

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ADULT LEARNING SERVICE (ALS)

WHO:

The purpose of Information, Advice and Guidance within our service is to support enquirers considering undertaking a course with Northamptonshire Adult Learning Service (ALS). This enables access to good careers advice so that all learners get a good start and are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment. As a funded provider of adult learning, Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) holds a contract with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for the delivery of community and skills learning.

From April 2017 to July 2018, NCC sub contracted its adult learning provision to First for Wellbeing (FFW), a TECKAL company in which NCC owns a 51% share, and in March 2018, due to these subcontracting changes, our most recent matrix assessment took place. Having experienced challenges during this time, we felt encouraged by our matrix assessor's ability to recognise our robust self-assessment and commitment to IAG delivery in accordance with the principles of matrix. Through matrix, the importance of IAG in our service was highlighted and this helped to ensure IAG remained a priority, contributing directly to key outcomes and positive learner progression.

Our service has been through a period of significant change during the last three years following decisions to subcontract the service to a community interest company from April 2017 – August 2018 and then to return to a model of direct delivery from September 2018 onwards. There have been some staff changes at senior level during this period against a backdrop of serious financial challenge for the council as a whole although our grant allocation has remained un-changed. Against this background of some uncertainty matrix has provided us with a stable grounding which ensures IAG remains a key focus of the organisation.

WHAT:

In 2015 our service appointed a full time IAG Coordinator, responsible for maintaining quality of IAG and increasing accessibility and access. One of their first roles was to oversee the 2015 matrix assessment, which resulted in maintaining our accreditation. In September 2016 our service was inspected by Ofsted and maintained its "good" inspection grade, with IAG being explicitly mentioned:

Tutors place learners on the right level of course and ensure they benefit from impartial advice and guidance to plan their next steps. Learners have a good understanding of the nature and expectations of the course for which they have enrolled. Partnership working with the National Careers Service is good.

Adult learning Service – Ofsted Report – 2016



Having previously been supported by our service to achieve a QCF LEVEL 4 Diploma in Career Information & Advice, this staff member was further supported to gain an OCR Level 6 Diploma in Careers Advice and Development, enabling them to continue to fulfil the demands of IAG amongst significant challenges. Matrix plays a fundamental part in ensuring the IAG our service provides meets both our own expectations and that of enquirers and learners. To managed change effectively, we aim to continue with our robust self-assessment and continuous improvements using the matrix assessment framework with the understanding that this will continue to provide stability for our IAG services and ensure our maintenance of high quality IAG services across our provision.

HOW:

As part of this assessment, our IAG Coordinator was able to make good use of the self-assessment tools provided by matrix to carry out a comprehensive assessment, with the confidence that these tools provided a structured, methodical approach. Our IAG Coordinator utilised the matrix assessor's written report to produce an action plan, illustrating intended outcomes over a three year period according to importance and capacity. The action plan was discussed with managers and in turn, IAG is now a defined agenda item once a month at both senior and curriculum manager meetings, with reference to the matrix action plan being a priority. This example alone illustrates how matrix has supported us in so many ways and to recognise the value of our IAG services.

Our assessor recognised how various IAG promotional activities took place across the three programmes, but that there was not enough sharing of good practice. This prompted our review of how coordinators and tutors currently share good practice around IAG and used the opportunity to look at how we used 'Course Information Sheets' (CIS). To date, this has resulted in the format and content relating to IAG being standardised and a guide to completing CIS being cascaded to all staff to ensure quality and appropriate information relating to IAG.



IMPACT:

Since the start of this 2018-19 academic year, a new IAG policy has been implemented, defining the purpose of IAG services provided in ALS. Our IAG policy reflects how we place an emphasis on opportunities for independent self-assessment and decision making by providing information and advice that is accessible, impartial, relevant and up to date. Until our assessor made a suggestion to consider the terminology our service used for the people who use our services, such as "learner" we did not distinguish between "enquirer" and "learner", this illustrates how our re-written IAG policy provides a distinction between people who may access our service, resulting in increased clarity amongst staff and customers and differentiated approaches.

Updates to our IAG policy has resulted in an increase in shared understanding of IAG across our programme areas as well partners, enquirers and learners, with greater confidence that IAG is of high quality and more widely embedded. This can be illustrated by the Northamptonshire manager of Futures, who since October 2018, became the provider of the National Careers Service IAG local offer in Northamptonshire, stating that they enjoyed working with a proactive and organised adult learning provider in terms of IAG.

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The matrix assessment process also recognised the importance of capturing tutor and learner influence for how IAG is delivered across our service. This has resulted in IAG representatives from each ALS programme area being established. The impact this has had on our service so far is that; the IAG policy has been shared at team meetings, IAG representatives have contributed to IAG set up process, a vocabulary sheet was recommended and is now in place to help learners prepare for their group IAG where English is not their first language and in turn accessibility to IAG within course groups has been improved. We have also cascaded how staff can access the IAGL2 CPD opportunity and continue to maintain sharing of IAG updates with these representatives.



Learner and tutor influence around IAG is ongoing and to date, our IAG representatives have captured the following feedback:

ALS Tutor – October 2019 - Hi, I had IAG sessions last week at Corby Primary and Danesholme. 'I'd just like to 'put on record' how impressed I was by xxxx. His presentation was perfectly tailored to an audience of non-native speakers and the feedback I received from the learners was highly complementary.

Many of my learners are looking for careers and training guidance and I know they will be in contact with his organisation. Can I request an IAG session for my class at Rockingham Road Primary between now and Christmas, please? My classes run on Thursday mornings 09:15 /11:15.'

I found the course stimulating fun and very educational. Teacher was always available for help and advice.

ALS Learner

Linda is a great tutor, approachable and available for extra advice and help if needed.

ALS Learner

Great course looking forward to do level 3 course.

ALS Learner

Excellent course, already booked the next.

ALS Learner

ALS Tutor – January 2019 - 'First things first - can I just say how pleased I was with your colleague when he visited my class at Rockingham Road Primary last Thursday. The highest compliment I can pay is to say he was every bit as good as yourself! Anyway, I have a new learner at one of my other classes in Corby - Danesholme, you visited them in the autumn. He's a Polish chap with Level 1 English ability. He's been working in a warehouse, like many of my learners but he's a graduate and worked as a graphic designer in Poland. He's really keen to get back into this area of work and I have to say he really is motivated to succeed. Would it be OK for me to put him in touch with you to arrange a 1-2-1?'

I'm sorry I am not able to continue due to my moving to France, but the course has put me in good stead for it.

ALS Learner

The course met expectations and I have registered for the follow-up course in the new year.

ALS Learner

Lovely tutor I felt really relaxed and safe in her presence I now feel ready to take the level 1 course

ALS Learner



Some fantastic upcycled bags from the learners on our sewing course this term. The project was restricted to using only old clothing and belts etc.

April 2019

This is some work recently produced by learners on the 'Art Medicine' course.

Learn2b courses are free of charge to anyone who lives with (or has experienced) a mental health disorder. Diagnosis is not essential. Tutors, who are selected specifically because of their own experiences of mental health illness will support you through a variety of teaching and learning in a safe and welcoming environment. All tutors are qualified in subject matter and passionate about the principles of Learn2b.



March 2019