

**Commercial in Confidence**



**matrix Accreditation Review Report**

**For**

**WHEATSHEAF TRUST**

**By Janet Lewis-Jones**

**On behalf of ENTO LTD**

**Assessment Date: 30<sup>th</sup> June to 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2010**

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## 1. Assessment Outcome

Having carried out the Accreditation Review in accordance with the guidelines provided, Wheatsheaf Trust has demonstrated that it continues to meet the **matrix quality standard for information advice and guidance services**. Continued Accreditation to the **matrix** Standard is granted for the external services provided by the Trust.

This Accreditation Review Report details the services provided by Wheatsheaf Trust and includes a brief description of the organisation, the Assessment methodology and an overview of how the Trust demonstrated that it continues to meet the **matrix** Standard.

## 2. Introduction

Wheatsheaf Trust is a charity based in South Hampshire which works to promote social inclusion in some of the most disadvantaged areas of the County. It does this by providing information, advice and guidance through Employment Access Centres (EACs) and specific programmes, to support people who are unemployed, or in work but on a low wage, helping them to find work or training/re-skilling opportunities. The Trust currently offers services from four EACs in Southampton, Havant, Millbrook and Gosport. In addition to this some services are delivered on an outreach basis from the premises of partner organisations and from community venues such as church halls and community centres. Whilst services provided by Wheatsheaf are open to all unemployed and low waged clients, there is a specific emphasis on those with multiple barriers to employment, who are hard to reach and have not previously engaged with other provision.

The EACs offer a free IAG service on both a drop-in and appointment basis. Clients can receive help in areas such as job search, CV and interview preparation, completing applications forms, and finding training opportunities. They have access to the internet, telephones, computers, stationary and an information library, as well as one to one support from staff and volunteers.

As well as the EACs, Wheatsheaf also provides a range of specific projects through separate contracts/funding streams:

- Job Centre Plus Support Contract (2009 -2014) – Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) funding through A4E – delivery of preparation for work and some vocational training courses aimed at different groups such as lone parents, over 50's, and the long term unemployed. The courses are accompanied by 'job search support centres' where services are delivered on a one to one basis through the EACs
- Reach Out (2008 – 2011) – DWP and European Social Fund (ESF) funding through VT – support for those 'furthest away from the labour market', a forty week programme of one to one help, and some group work focussed on 'soft

outcomes' for clients with issues such as an offending history, dependency, health or mental health issues, women returners and those with no work history.

- Future Jobs (2009 – 2011) – DWP funding – 6 month paid work placements; progression workshops; and one to one support for 18 to 24 year olds (some of the placements are with the Wheatsheaf Services construction team)
- Youth Sector Development Fund (YSDF) (2008 – 2011) – Department of Children, Schools and Families funding via ECOTEC – a partnership with two youth organisations to provide support for young people who are or who are at risk of becoming NEET (not in employment, education or training) – Wheatsheaf advisors work with young people and with their families on a broad range of issues such as debt, substance abuse, housing and parenting
- REACT2 (2008 – 2010) – LSC and ESF funded via Southampton City Council – a programme of activities and one to one support aimed at re-engaging 16 to 19 year olds who are NEET in order to move them towards training and employment

In addition to the above, at the time of the Assessment, Wheatsheaf was completing 2 further contracts:

- New Era (2008 – 2010) – Learning Skills Council (LSC) and ESF funding via Southampton City Council – 'Confidence with Job Search' courses and one to one support for the over 50's.
- nextstep Universal and Differentiated Support – (2008 – 2010) – LSC funding via VT – IAG for the over 20's.

In addition to IAG services the Trust has a fully equipped construction taster suite in the basement offering the opportunity to try out carpentry, bricklaying and painting & decorating – this is often used as an engagement tool with young clients, but it is also 'hired out' to schools and groups. It also forms the basis of the Future Jobs programme. A further service provided by the Trust is multi-cultural awareness training – the Trust has a long history of working with a variety of faith and cultural groups across the City and with them has developed this training programme which provides income generation – customers have included the Royal Navy and the Police as well as local schools and colleges.

Wheatsheaf employs 36 staff and has around 12 volunteers. The Trust is governed by a Board of Trustees and managed by a Senior Management Team comprising the CEO, Deputy CEO and Finance Manager. There is a small middle management tier including a contracts manager and 2 IAG managers, but the majority of the staff are involved in service delivery. A number of delivery staff have previously been clients of the organisation, and many have also previously been volunteers. The culture or management style of the organisation is nurturing and focussed on supporting and developing staff.

Each year the Trust works with in the region of 1750 clients.

This Accreditation Review was the third **matrix** Assessment for the Trust. In the most part areas identified as development points during the last assessment have been attended to:

- Peer and line manager observations have been introduced as standard using the framework from mandatory observations. This has been viewed as a positive tool in staff development
- Management of information has improved – there are clear processes for ensuring information materials are up to date and responsibility for working on this is clearly designated
- An extensive range of client feedback approaches have been implemented including regular feedback forums, specific IAG focussed evaluations and detailed interviews at key delivery points

Wheatsheaf Trust has not changed significantly in terms of aims and core principles since the last Accreditation Review – it has grown with an increase in the number of advisors and the opening of one new site (Gosport). Funding streams have also inevitably changed leading to new projects and approaches – but the central activities of the Trust remain the same – providing one to one tailored support to clients from across South Hampshire. Client satisfaction levels remain consistently high; performance against target is strong with most targets being exceeded; and staff continue to report feeling well supported in their work. The Trust's ethos of "putting the client at the centre of everything we do" was apparent throughout the Assessment.

### 3. Methodology

The Assessor used a range of methods to gather evidence against the **matrix** Standard:

Site visits – two delivery sites were visited – the main Southampton Centre and the Havant Centre. This included viewing 2 EACs; one group delivery room and a number of IAG delivery offices

One to one interviews - fifteen face to face interviews – Deputy Chief Executive Officer, IAG Manager; 7 x Employment & Training Advisors; Southampton EAC Coordinator; Job Search Assistant; Youth Services Project Manager; 2 x Youth Workers; Volunteer

Telephone interviews – three interviews with partnership organisations – Contract Manager A4E; Job Centre Plus Contract Coordinator; Tutor Highbury College

Informal group interviews – four groups of clients – 3 groups of EAC clients (22 participants); one group of young people (3 participants) – 25 clients overall; and 3 volunteers

Document review – examination of a broad range of policy and practice documents; promotional material; resource information and reports

## 4. Strengths

During the Accreditation Review, the following strengths were identified. The numbers and letters in brackets refer to the relevant elements and criteria in the **matrix** Standard.

- Client satisfaction levels are consistently high. This was reported as a strength during the previous Accreditation Review and remains a major strength for the Trust. Staff and Managers described how the ethos of Wheatsheaf is to “put the client first” and it was evident from how advisors and clients described the service that it is truly tailored to each individual. Many of the clients spoken to compared the service they received from the Trust to the services they had received elsewhere and were keen to point out how the individual attention they received from staff, and the interest the staff took in them, was the thing that made the Wheatsheaf stand out. They also welcomed the opportunity to “go at their own pace” and “try things out before signing up”. Clients felt very involved in their action plans and that staff were sensitive to their changing needs and circumstances and willing to adjust approaches and goals accordingly. It is this personal attention that keeps clients engaged with services where they may not have engaged in the past (2c, 2d, 4c, 4e & 7d)
- Although projects and programmes delivered by Wheatsheaf are funded through different funding streams each with their own eligibility criteria and referral routes, they are delivered in a holistic manner with considerable cross referral. Even though a client is referred or self refers for one service, they are routinely signposted to other Wheatsheaf services through a ‘universal registration’ process, meaning that they have access to a much broader range of interventions. Clients described how this broad range of services was described to them when they first attended and how they are reminded of the services on offer throughout their involvement with the Trust. Offering services holistically contributes to the considerable achievements of the Trust in terms of job and training outcomes (2a, 2c, 2e)
- Partnership relationships are especially strong and the Trust has an excellent reputation amongst the organisations and agencies that it works with. Partners spoken to as part of the Assessment commented on how proactive they found the Trust in terms of raising not just issues but also suggested solutions. Two of the partnership contract managers described how they had taken on board suggestions made by the Trust and now include them as a requirement in contracts with other organisations they work with. Partners included in the Assessment commented on the high level of achievement against target and on client satisfaction levels. Wheatsheaf staff described how they worked informally with a wide range of support organisations especially in relation to areas such as mental health, immigration and disability in order to ensure the highest quality of service for the client – this includes facilitated signposting and referral. The Trust uses partnership working to extend the range of support it is able to offer the client (5g)

- The Trust invests considerable time and energy into staff development and support. Staff have a very thorough induction delivered at a pace that suits them and often including mentoring with an experienced peer. In most cases, weekly one to one supervision sessions are offered along with regular (usually weekly or fortnightly) group meetings; there are away days at least once a year, and a comprehensive formal appraisal process. There are numerous opportunities to attend training courses and, funding permitting, advisors are encouraged and enabled to complete their NVQ 4 (the Trust has already supported advisors to achieve level 3). Many staff have been previous service users and volunteers. This level of investment has resulted in a competent, enthusiastic and committed workforce, as well as high staff morale which is evident in the 'atmosphere' at each site and is also commented on by clients "if they had a bad day, you'd never know, they're also so happy and keen" (6a, 6b, 6d, 6e, 6f)
- It is evident that the Trust is "on a journey", always looking for ways to develop and improve. Partnerships described how the Trust is always proactively seeking feedback – asking what they could be doing better; a wide variety of approaches to collecting client feedback are used and that feedback is fully considered and acted on where feasible; staff away days focus on service improvement; and development areas referred to as part of the last **matrix** Accreditation Review have been acted upon. The Trust is very successful in achieving contractual targets and enjoys high client satisfaction levels, it would be easy for it to 'rest on its laurels' but instead there is a sense of constantly wanting to "get better and better" – always with client experience as the driving force. (7c, 8b, 8d)

## 5. Areas for Continuous Improvement

The Assessor identified the following 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.

- Analysis of new service users indicates that the majority are referred by the Job Centre (and through word of mouth). Many of those referred by the Job Centre suggested that they wished they had found out about Wheadsheaf sooner. Others complained that the information given to them by the Job Centre had been inadequate or incorrect. Staff confirmed that the Job Centre does sometimes give misleading information to clients (suggesting that if they drop in they can have their CV produced there and then). The Trust has already begun to address this issue through closer working with Job Centre Advisors, and a few clients who had been unemployed on and off over a number of years, confirmed that they had noticed an improvement. Wheadsheaf might want to look at other ways in which they might tackle this apparent block in order to ensure that clients are provided with timely and accurate information from Job Centre staff (1b, 1c)
- Alongside working to improve information given to clients by the Job Centre, the Trust might also consider developing a strategy to increase the number of self referrals through more 'direct marketing'. Clients taking part in the Assessment had a wealth of ideas about how to approach this – the sort of promotional materials and approaches that would have reached them – the Trust might consider conducting some kind of consultation exercise to tap this well of ideas. Whilst the Trust has no shortage of clients, directly targeting potential clients in this way should ensure that Wheadsheaf is reaching the widest possible range of people and so improving equality of opportunity (1c, 1d)
- Finally in respect of promoting the services, the Trust may want to review its promotional literature, in particular the client information card. The Trust might consider how to ensure that it is clear at a glance that services are for the unemployed and under-employed, and that they are free. Additionally the Trust might consider how to ensure that the material 'speaks to' the target client groups (1a, 1b, 1c)
- Wheadsheaf does not currently produce a regular report which encompasses the work of the Trust as a whole. Detailed statistical reports are produced for each contract and the EACs collate attendance figures and outcome statistics, but there is no overall annual report for example. The Trust might wish to consider producing such a document, perhaps aimed predominantly at staff and clients, as a celebration of what has been achieved. This would help staff to see how their individual contributions had impacted on overall outcomes, and could also be used as a way of introducing topics for discussion such as addressing drop out rates, or following up on 'no shows' – at present these kind of statistics are collated centrally and are not generally fed back to staff. It might also serve as an 'inspirational tool' with clients. Such a report could

further engage staff and clients in reviewing the effectiveness of the service and planning for the future (5c, 6f, 8a)

- The current management style within the Trust focuses on nurturing and developing staff members. As part of this approach contractual matters including targets are, as much as possible, dealt with by managers, and delivery staff are encouraged to focus only on the client and “not to worry” about hitting targets. This clearly has benefits in terms of freeing staff up to focus on clients without having the pressure of needing to think about achieving numbers, and so far the approach has worked for the Trust. However, the Trust might want to consider the disadvantages of this management style in terms of it not suiting all work styles (i.e. some staff actually respond better to having a clear statement of their targets) and in terms of it potentially holding back staff who want to move into a management position and therefore need some experience of managing targets. It might also be useful to consider if the current management style would be sustainable if the Trust were to expand much more or if the composition of the Senior Management Team were to change. The Trust is about to undertake an HR review – these questions could form part of that. Including staff in target setting and monitoring could help them to better understand their role in relation to organisational objectives (5c, 6f)
- Client feedback is gathered through a variety of methods and evidence shows that it is considered and acted upon where feasible. More could be done to feed back to clients about how their suggestions are used. The EACs do have a ‘you said: we did’ display – but this could be made clearer. Some clients who had taken part in client fora were unsure about how their feedback had been used (7a)
- The Trust has begun to work with employers – an Advisor in Havant is beginning to forge links and plans on sending out client profiles to targeted employers. Work with employers could be further developed across the Trust to further increase the range of opportunities available to clients (5g)

## 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**

Wheatsheaf Trust has a very clear and well defined raison d'être – to tackle social exclusion through the provision of information, advice and guidance. The range of services provided are targeted at the most socially excluded, though are open to anyone who is unemployed or low waged. The description of what the Trust has to offer and to who, is made clear on all promotional material and on the Trust's website. It was also evident from interviews with partner organisations that there is a good understanding amongst most referrers as to what Wheatsheaf can offer. One or two exceptions to this are discussed in section five. Staff were also able to clearly define the work of the organisation and its target client group.

Staff engage in a wide variety of promotional activities, in particular networking with other organisations both statutory and voluntary (e.g. Connexions, Probation Service, and various charities working with the same client group). They also attend community events, take part in radio and television interviews and speak at conferences. Leaflets and posters are also used but to a lesser extent, as the Trust finds that they have much more success engaging clients through "people not paper" based approaches, as this allows for someone to explain the service "at the clients pace, using words that they understand, and giving them the opportunity to ask questions". Analysis of new clients shows that the two biggest sources are referral from the Job Centre and 'word of mouth'.

With one of the programmes – YSDF – initial contact is often at the client's home where a member of staff explains what Wheatsheaf might be able to offer; outreach promotion might also be delivered on partner premises or in local community centres. Through the use of a wide variety of different approaches to promotion, the Trust seeks to give everyone the opportunity to engage with its services.

The Trust uses a credit card size promotional card for clients to take away which briefly lists the services on offer, opening times and how to get in touch. This is not produced in different languages as this has not presented as an issue to date. The Trust does have links with a wide variety of organisations who could provide language support if required.

*"We are trying to engage people who don't traditionally engage. That means we have to try anything and everything to get to them"*

*"We can't sit here and wait for them to find us – we have to go to them – where they live, other places they visit - link in with other services they are accessing"*

*"This client group can be a bit either suspicious or sceptical, or even both! We make sure that the information we give is brief but clear – no falsely raising expectations, just a clear statement of what's on offer"*

## 2.

### **People's use of the service is defined and understood**

Clients interviewed as part of the Assessment described their initial contact with the Trust as being highly informative and reassuring. Without exception, clients described how the welcome they had received had been friendly and relaxed, and how staff had explained what the Trust had on offer. Most commented as to how surprised they had been about the range of services available. They also confirmed that staff made it clear how information collected about them would be managed and stored; about health and safety in relation to use of the premises; and about acceptable behaviour on the premises, including adherence to the diversity policy.

There is a statement of service displayed at each site which includes points about the Trust making effective connections with other agencies; its commitment to exploring a full range of options for the client and its commitment to listening and responding to the client.

Clients described the registration process which includes initial discussion of their aspirations and needs. In particular clients commented on how reassured they were by the flexibility of the staff in terms of not pushing them to start things they didn't feel ready to tackle.

Because of the range of services available – one to one IAG, preparation for work groups, vocational courses, work placements – there is ample opportunity for clients to explore different options and with guidance choose the ones that are right for them.

*"I came in to get my CV done, but they told me about the construction work and I thought I might like to try that. At first I just went down and did a bit of carpentry and watched the others doing their thing. Then I thought 'I'd like some of that', so they signed me up proper. I'm out on site 3 days a week now"*

*"I got sent by the Job Centre to do this half day course thing. At the end X (Trust staff member) told me I could come here and get help looking for jobs on the computer"*

*I didn't want to do the group thing, so they said that was OK. But after a couple of weeks, I thought it might be alright, so they said I could do it then"*

Staff confirmed that they work closely with other agencies in relation to providing services to clients who might have needs above and beyond what the Trust can help with so that they can offer facilitated signposting/referral...

*"We don't just say – 'there's this place you can go. here's the address' – we ring up while they're here, ask if they've got someone to go with them, tell them to come back in and tell us how it's gone, or ring us up. We want them to stay with us or come back to us once they're sorted"*

Each IAG office and the EACs have a directory of organisations and agencies in the area to whom they can signpost or refer, and there is a formal signposting and referral policy & procedure, both of these were examined during the Assessment and were referred to by staff.

## 3.

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

All sites keep an information library as well a directory of relevant websites. Examination of these showed they were appropriate, well indexed and up to date. Staff described how they approached information management...

*"I do it using Outlook – I log it using the task manager and get it to warn me when something is about to expire. I've got it set up to tell me when I have to chuck out all of the VT stuff because they are changing"*

*"Some of the resources have got really good stuff in them combined with some that's out of date. I've put a health warning on these showing what is out of date"*

*"The papers come in every Thursday and that's also the day we change the vacancies in the window. Thursday is the day X (volunteer) comes in so that's her job!"*

Staff or volunteers would usually access library resources as part of their one to one work with clients, so there is ample opportunity for them to help clients work through and understand the materials. In reality most information is now accessed via the internet and staff invest a lot of time in showing clients how to search the web, complete forms on line, and send emails and attachments having set up email addresses for clients via UK On-Line's My Guide.

*"I didn't know anything about emails until I came here, now I've got an email address and everything"*

*"Its not fair, but there are a lot of jobs that only get advertised on line, and that you can only apply for on line. I wouldn't be able to go for any of them if it wasn't for here and X's help in logging on"*

The Trust also provides access to telephones, stationary and stamps – all free of charge for client use. There is a hydraulic desk and induction hearing loop available for clients with special needs and staff gave numerous examples of how clients with special needs had accessed the service...

*"One client we have is deaf. He doesn't like the loop and he can't sign. He likes me to write everything down instead – it takes a while, but it works for him, so that's what I do"*

#### **4.**

#### **People are supported in exploring options and making choices**

It was clear from speaking to clients that they were very much "in the driving seat" in relation to their action plans and engagement with the Trust, indicating that the advice and guidance they received was definitely impartial. Staff confirmed that they are very much led by the client and what they are interested in and where they are "starting from" in terms of the support provided. Options about what to work on and how to work on it are explained to clients, advisors check their understanding and give them time to consider, but the final choice of what to work on is always the client's.

*"Many of our clients are quite clear what they do and don't want to do. And for those that aren't like that yet – that's the place we want to take them to!"*

*“They’d soon disengage if you suggested a college course when they are only really interested in a job. You have to let them lead or they’ll disengage again and you’re back to square one”*

Clients were clear about what it was and wasn’t possible for the Trust to do, and about how there weren’t endless resources available. Staff described how sometimes clients did come with unrealistic expectations and that part of the role was to clarify possibilities from the outset. The biggest misconception was that clients could just stop by and get their CV done for them, and this was often the first conversation the staff member had with the client. Staff were also keen not to falsely raise expectations and so only “make promises [they] can keep”.

Clients’ engagement with the Trust is quite dynamic in the sense that the activities that clients are engaged in, and the objectives of their action plans are kept under constant review and frequently change as the client’s needs change. At all times staff are keen to ensure that the client is “on board” and so routinely reconsider options and explore new possibilities...

*“You have to keep it fresh. They are not going to go out and get a job tomorrow, but you have to keep momentum by adding new objectives, really maintaining that sense of progress. Get them to think about the choices they made when they first came. Are they still the right ones”*

*“Often clients need to try something before adding it to their action plan. I had one client who point blank refused to use the computer. I didn’t push it; he stuck to going through the newspaper and sending applications by post. But gradually I got him involved, first I asked him to check an email I written, then showed him a really interesting job ad. Eventually I got him set up”*

## 5.

### **Service delivery is planned and maintained**

There is a strategic plan for the Trust as a whole which includes overall aims and objectives. This is supported by annual action plans which include ‘headline’ targets. For 2010/2011 these include 1350 new registrations, 225 job outcomes, and 75 training outcomes. Each project or funding stream has more detailed targets (which feed in to the headline targets). The planning documents are put together by the Senior Management Team in consultation with middle managers, and are signed off by the Board.

The Trust has very clear and strong leadership – the CEO was the founding member of the organisation back in the late 1990’s; and the DCEO has also been with the organisation some considerable time. Staff describe the organisation using very similar terms – “client at the centre of everything we do”; “focus on the client and you’ll reach the targets without even thinking about it”; “we’re like a family with our Mum and Dad at the top”; “everyone is equal - clients, staff, managers” – these expressions were used consistently by all staff interviewed suggesting a very strong organisational identity formed through clear leadership.

Staff are consulted in relation to organisational planning and bidding for work and are asked for ideas and suggestions. Staff away days held at least annually are an opportunity for staff to consider broader issues.

The Trust achieves considerable success with limited resources; managers interviewed described how budgets and resources are carefully managed to ensure they are used to the best effect for the client. Staff commented that they felt they had everything they needed to carry out their roles effectively.

The organisation keeps itself up to date with legislation and codes of practice through effective networking, attendance at events and conferences and through inspections and observations by funders and bodies such as Ofsted. The extent of networking and range of partnerships that the organisation is involved in ensures it is ideally placed to stay in tune with emerging trends and changes.

A full range of policy and practice documents pertaining to the delivery of IAG were examined during the Assessment including a small handbook aimed at those working in the EACs (which included guidance on how to answer the phone/greet people, how to book an appointment, how to enter information on the database); Referrals and Signposting Guidelines; Complaints Procedure; Terms of Service for Centre Users; Feedback and Evaluation Procedure; Staff Handbook

## 6.

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

Staff confirmed that they had received a very thorough induction which for many had included some mentoring with a more experienced peer. The length and nature of the induction varied according to role and the level of experience of the incoming member of staff – but all staff confirmed that they were not expected to take on tasks until they felt ready to do them.

The Trust invests substantially in staff development. Staff interviewed described how the Trust had put them through the NVQ3 or were supporting them currently through their NVQ4. Staff also described a broad range of short courses which they had had access to – first aid, fire marshal training, interviewing, counselling skills. Training needs are discussed as part of the formal appraisal process and as part of ongoing supervision.

Staff described the nature of the supervision and support they received which broadly speaking comprised 30 to 60 minutes of one to one time once a week with weekly or fortnightly team meetings. However all staff emphasised that the Trust has an open door policy and “you can speak to your manager whenever you want”. Staff also said they felt perfectly able to talk to any member of staff including the CEO, and even trustees if they wanted to. One member of staff described how the CEO had helped her through a particularly difficult and distressing safeguarding incident; and another described how you could go to a particular trustee if you had an issue.

The appraisal process described is robust and inclusive with reviews during the probation period and then annually. Most staff reported finding this a valuable and developmental process with a chance to look at their personal development needs.

Since the last Accreditation Review, the organisation has also introduced observations by peers and partners as well as managers.

Staff and volunteers were very clear as to the boundaries of their role...

*“I do have a background in counselling, but that is not my role here, so if it was a domestic violence case say, I would refer that to a contact I have in another agency”*

*"I don't get involved in registrations – I pass those to an advisor"*

*"I wouldn't even try to answer questions like that, I'd just ask them to take a seat whilst I got X (Advisor)"*

*"I wouldn't do that, as a volunteer it's not my role"*

## 7.

### **Feedback on the quality of the service is obtained**

Clients interviewed confirmed that they had been advised of how to make a complaint or a suggestion. One client described what had happened when he had made a complaint (about how he had been treated on a work placement) and this reflected the process described in the policy. A staff member described how another complaint had been dealt with which again was according to policy.

Clients also described the range of ways in which feedback is collected which include occasional client forums, evaluation forms at the end of group sessions, and feedback forms at various points during ongoing one to one work...

*"I came in for a meeting a bit like this. They asked us what we thought needed improving, what we thought they did well"*

*"I had to fill in a form after my first session – just had questions like if I found it easy to find, did they greet me alright – that kind of thing"*

*"I had to fill in one asking what I got out of it"*

The organisation collects a lot of feedback from clients some of which was examined during the Assessment, this is almost exclusively complimentary and very rarely includes criticism or suggestions for how things could be improved. Suggestions that have been acted on include changes to opening times and improvements to IT.

Staff are also able to bring informal feedback from clients to the attention of the organisation; and for those who have previously been clients they can also bring their own experience...

*"Having been there myself, I'm ideally placed to suggest things that might improve services for clients. They're so open to ideas it would be fine to suggest anything. Mind you, I can't actually think of anything to improve!"*

## 8.

### **Continuous quality improvement is ensured through monitoring, evaluation and action**

Funders require that the Trust provides detailed performance reports against contractual targets on a regular basis – the Trust consistently over achieves. In addition to this EACs produce quarterly figures detailing new registrations, numbers visiting, and outcomes. The YSDF project undertakes very detailed 'distance travelled' monitoring and evaluation using a progression scale which rates changes in way people feel as well as the outcomes they achieve. A major evaluation method for the Trust is the publication of good news stories or case studies. Staff are encouraged to gather these on a monthly basis and these are published on the website, and in occasional newsletters - this frequent collecting

of stories means there is always something fresh for readers. The DCEO “interrogates the databases at least once a week”.

Feedback gathered from clients and staff and volunteers is used to inform service improvement as well as the individual’s experience of the service. A variety of meeting minutes were examined as part of the Assessment which showed that feedback is routinely discussed and that it is acted on as appropriate and resources permitting. The minutes also showed how the **matrix** Standard has been used as a tool to improve service delivery. Development areas identified have been acted on. The organisation also uses tools such as the A4E Quality Standard Review and Ofsted inspection reports as resources to inform development

The commitment to continuous improvement was evident throughout the Assessment...

*“We don’t like to stand still. There is always more we could be doing, things we could be doing better. Got to keep going”*

*“I have never worked with a contractor so open to feedback. X (Manager) is always saying to me – ‘so what do you need us to improve, how could we be doing this better’ – that kind of thing. And if you do suggest something, she is so willing take it on board. They are just the most proactive organisation I’ve ever worked with”*

## 7. Conclusion

One phrase heard repeatedly during the Accreditation Review was that the “client is at the centre of everything” – this may seem initially seem trite, but the evidence gathered during the Assessment clearly supported this sentiment. Clients receive a completely personalised service and this is seen by both staff and the clients themselves as the main factor in the success the organisation enjoys in terms of engaging with clients and achieving outcomes. For a client group that has not readily engaged with or responded to services in the past the Wheatsheaf’s achievements are especially impressive.

The staff team are competent, enthusiastic and committed to both their work and the Trust, and consequently provide an effective range of services to socially excluded people in South Hampshire.