

Commercial in Confidence



matrix Assessment Report

For

HIT TRAINING LTD

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On behalf of ENTO LTD

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1. Executive Summary

Having carried out the Assessment in accordance with the guidelines provided HIT Training Ltd has demonstrated that it meets the **matrix quality standard for information advice and guidance services**. Accreditation to the **matrix Standard** is granted for the external services provided by HIT Training Ltd.

This Assessment Report covers the services provided including a brief description of the organisation, the Assessment methodology and an overview of how HIT Training Ltd demonstrated that it met the **matrix Standard**.

2. Introduction

The external services of HIT Training Ltd were reviewed.

HIT Training Ltd was founded in May 2006 and commenced operations in August of the same year. It was established to provide national specialist training provision for the hospitality sector. A combination of Directors, staff, suppliers, and partners hold equity in the company.

HIT's head office is based in London and has 7 regional teams operating in:-

- London
- South East
- South West
- West Midlands
- East Midlands
- East of England
- North West

The organisation offers training and qualifications in hospitality and catering. The organisation holds direct Learning Skills Council contracts to deliver Train to Gain in the South West, London, South East, East of England, East Midlands, West Midlands and the North West. It also holds direct apprenticeship programmes for delivery in the South East, London, and South West.

HIT Training Ltd offers a good service to its employers and clients. Its key focus is the delivery of NVQ's in Hospitality and Catering to clients. The majority of its delivery takes place within the client's work place but sessions can also be held at some of the premises owned by HIT Training.

HIT Training Ltd offers information, advice and guidance to its employers and clients, offers screening to support Skills for Life and delivers training for NVQ courses and other qualifications such as Food Safety, Health and Safety and First Aid.

The aim of the organisation is:-

“To help employers increase the effectiveness and profitability of their staff, to develop learners’ personal, economic and social status and to enhance the level of service given to their customers and clients.”

Application to the **matrix** Standard has enabled HIT Training Ltd to check the effectiveness of their IAG service and has been assessed for its external services.

Three objectives for the Assessment were identified at the planning meeting on 8th September 2009. These included:-

- **To establish if the organisation meets the matrix Standard.**
- **To establish staff viewpoints on the effectiveness of feedback received through quality monitoring and if this has improved the quality of service delivered**

Staff confirmed that HIT Training Ltd is proactive in its approach to quality monitoring and all people interviewed supported the process. People were able to give examples of how improvements to the service have been made as a result of monitoring activities. The Assessors were able to see how the organisation has continually improved and has a variety of methods in place to monitor delivery.

- **Identification of good practices that are unique to a region that can be shared with other regions.**
 - The South West Region has created an information, advice and guidance sheet that informs clients of external organisations that could support them. This leaflet gives out local information that may be more appropriate to local needs. Other regions may wish to duplicate this approach and produce local information relevant to their region.
 - The East Midlands Region has the support of the Telesales Executive who assists with the marketing of the services in the East Midlands region. The Telesales Executive regularly visits Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and Leicestershire to promote the services to employers. Other regions may wish to see if this approach would be useful to their region.
 - Some regions are producing statistical graphs and bar charts to demonstrate the effectiveness of the service within their region. HIT Training Ltd may wish to consider introducing a standard approach to producing this information to ensure other regions adopt this practice.
 - HIT Training Ltd has identified and developed IAG Champions that take responsibility for ensuring the service is embedded within their region. Champions support assessors in the role of information, advice and guidance. The West Midlands Region has excelled in taking this approach on board and has carried out training sessions with staff on what information,

advice and guidance means, has set up a file to capture evidence on how information, advice and guidance is delivered and what the successes have been. Other regions may benefit from seeing how West Midlands has approached this and adopt some of the good practices in place.

3. Methodology

Two Assessors carried out the Assessment over a 5 day period.

K Hunt

- 1st October – London Region
- 2nd October – East of England Region
- 5th October – South East Region

J Plass

- 5th October – South West Region
- 7th October – East Midlands Region and North West Region
- 8th October – West Midlands Region

The Assessors used a range of methods to gather evidence against the **matrix** Standard;

- 1:1 interviews with management (15 people)
- 1:1 interviews with staff (17 people)
- Group interviews with management (2 people)
- Group interviews with staff (2 people)
- Informal group interviews with newly appointed Assessors attending the Academy. (11 people)
- Telephone interviews with management (2 people)
- 1:1 interviews with clients (26 people)
- Group interviews with clients (8 people)
- Telephone interviews with clients (9 people)
- 1:1 interviews with partners / employers (8 people)

- Telephone interviews with partners / partners (7 people)
- Visit to employer venues (16 sites)
- Observations of the day to day interaction between assessors, employers and clients.
- A range of materials were reviewed including marketing literature, organisation chart, organisational strategies, policies and procedures, management information system, website, client portfolio, performance evaluation forms, client feedback and evaluation reports.
- Feedback to the Operations Director and some of the West Midlands Regional staff, including Regional Manager, City Manager, County Manager, Team Leader and Trainer Assessor.

4. Strengths

During the Assessment six strengths were identified. There are outlined below. The numbers and letters in brackets refer to the relevant elements and criteria in the **matrix** Standard.

- The organisation has numerous mechanisms in place to ensure it effectively markets the service. These include:-
 - HIT Training Ltd has invested in its marketing materials to ensure the leaflets look professional and the information is inclusive. Materials have recently undergone a review and update with an external artist being commissioned to improve the images used. A suite of information sheets have been created and all have a common theme. (1b, 1c, 1d)
 - HIT Training Ltd undertakes market research, looks for trends and identifies forthcoming policy and funding activities. In addition, they have established a wide range of contracts with key employers and organisations to identify expected and potential use of the service. (1a)
 - The comprehensive and well designed website provides potential and existing clients with clear information on HIT Training Ltd including the people, policies, courses, support and a wealth of other essential information on which to make a decision whether to take the initial enquiry further. (1b, 1c, 1d, 3b, 3c, 3d)
 - Managers and assessors are fully engaged in the promotion and marketing of the services that HIT Training Ltd provides, whilst the methods used vary from region to region reflecting the geography of the employer base and the staff resources available. This joint approach helps to create ownership. (1b, 1c, 1d)

- The London Region has a number of assessors that speak languages that are common to many of the learners and this helps them support learners with information, advice and guidance as well as the learning journey. (1d, 3d, 4e)
- The South West Region has created an information, advice and guidance sheet that informs clients of external organisations that could support them. This leaflet is in addition to the company wide information, advice and guidance sheet and gives out local information that may be more appropriate. (3a, 3c)
- The East Midlands Region has the support of the Telesales Executive who assists with the marketing of the services in the East Midlands region. The Telesales Executive regularly visits Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and Leicestershire to promote the services to employers. (1b, 1c)
- The Directors offer clear leadership and direction and operate an open door policy with their team as well as empowering their staff. Directors regularly go out with assessors to visit employers and clients to obtain feedback on the delivery of the service. The Managing Director subsequently has informal meals with the assessors to discuss the planning and review of the business. Staff are actively encouraged to give feedback. An annual conference takes place where staff again are given the opportunity to put forward their viewpoints or ideas. The culture of the organisation is to continually improve and the Directors are very receptive to receiving feedback and taking the appropriate action. (5b, 5c, 7c, 8c)
- The organisation offers its potential staff and existing staff excellent opportunities to develop, not only within the job role, but be proactively involved with the development of the company. These include:-
 - A three stage staff selection process comprising of an initial interview, an unpaid shadowing day and a second final interview provides prospective employees with an opportunity to show commitment, gain a valuable insight on the role of an assessor, to be able to experience the settings in which assessors work and to meet employers and learners and ask questions over an extended period in a more informal setting. The process provides HIT Training with applicants who after the shadowing day, have shown commitment, are better informed and have a broader understanding of the role of an assessor. In addition feedback from staff involved in the shadowing exercise further informs the interview and selection process. (5d, 6a, 6b, 6c)
 - The staff induction process is comprehensive, structured and designed to give new staff an understanding of HIT Training Ltd's aims and objectives, ethos, policies and practices. All new assessors to HIT Training, regardless of their experience, undertake the Assessor Academy for a four day intensive induction into the organisation. The training plans and shadowing ensures that staff are competent and able to contribute to the success of the organisation. (6a, 6b, 6d)
 - Supportive and inclusive management has ensured that staff are involved in all aspects of planning, delivery, review and evaluation. There are many opportunities for staff to express their ideas or views through regular staff

meetings. It was apparent to the Assessors there is a clear openness between all staff and they are encouraged to work as a team and participate in the development of both the clients and the service. A key feature of this approach is the Self Assessment Report process and the Annual Conference where staff are actively involved in and contribute to the process. (5c, 6f, 8b)

- HIT Training Ltd has identified and developed IAG Champions that take responsibility for ensuring the service is embedded within their region. Champions support assessors in the role of information, advice and guidance. The West Midlands Region has excelled in taking this approach on board and has carried out training sessions with staff on what information, advice and guidance means, has set up a file to capture evidence on how information, advice and guidance is delivered and what the successes have been. (6b, 6c, 6d)
- HIT Training Ltd has built on its partnerships and has excellent relationships with them. Partnerships have been developed in order to enhance the service provision, to promote the services, to deliver training to clients and staff, to monitor performance and to feed into the strategic planning and review of HIT Training. The organisation has forged links with experts to help them with specialisms such as marketing, web design, art design, telesales, audits, and obtaining client and employer feedback. (5c, 5g, 7c, 8d)
- HIT Training Ltd has developed a comprehensive and informative management information system called TMS, which includes up to date policies and procedures, operating procedures, documentation including forms, client records, employer records, personnel records and support services available to staff. Directors and managers can retrieve real time performance data and produce monitoring reports as required. (5f, 8a, 8b)
- HIT Training Ltd has a vast amount of monitoring activities to ensure it is meeting its aims and objectives. These include:-
 - Internal audits carried out at regional and organisational level.
 - External audits carried out by funding partners, key partners, and specialists that HIT Training has appointed to ensure company standards and contractual requirements are being met.
 - Telephone surveys carried out by external organisations.
 - Analysis of a variety of questionnaires issued to the employer and client.
 - Internal verification processes including observations of information, advice and guidance delivery.
 - Analysis of data extracted from the TMS system.
 - Director visits to employers and clients. (8a, 8b, 8c, 8d)

5. Areas for Continuous Improvement

The Assessor identified three areas where further development may improve the quality of service. The numbers and letters in brackets refer to the relevant elements and criteria in the **matrix** Standard.

- HIT Training Ltd has excellent methods in which it promotes its services but may wish to consider strengthening these further by:-
 - The organisation actively promotes its services to its employer network. However, to build upon employer engagement, HIT Training Ltd may wish to consider emailing a newsletter / information sheet to inform them of changes in legislation, funding opportunities and new initiatives. This may assist HIT Training Ltd with working with employers and the sharing of information. (1b, 1c, 5g)
 - Individual staff within the London region have good knowledge of local support providers and training providers. However this information is not collated and shared amongst the team in any systematic way. HIT Training Ltd has considered creating a database of local support and training providers that would be readily available to staff enabling them when appropriate to signpost people to them. The Assessor confirms the introduction of this database should help the Region to collate the information in a systematic way. (2e, 3a)
 - A comprehensive data sheet on information, advice and guidance has been created and is available on the website. However the organisation may wish to consider including this really useful document in its Portfolios. This will then remind clients of other organisations that could support them. (2e)
- The organisation has excellent working practices in place to support its staff but may wish to consider strengthening these further and include:-
 - The existing staff are experienced and well qualified and HIT Training strives to develop staff above and beyond what is contractually required. As part of that development HIT Training Ltd might consider adopting an objective of key staff providing IAG services working towards NVQ Level 4 in Information, Advice and Guidance although this is not a requirement of the **matrix** Standard.
 - Extend the checks carried out on the assessors by the internal verifiers / team leaders to include the delivery of its information, advice and guidance service. The majority of the Principles of the National IAG Board are already integrated into the observation process but the principles 'Effective Connections' and 'Impartial' are not currently included in the checklist.

This may help the organisation to evaluate whether staff are carrying out their duties as required by HIT Training Ltd's policies, procedures and the requirements of the **matrix** Standard and help identify training needs, develop staff further and improve working practices. (5e, 5f, 6b, 8a, 8d)

- The organisation has a variety of methods to obtain feedback, analyse it and report outcomes, but could strengthen the methods. For example:-
 - HIT Training Ltd has a feedback box on its website and an Appeals Procedure to support the assessment process but may wish to consider including in the contact sheet located in the Portfolio details of how feedback on the service, positive and negative, can be given. This will then inform and remind clients of how feedback can be given. (7a)
 - HIT Training Ltd might like to consider ways of recording and evaluating informal, as well as formal, feedback about the information, advice and guidance services. This would enable the Service to base improvement activities on learners' and employers' experiences in a more structured way, and to be able to show more clearly how they are using informal, as well as formal, feedback to improve the Service. (7c, 7d)
 - There is limited feedback to clients informing them of the changes made as a result of their comments. HIT Training Ltd may wish to consider reporting back to users on the results of their various consultation exercises and the improvements that have been made as a result. Perhaps a simple 'You Said, We Did' on the website may encourage others to also give feedback. (7d)
 - Some of the regions are not analysing feedback for trends before they pass the information to the senior management team; whereas some regions are producing statistical graphs and bar charts to demonstrate the effectiveness of the service within their region. HIT Training Ltd may wish to consider introducing a standard approach to producing this information. (8a, 8b, 8d)

6. Detailed Findings against the matrix Standard

The following information is a summary of the findings against each element and should be read in conjunction with the previous sections.

1.

People are made aware of the service and how to engage with it

Potential users of the service are clearly identified and distinguished between. The services are for people and organisations primarily within the hospitality sector.

HIT Training Ltd promotes a wide variety of training options ranging from NVQ's at level 2 and 3 in Hospitality & Catering, Customer Service, Cleaning, Food Safety, Health & Safety and First Aid. Clients can undertake the qualification or training through the Train to Gain programme or Apprenticeship programme. The Statutory Training courses are accredited courses through HSE, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and BII.

Evidence was provided during the Assessment to confirm that clear details about the organisation are provided and people understand what is available to them with regards to the information, advice and guidance service. The organisation has a wealth of information available on its website relating to the various courses, qualifications and information, advice and guidance service, but may benefit from including specific details about the service in its client portfolios.

Staff clearly described the groups of people that use the service. They were also able to give examples of how the service is promoted to users and potential users. These include course leaflets, client induction, networking, attending conferences and partner events, word of mouth, cold calling, telesales, and through promotional materials that are distributed by the staff.

HIT Training Ltd uses the service of an external organisation to carry out telesales on its behalf. The organisation obtains leads on employers who may be interested in Train to Gain or the Apprenticeship programmes. These are then followed up by the regional team.

The East Midlands Region also has their own dedicated telesales executive who is responsible for marketing and proactively visits employers across the four areas of the region. Initial contact is sometimes made by telephone and followed up with a visit to the employer.

The organisation has recently used the expertise of an artist to update their marketing literature. New cartoon characters have been created and the leaflets amended to make them more informative and attractive.

The organisation has strong links with employers and closely match their requirements to the needs of the clients. The regional team is responsible for communicating with the employer and explaining how the NVQ works, what information, advice and guidance service is available, and how HIT Training Ltd can support their organisation.

HIT Training Ltd promotes equality of opportunity in a number of ways. Staff are aware of how to access support should information be required in other languages. Staff are fully aware of equal opportunity issues and have a good understanding of

how equal opportunities impact on the way the organisation is promoted. The organisation ensures that the same level of service is provided to everyone regardless of race, gender or disability. .

2.

People's use of the service is defined and understood

Clients receive an induction which explains the purpose of the course and a portfolio is given to each client explaining the details of the NVQ and a detailed explanation of the service is given, together with an informative document that clearly explains what information, advice and guidance is, who it is delivered and by whom. The client is also informed of HIT's policies including Confidentiality, Equality & Diversity and Health and Safety. These policies are also included in the Portfolio.

Clients undertake a skills scan, which may identify / confirm additional learning support. An individual assessment/learning plan is developed with all clients. This plan clarifies to the client the support they should receive and targets, which are mutually agreed. This document is a useful tool to confirm to clients what is expected of them and how they will be supported in helping them achieve the goals and targets related to the programme or support. The document, together with how the client will be supported is discussed.

People interviewed were very positive about their contact with the service. They confirmed their requirements were established at the outset and the suitability of the service to them explored.

The client is informed of how the organisation will preserve confidentiality. This is explained at the initial interview and is confirmed throughout the programme.

Clients explained during the Assessment how the expertise, the level of support and the enthusiasm of the staff were a great incentive for them. This has helped them to take advantage of training opportunities, to gain relevant experience required for work as well as the life skills they may need.

Staff provide information, advice and guidance and answer queries about a range of issues, including educational and training opportunities. Where the service does not hold the required information or is unable to answer queries, staff will endeavour to explore options and refer people on to other organisations as appropriate.

The South West region has developed a local information, advice and guidance sheet that informs the client of external organisations they may wish to contact for additional support. This information sheet supports the company wide information, advice and guidance sheet that signposts to national external organisations.

Feedback during the Assessment included:-

"I am impressed how everyone is treated as an individual and they take a genuine interest in one's progress and achievements".

"I have not been in formal learning for a long time, but when it was explained how I could gain a NVQ, the evidence I would need to provide and how observing me doing my job was also part of the evidence I felt that HIT Training would be right for me."

"They explain the commitment you need and describe how the process works."

“In my role a lot of the information was about management information and they told me all of that would come back to me and would not be given out to others.”

“It has been very good and I did not know that we could do something like that until they approached us.”

“They made us well aware when they came in what was involved and how long we would be doing it for.”

“We sat down and went through 3 or 4 options and I picked the best one.”

3.

People are provided with access to information and support in using it

Information held by the organisation is sufficient for and relevant to the service. This includes portfolio of information, reference books, publications, journals and brochures. The Directors are responsible for ensuring this information is up to date.

Documentation and information that is provided for the clients is reviewed and updated as required. Any interim changes required are identified and actioned as appropriate.

Staff are on hand to help clients with equipment and sourcing of information. Clients and staff have a close working relationship and there is a continual dialogue between them.

The Assessor noted that information on the website had been updated following the recent announcement by Government about the change to legislation in respect of financial tips and the minimum wage for the hospitality industry. The Development Director is responsible for ensuring legislative and regulative information is up to date. She will update documentation that is issued to employers and clients. Staff are informed of changes at team meetings, standardisation meetings or by email.

For those clients with literacy issues or where their first language is not English appropriate support is given to ensure that they are not disadvantaged.

A number of guides have been produced to provide learners with simple clear information sheets on a number of frequently asked subjects for ease of reference.

The Assessor noted particularly in London the broad range of languages covered by the team.

One client interviewed confirmed they have an hearing impairment. The client explained how arrangements had been made for her to undertake parts of the qualification and access the information, advice and guidance service outside her normal working environment so that she could hear, as the workplace is quite noisy. *“It has given me a lot more confidence. If I get the help that that assessor gave me I would love to do more.”*

4.

People are supported in exploring options and making choices

Staff delivering the service are able to describe how they offer impartial information, advice and guidance. Assessors use their wide experience and expertise in the

hospitality world and their close working relationship with partners to provide clients and employers with up to date information and advice relevant to their particular circumstances. Staff also have a wide range of experience and expertise and demonstrated how they continually strive to meet the aspirations of their clients. The focus through the information, advice and guidance service is to ensure the employer and client needs are identified and those needs are supported throughout.

Anyone wishing to access the service is offered an initial interview, which is focused on the individual's aspirations and needs.

The client induction session confirms how the client will be supported.

Clients confirmed the high level of support that is given by the staff when helping people to articulate their priorities and explore the suitability of programmes.

Clients confirmed during the Assessment they are given time to select their chosen modules within the NVQ and are encouraged to make a choice based on their own needs as well as their employer requirements. Clients interviewed were enthusiastic about the level of advice, choice and support given to them. They all said they would or had recommended the service to their friends.

There are mechanisms in place to ensure that everyone is provided with the appropriate level of support and assistance in accessing that support. Clients are visited at least once a month and employers are seen as part of that visit. Clients confirmed that assessors are available to contact at any time. Several clients explained how they had texted or phoned their assessor late at night and had received a response. Some clients also explained how they have received information, advice and guidance from their assessor which was not related to their qualification or programme.

Assessors adapt to clients' work schedules and carry out assessments at a time appropriate to them. The visit includes information, advice and guidance. Clients interviewed were very positive about their contact with HIT Training Ltd. They confirmed their requirements were established at the outset and the suitability of the service to them explored. Clients explained how they have discussed with their assessor the appropriateness of the qualification, especially where job roles had or were changing.

Clients particularly highlighted HIT Training Ltd's approach as being responsive and sensitive to business needs and their personal circumstances.

Clients receive regular reviews with staff to discuss their progression and to identify any further needs the individual may have.

There is no limit to the number of times clients can make contact with staff, and the staff have an open door policy for clients to phone or email them at any time.

Staff work closely with its partners, local agencies/organisations, colleges and employers and they will tailor specific options which will be of benefit the client and candidate.

Feedback during the Assessment included:-

"The information, advice and options they presented were very clear."

“Moving from a level 2 qualification to a level 3 was a big step. The assessor was very clear on the additional effort I would need to commit and the time. She helped me and supported me all the way.”

“I am really enjoying it and have a chance to get back in into it again as I didn't do very well at school.”

“At the start I was working in the kitchen but didn't like that so made a decision to go for the bar work.”

“She has helped me no end and got me through it when I wanted to give up and she did it in a positive way and I was not embarrassed.”

“It was my choice and she was good enough to arrange it around me.”

“It was a good one for me to do as I have just been promoted.”

“He works around me but if we can't see him we can see anyone.”

“She talks to you individually, even if there are two of you there.”

5.

Service delivery is planned and maintained

The aims and objectives of HIT Training Ltd are clearly defined and publicised throughout the organisation. The staff are fully involved in service planning and the review process, and are confident in feeding ideas for improvement in all elements of the business and including the delivery of the information, advice and guidance service. This occurs through regular team meetings, standardisation meetings or through informal channels that exist directly to the Directors. All staff are aware of their individual and team targets.

The aims and objectives of HIT Training Ltd are linked to continuous improvement and increasing their market share to help the organisation expand. The organisation has grown significantly in its 3 years. The organisation is keen to ensure their employers and clients are seen as a priority. The main aim is to offer a service of excellence to both the employer and the client. This was clearly evident throughout the Assessment.

The Directors demonstrated clear leadership and direction through an open door policy as well as formal team meetings. Staff confirmed this to be the case.

Staff are actively encouraged to participate in the regular and systematic review of service provision through team briefings and staff meetings. The Managing Director regularly visits the Regions and Area Offices, attends team meetings providing staff with the opportunity to both gain information on corporate issues and provide the Managing Director with feedback. An annual conference takes place in January where staff are encouraged to put forward their viewpoints and suggested improvements.

Staff interviewed described how they contribute to the development of the service and how their views are taken into account during planning of the strategic direction of the organisation.

The organisation is relatively new therefore resource is constantly reviewed by the Directors and the Regional Managers.

Resources are made available for staff to receive training and information necessary for compliance with legislation and working practices.

The Management Team is responsible for ensuring the staff are aware of any changes to legislation or regulatory requirements and this information would be disseminated at team meetings and/or standardisation meetings. The Management Team and assessors are qualified in hospitality and catering, therefore receive regular updates and information from various organisations and authority bodies. The organisation also receives regular updates from its awarding bodies and regulatory bodies which are disseminated to staff. Staff understand service policies and procedures and are kept up to date with these and any changes in legislation are made known at team meetings, standardisation meetings or via emails. The Managing Director also informs staff by email of changes made to company policies, procedures and documentation.

The organisation has a suite of policies and procedures to support the delivery of activities and the service and has recently incorporated the principles established by the National IAG Board. The Managing Director maintains the policies and procedures and supporting documentation on the TMS system.

To ensure conformity of service delivery, observation, internal and external verification and standardisation activities are regularly undertaken as part of a system of quality assurance.

HIT Training Ltd has recognised that with its extensive range of outreach visits the safety of the staff delivering the services is paramount and has introduced a comprehensive risk assessment process, site evaluation and staff location.

The organisation has forged links with local partners, and a range of statutory and non-statutory agencies. Employer links are critical to the success of HIT Training Ltd; therefore the teams are proactively working together to strengthen the relationships it has with employers. New services are being developed in order to meet customer expectations.

Partners confirmed the organisation is effective and ensures it follows up any queries put forward to them. Feedback received included *"They are very helpful and should take all the credit. She is amazing and has loads of loyalty to the company and the person taking the qualification."* *"I have never known a person who deserves the recognition."* *"They are very flexible and will fit in when we have got people available."* *"HIT has been one of the main people looking at the apprenticeship programme and they have taken it on board."* *"The working relationship has always been a good one and if there are any issues to be discussed it is done in an open manner and we are always in discussion."* *"Both parties feel they know and understand what the situation is and we have a very positive relationship."* *".... and I will normally get together after the course and have a review of how it has gone."* *"It is the set up in general and she listens to me whinging on and whoever comes out are just as good and fantastic."* *"They are not just there for training; they are there to listen to you about other things as well."* *"They are impartial and very professional. They do not take advantage and are meticulous about getting the right student on the right course."* *"They are very responsive and they are the most effective partner we have in listening to what we want."*

6.

Staff competence and support they are given are sufficient to deliver the service

All staff receive an induction and are provided with ongoing support. Assessors go through the Assessor Academy which is a comprehensive 4 day induction session including their responsibilities in the delivery of information, advice and guidance. The Directors and management team hold the event and the role of the assessor is fully explained to them. After the 4 day induction the assessor is put onto a shadowing programme. The duration of this varies depending on the level of experience they have. The new assessor receives regular performance reviews during the initial period.

Job descriptions are issued to staff. Staff clearly explained their job roles and responsibilities. The role of Trainer Assessor also includes responsibility for delivering information, advice and guidance to both the employer and the client. Staff were able to clearly explain all elements of their role and, in particular, how they delivered information, advice and guidance.

Operating Procedures and Policies are available on the TMS system, which informs staff of the various roles and responsibilities of all staff.

Staff are observed by the Internal Verifier and/or Team Leaders carrying out key activities. Feedback is given to the person observed. New staff are observed to ensure the delivery of information, advice and guidance is to the standard of HIT Training Ltd. However the organisation may benefit from including in to the already robust observation process the review of two of the Principles of the National IAG Board, 'Effective Connections' and 'Impartial'.

Staff work as a close-knit team, therefore sharing of knowledge, particularly after training events and workshops. Staff meet regularly to share and review the performance and efficiency of the service. Best practice and areas that have been developed and require further development are discussed.

The IAG Champions are responsible for ensuring assessors are effective in the delivery of information, advice and guidance. However some regions are better at this than others and HIT Training Ltd may wish to look at introducing a standard approach to the role of the IAG Champion and ensuring the role is effective.

The organisation demonstrated its commitment to the training and development of its staff, and investment has been made to ensure that all staff receive the right level of training to do their own job and to improve. Staff development is linked to the business strategic plan and remains the key way of ensuring that they are competent to deliver a high quality service. Staff are encouraged to gain new qualifications and skills to help them in their personal and career development. Staff were very complimentary about the training opportunities available to them and the ease with which they can access these.

During the Assessment staff described how they are provided with the most appropriate training which allows them to develop their role. The organisation has good systems in place to ensure competency of staff in the delivery of the NVQ training, and is looking at strengthening further how they check the competency of staff in the delivery of information, advice and guidance. The Internal Verifier, Team Leaders and the IAG Champions monitor the effectiveness of the delivery but are

now looking at how they can work closer as a team to ensure consistency across the organisation.

Staff described the defined link between training and development, the aims and objectives of the organisation. To ensure that all staff are fully informed and benefit from training opportunities, those who attend courses cascade information to others as part of a structured process.

Team meetings and standardisation meetings take place regularly and performance of the team is discussed.

Staff receive individual performance review meetings with their line manager.

Feedback on individual's performance is given following the monitoring and observation activities. Any actions to address deficiencies are agreed, planned and actioned with the individual, the Manager and the observer.

Staff interviewed confirmed that good support mechanisms are in place and praised the level of support and help that is available and how they could access that support.

7.

Feedback on the quality of the service is obtained

The organisation has a formal Appeals Procedure and details of this are given and are explained during induction and a feedback field is available on the website for clients and employers to give feedback on the service provided. However, the organisation may benefit from including in the contacts sheet within the client Portfolio a reminder of who they can contact in the event of a complaint, compliment or comment they wish to make.

All clients spoken with during the Assessment were able to explain the process to give feedback on the service.

The organisation uses a number of effective mechanisms through which to gather feedback from employers and clients. These include a variety of questionnaires from clients during their programme, questionnaires to employers, verbal feedback from clients, verbal feedback from staff, external agencies and partner feedback, management/team meetings, and standardisation meetings. The Director regularly goes out with each Region to visit employers and clients to obtain feedback. The organisation has included in all the feedback methods used questions relating to the delivery of information, advice and guidance.

Very good perceptions of the service were found during the Assessment visit. Clients and partners spoken with provided overwhelming praise for the staff and the help and support they receive. Some clients expressed their gratitude for the ongoing support they have received.

Feedback from partner organisations is collected through external audits, review meetings and various other meetings. Feedback from clients and partners is used to inform service planning.

One partner explained how HIT Training Ltd had made changes to the delivery times following feedback given to them. The employer confirmed the original times were

not conducive to their busy periods; therefore they were amended to suit their operational requirements.

Informal feedback is discussed and actioned. However, HIT Training Ltd may wish to consider ways of recording and evaluating informal, as well as formal, feedback about the information, advice and guidance services. This would enable the Service to base improvement activities on learners' and employers' experiences in a more structured way, and to be able to show more clearly how they are using informal, as well as formal, feedback to improve the Service.

The organisation is extremely quick to respond to feedback received. One manager explained how they had used their external telesales organisation to follow up on an issue that had been raised. The organisation carried out a telephone survey on other employers to see if the issue raised was a one off or a bigger issue. The outcome of the exercise resulted in changes to working practices.

8.

Continuous quality improvement is ensured through monitoring, evaluation and action

The management process monitors activities to ensure that effectiveness is monitored against a range of service measures and targets. The Directors and management team utilise the TMS system to extract performance data. The TMS allows the organisation to track individual client performance and monitor progress.

Staff are committed to service improvement and described key developments that have been introduced into the service. For example, feedback from clients indicated that paperwork was not easy to understand. This resulted in the alteration of documentation to make it more user friendly.

100% internal audits are carried out for each client on the start process. A checklist has been developed to assist the administration team to carry out the audits and includes elements of the information, advice and guidance process. Findings are reported to the management team and reviewed at the team meetings. Follow up to audits are then carried out to check the problem has been effectively resolved.

Regular reporting at the Management Meetings ensures that standards and objectives are being achieved. Regular team meetings and standardisation meetings evaluate progress and plan future developments.

Personal targets, organisational targets, aims and objectives are reviewed at the team / standardisation / management meetings. The organisation establishes how well they feel they are performing against the goals and standards. Regular meetings take place to review and monitor the service.

The staff have a good understanding of the issues and explained how they support and contribute to the continuous quality improvement strategy, and to the success of the organisation.

The organisation has a passion for continuous improvement to ensure an improvement in the service for the employer and client. Since the creation of HIT Training Ltd 3 years ago it has grown year by year. Twelve months after the organisation started it was recognised area offices were needed as the regions had grown significantly. This resulted in the opening of several area offices such as

Ilkeston, Nottingham, Leicester and Lincolnshire. Staffing has increased from 85 in July 2008 to 265 in 2009.

From the feedback received the organisation has made the following improvements to its service provision:-

- The preparation for the **matrix** Assessment Review has provided HIT Training Ltd with the opportunity to systematically review their performance against the eight elements and put in place a number of improvements as part of a continuous improvement plan.
- Job vacancies are now being recorded and the Assessors share the information with the Internal Verifier. The Internal Verifier then collates all the vacancies and passes on the information to clients who may be interested in a particular post. Clients therefore now have information on a wide range of job opportunities.
- The East Midlands Region now utilises their Telesales Executive to go out and cold call employers. Initial contact may have taken place over the phone but the Region explained that by the member of staff visiting the companies they are able to promote the service more effectively. This approach has resulted in an increase in employers and clients.
- The Development Director has made significant changes and improvements to staff development. The Assessor Academy has been reviewed and strengthened; new Assessors go through a robust learning and development programme and existing staff receive regular development and coaching support.
- The East Midlands Region and West Midlands Region has standardised their team agendas to ensure a constant approach is carried out when reviewing and planning the service. The Regional Managers explained that having the standard agenda ensured the area teams were consistent in their approach to monitoring performance.
- The introduction of the working groups is enabling HIT Training Ltd to focus on improving particular strategies such as marketing and employer engagement. External experts have been commissioned to work with the groups to focus on the projects.
- The introduction of the Regional Managers role and their regular meetings has enabled HIT Training Ltd to share ideas and best practice. Regional Managers bring to the meetings improvements they have made to their region. Examples of sharing of ideas include the introduction of the localised information, advice and guidance sheet, combining of paperwork to simplify the recruitment process of clients, and the standardisation of team agendas.
- The website has been improved to ensure it gives out more information to the employer and client.
- An information, advice and guidance fact sheet has been created. This is available to employers and clients on the website and disseminates a vast amount of information not only about HIT Training Ltd but other external organisations.
- Individual fact sheets on the qualifications available have been improved. Cartoon characters have been created to help communicate the information and make it more meaningful to the hospitality and catering sector.

- The portfolios issued to the client have been improved. Information is now integrated within the Portfolio and easier for the client to find. Dividers are used to separate out the information.