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Mrs R Crossley
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Dear Mrs Crossley

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 8 and 9 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 and participants; scrutiny of relevant documents; and an observation of lift truck driving lessons.

Key findings

- Anne Clarke Associates (ACA) has been very proactive in response to the revised policy on provision for people on benefits and it has shown good initiative in developing new vocational programmes to meet the needs of unemployed people in Norfolk. Staff make effective use of the information provided by Jobcentre Plus on the current vacancies in the local area. ACA is developing courses that provide the vocational skills needed in areas where there are larger numbers of vacancies such as warehousing, and health and social care.
- Since August 2011, ACA has developed a very inclusive approach to working with unemployed participants and it is starting to work with people who face more complex barriers to employment. Staff are building

effective working relationships with local jobcentres to develop this new work further. Communications are clear and personal links through attendance at jobcentre meetings and the use of fact sheets helps maintain a good flow of information. ACA staff provide very good initial support by keeping touch with participants referred from the jobcentres before they start their courses. However, ACA does not have any systems for monitoring participants' progress or progression through further training programmes and into employment.

- ACA has carefully selected units of qualifications which can be funded through their adult skills budget and they link these well-structured vocational courses to other qualifications that are valued by employers and participants, such as lift truck licence and emergency first aid at work. However, participants are not always aware which vocational units they are working towards.
- The vocational trainers are well qualified and experienced, and they are particularly enthusiastic in their work with participants. Successful new work includes a jobsearch course which has small groups to allow for an individualised approach to skills development.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing the involvement of employers in designing and developing courses to ensure the vocational units selected provide the best starting point for participants looking for employment in a specific sector
- encouraging employers to provide work experience and work trials
- ensuring that assessments at the start of the courses identify participants' personal barriers to employment and their current levels of literacy, numeracy and employability skills, so that they can be recognised and developed during the courses, as appropriate.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop employability provision at Anne Clarke Associates.

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

Joy Montgomery
Her Majesty's Inspector