

REPORT TO: Employment Learning and Skills and Community
PPB

DATE: 9 January 2013

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Children & Enterprise

PORTFOLIO: Economic Development

SUBJECT: Matrix Accreditation

WARDS: All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of the report is to inform Members that the Council's Employment, Learning & Skills Division has been reaccredited with the Matrix Quality Standard. The report also provides Members with information on the assessment criteria and the positive assessment outcome.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS: That

- (1) Members note the contents of the report;
- (2) Welcome the outcome of the assessment;

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background to the Matrix Quality Standard

- 3.1 The purpose of the Matrix Standard is to provide a benchmark for organisations to assess/measure their advice and support services, which ultimately support individuals in their choice of career, learning, work and life goals. The Standard is a requirement for being awarded particular external contracts, for example, the National Careers Service. It is also an advantage for organisations when bidding for other contracts and would certainly contribute positively to an Ofsted inspection.
- 3.2 There are 4 elements in the Matrix Standard:
- Leadership & Management
 - Resources
 - Service Delivery
 - Continuous Quality Improvement
- 3.3 For example, the strategic aim could be to reduce poverty and support the regeneration of the area. The objectives could include engaging with x

number of people, for y% of people to enter learning and for z% of people to gain work.

Inputs could be the processes put in place to manage staff, premises, resources, delivery, etc. Outputs could be interviews, group work sessions, CVs, action plans.

- 3.4 The Leadership & Management assessment element relates to the way in which the organisation is led and managed to develop an effective service.;

The Resources assessment element relate to how assets are invested and applied in providing an effective service.;

The Service Delivery element describes the way in which the service is delivered effectively.

The Continuous Quality Improvement assessment element describes the way in which the service provided is reviewed and improved on an ongoing basis.

- 3.5 Although the Halton People into Jobs (HPIJ) service achieved Matrix re-accreditation in 2010 the Enterprise & Employment Division merged with the Employment, Learning & Skills Division in March 2011, and, therefore, it was considered more appropriate to seek a re-accreditation that encompassed the work of the whole Division and not just HPIJ. A timetable for re-accreditation was agreed within the National Careers Service Delivery Plan as follows:

- Commence Base Line Assessment April 2012
- Submit application for Matrix Assessment by October 2012
- Complete Matrix Assessment by December 2012
- Achieve Matrix Accreditation by March 2013

- 3.6 The Baseline Assessment is a set of questions relating to each of the assessment elements. As part of the assessment process, those seeking the Matrix Standard must complete their Baseline Assessment, which involves examining a number of criteria, defining the current position and identifying a number of actions to achieve the required criteria. All staff within the Employment, Learning & Skills Division contributed to the Baseline Assessment over a period of 8 months (April to November 2012).

- 3.7 Whilst the existing HPIJ Matrix Accreditation was not due to expire until March 2013, the Division took a proactive view that reaccreditation should be sought in advance of this date.

The Matrix Accreditation Assessment

- 3.8 Prior to the 2 day assessment visit, a programme for the 2 days was negotiated with the Registered Matrix Assessor. The Matrix Assessment took place on Monday 3rd and Tuesday 4th December 2012 (9am until 5pm) and included a range of activities as follows:

- One full day spent at Kingsway Learning Centre
- One full day spent at HPIJ offices in Rutland House
- Meetings with individual members of staff including the Operational Director Economy, Enterprise & Property, The Divisional Manager, representatives from the various 'teams' within the Division and others with a responsibility for information, advice and guidance services within the Division
- Meetings with groups of Adult and Family Learning Tutors
- Meetings with groups of Work Programme Advisors and National Careers Service staff
- Meetings with groups of learners
- Meetings with groups of clients that access National Careers Service, Enterprising Halton and Work Programme
- Review of documentation, including plans, policies, marketing materials and client/learner paperwork
- Telephone interviews with key partners (Riverside College, JCP, Halton Housing Trust)

In addition, interim 'feedback' meetings took place on both days, with a final feedback meeting taking place at 4.30pm on the 5th December.

- 3.9 The outcome from the 2 day Matrix Assessment was extremely positive and the service was successful in obtaining Matrix Re-Accreditation for the whole of the Employment, Learning & Skills Division with immediate effect. The results will be published on the Matrix website before the end of December. At the time of writing, the final report was due to be published before the end of December. Feedback received on the 5th December included key strengths/areas of good practice and areas for continuous improvement.

Equally at the time of producing this PPB report the final Matrix report was not yet published, but the Matrix Assessor provided the following verbal feedback:

3.10 Strengths/areas of good practice:

- Clear leadership and direction - leadership and management is a real strength
- Strong coherence between council's vision and priorities and different levels of plans
- Staff know where they fit in the plans/delivery of priorities
- Passionate and committed staff
- Client/learner centred approach
- Empathy and understanding clearly demonstrated by advisors/tutors
- 'Big picture' outlook is clearly and effectively communicated
- Partnership working is an integral part of the division's services, with fruitful relationships on both parts

- Halton Employment Partnership (and how it operates across the borough) is a real strength – “magnificent!”
- Use and management of resources is very effective, from the restructure at the macro level down to management of staff cover, room bookings etc – clearly effective
- Many examples provided by staff during the assessment demonstrate service delivery is highly effective, staff know what works well and why they are doing what they do

3.11 Areas for continuous improvement

- Promoting the services more effectively – shouting about the services on offer
- Agreeing some core outcomes for across the division – the division has clear adult learner and client outcomes, but it would be useful to identify some ‘core’ ones for across all of the division’s services
- Use feedback from clients/learners/employers in marketing materials and during inductions/1:1s with clients/learners
- Informing clients/learners not only about the service they will receive but also about what benefits the service can bring them
- Consider offering front facing staff that do not already have IAG NVQ level 3, an opportunity to gain this qualification.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Achievement of the Matrix Quality Standard will place the Division in an advantageous position when submitting tenders for contracts and or external funding bids relating to employment, learning and skills services are released. This will include from the Department for Work and Pensions and Skills Funding Agency.

4.2 Achievement of the Matrix Quality Standard will also support the Division during Ofsted inspections as it demonstrates that the information, advice and guidance offered to those accessing its services are high quality, inclusive, clearly communicated and related to the organisations strategic priorities.

5.0 **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The recent merger of two Divisions within the council brought all our employment, learning and skills services within one structure and reporting framework. The achievement of the Matrix Quality Standard has cemented this arrangement and evidenced that a consistent standard of information, advice and guidance is being offered to all those accessing the services across the newly created Division.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton**

Whilst the Matrix Quality Standard relates to activities offered to adults, achievement of the standard means that all staff within the Division, whether that be Family Learning tutors working in schools and Children's Centres or Work Programme Advisors working from a council office, are offering a high quality service to the community that they serve.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

Given the main focus for the Division is the delivery of employment, learning and skills services, the achievement of the Matrix Quality Standard is a public recognition that the services offered by the council are of a high standard.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

None

6.4 A Safer Halton

None

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

6.6 Corporate Effectiveness and Business Efficiency

The Matrix Assessment process included the examination of paperwork, policies and plans across all services within the Division. The recent restructure was identified by the Matrix Assessor as an effective use of management and resources.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

Non achievement of the Matrix Quality Standard would have placed the Division at a disadvantage in terms of maintaining existing contracts, bidding for new contracts and demonstrating high quality standards as part of external Ofsted inspections. The risk was minimised by applying for the re-accreditation earlier than actually needed, thus giving the division a 3 month period (December to March 2013) to re-apply should this have been necessary.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

The Matrix Assessor reported that the services offered were inclusive and demonstrated equality and diversity.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act