







## Organisation – Introduction, Aims, Objectives and Outcomes

Workers' Educational Association (WEA) is a registered charity that delivers adult learning, employability, and skills training in England and Scotland. WEA provides its learners with an Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Service and this is embedded in all the non-leisure learning provision. This was the scope of the **matrix** Accreditation Review. WEA receives Adult Education Budget (AEB) through the ESFA and the Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCA) such as Peterborough and Cambridgeshire but not all e.g. Tees Valley Combined Authority which determine skills priorities through planning with local authorities and employers groups in the region. During lockdowns WEA provided online learning through Zoom and IAG support by email, video, and phone. Feedback from learners is very positive about this provision and learners interviewed felt they had been supported well over the previous year, emphasising how much support they had. Access was hampered by the problem of digital poverty and poor Wi-Fi signals in some areas. Partnership working is essential to WEA's success and there was evidence of good referral and good practice sharing between community groups and partners.

Since the last **matrix** Accreditation Review held in 2019 there has been considerable change in the organisation. A new Leadership Team is in place and new strategy, formulated during 19/20 is now well in motion. The changes brought about are principally around strategic direction and delivery priorities. With the advent of Mayoral Combined Authorities the control of the AEB has moved from ESFA, and WEA has had to tender for contracts to operate its learning offer. This has also had to change to meet the policy priorities of the new MCAs. The Skills Agenda is the major theme running through all MCA priorities and WEA has been successful in several of these bidding processes. The key is continuing to provide the means to upskill local people to ensure they can compete successfully. This meant WEA has had to re-prioritise its learning offer to fit the need to improve employability among job-

WEA's mission is 'To bring adult education within reach of everyone who needs it, fighting inequality and promoting social justice' and this inspires the ethos of the organisation. Staff interviewed said this drew them to the organisation to work alongside other committed staff and be ambassadors for Adult Learning. From the Mission operational objectives including IAG, are included in the Self-Assessment Review (SAR) and Quality improvement Plan (QIP). These determine the Key Performance Indicators: achievement, retention, and progression. Tutors ensure information is provided that will enable learners better access other opportunities and aid progression. Objectives

Examples of monitoring came from the regions assessed. The East Midlands Region, for example, provided a clear breakdown of KPIs and outcomes in 19/20 and included an analysis of Achievement (79%), and Retention (93%). Given that many of the learners are operating at entry level and are ESOL learners and are from the most deprived wards these figure

The Quality Assurance processes and procedures are robust, and processes appeared comprehensive and appropriate. Regions provided much evidence to show how these were followed. The ethos behind Quality control in WEA gives considerable confidence in the organisation. Funders also expressed their pleasure with reporting mechanisms and felt they received secure and reliable monitoring and outturn information. The Impact Report continues to be a rich source of performance data and also contains very good coverage of intent and impact, as well as cogent stories of individual learners success, often against considerable barriers.

During the **matrix** Assessment Review it was evident that at an individual and a strategic level WEA has in place very effective approaches to IAG delivery and continuous quality improvement. Partners and learners commented on the way that WEA is always looking to improve, and it is suggested that continuing joint activity could develop with partners around the demand for creative employability training, and curriculum areas that will continue to be attractive to learners in the future. These will obviously be dependent on continuation funding and successful bidding but WEA's model of learning is effective and is critical to bringing learners and communities into education and training that otherwise would have very little access to IAG support and opportunities. The advocacy role of the WEA on behalf of learners who may have a voice but are rarely listened to, is vital. From the evidence of this **matrix** Accreditation Review WEA is in a very good position to move forward and contribute ever more cogently to the Skills Agenda and Adult Learning in general.

## Strengths

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

WEA provides clear leadership for **Adult Learning** with very good direction, communication, and decision making. The Strategy document 'We Are WEA' is clear and inspiring. WEA has an excellent reputation for delivery and very good learner outcomes. (1.1,1.2)

Partners interviewed consistently praised the quality of delivery and the high standard of support for learners. Partners cited the professionalism and enthusiasm of staff and their positive attitude. Excellent communication featured strongly in the feedback provided for the **matrix** Accreditation Review and funding partners supported (positive impact) responses to requests for additional delivery. There was much respect for the staff of WEA in evidence from partners. (1.8, 2.1, 3.2)

There was much evidence of personal progression, especially for learners whose self-belief had been low. Initial Assessment is robust and provides assurance that most learners are enrolled on the right course. Initial Assessment is mandatory and this seems vital to ensuring retention and achievement are 'on track'. ESOL learners were clear about the career pathways identified through high quality IAG. Partners also noted how well WEA achieved progression even from areas of high deprivation. (1.5, 2.1, 3.2)

There is a strong compliance and quality culture in WEA, and WEA staff maintain a robust Quality Assurance system. The commitment to continuous improvement through the **matrix** Standard is embedded in all activities in delivery and reinforced by WEA values. (4.2, 4.3, 4.8)

Communications within WEA has improved considerably and staff interviewed commented on

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## Methodology

The following methods were used to gather evidence against the **matrix** Standard during the assessment process. All interviews were carried out by telephone or by Zoom video link.

Initial discussions with the Learning and IAG Manager to identify scope

Opening meeting with the Learning and IAG Manager

### **Interviews with Central Services:**

Chief Executive and General Secretary

Director of Quality and Learner Services

Head of Learner Services

Director of Education: Employability & Skills

Director of Education: Community Learning

EME and Curriculum Manager

Director of Marketing, Membership and Income Growth

Digital Marketing Manager

Digital Development Manager and Learning Technologists

Head of Quality and Performance, Tutor Training and Development Manager, Quality, Performance and Training Administrator

Research Manager

Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

### **Interviews in three Regions: East Midlands, North West and West Midlands**

Regional Managers (3)

Senior Area Education Managers (6)

Area Education Managers (6)

Education Coordinators (10)

Tutors (18)

Education Support Staff (4)

### **Total number of WEA Staff interviewed: 64**

Twenty delivery and funding partners

## Conditions of Accreditation

Holders of the **matrix** Standard Accreditation must:

1. Maintain and continually improve upon their services.
2. Throughout the period of accreditation satisfy The Growth Company that the organisation continues to meet the requirements of the