

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



9 February 2012

Mr M Malcomson
Principal and Executive Director
City Lit
Keeley Street
Covent Garden
London
WC2B 4BA

Dear Mr Malcomson

Ofsted 2011–12 survey inspection programme: employability - the impact of skills programmes for adults on achieving sustained employment

This survey evaluates providers' response to initiatives launched on 1 August 2011 to use Skills Funding Agency funds flexibly to support people on benefits.

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and participants, during my visit on 1 and 2 February 2012 to look at your work in employability provision.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff, participants and an employer; scrutiny of relevant documents; analysis of participants' work; and observation of two lessons.

Key findings

- City Lit has an outstanding range of courses which attracts participants seeking employment, self-employment and progression to higher education. It has built well on its previous experience to develop this provision further since August 2011. Its community outreach team makes excellent use of feedback from public and voluntary sector partners to help design very specific courses for participants with multiple barriers to employment. Participants progress well through different levels of courses, making them more employable and confident.
- City Lit's partners host participants on health and social care courses as volunteers, giving them an exceptionally beneficial introduction to support

and care work and bringing relevance to their coursework. This additionally gives participants an invaluable structure and discipline to their lifestyles and helps alleviate their fears of returning to work. However, some participants do not have a placement at the start of their programme which affects their ability to apply their learning in work-related settings.

- The teaching and learning observed were very effective. Tutors used outstanding activities to stimulate controversial and challenging discussion among participants that increased their awareness of their own professional behaviour and values. Participants' experiences from volunteering were expertly drawn upon by tutors to put theory into context.
- Participants receive excellent support and guidance. They discuss their personal circumstances in detail with tutors who put relevant financial and welfare support in place. Individual employability training is readily available and group sessions are now designed into all literacy, numeracy and language courses and are effective in developing participants' communication and teamworking skills.
- Participants are very well motivated to achieve and retention rates on courses are high. Participants use their increased understanding of support and care work theory to deal with their own personal issues and barriers very effectively.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- working with participants and employers to ensure that all participants have relevant volunteering or work experience confirmed at an early stage in their programme.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop employability provision at City Lit.

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter is also being sent to the Skills Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Janet Rodgers
Her Majesty's Inspector