

Assessment Report

COMMUNITY TRAINING SERVICES
LIMITED (CTS TRAINING)

ASSESSMENT INFORMATION	
Assessment Type	Accreditation Review
Assessor's Decision	Standard Met
Assessor's Name	Dane Gould
Evidence Gathering/Assessment Date/s	19, 20, and 23 September 2024.
Client ID and Assessment Reference	PN202491 - C10204
Accreditation Review to be conducted by	21/09/27

METHODOLOGY	
Evidence gathering	Face-to-face (and phone) at both CTS sites in Sheffield on the 19 & 20, and remotely on the 23 September.
Staff interviews	16
Recipient interviews	16 learners (plus interviews with 4 individual parents)
Partner interviews	4

Document review	CTS Subcontracting Strategy 2023-2024 Ofsted Inspection Report – 2019 Behaviour and Attendance Policy Compliments, Complaints and Suggestions Policy CPD Policy CTS Training Mission Statement, Core Values and Business Goals IAG Policy and Guidance Learner Survey Responses - February 2024 Parent Survey Responses - March 2024 Positive Engagement Policy QIP 2024 Quality Assurance Policy Quality Cycle 2024-2025 Safeguarding and Prevent Policy SAR 2022-2023 Staff Code of Conduct Policy Staff Surveys Analysis 2024 - All Staff Strategic Business Plan - 2023-2026
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About the organisation

CTS is an established independent training provider, formed in 1999 to provide training and education to disadvantaged young people and adults in Sheffield. CTS have delivered direct ESFA contracts for over 20 years and has built an in-depth knowledge of Post 16 Education. Their offer has diversified over the years, over the last three years they have returned to delivering programmes that are designed to help overcome barriers to employment, further education and training for young people in the Sheffield City Region. Provision includes developing employability skills and personal and social skills, alongside Maths and English and ESOL. Learners are supported along vocational pathways including customer service, hospitality, business administration and sport. All learners that undertake CTS's provision are 16-19 and the majority are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

There have been a number of major organisational changes since the last matrix assessment in 2021, with some significant developments taking place in August 2024. Up until August 2024, CTS operated from one site in the centre of Sheffield with a range of managers, tutors, learning mentors and administrative staff. A second site has been developed and CTS began delivering provision from this site in August 2024. At the time of the matrix reaccreditation all BTEC vocational courses were being delivered at this site, courses included Travel and Tourism, Business Administration and Sport. This site is a 5-minute walk from their original site. There is plenty of classroom space to expand delivery of their provision, with plans for part of the building next to the classrooms becoming a specific Careers Advice Service, with

tutors offering one-to-one and peer group Carer Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG). CTS's original site has a 'well-being' space for learners to 'de-stress' and a 'well-being' space for learners is planned for the new building. CTS also have two 'Pastoral Tutors' who are available to support learners across all provision.

Both CTS sites were visited during the **matrix** Review, and tutors and learners in all classes taking place at the time were observed, the **matrix** Assessor also inter-acted with the tutors and learners during the delivery of their provision.

Since 2023 the number of learner referrals to CTS has doubled. The organisation is now the preferred first referral partner for Sheffield city college and Sheffield city council Community Youth Team, other referrers include the Local Authority and Social Workers. In 2023 Sheffield city college raised their entry grades from Grade 3 to Grade 5 and many learners from schools and colleges across Sheffield failed to gain entry to the college. CTS has a 'fantastic reputation' (one on many positive quotes from partners) in the city, so the college has been referring learners to CTS since the grade entry level was raised confident that CTS will bring those learners grades up to the required entry level. Unlike other colleges in the city, CTS have a 'rolling programme' of curriculum provision, so learners can be referred to CTS throughout the year.

Due to the increase in the number of referrals, CTS have recruited new tutors throughout 2024.

The Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)

CEIAG is an integral part of the overall purpose and provision of CTS and an in-depth IAG Policy is in place which underpins the IAG provided and complements the training, education and learning which takes place. The IAG policy states, 'A high-quality information, advice and guidance service is the key to the success, it ensures we have learners on programmes suited to their needs and contributes to our retention and success rates. The quality of the service is monitored through performance data and feedback from users.'

CTS's well-structured and embedded processes allow for dedicated time to identify the needs, interests and goals of individual learners associated with their provision. In practice, this means Enrolment staff and Learning Mentors undertaking, with new and potential learners, an initial assessment and diagnostic exercises to determine their suitability for the Study Programme and their particular individual needs. An explanation of options available is also provided so that learners can make appropriate decisions for themselves about their way forward. All learners have a two-week window where they experience a variety of CTS provision at the centre/s, enabling them to make sure that their chosen course/s are right for them. This window also gives tutors and learners an opportunity to explore whether their initial diagnostic assessments are correct for example, learners could be assessed as being Level 1 but through interaction with tutors and other learners, tutors gave examples of learners being at Level 2. Learning agreements and learning plans are created with learners and tutors leading to regular reviews with learners, which

include opportunities for providing further IAG as learners move towards their identified objectives and positive outcomes.

The curriculum is planned so that learners can start at entry level and progress directly through levels in a single subject. This is particularly beneficial to ESOL learners who often start at very low levels and go on to achieve qualifications in Speaking and Listening and Reading and Writing. These learners are able to progress through the levels until their level of English is sufficient to be able to progress into employment or further education, or to a level where they are more confident citizens and are able to access support and services independently. Sessions across all qualifications are planned to develop learners' wider skills, in addition to those required to achieve the qualification.

When discussing IAG with staff from CTS, it was clear that this is provided by an enthusiastic and experienced group of professionals. Their learner centred approach ensures each individual's personal needs and requirements are considered. While learners are with CTS, their development and progress is facilitated by a focused team in a highly supportive and enthusiastic manner.

There is a strategic commitment to ongoing staff professional development. CTS encourages all staff to undertake training and development to enable them to enhance the learner experience. All staff have an individual Personal Development Plan, and this is monitored at monthly PMR's. Staff are responsible for updating their CPD logs and reflecting on the impact the training and development has had on the effectiveness of their roles.

The difference the IAG makes to recipients and the overall impact

CTS identify Outcomes in their IAG policy as: 'IAG should be provided to learners at three key stages of their journey: Getting In, Getting On and Moving On' at the start, during and end of the programme.

Monitoring the progress and learner outcomes is undertaken regularly and through complementary processes, for example, CTS utilises their PICS database system and there is a regular cycle of reviews providing the opportunity to focus on learner progress. Monitoring and review is robust, delivering and reporting on the IAG provided is detailed and comprehensive. All learners are contacted, and data is analysed at management level to look at how provision can be improved. The combination of planning set review points, regular opportunity for group and one-to-one interaction, complemented by tracking progress ensures learners receive comprehensive IAG in order that they progress towards their stated goals and objectives and successful outcomes. All CTS tutors and staff expressed their support, passion, and commitment to the learners.

Comments from members of staff included, 'The IAG journey involves learning basic life skills, informal stuff, so we get to know learners. I link things that I've done in my life to the learners journey, for example, I worked in Primark and my life in Ukraine before I came to the UK', 'They learn many life skills, for example, how to catch a

train, how to catch a bus, it's good to have a bit of realism linked to their ambitions' and 'I have a learner who is going to Cambridge, she is from Somalia and is deaf, she translated everything into an app and got a GCSE in English and maths. She came in to do a speech about her career, it was fantastic for her and for the learners', 'We really prepare the learners for FE or HE. We find out what they want to do, and I tailor their sessions to meet their needs' and 'We are not here for the money. We are here because we are committed to the learners, we want them to succeed in life.'

Examples of learners' progress journeys were seen, for example, Study Programme Enrolment Forms, Study Programme Learner Agreements, Learner Timetables, End of Assessment Reports on Functional Skills English, English Diagnostic Assessment, Free Writing and Functional Maths Assessments. A number of Learner Journals were also viewed demonstrating learner progression and outcomes. The journals highlight learners' progression in terms of soft skills for example, 'more confidence', their progression to achieving their qualification, and their progress to education or employment.

Responses from a Learner Survey of 220 learners showed that just over 95% of learners 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree' with 20 statements about their involvement with CTS. Statements included, 'Before I came to college (CTS) I was given information on what to expect on my programme', 'My needs were identified at interview before I started the programme', 'CTS is flexible and makes arrangements to suit my personal circumstances', 'CTS is flexible and makes arrangements to suit my personal circumstances', 'Staff expect me to take responsibility for my own work in class', 'Staff keep me informed about my progress' and 'Staff talk to me regularly about how to improve my learning.'

Comments from learners included, 'I was super nervous, the tutors were so nice, they taught me about being resilient', 'They make sure your voice is heard, I was shy and nervous, now I'm more confident and they helped me to find a job', 'Tutors have enormous respect for you, they don't give up on you, encourage you to be yourself, it's like being part of a big family, a community', 'The tutors care for you, they help you, they try to understand who you are. We are so respected, it's a great college', 'They are always looking after your mental health, they support you, it's amazing, they are great at listening - with beautiful patience comes good things', 'The tutors are so helpful, and the tutor looks at my learning journal, they use this to recap on my progression, it's fantastic', 'My ambition is to go into childcare, we do all the CEIAG, they help with my CV, interview skills, they really prepare us for interviews and the career we might want, what is best for us, they want us to be happy', 'I have learnt so much at CTS, better communication skills, I've made new friends, I'm so much more confident, I don't have social anxiety anymore' and 'CTS really involve learners in what we want to learn, we voted last year on what new courses we would like, and Travel and Tourism was one of the courses that we voted for - now it's happening, and I'm doing it.'

Data shows that Qualification Achievement Rates (QAR) have increased by 10% over a three-year period. The latest figures show that from a cohort of 1069 learners, 832 achieved qualifications with a pass rate of 100%, resulting in an overall achievement rate of 77.83%, to which IAG contributes through the learning plans. This figure includes achievement rates for Awards, Certificates, ESOL, Functional English and Maths, GCSE English and Maths and other regulated and non-regulated qualifications. Destination Data shows a year-on-year increase in learners with a total of 71.6% of learners going onto employment or Further Education.

Due to increased referrals from partners such as Sheffield College, statistics relating to learners in 2024 have increased markedly from August 2023 to August 2024 for example, in August 2023 there were 74 Starts whereas in August 2024 there were 129. This trend is set to continue for 2024-2025. CTS learners have recently gained entry onto a number of their preferred courses for example, Level 3 Engineering at Sheffield City College. Partners enthused about CTS 'focus 100% on the learners needs and aspirations.' Comments from partners included, 'We have worked with CTS for 15 years, they are a fantastic organisation, totally focused on the learner, their individual learning and progression' and 'CTS are absolutely fantastic, the difference they make is phenomenal. With one learner, they supported him to get on the bus, to travel to the college, they sat with him at lunch because he was so anxious, now he has qualifications to go to college, they are so amazing.'

Responses from a Parent Survey of 50 parents showed that on average over 80% of parents answered 'Excellent' or 'Good' to a range of questions about their experience and their child's experience of being a learner at CTS. Statements included, 'How well do you think CTS is meeting your child's needs', 'How well do you think CTS is meeting your child's needs' and 'How do you rate the information, advice and guidance given to your child regarding next steps.' Comments from parents included, 'They supported my child in their learning and amazing emotional and mental health support too. They get so much support from tutors, my child has a such a great relationship with his tutor, they are brilliant' and 'As a parent, CTS keep in touch with me too, my child was nominated to be a learning champion, which was great for her, she has so much confidence now.'

A new development for 2024 was the creation of the post of Quality and Curriculum Manager (QCM - post started in August 2024). All CEIAG, supporting tutors and learners, developing curriculum and provision, falls under this position. This was an internal promotion and the person in the post has a wide range of experience and knowledge in CEIAG and is qualified at CEIAG at level 3 (currently undertaking Level 4) and at IQA level four. Having oversight of CEIAG throughout CTS, this position will improve the consistency of the CEIAG delivery across the organisation. An example of how CEIAG at CTS achieves 'good outcomes', was outlined through interviews described from multiple viewpoints - learner, referrer, learner's Guardian, CTS QCM and CTS Tutors.

At 14 years of age, a young girl was taken into care from her mother. Initially, the young girl was taken in by her Nan, but Nan couldn't cope, so her Aunty took her in.

The Social Worker allocated to the young girl contacted CTS to see if they could find a place for her on their curriculum. Due to her complex situation, the girl had not been in education. The Social Worker contacted the CTS QCM who met with the Social Worker, the guardian of the young girl, the young girl herself - they found a place for her at CTS. Diagnostic and assessment models were undertaken for the prospective student to assess her level of education, and what she might be interested in as a career. The **matrix** Assessor met the student as one of a group of learners, she is in the final stages of completing her BTEC in Travel and Tourism and plans to go on to an Apprenticeship in this industry. The assessor interviewed the guardian of the young girl in a phone interview, and she praised CTS highly.

The QCM described her involvement with the Social Worker, the student and her guardian, and commented on the 'unbelievable progress' she had made whilst at CTS. In the group interview with learners, the student talked about how 'supportive and amazing' the tutors and staff were at CTS, and that 'she would never have been able to do this without them.' At the end of the interview session with a group of learners, this student was keen to share her Learner Journal. As with all Learner Journals the journal contained her thoughts about her progress, for example, what she plans to do next, and what her weekly and overall goals are. At the end of every lesson her tutor writes in her journal in response to her comments, and on her weekly and overall goals. All tutors do this throughout the delivery of all provision at CTS.

What is working particularly well

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

- CTS excels at developing partnerships. They are the first preferred providers for Sheffield city College and Sheffield Local Authority Community Youth Team. The number of referrals from organisations has doubled since 2023 and CTS have responded by recruiting new staff members and promoting internal staff. CTS's rolling programme as well as its outstanding reputation plays a big part in why these organisations choose CTS. (2.7)
- The development of the post of Quality and Curriculum Manager means all CEIAG, supporting tutors and learners, developing curriculum and provision, falls under this position. This was an internal promotion and the person in the post has a wide range of experience and knowledge in CEIAG and has an IQ on level four. This post started in August 2024. This position also undertakes PMR's for all tutors (the CEO did this before this position was created), allowing the CEO to concentrate more on the strategic development and expansion of CTS. (2.2, 2.3)
- All students were highly complementary of the support and welcoming attitude of the tutors and of CTS staff. Many talked about the advantages of smaller class sizes, being important, being able to talk to tutors and staff about

anything, one-to-one. A learner said, "I would not be here without their support" (i.e. 'not alive.') (1.4)

- Strategic development and CTS are excellent. Due to the rapid expansion of student numbers, CTS have now acquired another building near the current headquarters for further delivery of their provision. At the time of the current matrix assessment the vocational provision was being delivered at the new premises. In the new site they have a space ready where careers advice will be delivered by members of staff to students on a one-to-one basis. (6.2, 7.1)
- CTS have developed into an organisation which has become very much learner centred. All staff consistently support individual learners in a non-judgemental manner which is free from bias and is focused on individual needs. This has had the effect of motivating high proportions of learners towards meeting their goals and objectives resulting in an upward trend in achievement rates and progression towards their desired aspirations and positive outcomes. Staff from CTS not only present the options that learners have available to them, but they also facilitate learners' thinking and decision making to enable them to make appropriate individual choices. This approach encourages learners to make decisions for themselves without being pressurised to opt for anything in particular. It also ensures that ownership for choices made is engendered for all learners creating greater motivation leading to higher proportions of learners progressing to the achievement of their goals and objectives. All CTS staff are committed and passionate to understanding the learners needs and putting them first. (3.1, 3.2, 4.2, 4.3)

Development suggestions

Development suggestions are offered in the spirit of continuous improvement and a way for an Assessor to add value e.g. where the service is of a high quality, development areas are offered to help the service be even better than it already is, or to give insight into practices seen elsewhere. There is no correlation between the number of strengths and development suggestions. Where development areas are greater in number this is not intended to indicate that the information, advice and guidance service is in any way lacking. These will form the basis for discussion at the Continuous Improvement Checks (CIC) conducted twelve and twenty-four months from the date of this Assessment, along with any other notable developments. The numbers in brackets refer to the element and criteria of the **matrix** Standard.

- As CTS continue to expand and offer more provision, for example, more vocational courses, they could develop more formal links with possible employers, or places where learners can get real life experience of the chosen courses, for example, the travel and tourism BTEC and the sport BTEC. (2.7)
- Most staff had completed CEIAG at level two and some new members of staff are embarking on this qualification. Due to the amount of IAG and CEIAG that

CTS deliver across their curriculum, the organisation could consider all CTS staff completing CEIAG at level three. (2.2)

- Consider more formal links with third sector organisations that may be able to offer students, volunteer opportunities, work experience, or volunteer roles that complement their course provision. For example, CTS could explore the NHS 'Volunteer to Career' scheme, and other third sector opportunities. A possible partnership with VAS volunteer brokerage scheme could be useful too.

<https://helpforce.community/our-services/building-your-workforce>

<https://www.sheffieldvolunteercentre.org.uk/>

<https://www.vas.org.uk/>

Sheffield Volunteer Centre registered Provider application page:

<https://search.sheffieldvolunteercentre.org.uk/volunteers/registration-provider>

To assure the quality of the experience with volunteer-involving organisations, CTS would need to know that students will have a quality experience with those organisations, VAS will have a good provider opportunities list in place, that assures them that volunteers will have a quality experience. (2.7)

- CTS are rapidly expanding the range of provision across their curriculum. For example, the number of referrals has doubled since 2023. As CTS continue to rapidly expand, they should continuously review the capacity of the organisation to deliver the expanded provision. (7.1)
- Consider managers at CTS becoming Heads of Departments, giving the organisation, a clear structure, and easily identifying who is responsible for particular provision, and curriculum areas, for example, Head of Quality and Curriculum. (2.1)

Conditions of Accreditation

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

1. Maintain and continually improve upon their services.
2. During 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.
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