting learners to access and make progress in their learning. They could speak knowledgeably of the learners they had supported and their journeys. (3.4)
- There is a strong link between the work of the service and the priorities of the local authority and the London Mayor's office. This alignment in strategy provides a valuable focus to ensure the needs of the local area are being addressed. (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.

- A new team of Career and Learning Officers has been established who, to date, have completed Level 2 in information and advice. The organisation recognise that further development is needed for these staff, and they may wish to consider Level 4 advice and guidance qualifications as the aspiration (the Career Development Institute set out a career development progression pathway: <https://www.thecdi.net/Career-Development>). Other qualifications/frameworks that may provide some helpful resources are Institute of Employability Professionals <https://www.myiep.uk>, coaching qualifications or looking at some of the guidance theories e.g. Egan's Skilled Helper model. (2.4)
- The organisation recognises that the quality assurance of IAG activities is implicit in other processes. The organisation could consider how they formally quality assure all aspects of IAG from initial engagement and throughout the learning journey. The draft revised **matrix** Standard describes developing an 'evidence base' that is informed by: impact and outcome data, feedback from recipients of IAG, staff and other organisations/networks, quality assurance activities of promotion, delivery (including where appropriate observation of person-to-person delivery), digital and non-digital resources, understanding of the external environment and any proposed changes on the horizon, the benefits of digital, non-digital and blended delivery, the benefits of working with other organisations and how they contribute to recipients' experiences, learning from other assessment and self-assessment processes, feedback from oversight arrangements.. For the area of observation, the Career Development Institute have developed some resources: <https://www.thecdi.net/QA-of-Career-Development-Interventions> (4.5)
- As the role of the Career and Learning Officer develops, there may be an opportunity to create careers-specific resources such as Career Action Plans/Summary of Guidance documents that would provide a record of the independent careers guidance offered, LMI information, career planning tools etc. (2.1)
- It is recognised that a range of staff provide IAG through their role, both discrete IAG and embedded within their role. The College may wish to consider providing an IAG induction to those staff where this is an aspect of their role and cover areas such as boundaries, signposting and referral, options and choices, impartiality etc. This would help all staff acknowledge their contribution to the delivery of IAG and ensure that they were clear about the expectations. (2.5)

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.

The assessment was conducted remotely using MS Teams.

Staff	Interviews with 35 staff
Learners	Interviews with 12 learners
Partners	Interviews with 3 partners
Document Review	A range of documentation was provided prior to the assessment that covered Leadership and Management, Service Delivery and Continuous Quality Improvement. Other information accessed was the service's website (which included information on services, courses, support, and policies), recent Ofsted Report and during interviews screenshare of the Learner Intranet.

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.