

Assessment Report

The Inspire and Achieve Foundation

ASSESSMENT INFORMATION	
Assessment Type	Accreditation Review
Assessor's Decision	Maintaining Accreditation
Assessor's Name	Aly Jackson
Evidence Gathering/Assessment Date/s	06/12/23 – 07/12/23
Client ID and Assessment Reference	C35025 PN202092
Accreditation Review to be conducted by	07/10/26

METHODOLOGY	
Evidence gathering	Fully remote Assessment over 1.5 days
Staff interviews	9
Recipient interviews	5
Partner interviews	3
Document review	Review of a range of information including reports, staff training information, policies, marketing activity, strategy, quality information planning, feedback and continuous quality improvement factors.

About the organisation

The Inspire and Achieve Foundation (IAF) is a Nottinghamshire charity, incorporated in 2009, which provides a range of information, advice, guidance and support to young people who have barriers to learning, work, and within their everyday lives. The charity's work is focused on young people (aged 16-26) who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) or are at risk of being in this group. Current work is focused within the districts of Mansfield, Worksop and Nottingham City.

IAF offers a range of opportunities for young people, many of whom are particularly vulnerable and is committed to delivering impactful Information, Advice, and Guidance (IAG) services. Established with a clear mission: 'Inspiring young people - Empowering them to achieve their best', IAF aims to make a positive difference in the lives of young individuals facing adversity. The foundation places a strong emphasis on empowering young people to achieve their goals.

IAF's IAG services directly address the defined recipient group—young people aged 16-26 who are NEET or at risk of falling into this group. The purposeful IAG services, including mentoring, employability training, and outreach programmes, are strategically designed to cater to the specific needs of this vulnerable demographic, aligning with the organisational mission and scope.

IAF has an ongoing commitment to understanding the client group and systematically analyses the challenges and aspirations of the young people they aim to support, through ongoing case studies, input from a diverse range of partners and the wider national picture, thus reflecting a strategic approach to IAG development. The bespoke IAG on offer is a result of ongoing needs analysis, ensuring relevance and effectiveness in addressing the unique and ever-changing circumstances of the target group.

IAF's values, including Commitment & Passion, Youth Focused, Respect, Quality of Service, Positivity, Responsibility, and Accountability, are lived and breathed across the organisation and a recipient-focused ethos is clear. These values guide the delivery of IAG services, creating a supportive and inclusive environment for the young people being supported, as well as the team themselves.

The commitment to quality is clear both in the design of services and evidence based practice. IAF implements a robust quality management system, seeking 360-degree feedback, conducting ongoing monitoring of delivery and outcomes and reporting regularly to the Board. There is pride in holding **matrix** Standard accreditation and an Ofsted inspection standard of 'Good.' This commitment ensures that the IAG services provided are of high quality, aligning with the strategic goal of further improving provision and funding opportunities.

Clear communication channels, and a high level of care for staff demonstrate effective leadership and direction, as does the inclusion of staff in future planning through team discussions and focus groups.

The IAG services offered by IAF directly contribute to the aim of inspiring and empowering young people. By providing personalised help, mentoring, Princes Trust Team and employability support, IAF delivers the mission of inspiring young individuals to reach their full potential, thereby contributing to the broader goal of breaking the cycle of disadvantage.

The Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)

The scope of IAF is to provide personalised support to unemployed young people aged 16 to 26 in Nottinghamshire. This includes some or all of the following: mentoring to overcome or manage personal barriers, support to enter education, employment and/or training, employability, volunteering and enterprise training through delivery of the Prince's Trust Team Programme, and a range of outreach and activity programmes to engage and create positive communication.

There are different strands of delivery, however, the inclusive nature of IAF and the belief that the complex needs of individuals may not be 'solved' by one programme, ensures that there is cohesion across the IAG on offer. The three main delivery areas are:

Mentoring:

These are one to one sessions to suit the requirements of the young people and are led by their needs. This enables the Level 3 IAG qualified staff to offer bespoke support to individuals. Support begins with an assessment of need and an exploration of short and longer term goals, as defined by the young person. Baseline softer outcomes are measured at this point to establish distance travelled and the impact the service has made over time.

Taking a 10 step approach, the mentors work with young people to support them, including being safe, having their basic needs met, understanding themselves and their skills, helping them on their employability journey, and action planning for success. As a truly bespoke service, young people are able to access support without specific time limits, however, supervision of caseloads ensures that young people continue to be supported and exit strategies are developed when someone is ready to move forward. For example, if a young person is successful in employment, their mentor can continue to support them until they are settled and confident to immerse themselves into the job.

Action plans are a component part of the mentoring work, with actions to be taken and agreed by both young person and mentor. Feedback during assessment was unanimous in praising the mentors for their care, support and impact. Comments from young people included:

"It really helped with my mental health and was a massive support. The staff are inspirational."

"I have gained skills and experience and faced my fears."

"You can call anytime and she will listen. I am much more confident in myself."

“She got me back on my feet. My social anxiety is gone. I am a different person from what I was then, I can talk to people and I have learned so much about myself.”

Prince's Trust Team Programme:

A twelve week personal development, life-skills, and employability skills programme incorporating a Level 1 or 2 qualification which improves confidence, communication, life-skills, employability, and pushes young people out of their comfort zone. A Team Leader and Assistant Team Leader support a group of up to twenty young people through a variety of challenges, including a residential experience, work placement, voluntary work, employability skills and group presentations. The whole process has IAG at its heart as staff work to inform and guide each individual towards greater confidence and achievement of personal goals. Comments from young people included:

“I thought it was just going to be another programme the job centre sent me on, but it completely changed my life in the best way possible.”

“You are supported all the way through the programme and it's great to learn new skills.”

“I loved the residential and I didn't think I'd like it. I went rock climbing and enjoyed it.”

“I did Team myself and got so much out of it. I learned more about myself than I imagined and then volunteered. I now have a job as an Assistant Team Leader.”

In addition to the provision described above, IAG is also provided during youth –led social activities. Communi-Tea is a well-established regular opportunity for young people to get together for socialising, games and for meeting their mentors. Within this informal setting, individuals are gaining personal skills which support achievement of their short and long term goals.

Moving forward, there are plans to develop digital connections through ‘Our Space and ‘I Time’, where young people can safely use a platform for socialising, building communication skills and sharing ideas for activities. Support from staff will be part of this model, but it is envisaged that the IAG delivered through mentoring and Princes Trust will empower individuals to self-manage and take responsibility for decision making.

The difference the IAG makes to recipients and the overall impact

The strategic goals for 2023-2024, include helping young people reach their potential, supporting mental health, developing youth voice, improving marketing and enhancing quality. Effective IAG is key to all of these and ongoing monitoring and evaluation provides evidence of the impact made in young peoples' lives. Mentoring, the Prince's Trust Team Programme, and youth-led social activities—are directly linked to achieving the strategic goals, providing a structured approach to holistic support.

For example, since April 2022, IAF has supported 333 young people, with 210 individuals receiving mentoring support, 65.9% progressed into positive destinations, including employment, education, and training. Considering the complex and chaotic lives of many of the participant group, this figure demonstrates real impact on

meaningful next steps. 93% of young people taking part in the Prince's Trust Team Programme completed the twelve weeks and 41% progressed into further education, employment, or training. IAF have a policy of offering a place to young people who wish to try the programme and although steps are taken to check commitment and attendance prior to starting, there is no bar for those who may not be ready for work at the end.

As IAF conduct regular distance travelled evaluation, there is live, ongoing data on the views and experiences of young peoples' progress whilst working with mentors. For example, the end of year report for 2022 related that 88.9% of young people felt they had improved their employability skills/felt more work ready, 72.2% of young people said IAF had helped them to make friends and feel less isolated, 66.7% of young people felt IAF's support had improved their mental health, 88.9% of young people felt their confidence had improved, 83.3% of young people felt their communication skills had improved, 77.8% of young people felt more able to cope with challenges with IAF's support and 88.9% of young people said moral support from IAF staff helped them move forward with their lives in positive ways. The feedback from participants during assessment was highly complementary and along with case studies, gave a personalised view of individual experiences.

Quality is a key principle in the design of IAG services and is systematically integrated across planning, monitoring and evaluation processes. Each stage of delivery is quality assured. The ongoing commitment to quality ensures that IAG services are not only effective but also responsive to the evolving needs of the young people.

IAF provides highly effective IAG services to its young people. The organisation's strategic alignment of IAG services with its mission and values, coupled with comprehensive needs analysis and an individual centred ethos, enables young peoples' needs to be met. IAF's emphasis on quality, transparent communication, and effective leadership ensures a cohesive approach toward empowering young people to overcome challenges and achieve their aspirations, fostering an environment where young people can flourish and realise their full potential.

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.

- The staff team are highly effective within their roles, which is considered a key factor, by both young people and partners in the ongoing successful engagement and positive results for individuals. Staff were described as 'lifesavers' more than once and feedback during assessment was unanimously positive and complementary. (2.3)
- Managers lead strategically, are highly supportive and inclusive, and ensure that the team have a voice within the organisation. Charismatic and enthusiastic

leadership provides a springboard for innovative work as well as solutions to a range of arising issues, such as ongoing funding within a difficult financial period. (1.1)

- There is excellent evidence of career development and progression within the service, particularly where staff have been appointed after taking part in activities themselves as participants. Young people are encouraged to consider working within IAF and in similar organisations, as their experience and achievements are considered valid and important. (1.2)
- Partnerships are well-established, nurtured and developed to provide the most effective outcomes for young people. Over a period of time, significant relationships with key providers have emerged which provide synergy and impact collaboratively. One example of this is the positive, ongoing relationship with DWP, which has been nurtured to enable a joint approach to supporting young people to gain the confidence and skills to move into employment or other positive outcomes. (2.7)
- The culture and ethos of IAF is grounded in sound values that prioritise the well-being and success of the young people they support. This ensures that all achievements are recognised and young people can celebrate the smallest steps as well as the greater goals. Use of initial assessment benchmarking and distance travelled criteria relating to softer outcomes is a highly effective way of helping young people to see how they are moving forward and how IAG is supporting their growth in confidence, self-esteem and personal skills. Softer outcomes are genuinely celebrated as much as formal qualifications and young people value this. (1.4, 2.4)

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.

- The IAG service is described within specific areas of delivery, and young people are made aware of how they can access the range of provision available. It may be useful to develop an IAG Policy which brings together the various strands and links to the new Strategy document. This could support staff understanding of the breadth of IAG, particularly for new appointees. (1.1, 3.1)

- The new Strategy is being finalised and as it is a new document, it will be useful to use the Continuous Improvement Checks (CIC) at years one and two, to consider progress and discuss whether any IAG issues are raised. (1.1)
- Work is ongoing to develop links with careers resources and staff have a number of sources for work with young people to help their progress into employment. It may be beneficial to further explore links with employer representative organisations, such as Chamber of Commerce, D2N2 and CEC, to support current resources and to ensure current labour market information is held by the team. (2.3, 2.7)

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