

Education Development Trust – Employability and Careers



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Assessment Information

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Organisation – Introduction, Aims, Objectives and Outcomes

Education Development Trust (EDT) is an education charity that seeks to transform lives by improving education around the world. It helps to shape education systems and design education solutions to give young people everywhere a brighter future. For nearly 50 years, it has provided a range of education services, with a particular interest in school effectiveness. Internationally, it has successfully implemented diverse education programmes for governments in the UK, the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia.

To support the education theme, a range of Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) contracts is delivered through the Employability and Careers business unit (hereafter referred to simply as EDT of ease of reference). EDT has experience and expertise ranging from consulting on careers education advice and guidance policy at government level to training a highly skilled careers adviser workforce and delivering impartial careers and employability IAG in a wide variety of settings. It also works with national and local agencies to deliver high quality careers support to young people and adults. Current contracts include the National Careers Service, where EDT is the area based prime contractor in the Northeast, Cumbria, Yorkshire and the Humber and is a key subcontractor in the Southeast and Southwest of England delivering IAG to adults aged 19+. The 'Inspiring Careers' team works with local authorities or directly with schools, to not only deliver careers IAG to young people but also support with work experience placements, careers education activities, tracking and data reporting services. Currently, there are around 90 schools' contracts. Programmes are bespoke and designed to help schools and colleges meet their statutory responsibility for careers and to achieve the benchmarks established as guidance by the Gatsby Foundation.

Since the last **matrix** Assessment, it has also grown considerably through the successful acquisition of a range of new contracts. These include the Making A Difference employability service in the Coast to Capital and North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) regions of England, as well as just starting in Leeds City Region; the North East Ambition contract, which seeks to link small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) more effectively with local and national skills initiatives; the ASK contract (Apprenticeship Skills and Knowledge) contract to transform how students think about apprenticeships in all London borough schools; and Local Authority contracts for tracking young people who are Not in Employment or Education (NEET). From 1 May 2020, EDT started delivering the London Careers Clusters, The Mayor's European Social Fund (ESF) 2019-23 Programme that builds upon existing Careers Clusters across London, enhancing activity currently undertaken within schools and colleges to help facilitate sustainable relationships between local schools, colleges, employers, and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to support the work readiness of student groups, in particular those with higher levels of need. It is also an approved OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) centre for careers guidance qualifications. Finally, in response to the impact of COVID-19 on the employment landscape, the Careers team is delivering the Re-skilling Cornwall employability programme. Funded by the European Social Fund, the programme aims to facilitate the transition of workers who were affected by COVID-19 and have lost their job, especially those who are over 50 or with a disability, and those who are looking to return to work after a period of unemployment. In the Cornwall area, there are particular challenges faced by people who previously worked in the hospitality, arts, retail, and tourism sectors.

The client journeys and the IAG varies between contracts; however, the fundamental purpose is making a difference to people's lives. In the National Careers Service (NCS), clients aged 19 or over (or aged 18 or over if a Job Centre Plus customer) can access support face-to-face (when pandemic restrictions permit), over the telephone, and via the web. The team of qualified careers advisers have traditionally delivered free, impartial, and confidential careers advice sessions in a variety of locations, such as EDT's own premises, Job Centres, and a variety of outreach locations. The

pandemic meant the organisation moved to a position of “*protect and pivot*” to new ways of working including use of telephone and virtual appointments and workshops. In terms of the IAG, the one-to-one and group sessions help customers to explore their careers options and make careers decisions, reflect on their skills, abilities, and experience, provide ongoing motivation and support with the ultimate aim of moving an individual into or closer to work, education, or training.

The IAG in schools includes the delivery of one-to-one interviews, group careers, employability skills workshops, parents’ evenings, and tailored transition support for vulnerable students and those with Special Educational Needs. Work in schools is bespoke to meet individual institution requirements and consists of careers IAG either in one-to-one guidance appointments, group work, parents’ evenings, careers fairs, employability skills including applications, mock interviews and CVs and transition support for young people with SEND (Special Educational Needs) and / or Disabilities and for other vulnerable students.

Employability contracts support a wide range of individuals seeking to return to employment, including those who are furthest from the labour market and those who have been unemployed for significant periods of time. The various teams help individuals to identify and address barriers which may be preventing them from entering employment, and to recognise and develop their existing skills. Where needed, they also help people develop new skills and build their experience, including by helping them to find suitable work placements, training, or volunteering opportunities. Employability work is tailored to the needs of each individual, and is underpinned by high-quality IAG, including expert labour market intelligence. Through this, clients are able to take advantage of the opportunities available to them and help them change their lives for the better. Specifically, the Making a Difference programme is designed to support 10,600 unemployed or economically inactive participants in the Southeast and Northeast of England, helping them to become either job-search ready or move into paid employment. Through Making a Difference, each client is supported by an employment coach, who provides careers support, coaching and mentoring to help them to make progress towards their learning and employment goals. The programme teams also work with local employers to provide access to a wide variety of employer-led activities, such as job tasters, conferences, and jobs fairs, all to support each client in getting closer to the job market.

In North East Ambition, each SME that engages in the programme is supported by a dedicated Skills Facilitator, who undertakes a needs analysis to determine the specific requirements of each business and develop an action plan to best support them in addressing current and future skills gaps as well as identifying and brokering the right solutions for their specific needs. Within the programme, businesses receive impartial IAG on available skills initiatives and government support, as well as help in connecting with other small businesses, where useful.

The mission of EDT overall is “*A world where everyone’s life is transformed through excellent education.*” Its purpose has been more clearly defined to reflect the IAG contribution as follows “*We strive to change education for good around the world, grounding our work in research and evidence of what works. We support leaders to raise standards, improve school performance, develop great teachers and open career pathways – transforming lives and futures.*” This is underpinned by four core values of Excellence, which are Integrity, Accountability, Collaboration, and Inclusion. The achievement of the mission and purpose is measured through the delivery of carefully chosen contracts and the performance against the relevant contractual targets within as all overall targets and impact measures set by the organisation itself. A Corporate Strategy is in place that emphasises the importance of IAG as well as a Bbusiness Plan that supports the achievement of key targets, and these are supported by Key Performance Indicators (KPI). The aims for IAG are to remove barriers to learning and work, raise aspirations and to provide advice and support for clients to

progress. The objectives of the IAG service are to enable people to aspire and progress through education and training into meaningful employment that contributes to successful lives.

Client outcomes in relation to NCS are improved career management skills, confidence, and motivation. These are assessed through customer satisfaction measures and through spontaneous customer compliments. Satisfaction rates are consistently high at over 99% as assessed through these routes. Case studies are routinely produced that describe the impact of the IAG on customers' lives. Distance travelled tools are used, as appropriate, such as the Pathways Star in Making A Difference with 98% of clients recording progress of soft outcomes on their Pathways Star. In relation to young people some 93% (target 90%) felt clearer about their future following their careers IAG session. Similarly, 93% (target 90%) felt they knew what actions to take to achieve their future plans. Feedback during the assessment included comments from clients such as:-

"This service is amazing; I had just left a violent relationship and felt very anxious; I was supported to develop my CV and now I am volunteering."

"This is a great and valuable service; I have been supported to consider how I could improve my CV to include more about my current skills in accountancy; now when I am applying for jobs, I feel so much more confident."

"Following redundancy, it was introduced to the NCS by a friend, they have helped me to find access a funded level three qualification that is near to where I live, I am over the moon."

"I received a brilliant service, ten out of ten."

"My NCS advisor was brilliant, they really listened to me."

"I had a bad experience at school, and was later diagnosed as dyslexic, I am currently completing a maths qualification and feel much more confident about the future."

Linking back to the mission and purpose, impact measurements for IAG are routinely considered by management. For NCS these are linked to contract profiles set by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) of Customer Satisfaction Outcomes (CSOs), Career Management Outcomes (CMOs), and Jobs and Learning Outcomes (JLOs). The aim is to perform at 100% of profile, however the COVID-19 pandemic saw referrals dry up overnight due to the closure of Job Centre Plus (JCP) offices and subsequently the plethora of Department for Work and Pension (DWP) programmes has created a focus for DWP Work Coaches. In response, some 50% of the operational workforce was placed on furlough. Despite this and during the period July 2020 – August 2021, 78% of overall CSO profile was achieved which was comparable with other NCS Primes. Correspondingly, the CMO achievement was 80% of profile; however, the interesting dimension was that the JLO target / national benchmark of supporting 45% of IAG customers into work or further learning, was surpassed at 57%. This was as a result of the diligence and commitment of staff to finding new ways of accessing referrals and effective staff development that helped the service to pivot from face-to-face to one-to-one telephone and group online workshop delivery. There was also improved customer follow up and tracking processes which meant advisers were able to use the opportunity for extra client facing support. In the Making a Difference contract effective IAG and holistic client support has resulted in an 80% conversion rate to jobs (against the targeted national average of 45%). In the North East Ambition contract, the accurate translating of needs into IAG solutions means that 29 out of 38 employers have completed their aims. In the 'Inspiring Careers' traded services with schools, the use of social media and effective school careers leader partnerships has seen a growth from the targeted 84 to 91 individual school contracts in the last 12 months. The youth guidance and tracking services aim to contribute to the reduction of young people who are NEET and are provided along with the annual Activity Report for the Department for Education, which includes reports against gender and those with additional learning needs. There remains also an emphasis on reducing the number of young people whose destination is unknown. Good illustrations of this in Hammersmith and Fulham are the overachievement of targets, specifically NEET target of less than 5% with an

outturn of 1.1% and in Hounslow 3.6% against the target of 4%. Even more startling is the Solent LEP project which achieved 61% of young people moving from NEET to EET (vs a 33% expectation from the LEP) as a result of training in supporting young people with anxiety issues, diligent and caring tracking, and impartial presentation of options without judgement.

Continuous improvement is woven throughout all activity. In addition to those already described, developments since the last **matrix** Assessment are numerous. Some examples have included, for example, a full analysis of 'fail to attend' rates where clients were asked why they did not attend a scheduled NCS appointment, responses varied from not receiving the email invite, to not feeling comfortable to go on Teams / Zoom camera, and not feeling comfortable that background distractions wouldn't be a problem. From this feedback a range of support materials have been developed, such as how to look in your email spam folder for the invite; step by step instructions on how to download Teams / Zoom; confirming that camera video although desirable is not essential; and outlining that the staff delivering the sessions will also have background distractions, e.g., children, pets, Amazon deliveries etc. Text messages to introduce the advisor before a telephone call have also been implemented. Another development was in June 2021 whereby the Senior Leadership Group introduced Project 'Road Map' to transition back to face to face delivery based on the evaluation of feedback regarding digital delivery of support, strategies included looking for new locations for delivery, particularly where JCP offices are too small to support social distancing and so other local outreach centres are now being used to support face to face delivery. In terms of quality, the observation process has moved away from numerical grading to Strength, Met, Area for Development findings with training plans being put in place to address this. Technology has been actively employed across all IAG delivery. Microsoft forms is now being used review customers progression and seek feedback on action plan progress.

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.

- There is strong leadership and commitment to IAG. Indeed, this is the Employability and Careers raison d'être and fits the corporate strategy of 'excellence' in careers and employability delivery. Leaders and managers highlighted care taken to ensure effective communication about the direction of the service and their strategies to cope with the pandemic and its challenges. Needs analysis has formed a critical part of the movement into employability delivery and providing a clear definition of the differences between careers advice and employability advice has been welcomed and understood by staff. Staff consistently spoke about feeling *"trusted, supported and empowered"*. The resourcing to support delivery matched the senior level commitment to the IAG service, for example, in having a dedicated Business Improvement Team and a separate Continuing Professional Development (CPD) department. There is a strong commitment to customer focus built on the organisational values. (1.1 / 1.2)
- Considerable measures have been put in place to ensure both staff and clients feel safe throughout their interactions. In terms of staff most notable has been the carefully risk assessed home working activity and also similar levels of care and attention paid to returning to face-to-face delivery in some Job Centres and other community venues. Clients spoke of feeling safe online following detailed support on how to achieve this, for example, use of cameras and care on backgrounds etc. There was also a powerful example of how client safety had been carefully managed in a situation of fleeing domestic violence. (1.4)
- The level of wellbeing support provided for staff was much more than might normally be expected. The senior leaders have worked tirelessly under the brand 'Careers Cares' to make sure staff are supported. Examples range from physical wellbeing such as undertaking ergonomic assessments to ordering office chairs, desks, and monitors home homeworking use, as well as providing fun activities such as drawing, a book club and photography competitions in an effort to address mental wellbeing. As a result, staff felt that their wellbeing ensured that they were in the best place to address issues of client wellbeing. In turn clients spoke of the *"caring and considerate"* nature of staff with some even noting that *"without them {adviser}, I don't know if I would be here today."* (1.5)
- As noted, the resourcing given to CPD is extensive. Despite the National Career Service contract requiring a Level 4 CEIAG qualification, there is a drive to help people develop to Level 6 and beyond. A comprehensive CPD calendar is in place that covers topics from induction and mandatory 'core' training such as health and safety and safeguarding, to professional qualifications and workshops as well as leadership and management courses. As a direct result staff commented on the benefits to them in their roles. For example, *"This is my first management role; I have felt one hundred percent supported; it has been amazing"*; *"We have access to fantastic training programmes, to support us to stay up-to-date"*; and *"The support and opportunity for continuous professional development has been phenomenal."* (2.5)
- Levels of technological equipment, CPD and staffing levels indicate the senior leadership commitment to the IAG service. Staff noted that budgets for provision of tools needed to deliver IAG were appropriate and in particular the level of investment in Labour Marketing Intelligence (LMI) staff and resources were *"amazing and as an Adviser I would struggle to do my job as well with it"*. Information resources are robustly quality assured for Advisers' use with clients which meant they could be assured of using the most up-to-date, relevant, and accurate sources. (2.8 / 4.3)

- The use of data, feedback, and staff insight as well as external benchmarking are combined to provide the evidence base on which significant improvements to the IAG are made. As noted extensively earlier in the body of this report, there have been a number of continuous quality improvements made. The volume of business improvement activity means that staff feel changes can be made for the good of clients. A culture of ‘test and learn’ exists that creates a framework for stretching the boundaries of services and ongoing impact analysis denoted where successes are achieved. (7.2)

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.

- Values of the organisation are a driving force for the staff. EDT is asked to consider how the key principles of effective IAG can be incorporated more overtly into review and reflection on delivery successes. It may be worth considering the development of a Code of Ethics or similar to focus on this which would ensure staff maintain a view of key values in the delivery of IAG. (2.4)
- It is recognised that the ‘protect and pivot’ strategy was used by many organisations at the start and during the pandemic. Now EDT is encouraged in its plans to continue to develop even wider partnerships to create a more diverse range of referrals to the IAG it offers. Working with non-traditional organisations will further the scope for working with those clients facing the most disadvantage. (2.7 / 3.2)
- National Careers Service clients noted the value they placed on the telephone support received and equally those who attended group workshops spoke of the “*great atmosphere*” using Microsoft Teams. Many remained unaware however of the option to have the initial and subsequent meetings using video technology or to mix and match telephone, face-to-face (where possible) with it. It is suggested that the promotion of the support and options presented through the booking line consider this feedback. (3.1)
- Distance travelled measures are used to give an overall assessment of impact against softer outcomes. It is suggested that a more detailed or granulated approach could be used to identify areas of good practice which can then be shared across teams and contracts. (4.2)
- Signposting and referrals are effective in the majority of cases. Clients spoke favourably of the support they received from some third parties. EDT is asked to consider a more effective and systematic way of not only capturing client feedback about the IAG signposted or referred to, through the individual client action plan review process, but to actually using this to quality assure it. For example, currently if a client does not have a good experience when signposted or referred, the Adviser will quite rightly find another source, however there is little, or no action taken to gather any trends in relation to poor feedback or to take any action with regards to the signposting and referral resources used. (4.7)
- Overall impact reporting is extensive however it is recognised that there may be a disconnect between what is counted for the contract purposes and what is really required in order to truly assess impact. For example, the Apprenticeship Skills and Knowledge (ASK) contract lends itself to counting how many people have been ‘helped’ however the real impact measure is more likely to be found in post 16 progression data. EDT has plans to develop the impact reporting further and the Assessors are interested to see more at the annual **matrix** Continuous Improvement Check, (6.2)

- EDT may wish to consider building on good aspects of its performance by having these validated through external quality assurance. Examples might include the achievement of the Disability Confident quality mark and / or the implementation of the ISO9001 Standard. Both are on the EDT 'radar' and there are plans in place to implement such activities into the range of quality assurance mechanisms already in place. (7.1)

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 the organisation's accreditation, please see the section Assessment Information for dates.

Methodology

The **matrix** Review Assessment was conducted remotely. The Assessors would like to thank all staff, partners and learners involved in the Assessment for demonstrating their flexibility and tenacity in coping with new ways of working.

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

Meetings via Microsoft Teams video calls and telephone calls with 74 managers and staff.

Telephone interviews with 5 external partners.

Telephone calls with 25 clients.

Document review (various strategies and plans, data reports, health and wellbeing information, marketing materials, monitoring system information, feedback and evaluation reports, website).

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.