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quality standard for information advice and guidance services

Assessment Report

ELATT

The Growth Company

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ASSESSMENT INFORMATION	
Assessment Type	Review Assessment
Assessor's Decision	Standard Met
Assessor's Name	Janet Lewis-Jones
Evidence Gathering/Assessment Date/s	8th & 9th May 2024
Client ID and Assessment Reference	PN202369 - C10975
Accreditation Review to be conducted by	8th July 2027

METHODOLOGY	
Evidence gathering	Online interviews with staff, partners and learners; review of documentation, exploration of website and social media
Staff interviews	Interview with 9 personnel including CEO, Head of MIS and all key IAG delivery staff
Recipient interviews	16 learners in three groups – one group for each area of learning
Partner interviews	4 partners representing different aspects of delivery
Document review	Strategy, self-assessment report (SAR), quality improvement plan (QIP), IAG statement of service, IAG procedure, employer engagement strategy, KPIs, destination data

About the organisation

ELATT (East London Advanced Technology Training) is a registered charity, established in the early 1980s, with the mission statement 'ELATT inspires people to achieve the skills they need to flourish in life and work'. Its charitable objectives are 'the education and training of young persons and adults in Hackney, Tower Hamlets and other disadvantaged areas of London in the skills essential for adult and working life, including information and communications technology'; and 'the provision of advice, guidance and support so that such persons may benefit from education, training and employment'. ELATT has held **matrix** Accreditation continuously since 2006 and is graded 'outstanding' by Ofsted. The organisation's current strategic plan 2024 to 2027 has three key objectives – 'Meeting Needs, Enabling Progression, Funding and Sustainability'. As part of 'enabling progression' ELATT will 'focus on the social integration, personal independence and employment outcomes… enabling progression to further learning and training, work experience, employment and apprenticeships' – this gives the context for IAG delivery within the organisation.

ELATT has three main delivery areas – Adult Vocational Courses, Adult Life Skills Courses and a 6th Form targeted at young people who have found it difficult to engage with larger more mainstream colleges. ELATT's vocational courses include business administration and a range of IT & digital programmes; life skills courses comprise a suite of ESOL courses with specific focus on maths, English or digital skills. In the last full academic year, ELATT supported 194 vocational learners, 623 life skills learners and 62 sixth form students - 29 of whom had EHCPs in place, many were neurodiverse, and most were unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees.

ELATT maintains its training centre in Hackney, East London, as well as delivering from third party venues across neighbouring boroughs. Since the global pandemic, ELATT has continued to deliver many programmes online, and now has a hybrid model of delivery. Staff also work in a hybrid model which has freed up space at the training centre allowing for new classroom space to be created.

A small number of areas for development and improvement were identified at the last assessment against the **matrix** Standard. These were reviewed through the annual continuous improvement checking (CIC) process. Significant progress has been made in relation to providing qualification 'road maps' for each programme offered, with hyperlinks through to NCS information about salary levels and related progression pathways; following up both graduates and early leavers enables ELATT to better capture destinations; and data is now collected across a more holistic range of impact measures, including questions around wellbeing.

The Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)

There is a clear IAG statement of service (purpose – 'to make sure that all our students have free, quality advice and guidance both at the stage of enrolling at ELATT and progressing to their next step'), accompanied by a detailed IAG

procedure that ensures that all learners and prospective learners have equitable access to consistent IAG provision. Whilst a range of staff might be involved in providing basic information and responding to queries, IAG is predominantly provided by the Student Support Manager and Business Recruitment Officer in relation to onboarding and ongoing support, and, new since the last assessment, the team of five Employability Advisors (who are also tutors). ELATT also has a range of embedded specialist advisors (employed by partner organisations) – Careers, Welfare, Finance & Debt.

All prospective learners will have an introductory IAG session to explore their goals and aspirations in relation to the course they are applying for, as the IAG statement of service notes – 'your first Advice session we will talk about what you want to achieve, and how we can help you do that'. The Student Support Manager or Business Recruitment Officer helps the individual to identify an appropriate programme and helps them to complete an application form. There is then an assessment of current skills level. Based on the result of this the individual will be enrolled onto the chosen course, or will receive further IAG around alternative options – 'Depending on the result of your assessment you will either be enrolled on the course, or the assessor will discuss your assessment result with you and offer advice on further courses or jobs if necessary'.

Also as part of this enrolment process barriers to learning are explored. This might result in referral to one of the embedded specialist advisors or other local provision. It might also include the loaning of equipment (laptops) or an application to ELATT's welfare fund to cover the cost of small items of expenditure.

The Student Support Manager and Business Recruitment Officer remain available to learners throughout their journey and support teaching staff in picking up any issues, including contacting learners who fall away to ascertain if there is anything they can help with to enable that learner to return to programme. This might include referring the learner to the new Wellbeing Service or the specialist advisors.

Towards the end of the course the Student Support Manager and Business Recruitment Officer are included in helping the learner to identify next steps – 'Towards the end of each course, an advisor from our Student Support team will meet with you to discuss your next steps, at ELATT or elsewhere'. They are also responsible for following up with students post-graduation to capture destination information and offer further IAG as appropriate.

Since the last assessment, ELATT has introduced a team of Employability Advisors. Vocational and life skills learners can ask to be referred for employability support and will be allocated to one of the advisors for one-to-one support in areas such as job search, CVs, personal statements, personal branding, volunteering and interview skills. Employability is also embedded in some ESOL classes. For 6th Form students, they are all automatically supported by a level 7 Careers Advisor employed by Prospects but embedded in ELATT.

Another key aspect of ELATT's IAG delivery is its partnerships with employers. ELATT has strong and longstanding relationships with many major employers who then support the organisation in various ways. One of the ways they are involved is in providing 'real life experiences' for learners, and providing feedback (IAG) in relation to CVs and mock interviews for example. "A much higher number of students are getting employer engagement now". Trustees have also been involved – "We had trustees providing feedback on mock interviews – each did five or six level 3 students".

It is clearly understood that IAG provision directly relates to ELATT's overall impact. Staff described how it was essential to ensure that learners were on the correct course relative to their starting point and aims, and that any barriers to learning were identified and addressed, and this they said was the main purpose of IAG delivery "both at the beginning, but also throughout".

A number of staff commented that for many learners the IAG included "a reality check", helping people to temper their ambitions to more realistic short term goals, and to "think of it more as a journey towards their overall ambitions". They also noted how exposure to different experiences (including employer engagement) supported IAG delivery by providing context and "a sense of possibility".

The difference the IAG makes to recipients and the overall impact

The impact of IAG provision is considered as part of the overall impact of ELATT's offer. The main vehicle for considering this is retention and destination data. In the last full academic year, ELATT achieved an impressive 95.2% retention rate – given the demographic of ELATT's learners, the complex and multiple barriers they face, including insecurity of residence – this is admirable.

Achievement is also high – 96%. And learners go on to achieve a variety of outcomes – 74% progress to the next level programme; 10% progress to a mainstream FE provider, 1% go on to HE; overall 89% achieve a positive outcome. In addition, 18% undertake voluntary work, 21% work experience placements, and 68% become involved in the community. Around 50 individuals gained employment or supported internships.

ELATT also uses its database – ProMonitor - to capture soft outcomes/progression, this clearly shows improvements across all measures term by term. Parameters include confidence, ability to deal with problems, feeling good about self, mental health, and career vision.

Learners interviewed described the difference that being part of ELATT had made to them: "I did not know how things work here, in this country. ELATT has made me know this now"; "I did not know what I could do with work, I was a [profession] in my home country, I knew I could not do that here, but they help me find something where I use the skills"; "I did not used to go out much, confidence no good, now I am

very confident"; "I know how to talk to GP, teachers. I know how to look for work. I know so much now".

Staff gave examples of how they had supported learners to engage and succeed: "I had one lady, an asylum seeker, whose English was OK, but she needed a job to supplement her income. She was a mum to three, so also had that to consider. I introduced her to the Working Mums website, we looked at some jobs together, put together a CV… did interview practice, and now she has a seven hours a week role"; "We're seeing a lot more highly skilled and qualified people as a result of changes to immigration rules. The IAG for them is often focussed on UK recruitment practices and where to look for work"; "Often course information, ours and other providers, quite literally gets lost in translation, we do a lot of explaining, making sure they sign up for what it is they are looking to do"; "Some examples from my caseload include a lady who started at entry level ESOL who is now a SEND teacher, another who is a TA after having progressed to ELATT's TA course, and someone else who progressed to volunteering with ELATT who is now something in the City".

Partners described how ELATT complemented or supplemented their own provision and how this provided "… a holistic approach, with a good range of progression opportunities".

What is working particularly well

A number of strengths/areas that are working particularly well were identified during the assessment, which are detailed below. The numbers in brackets refer to the element and criteria of the **matrix** Standard.

- ELATT attracts and welcomes a particularly broad demographic of learners – many spoken to described how their experience with ELATT was a stark contrast to their experience with other providers and agencies. One interviewee described how ELATT was "like the United Nations, just about every country and nationality represented". Another noted how other colleges he had applied to had refused him due to his immigration status, but how "this was no problem" for ELATT. There is a nominated Inclusion Officer for refugees and asylum seekers. "We focus on those rejected by the marketplace… our differentiated approach means that have a place here with us" said a staff member. The IAG provided helps those who find it the hardest to engage with learning to succeed. Many examples were provided of learners who may have started at ESOL pre-entry or Entry Level 1 and progressed to jobs in the City, or within the NHS (1.3, 3.2)
- ELATT has continued to develop its employer engagement, offering employers a menu of different ways to become involved (captured in the Employer Engagement Strategy). This creates real opportunities for learners – having direct contact with a range of employers building their confidence and understanding of recruitment practice, the opportunity to receive feedback on CVs and interviews, tasters and placements, and in a number of cases jobs. This engagement is

supported by robust employability IAG sessions so that learners can make the most of opportunities. A number of learners interviewed described the benefits they had derived from attending an event in the previous week with UBS – “A lot of information and guidance directly from the company” (2.7)

- ELATT has a strong focus on learner and staff wellbeing with many initiatives and approaches in place. Since the last assessment a specific wellbeing service has been introduced for learners that staff are also able to access. This comprises a qualified counsellor and a mindfulness practitioner (funded through the NHS) that offer both a one to one and a group service including social prescribing. Learners are ‘surveyed’ to explore levels of happiness, resilience, and confidence & ability to access support. ELATT also has a contract with Plumm Health through which staff can access free one to one counselling. Uptake of this is monitored (78 people accessing 95 sessions in last 8 months) and patterns and trends identified to identify any areas that ELATT might address internally and flag any potential safeguarding issues. “They are very mindful of your personal circumstances and try to accommodate those, such as changing meeting times. A very caring employer” said a staff member. “All trustees have had up to date safeguarding training so that they can properly hold us to account… ask the right questions” said another; “They were brilliant over a recent section 47 case… really worked with us, and supported the student throughout” said a partner (1.5)
- ELATT continues to provide wrap around IAG and support for learners (which staff can also access) through third party partnerships that provide an embedded Welfare Advisor, an embedded Finance & Debt Advisor, and an embedded L7 Careers Advisor. This ensures that learners have access to guidance that helps them address barriers to engagement and achievement. The two key personnel involved in IAG delivery are completing mental health first aid training. ELATT also continues to offer small grants to individuals for specific items, and provides equipment such as laptops to enable access and engagement. Further ELATT has created a culture within which students feel empowered to ask for assistance, and support staff, particularly the two main IAG advisors, remain very visible to and in touch with learners to facilitate this (1.4, 1.5, 2.7)
- There is excellent support for personal development, with many examples of individuals progressing from learner to volunteer to staff member, with ELATT supporting training, experiences and qualifications to facilitate this. This acts as an inspiration to current learners, as well as adding to a sense of ‘belonging’ for learners, of shared lived experience, which in turn contributes to learner aspirations, motivation and achievement. Examples include one of the current employability advisors who already holds careers guidance qualifications being supported to explore HE level upgrades, another being supported to undertake the L5 Education & Training qualification, the mindfulness practitioner was originally a learner. The SAR notes ‘…some 25% of our workforce – including teaching assistants, outreach managers and teachers - began their journey at ELATT as students and volunteers, and many now occupy senior roles within the

organisation. In this way we keep connected to our local community whether working online or in person' (2.4)

- ELATT makes efforts to stay in touch with past learners and early leavers to both track their progression, but also to re-offer engagement and additional IAG. "We recently went through three years' worth of non-progressors to see if they wanted to come back to us". This enables the organisation to capture the impact of the provision, but also helps to reduce the number of people who 'drop through the net' – all contributing to ELATT's goals and objectives around making learning as accessible as possible and supporting people to achieve. One learner noted "When you join ELATT it is like joining a family, you stay part of that family", a staff member noted "There have been some genuine friendships developed through ELATT… students pop in years after they completed". (3.2, 4.6)

Development suggestions

Development suggestions are offered in the spirit of continuous improvement and a way for an Assessor to add value e.g. where the service is of a high quality, development areas are offered to help the service be even better than it already is, or to give insight into practices seen elsewhere. There is no correlation between the number of strengths and development suggestions. Where development areas are greater in number this is not intended to indicate that the information, advice and guidance service is in any way lacking. 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. The numbers in brackets refer to the element and criteria of the **matrix** Standard.

- Staff described how they hoped to be able to support more learners to achieve a growing range of qualifications. They also commented on how the support needs of learners and barriers they face have become more complex. "Our 6th Form has gone from around 40% higher needs students to 60%, our ESOL students are more likely to be recently arrived non-EU, and our adult learners have gone from around 15% disclosing mental health needs to more like 25%"; "We're having to do more to keep them on course, a lot more 'non-starters' or early leavers… new mental health issues arising whilst on the course. More intensive input overall". It will be important moving forward to keep the capacity of the Student Support Team under review to ensure that ELATT is able to continue to provide the breadth and quality of support that it currently offers (2.6)
- 6th Form students indicated that they would like more input around what their next steps might 'be like' – the IAG they have received about what their next steps might be is clear and comprehensive, but they commented that they would welcome something more 'experiential', what those next steps might look and feel like. Ideas explored in the feedback session included visits to unis' open days/sitting in on a lecture, possibly contacting SEND personnel within unis to

arrange for ELATT learners to meet students, or inviting back ELATT alumni who had progressed to HE to share their experiences with current learners. This might be something ELATT could explore (4.2, 4.5)

- Vocational learners commented that they would like more input around careers guidance and employability. They expressed an appetite for one to one support around career planning and job search/applications. They did not seem to be aware of the opportunity to access employability IAG through ELATT. This might be something ELATT could look at reinforcing. It also seems that a small number of learners who had engaged with a third-party provider did not receive feedback on CVs submitted. This should be followed up (3.1)
- Dedicated employability tutoring/coaching is a new development since the last assessment. Existing tutors have taken on the role. ELATT might consider investing in the skills development of these personnel through engagement with the Institute of Employability Professionals (or similar) either through membership or through accessing CPD (2.5)
- A staff member noted that the number of non-progressors has grown over the last year – “You might get 100 applications, that results in say 16 enrolments, but then only 10 who stay on course. We’ve already identified that this is something we need a strategy to address”. Looking at what sits behind this drop in conversion rates to see if there is anything from an IAG perspective that can be improved would be useful (4.3)

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3. Complete annual continuous improvement checks in a timely way, it is expected these will be carried out annually by the accreditation anniversary date.
4. Inform The Growth Company or their Assessor if the key contact name/contact details change.
5. 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.
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