

Commercial in Confidence



Crackerjack Training Ltd



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1. Assessment Information

Assessment Type	ACCREDITATION REVIEW
Assessor's Decision	STANDARD MET
Assessor's Name	GRAHAM PICKUP
Visit Date	08/05/2018 – 09/05/2018
Client ID	C11348
Assessment Reference	PN103555

2. Organisation – Background, Introduction and Overview

Crackerjack Training (hereafter referred to as the Company) is a training provider which specialises in the provision of training in Childcare through funding by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and Advanced Learning Loans, for adult learners who are not eligible for the ESFA funding. It offers a variety of programmes and apprenticeships including Study Programme (Level 1), Traineeship (Level 2), Apprenticeships (Level 2 & 3), Level 2 and 3 Diplomas in Playwork, Level 5 in Early Years and the TAQA award for Assessors and Verifiers. The Company continues to operate out of offices at 78-79 Francis Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B16 8SP.

In the last 12 months it has introduced the provision of GCSEs in English and Maths, as there was a requirement for learners to have them. This requirement has now been removed but the provision is still relevant for Study Programme learners who need to resit the exams. The changes in the apprenticeship levy meant a significant reduction in fees for the childcare apprenticeship frameworks, which has put a lot of financial pressure on the Company and resulted in one member of staff being made redundant.

The Company is led by the Managing Director and the Finance Director. They are supported by the Senior Operations Manager and the Senior Quality Manager and together they form the senior management team (SMT). The Office Manager joins the SMT meetings to discuss administrative matters.

The Company's aim is to provide high quality vocational training in Childcare and Playwork with the ethos of delivering training and activity needs where they are most wanted.

The Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) service (hereafter referred to as the Service) is provided by staff during marketing activities, the recruitment and enrolment/induction processes, embedded within the delivery of the courses and during reviews held with learners.

3. Strengths

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

- There is effective working together by staff across all areas. The Employment Liaison Officers, Tutors and Assessors all have a clear understanding of how they can best work together to help learners achieve their goals and the Company to meet its targets. (3.2)
- Through the staff team meetings, which all staff attend, staff are provided with a clear direction by the Senior Management. All staff are clear about what the Company is aiming to achieve, and they understand their part in doing that. At these meetings staff also have the opportunity to input their ideas about how the Service could be developed. (1.2, 1.7)

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.

- Some staff have received IAG training but not all. The Company may wish to consider enabling all staff to have access to IAG training appropriate to their role. This could be provided through sessions provided by qualified staff as well as providing access to accredited qualifications. This may help to ensure consistency of service across all areas and help to identify areas for development. (2.4, 4.3)
- The staff meetings are effective at providing leadership and management to staff. The Company may wish to consider including IAG as a regular agenda item for the meetings. This will help to ensure that any IAG issues are raised and discussed, thereby help to identify areas for development of the Service. (1.7, 4.3)
- The Company has its own bespoke system to monitor learner progress. It may wish to consider looking at e-portfolio systems for the apprenticeship courses it delivers. These systems can help with communication between staff, employers and learners, ensuring that all are clear about the progress of the learner and there is no possibility of work being lost, amongst others. (4.7)
- The staff describe the support available to learners at interview, enrolment and induction but not all learners were clear about the IAG service available to them. The Company may wish to consider developing a clear and concise description of the IAG that is available to the learners to ensure they are clear about what is available to them. This could be provided on the website, into literature used at events, in the learner handbooks and portfolios, which could then be used to describe the Service at interviews, enrolment and induction. (3.1)

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 <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.

Telephone conversations and emails with the Managing Director and an Administrator in preparation for the visit including an understanding of the Service.

Site visit	78-79 Francis Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B16 8SP
Staff	14 staff interviews.
Clients	29 client interviews.
Partners	3 partner interviews.
Document review	including website, monitoring statistics, quality assurance and planning documentation.

The Managing Director and the Finance Director attended the feedback meeting at the end of the Review.

6. Aims, Objectives and Outcomes

The Company uses several measures to monitor their performance. These include attendance, retention and achievement.

These measures can vary between course and by month/quarter depending on the targets set by the funding bodies but are usually between 85% to 92%. They are developed each period by the Finance Director and discussed at the management meetings and, when agreed, the staff meetings. For 2016/17 the overall success rate for apprenticeships was 92.7%, compared to 94.0% in 2015/16, this is 3 learners difference. This small reduction was, in part, caused by the lower academic standard of learners coming from schools. The target for 16-18 year old success rates was 92.5% and for adult apprentices 92.4%.

Timely success rates for 2016/17 was 88%, down from 92.2% in the previous year. This has been mainly caused by more learners taking a break in learning for illness and others having to resit GCSEs.

Progression routes for learners are also monitored and for 2016/17, from 85 level 3 achievers, 54 moved into employment with their current employer, 28 moved on to University, 14 into Early Childhood studies, 2 into Early Years Foundation Degree, 4 into Nursing/Midwifery and 8 into teaching. The number of learners progressing into the level 3 Early Years Educator diploma fell in 2015/16 to 66, compared to 88 in 2014/15, but grew again to 82 in 2016/17. This was caused mainly by the changes in GCSE requirements.

For the Study Programmes and Traineeships, the retention levels have been 100% for the past 2 years. For the Study Programme learners 63% progressed to a Traineeship, Apprenticeship or employment and 26% progressed into full time education. For the Traineeship learners 88% progressed into apprenticeships and 12% into full time education. These levels are in line with the targets set by the Company, for example 65% of Study Programme/Traineeship learners to move into employment/apprenticeship.

Learner progress is closely monitored by staff in all programmes and courses. This is done in meetings with the learners, at 1 to 1s with the Manager and at staff meetings. Staff use the Company's system to track progress. A learner who is not progressing will be identified as a 'Cause For Concern' (CFC).

Learners who are a CFC will have a meeting with the Senior Quality Manager, actions will be identified and taken as appropriate. These can include, for example, the apprentice not being allowed time to do their work for the qualification by the employer. In these situations, staff will hold discussions with the employer to help make time for the learner or look at supporting the learner with more frequent visits. If a learner is absent through illness or other personal matters the Company may allow them a break in learning until they have been able to recover from the illness or resolve the issue.

In the Study Programme and Traineeships attendance of learners is a key indicator of success and this is closely monitored by staff, with the learners and at staff meetings. If a drop off in attendance is identified, then the staff will follow up with the learner to identify any causes and any actions to help improve attendance will be taken. This can include contacting the parent/carer to agree what support is required, or staff providing extra support through more regular visits.

7. Detailed Findings

1. Leadership and Management

The way in which the organisation is led and managed to develop an effective service

The Company communicates its aims to staff through management meetings and team meetings. At the meetings, staff can discuss the aims of the Company and how the service they provide to the learners helps to support those aims. The Company also communicates any changes it may be making to staff at these meetings and through emails. Staff were clear about the aims of the service they provide and how it supports the aims of the Company. They described how by providing an effective service to learners, they help the learners to achieve their outcomes including successfully completing their qualification, progressing to higher qualifications and into employment.

Staff have the policies of the Company explained to them at their induction, including Safeguarding, Prevent, Health and Safety, Confidentiality and Equality and Diversity when they join the Company. Staff ensure that learners are clear about these policies and understand how the policies affect them. Staff were able to give examples of the way the policies are implemented, for example notifying the Safeguarding Officer about any potential safeguarding issues. The staff are briefed on any changes at the staff meetings and through emails.

Learners become aware of the Company through friends, employers, websites such as the .Gov website for apprenticeships, schools, colleges and other organisations such as local authorities. The Company promotes itself through its website, leaflets, social media, schools' events and apprenticeship/careers events. Many of the Traineeship learners and Apprentices come through applications for an apprenticeship and Study Programme learners come through schools, friends and family.

Staff were able to describe how they had made suggestions about how to develop the service, through the staff meetings, 1 to 1 meetings with their manager and informal communication at any time. Learners described how they made suggestions through feedback, including informal verbal feedback, through the group representative and written via feedback forms. This feedback is reviewed at management and team meetings and examples of changes made as a response to this are described later in the report under Continuous Quality Improvement.

The Company have developed many effective links with partners, including employers, various other support services, for example Edward's Trust, and schools amongst others. They work with these partners in several different ways, for example, they will work with schools by supporting their careers events, they work with employers to help apprentices identify the right qualification for them in relation to their role and complete the qualification and find an appropriate work placement for Traineeship and Study Programme learners.

2. Resources

The assets invested and applied in providing an effective service

The resourcing of the Service is determined by the plans and funding available and is monitored at the management meetings. The Assessors have caseloads, which may vary with the time the Assessor has been in post, the number of hours they work and allowing for any other responsibilities the Assessor may have. Staff will cover more than one area, for example an Assessor also covers IQA responsibilities and the Office Manager teaches ICT. The Service also employ staff on part-time and full-time bases, depending on the needs and resources of the Company.

Information is provided to potential learners and learners by staff, through websites, brochures, letters, print outs, phone calls and by email. This can be provided at events, at interviews, at learner induction, at meetings the learner has with staff or at any time the learner requests it. The information describes the qualifications, the options available, other services they could access, finance options and details regarding vacancies in which they are interested. At learner induction, more detailed information is provided, regarding the qualification, the options available to the learner and what is expected of them. The information provided is checked by staff to ensure it is up to date, accurate and is understandable by the learners. Learners stated that the information they had received was relevant to them and up to date. They confirmed that the staff take them through the information as required to ensure they understand it.

The Company looks to employ staff as per the competencies required by the job role. This includes appropriate qualifications, occupational competence, values that match those of the Company for example, flexible, good team workers, understand how to engage with learners and with a passion to help people build their confidence and achieve. The Company will recruit people who require some training providing they meet the other requirements. Staff were clear about their roles and their boundaries, knowing what their responsibilities are and when to refer to a colleague.

Staff have their development needs identified at their 1 to 1 appraisals and reviews with their manager, in line with the needs of their role. The Company will support staff in doing whatever CPD is appropriate. Staff have training in specific areas, such as Safeguarding, Prevent, Equality and Diversity and British Values to enable them to support learners more effectively in those areas. The Company supports other training for staff, examples of courses taken by staff include, qualifications in subjects the staff member teaches in including up to degree level, Assessor qualifications, teaching qualifications and other short courses such as awareness of Autism, ADHD and Dyslexia, which were delivered by an associate who provides the SEND support for learners.

A new staff member goes through an initial induction process. During this they are given the Company Handbook, go through the Company's policies and procedures and the Company's aims. They meet colleagues and are set up on the Company systems. The new staff member will shadow colleagues until it is decided, in agreement with their manager, that they can start to work on their own. This is when Assessors will be given a small caseload. There are regular meetings with their manager to review progress and identify any development needs through the 6-month probation period, this can be extended if required. Staff confirmed that the induction process worked for them and they were confident about performing their role within the probation period, with support from colleagues and their manager as required.

3. Service Delivery

The way in which the service is delivered effectively

Staff describe the Service available to the learners at the interviews and their induction, Tutors and Assessors also ensure the learner is clear about the Service when they first meet with the learner at the start of their course. Learners stated they understood the service available to them, what they could expect to receive from the Service including helping them understand what support they could expect to receive. Examples include explaining how often they will meet with staff and ensuring they understand the full range of support available to them from the staff.

Potential learners will call the Company, apply through a website or meet staff at events. They will be invited to come into the Company for a taster event, when they can get a more detailed understanding of what is involved in the course they are interested in. If they decide to apply they will be invited for an interview, which can be held at the taster event. At the interview they are provided with the information they need about the courses and the Service. They are also asked about what they are interested in to ensure the courses on offer are right for them, if not they will be signposted to other training providers, for example Gordon Franks, or local colleges for courses more relevant to what they want to do. They will also have an initial assessment to identify their strengths and weaknesses in English and Maths.

The course they decide upon will be defined to some extent by the level of qualifications they already have. Some learners decide to take the level 2 Traineeship instead of the level 2 Apprenticeship as it is a quicker route to get to the level 3 Apprenticeship. If a learner needs to resit their GCSEs, they will have to take one of the Study Programmes offered. At this stage if any barriers to learning are identified the learner may be referred to other services for support, for example CAMS, MIND, St. Basils for homelessness and the local health centre.

For the apprenticeship qualifications, staff will discuss the vacancy with the applicants and ask them about their interests and goals to ensure the qualification and job is appropriate for them. Staff will also help the candidate with their CV in preparation for the interview with the employer. Learners can do a trial session with the employer to help ensure the candidate is right for the role and the employer is right for the learner. Once they start on the job an assessor is allocated to the learner. At the first visit the assessor will take the learner through the induction process and again will try to identify any potential barriers to learning and any additional support the learner needs. The assessor will work with the learner to help them develop their Individual Learning Plan (ILP), which includes the goals the learner is aiming to achieve. The Assessor will visit the learner every 8-10 weeks, or more often if required, and meet up with the learner when they are in the classroom in-between those times. The Assessor will also discuss progression opportunities appropriate to the learner as they progress through their qualification, for example higher level qualifications and different career pathways the learner could consider. Towards the end of the qualification the plan is revisited and next steps for the learner are identified, which will help the learner progress towards their goals.

For the study programme and Traineeship learners have the Service explained to them at the initial interview, including what they can expect and what is expected of them. Learners can have taster sessions to help them in deciding if the programme is right for them. When they decide it is right for them they have a session with a member of staff when the options

available to the learner are discussed, the learner will be assessed for their Functional Skills levels and the Individual Learner Plan will be developed with the learner. Staff will hold regular, one to one, reviews with the learner when they will discuss any issues the learner faces, progression with respect to the plan is reviewed and any changes to goals will be discussed. The learners are also supported in finding work experience opportunities, with the aim that it will help the learner gain experience in an area they want to work in. If a learner is not happy with a placement, it is possible they will be found another, which is more in line with their aspirations. Towards the end of the programme staff will discuss possible next steps with the learner. These can include going back to college, finding a job or returning to the programme for a second year.

For learners interested in progressing on to University the Managing Director will support the learner with their UCAS application including their personal statement and looking at different Universities.

Staff ensure the learner understands the information they are provided at any time by using the internet, phone, email and paperwork as appropriate.

If a learner has other issues that require support staff cannot help with, they will be referred or signposted to other services. This can include support in relation to drug abuse, mental health and homelessness. Learners reported that they found referrals to external services helpful in keeping them on the programme.

Comments made by learners include,

'I was told about Crackerjack by my school. They invited me in for a taster, which help me a lot'

'I got a pack with lots of good information in it'

'They ask me to come for an interview, I got all the information about the courses and decided to do the Traineeship'

'They gave me all the information, but it was up to me to decide'

'We talked about what I wanted to do, and they showed me my options'

'I didn't have a clue what I wanted to do, they helped me understand my options and so I have decided I want to work with children with disabilities'

4. Continuous Quality Improvement

The way in which the service provided is reviewed and improved on an ongoing basis

The Company collects feedback from learners and staff as previously described. This feedback is reviewed at management meetings, team meetings and meetings with partners. Any improvements identified are actioned as appropriate. Examples of changes made include: the development of the breakfast club for learners to help them when they are taking exams, improvement of the IT facilities for learners and the development of support for learners through email, phone, WhatsApp and texts,

The Company meets with partners to review the effectiveness of the service provided, to review performance against expectations or contracts where appropriate and to discuss developments of service provision, which includes identifying improvements that the Company and the partner can make. These reviews identify the level of support provided to learners, how learners are progressing and any areas for improvement. Partners confirmed that the Service is responsive to their comments and suggestions, for example the Assessors will meet with learners to suit their work patterns to minimise their time off the job and the Company is flexible with respect to the 20% off the job requirement, adjusting to accommodate the employers' busy times.

The Company uses several methods to assure the quality of its service. The IQAs sample documentation and carry out observations, and feedback is provided to the Assessors in 1 to 1 Mentor meetings with the Senior Quality Manager. The IQAs also attend standardisation meetings with the Tutors and Assessors to discuss any findings. At these meetings staff will identify good practice and any issues that need addressing. Any actions required will be identified and actioned with the staff concerned. From these areas issues are identified and have been fed into a Self-Assessment Report.

Objectives for staff are set at the annual appraisals with their manager and are reviewed at the 6 monthly reviews. Staff understand how their performance relates to helping learners achieving their goals, for example helping learners identify if the programme is right for them, helping learners select the correct course or units for them and helping to ensure they successfully complete their qualification. Staff described how they contributed to the Company's objectives through achieving their own objectives by providing help and support to their learners to help them successfully complete their qualification and progress after completing the programme or course.

The Company uses several systems to help ensure they are supporting the learners as much as possible. These include an in-house system to help track progress of learners and BKSB to assess functional skills levels for learners.

The Company regularly monitors and reviews its performance, partnership effectiveness, performance of staff and learner progress and achievement, at both formal meetings and informally, to identify areas for improvement. Examples of improvements to the Service have been mentioned throughout the report.

8. Conclusion

The Company has demonstrated that it meets all areas of the standard. It has a good reputation with partners and learners and provides good leadership to staff. This helps to ensure the staff work well together in providing learners with effective support. There are several areas of continuous improvement identified including broadening the IAG training amongst the staff and developing a clear and concise description of the IAG provided by the Company.

9. The matrix Standard Evidence Grid

Element 1 Criteria		Met	Not Met	Strength	AfD
1.1	The service has clearly defined measurable aims and objectives which link to any wider organisational strategic aims.	✓			
1.2	The service is provided with clear leadership and direction	✓		✓	
1.3	The organisation implements policies to promote equality and diversity, impartiality, confidentiality and professional integrity in all aspects of service delivery	✓			
1.4	The organisation complies with existing and new legislation which might impact upon the service	✓			
1.5	The organisation defines client outcomes and uses them as a measure of success for the service	✓			
1.6	The organisation promotes the service in ways which are accessible to all those eligible to use it	✓			
1.7	Clients and staff influence the design and development of the service	✓		✓	✓
1.8	The organisation establishes effective links with other appropriate partnerships and networks to enhance the service	✓			

Element 2 Criteria		Met	Not Met	Strength	AfD
2.1	The organisation uses its resources effectively to deliver the service	✓			
2.2	Clients are provided with current, accurate and quality assured information which is inclusive	✓			
2.3	The organisation defines the skills, knowledge, competencies and qualifications, in line with current national recognised professional qualifications and frameworks, for individual staff roles, linked to the aims and objectives of the service	✓			
2.4	Staff are supported in undertaking continuous professional development and provided with opportunities for career progression	✓			✓
2.5	Effective induction processes are in place for all staff	✓			

Element 3 Criteria		Met	Not Met	Strength	AfD
3.1	The service is defined so that clients are clear about what they might expect	✓			✓
3.2	The service is delivered effectively to meet its aims and objectives	✓		✓	
3.3	The service provided is impartial and objective	✓			
3.4	Clients are given appropriate options to explore and understand that they are responsible for making their own decisions	✓			
3.5	When exploring options, clients are provided with and supported to use appropriate resources including access to technology	✓			
3.6	Clients benefit from signposting and referral to other appropriate agencies or organisations	✓			

Element 4 - Criteria		Met	Not Met	Strength	AfD
4.1	The organisation measures and evaluates the service against its stated aims and objectives and identifies improvements	✓			
4.2	The organisation monitors and evaluates client outcomes to support and improve service delivery	✓			
4.3	The organisation evaluates feedback on the service to build upon its strengths and addresses any areas for improvement	✓			✓
4.4	The organisation evaluates the effectiveness of its partnerships and networks to improve the service	✓			
4.5	The organisation defines quality assurance approaches which are used to improve the service	✓			
4.6	Staff performance, linked to their role within the aims and objectives of the service, are reviewed and evaluated to improve the service	✓			
4.7	Effective use is made of technology to improve the service	✓			✓
4.8	The organisation continually reviews improvements to help inform the future aims and objectives of the service	✓			

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@assessmentservices.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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