

Education Development Trust

Employability and Careers

First pilot assessment against the BETA version of the revised matrix Standard



November 2021

The first pilot assessment against the BETA version of the revised matrix Standard has been conducted with Education Development Trust, Employability and Careers

They have held the **matrix** Standard under the current criteria, and now they have successfully achieved accreditation under the newly revised **matrix** Standard criteria. How did they find the new Standard and what did it mean to them to be part of the process and gain accreditation under the new criteria?

Read below for an interview with Education Development Trust's Continuous Improvement Manager, Donna Cornell, to find out.

matrix team: Firstly, congratulations on your accreditation and for being the first organisation to be accredited under the pilot of the revised Standard!

Donna: Thank you! It has been an amazing process to be a part of. I had already started to consider the role of the Continuous Improvement team within the Employability and Careers directorate, and how we could best support future growth, and an ever-expanding number of Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) contracts. Being part of the pilot of the new **matrix** Standard criteria was very timely and fitted in well with our own plans.

matrix team: That's great to hear and to know that you are wanting to continuously improve your IAG into those new contracts and keep that flow throughout the organisation. How did you find the new assessment criteria overall?

Donna: I welcomed the new assessment criteria. It is very much aligned to a customer journey with continuous improvement woven throughout and this, in turn, is more reflective of our organisational continuous improvement strategy. Staff who took part in the assessment commented that they felt able to share their success stories and talk about what made them most proud in delivering the service.

matrix team: Compared to the old criteria, do you feel the new criteria reflects the world around us today?

Donna: Firstly, the whole assessment was conducted remotely and the positive impact of that approach in terms of sustainability cannot be overstated and is particularly topical at this time. The criteria itself is definitely reflective of the world around us today e.g. the inclusion of confidence, resilience, and self-worth as part of the delivery strand. Our customer group has seen the skills landscape of their local areas completely redefined because of COVID. Entire industries have come under threat and people have undergone a change in their work and personal lives that is unprecedented. Any organisation delivering IAG must recognise the importance of improving soft outcomes for customers, so the update to the delivery strand is really welcomed.

matrix team: As you have just mentioned COVID and the impacts it has had, how has being assessed under the new criteria helped you reflect on the work you did during the pandemic?

Donna: By having the assessment now, we have been able to show how we pivoted and used technology to adjust to the new way of working during the pandemic, while still being able to deliver our mission. We also had Project 'Road Map' (as did many other organisations, I'm sure!) to help us get back to face-to-face delivery and this was based on evaluation of feedback we received regarding digital delivery. It's so great to hear that staff have consistently spoken about feeling "*trusted, supported and empowered*" and that our clients have spoken about feeling safe online.

It is wonderful that we have still been able to strive for greatness and provide our services to our clients! We can measure against commitment from the senior leaders, making sure that our IAG is customer-focused and makes a difference, and that our staff and customers feel safe. It is great to have the external validation from the accreditation, as it demonstrates that we are doing the right thing.

matrix team: Is there anything specific in the revised criteria that is a welcomed change?

Donna: The particular focus on staff wellbeing is a welcome addition. Our mission is to transform lives through the services we offer and the foundation to achieving this is a well-skilled workforce who is holistically supported in their role. As an organisation, staff welfare has always been a key priority but, through lockdown, we wanted to ensure that staff had a range of services at their disposal to support in the most unique of times. The new assessment criteria really allowed us to validate the approach that we had taken, and it was fantastic to hear from the assessors that our approach to staff wellbeing is a strength.

matrix team: Amazing! Are you able to expand on how Wellbeing was measured under the new criteria and why you feel it is an important area to be assessed?

Donna: I feel that it should be assessed because we need our staff and clients to feel supported in every aspect of the job. Our senior leaders have worked tirelessly under the brand 'Careers Cares' to make sure staff are supported. They have looked at physical health, by undertaking ergonomic assessments for home working use. They also highlighted the importance of mental health, providing us with some fun social activities such as book club, drawing classes, and photo competitions, to bring us all together. 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 the staff. And again, this all relates to the new criteria that a culture of wellbeing exists!

matrix team: How will being assessed by the new criteria help your organisation to improve its IAG in the future?

Donna: The **matrix** report identified continuous improvement as a strength across the organisation. The new assessment criteria will add further depth to this, as we look to utilise the new framework in our ongoing commitment to self-assessment and to support our strategic objective of being a low risk, high performance, high-quality provider.

matrix team: Has the revised Standard provided new validation for your delivery of high-quality information, advice, and guidance?

Donna: The review of the new **matrix** Standard validated and supported my thinking, and I began the process of implementing new roles and new ways of working that allowed the Continuous Improvement team to work more **on** the business, rather than **within** the business. We worked on ways in which we could provide the tools and frameworks for contracts to continue to work to the highest quality Standards and utilise outputs from a range of activities, including quality assurance and recipient's voice to inform positive change.

matrix team: Having now been accredited under the new revised **matrix** Standard how do you feel about the revised Standard?

Donna: I am immensely proud of being part of the pilot and the first organisation to have achieved re-accreditation against the new Standard. I was particularly delighted to see the comment 'Continuous improvement is woven throughout all activity' within the report, as our mission is to transform lives through the services we provide, and a robust continuous improvement strategy, is key to this.

matrix team On behalf of everyone at **matrix** Standard thank you for being part of the first pilot Review and thank you for your time today. I hope your insights into the revised Standard can show others that the Review is something to look forward to and continue in our mission to **#makeIAGbetter**.

Thank you to Education Development Trust, Employability, and Careers for taking part in the pilot of the assessment and for receiving accreditation, you are clearly demonstrating high-quality information, advice, and guidance throughout your organisation.

The matrix Standard community is working hard on the revision of the Standard and it is due to be launched in 2022. If you would like to take part in piloting the review, then please contact our Head of Service Roger Chapman on roger.chapman@growthco.uk and express your interest.

