

Merton Home Tutoring Service



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Assessment Information

Assessment Type	Initial Assessment
Assessor's Decision	Standard Met
Assessor's Name	Janette Russon
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Organisation – Introduction, Aims, Objectives and Outcomes

Merton Home Tutoring Service (*referred to as MHTS or the organisation throughout this report*) was registered as a charity in July 2010. Since 2009, it has *'provided free English lessons to adults living in and around the London borough of Merton in their own homes or small classes'*. The organisation's primary objective is *'to advance the education of adults living in the London Borough of Merton and neighbouring boroughs who do not speak English as their first language and who find it difficult to attend formal classes'*.

The organisation describes its vision as follows:-

- *'To give learners the opportunity to learn English for everyday use*
- *To build confidence in the use of English and help to reduce social isolation, and build independence*
- *To help learners to understand more about the UK, its systems, cultural customs, and people*
- *To encourage all learners to move towards greater community integration.'*

MHTS is governed by a voluntary and dedicated Board of Trustees who support a small management and delivery team consisting of a Director, Education Coordinator, Project Coordinator, paid and volunteer Tutors, and Administrators. At the time of this assessment, several staff within the delivery team were relatively recent appointments, such as the Director, Education Coordinator, and Project Coordinator.

Historically, most of the provision has been provided without access to mainstream funding and delivered free of charge to the learner. However, during 2020/21, MHTS successfully secured funding from Merton Adult Learning (MAL) to deliver short courses to support learners overcome digital inclusion, particularly in disadvantaged wards. In 2021/22, MHTS secured further funding for delivering Digital, Citizenship, and Employability programmes.

The organisation has developed an Information, Advice, and Guidance (IAG) policy outlining its intention to deliver impartial, relevant, and practical IAG successfully. Learners can be referred to MHTS via a referral agency, such as the Jobcentre or Local Authority, or self-refer following a recommendation from friends or family or as a result of various marketing activities, such as a social media post, leaflet drop, or poster in local doctor's surgeries, libraries extra.

Once the initial contact has been made, each learner is invited to attend the centre to meet with the Education Coordinator, who collates a range of personal information, such as immigration status and family commitments, for example, any childcare responsibilities. MHTS is a unique provision providing learners with access to a creche for preschool-aged children. In addition, each learner completes an Initial Assessment (IA). This activity is designed around each learner; for example, picture cards could be used if there appear to be no English language skills. However, if learners appear to be able to converse at some level, they may be asked to read a booklet or write about themselves. This process usually requires the learner to refer to a topic in the past tense, considered reasonably complex, for example, *'describe what you did yesterday'*. These activities support the Educational coordinator in forming an initial judgement on each learner's English level and refer to the most appropriate internal, for example, home tutoring on a one-to-one basis or small classroom-style group, face to face or online delivery. Alternatively, the learner may be referred to an external service, such as a local college or other training providers.

Learners engaging with MHTS fall into two main groups:-

1. English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) tuition to learners in their own homes delivered by volunteer home tutors. It is hoped that these learners will progress to a classroom session.
2. Weekly community ESOL classes from Entry level one to Level 1 from paid sessional teachers. Weekly classes include the opportunity to take part face-to-face and remotely online, practice conversation, and take exams.

Staff and learners confirmed the breadth of IAG delivery that includes relevant IAG on accessing the National Health Service (NHS), housing services, the school system, library services, employability skills, how to vote, passing the *'life in the United Kingdom (UK) test'*.

Some learner comments include:-

"I have learnt much about British culture, particularly understanding some differences between English, Scottish and Irish."

"I hope to find employment."

MHTS measure the success of its IAG service by the number of learners who make some form of progression. Current Key Performance Indicators (KPI) are a target of 80% of learning outcomes achieved and 80% attendance. During 2020/21, the organisation engaged with 149 learners and introduced several What's applications (APP) groups to stay connected and track learners effectively, supporting it to attain a 90% attendance rate and an 88% achievement of learning outcomes rates. In addition, eight learners gained accreditation in Speaking, Listening and Writing from the English Speaking Board. Five home learners progressed to group classes, and 59 class learners progressed to higher-level MHTS classes. Also, 14 learners progressed to external accredited learning or higher-level courses, and 13 progressed to paid work or volunteering. Performances the organisation aims to maintain and improve.

Although staff recognised the importance of attendance and achievement rates mentioned previously, it was the participants' softer outcomes where the IAG had contributed, for example, by supporting improvements in softer skills, such as confidence and independence. For example, learners interviewed as part of this assessment talked about making friends, using public transport, and utilising local libraries. In addition, learner feedback confirmed that 96% of class learners and 95% of home learners reported increased confidence and better health and wellbeing, and 83% of class learners and 80% of home learners reported improved social life and communication skills.

Some learner comments include:-

"I feel so much more confident speaking to native Britons."

"I am now able to support my son with his homework."

"I feel more confident about making a doctor appointment and speaking to my child's teachers at school."

"I feel more confident about explaining myself in an email."

"I can see other members of our group's confidence improving."

"I feel more confident going to my hospital appointments."

During the last year, MHTS has made several improvements to its IAG service, including recruiting a new Director who has supported to implement a detailed Quality Assurance (QA) framework, including developing a learner journey map highlighting pathways and progression routes for learners. In addition, a new database has been created to record learner data and outcomes effectively.

In the future, MHTS would like to continue with steady growth by securing additional funding to enable it to *'increase learner numbers across the whole service, develop a network of contacts to bridge gaps in local provision, ensure learner progression, and long terms outcome sustainability, and be a local leader in our area of expertise, promoting capacity building and sharing best practice with other through the Learn in English Merton project'*.

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.

- Leadership and management are considered a strength. Initially, MHTS was set up by an individual wanting to make a difference in their community; this person has now retired; however, the organisation has continued to flourish under the direction of a very dedicated and totally voluntary Board of Trustees. The Board meet at a minimum quarterly, with additional meetings arranged in between; this weekend, a full strategic review is taking place, ensuring that the organisation's service remains current. Staff, including the volunteers, feel supported, valued, and enjoy working for MHTS. The recent appointment of a new Director has enabled MHTS to develop and implement a structured quality assurance and continuous improvement process that should support all staff to appreciate the range of IAG delivered and share best practices effectively. (1.2)

Some staff comments include:

"Everyone here is open and friendly."

"I really enjoy working here; everyone is so supportive."

"Our Board of Trustees is very hands-on."

"I have felt incredibly supported."

"Working here is inspirational and very learner-focused."

"Working here is very rewarding."

"This is a great organisation; I love the atmosphere."

"I have volunteered for ten years and feel extremely valued."

- Partners describe MHTS service as *"very consistent and responsive"* and consider that their *"strategic objectives are aligned"*, considered a strength. MHTS work with a range of partners that support the effective delivery of its IAG, including gaining access to funding, learner referrals, and appropriate signposting and progression routes for learners, all of which are important for each learner to be as prosperous as possible. (1.8, 4.4)
- MHTS produce an annual report outlining the impact of its IAG service in the community considered a strength. In addition, a collection of learner stories is collated each year, composed by learners summarising, in their own words, the difference the MHTS service has made, confirming what they have learnt and how they have progressed. Producing this information enables the organisation and its staff to recognise the overall impact of its IAG service and hopefully attract local funders. (4.1)

Areas for Development

Areas for development 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 areas for development. 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.

- MHTS was established in 2009, and the original aim and objectives are still in use. Consideration could be given to reviewing the organisation's primary purpose and examining whether these statements remain current. In addition, now that MHTS has successfully secured funding through MAL, it may wish to consider setting some internal KPI's, for example, set a target of the percentage of learners demonstrating an increase in confidence. Collating this information could support the organisation and its staff in understanding what good IAG looks like and validate the effectiveness of the IAG service to potential funders. (1.1)
- The organisation has recently reviewed all its policies and procedures as part of its new quality assurance process. Signing up for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Disability Confident Scheme could be considered: <https://disabilityconfident.campaign.gov.uk/>. This scheme provides access to a range of valuable resources and signposting suggestions to support staff and learners with a broad range of hidden disabilities. (1.3, 2.1)
- During the assessment, staff described various opportunities available to complete Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities. In addition, the organisation had already recognised the need to monitor and track progress, recently investing in the EssentialSkillz platform. Consideration could also be given to one or more staff members signing up for an IAG qualification to support other staff and learners that may have more complex needs. (2.3, 2.4)
- New staff interviewed for the assessment confirmed they had received a company induction. Consideration could be given to developing a consistent approach and checklist containing relevant timescales to ensure that all staff feel confident in their roles and that each learner receives the best IAG experience possible. (2.5)
- Staff and volunteer supervisions take place regularly. Consideration could be given to revamping the annual appraisal process to ensure that it links directly to MHTS aims and objectives. This process could support all staff to have a greater understanding of their contribution to the organisation's overall success measures. (4.6)
- During the assessment, staff agreed that the company website needs an update. In addition, consideration could be given to ensuring that the organisation's mission and vision statements are easy to find, and more information on classroom delivery could be included. Also, MHTS may wish to provide some hyperlinks to helpful external resources, for example, mental health awareness resources, to support its learners. (4.7)

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. These may include the Areas for Development above. <https://matrixstandard.com/assessment-journey/continuous-improvement-checks/>

Please note that annual Continuous Improvement Checks are mandatory and non-completion within the required timescale will impact on your organisation's accreditation, please see the section Assessment Information for dates.

Methodology

The following methods were used to gather evidence against the **matrix** Standard during the assessment process.

- The assessment was conducted remotely using zoom and telephone.
- Virtual interviews were held with a total of twelve staff, including the Trustees, Director, Education Coordinator, Project Coordinator, paid and volunteer Tutors, and Administrators
- Virtual interviews were held with seventeen learners.
- Virtual interviews were held with two partner organisations.
- Document review includes annual and trustee reports, learner handbooks, policies, learner stories, social media, and a website.
- The formal feedback session was held at the end of the Assessment with the Trustees, Director, and Education Coordinator.

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 **matrix** Standard via the annual continuous improvement checks and the three-year accreditation review.
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.
6. Inform The Growth Company of any significant changes made to the organisational structure, senior management or systems that may impact on their accreditation, email: matrixStandard@growthco.uk.
7. Inform The Growth Company immediately if they wish to extend or reduce the scope of their accreditation.
8. Inform The Growth Company of any serious complaint or rise in numbers of complaints received (within the scope of the accreditation).
9. Not undertake or omit to undertake any activity that may be misleading and/or may cause The Growth Company and/or the **matrix** Standard to be brought into disrepute.
10. 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.
11. 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 The Growth Company and do not display the **matrix** Standard Quality Mark nor refer to be a former holder of the **matrix** Standard.
12. Be aware that The Growth Company reserves the right to remove any accreditation and/or certification previously applied if payment is not received for services provided.