



Transferable Skills Training



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1. Assessment Information

Assessment Type	ACCREDITATION REVIEW
Assessor's Decision	STANDARD MET
Assessor's Name	CAROL PROBYN
Visit Date	18-19/10/2017
Client ID	C16405
Assessment Reference	PN103022

2. Organisation – Introduction, Aims, Objectives & Outcomes

The assessment relates to the information, advice and guidance services provided by Transferable Skills Training (TST hereafter) to students and prospective students. Established in 2004 as a sub-contractor for Cornwall College, TST now operates in its own right offering programmes for young people excluded from education and/or those in the justice system together with those young people with mental health or learning disabilities. The service is based on the care plan principle and programmes are land-based i.e. agriculture, conservation, animal welfare and construction. Qualifications are aligned to local job opportunities to enable young people to progress. TST works from Entry Level qualifications up to Level 2 and offers bespoke programmes for individuals who have complex special educational needs and which combines vocational skills with independent living skills.

There is a team of 22 staff with a delivery team made up of counsellors, youth workers and teachers. The team also includes veteran mentors who are ex-military personnel trained to be mentors and instructors. Veteran mentors support the delivery of the Together We Can Succeed programme which has been awarded the Queens Award for Voluntary services.

Information, advice and guidance are provided on the courses and qualifications available at TST, progression routes and pathways, alternative sources of provision at local training providers, moving into work or other positive destinations and a wide variety of pastoral and health and well-being topics. Information, advice and guidance are intended to support people to move on into clearly defined progression routes and to a future of their own choice. The provision aims to support independent decision-making, to improve self-confidence and to help individuals achieve their full potential.

The measurable objectives for the service are associated with retention and achievement for which a target of 80% is set. Performance data for 2016-2017 demonstrates actual achievement as overall retention at 94.8% and overall achievement as 92.5% with 100% achievement for functional skills. The performance is excellent for any provider but particularly so in the context of the young people that TST supports.

The outcomes of the service are defined as improved skills including employability skills, improved confidence and self-esteem and students progression into work, volunteering or other positive destination. Outcomes are agreed and monitored/evaluated via the IAG and ILP review process using a variety of tools – the Jelly Baby Tree for adults and the emoji rating scale for young students. Employability information, advice and guidance are delivered as an assessed qualification and so are evaluated through the learner review and assessment process.

Success factors were described as the time spent on understanding individual's needs and providing individual's with multiple opportunities to decide if TST is for them; the ability of staff to provide tailored support to students in a very flexible way; the environment in which students learn and develop and the investment in advice and guidance qualifications which has improved the capability and confidence of staff to deliver the service.

Feedback from students on the high level of satisfaction with their whole experience of TST, the outstanding results achieved for retention and achievement and the many examples of students' progression are testament to the effectiveness of the service.

The service is reviewed and monitored thorough the SAR process in which staff, volunteers, students and stakeholders are involved. Regular team meetings and the ongoing dialogue between staff and stakeholders ensure that the service is monitored on an ongoing basis.

The review and evaluation process has led to the identification of improvement to the service. Examples include: feedback and distance travelled tools have been changed in response to student suggestions; following the advice and guidance training, the team identified the value of developing the IAG policy/statement of service and the tutor delivery model; the IAG and ILP have been separated into two documents but are used in such a way that ensures that the importance and contribution of the service is not lost.

3. Strengths

A number of strengths were identified during the assessment. These are detailed below. The numbers in brackets refer to the element and criteria of the **matrix** Standard.

- The holistic approach to supporting the 'whole person' is a real strength and demonstrates the 'spirit of matrix'. There is no doubt that the student is at the heart of everything TST does and whilst IAG and ILP are separated as a process/document there is a keen understanding of the way the service contributes to and supports students learning and progression. Effectiveness is demonstrated by high levels of performance and many examples of student progression. Students said the difference at TST is that staff care and understand them as individuals and tailor support and learning to individual needs. (3.2)
- There is a keen focus on initial information and guidance and everyone interviewed during the visit referred to the high level of support provided to students to ensure the right solution is found for every individual. Of note is the time spent on the engagement process which can take several weeks or months. There is no limit to number of visits and taster days available to prospective students to help them decide whether TST is for them. (3.2, 3.4)
- Monitoring systems and processes are structured and comprehensive – this includes monitoring and evaluation of progress in learning and soft outcome/behavioural areas. The use of the traffic light system and occurrence log has proved particularly effective in this respect (4.2)
- There is a positive approach to collaborative working and TST works extensively with other agencies to achieve its objectives. Feedback from those spoken to during the assessment was positive with many comments made about the high level of service provided by to students. The relationships with a range of other organisations mean that TST has a wealth of knowledge and information about services and agencies to whom to signpost and refer students in line with their stated remit. (1.8, 2.1, 3.6)
- Staff are enthusiastic and motivated about their role and the way they are led and supported. Regular discussions which may be informal or formal ensure that individuals receive feedback and support and the opportunity to discuss and agree learning and development activities to support them in their roles. The provision of advice and guidance training/qualifications is indicative of the approach to ensuring staff have the skills and knowledge needed to support students. Lead roles have been developed so staff have internal experts to go to for advice and help. (4.3, 4.6, 4.8)
- The team is characterised by a commitment to continual review to identify and implement improvements to the information, advice and guidance service. Many examples were provided to demonstrate how staff and stakeholders are involved in identifying, developing and implementing improvements to the service: the development of separate IAG and ILP documents whilst recognising the link between the two; the development of the service statement and the delivery model that sets out the information, advice and guidance offer at each stage of the engagement and learning process. (4.3, 4.8)

4. Areas for Development

A number of areas for development were identified during the assessment which may develop or enhance the service delivered. These are detailed below and for the organisation to consider as part of its ongoing continuous quality improvement actions. The numbers in brackets refer to the element and criteria of the **matrix** Standard. 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.

- In addition to monitoring performance against targets for retention and achievement, consider the usefulness of introducing measures of social impact value, for example the number and value of volunteering hours completed by students, the value of the improvement in students financial stability and so forth when they move into work. These examples of social value impact are a powerful way to illustrate the wider impact of TST services. (1.1, 1.5)
- There is a sense that the Future Action Plan is missing a column in terms of the actions required by the student to achieve their preferred career outcomes. There are no clear links between the Future Action Plan and the IAG and ILP and it might be useful to review how the three documents/processes work together. (4.2)
- There is potential to develop a tool to capture the many and varied ways in which students develop and progress to enable students to see the extent of their achievements in one place – impact on soft outcomes, milestones such as getting on a bus or working in a group and so forth. Consider the development of a visual representation of the student’s journey that can be revised and refreshed at key points along the journey i.e. from pre-entry interactions such as interview to progression discussions, on exit and beyond. This might be based on a journey around the farm and could be developed with the input of students and staff. (1.5, 4.2)
- It might be helpful to develop the Quality Assurance Strategy to include specific reference to information, advice and guidance and to expand on the quality assurance section in the Statement of Service accordingly. Consider the benefits of defining what outstanding information, advice and guidance ‘looks like’ and use as the basis for assurance, monitoring and evaluation approaches – observation, audit, supervision and so forth. A clear articulation of an outstanding service has potential to ensure a consistent understanding of a ‘high quality’ service as well as providing a tool for identifying excellent practice, development needs and an evaluation framework against which to measure the impact of CPD and staff and volunteer support activities. It might be useful for the team to work together to identify and agree what an outstanding service ‘looks like’ as a way to facilitate a common understanding among team members.

A review of the draft observation framework developed during the site visit is a good start and has potential to be developed further. However, it might be helpful to avoid multiple questions, to expand on the skills requirements referred to in the framework and to differentiate between outstanding information, advice and guidance and that requiring improvement. (1.2, 2.3, 4.5)

- As part of the above, consider the benefits of developing a skills and knowledge matrix for TST that sets out the requirements needed to deliver aims and objectives now and in the future. This will include the skills and knowledge specific for the delivery of information, advice and guidance. Cross-referencing the matrix to job descriptions has potential to enhance the current format by explicit reference to the capability requirements for information, advice and guidance and other aspects of a role. Use to support succession planning, performance management, learning and development planning and the recruitment process. (2.3)
- It might be helpful to develop a central repository for information on support agencies and signposting organisations in order to provide a reference point for staff and to minimise the risk of losing pools of knowledge when staff leave TST and take information on support agencies and signposting organisations with them. (2.3, 3.6)

The following suggestions relating to feedback and quality processes might be helpful as the team continues to develop its approaches: (4.2, 4.3; 4.5)

- Consider how feedback, through whatever means, checks the understanding of options and next steps and routes/actions required progress towards career, learning or life goals. Consider asking about whether information and advice has enable individuals to understand the options available to them, how to pursue options and what to do next to move forward particularly as these are some of the outcomes of the service.
- Where individuals are asked to rate an aspect of a service or their experience, there is the opportunity to elicit additional feedback, perhaps by asking what would need to happen for the highest rating to be achieved. By asking the “next question” in this way, respondents might be encouraged to identify the action required to move from a lower to higher rating as well as serving to calibrate the scoring of those individuals that would never give the highest rating on the basis that there is always room for improvement but are unable to articulate what the improvement might be.

It might be of value to ask groups to arrive at a consensus score as a way to stimulate debate and encourage service-users to identify what works and where improvements could be made. The added benefit of this approach is that it has the potential to support the development of communication and negotiation skills.

- It might be helpful to consider gathering structured feedback from employers and other stakeholders currently gathered informally and on an ad hoc basis. This would provide a way to gather and analysis feedback themes and trends over time. Of particular value might be feedback on the way TST works with employers/stakeholders as opposed to seeking feedback on the student.

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 <http://matrixstandard.com/continuous-improvement-checks/> . These may include the Areas for Development above.

Please note that annual Continuous Improvement Checks are mandatory and non-completion within the required timescale will impact on your organisation's accreditation.

5. Methodology

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

Site visit: The TST centre near Callington, Cornwall

Face to face interviews: - 10 staff; 8 students in informal one to one interviews or small groups; 1 partner

Phone interviews: - 3 partners

Observation: - facilities, premises, resources and website.

Document review: - SAR and QIP; IAG Policy/statement of service and tutor delivery model; Quality Assurance Strategy and related documents; policies and procedures; promotional literature; feedback formats and results; staff appraisal format and job descriptions; student documentation including the IAG, ILP and Future Action Plan

Conditions of Accreditation

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

- Maintain and continually improve upon their services.
- Throughout the period of accreditation satisfy Assessment Services Ltd that the organisation continues to meet the requirements of the **matrix** Standard via the annual continuous improvement checks and the three-year accreditation review.
- Complete annual continuous improvement checks in a timely way, it is expected these will be carried out 3 weeks either side of the accreditation anniversary date.
- Inform Assessment Services Ltd or their Assessor if the key contact name/contact details change.
- 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.
- Inform Assessment Services Ltd of any significant changes made to the organisational structure, senior management or systems that may impact on their accreditation; email: matrix@assessmentsservices.com .
- Inform Assessment Services Ltd immediately if they wish to extend or reduce the scope of their accreditation.
- Inform Assessment Services Ltd of any serious complaint or rise in numbers of complaints received (within the scope of the accreditation).
- Not undertake or omit to undertake any activity that may be misleading and/or may cause Assessment Services Ltd and/or the **matrix** Standard to be brought into disrepute.
- 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.
- 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 Assessment Services Ltd and do not display the **matrix** Standard Quality Mark nor refer to being a former holder of the **matrix** Standard.
- Be aware that Assessment Services Ltd reserves the right to remove any accreditation and/or certification previously applied if payment is not received for services provided.

Whilst accredited the organisation will be signed up for IAGonline - a community website for all **matrix** holders. Once signed up, any employee of the organisation can join the community and access regular posts and join specialist interest groups for support and discussion.

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