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Ms D Brown-Sackey
Principal
Newham College of Further Education
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High Street South
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Dear Ms Brown-Sackey

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 24 and 25 January 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 partners; scrutiny of relevant documents; and observation of five sessions.

Key findings

- The college has built on its significant expertise and experience in providing employability programmes to develop this provision further in 10 vocational areas. However, implementation of employability provision funded through the Skills Funding Agency since August 2011 has been slow. Very few participants have joined many of the short courses developed specifically for people on benefits referred through Jobcentre Plus.
- Staff promote equality and diversity very effectively through employability training. In the sessions observed, participants developed a good understanding of equality of opportunity at work. Inclusivity was also a high priority in the session plans and schemes of work reviewed. However,

in the vocational training sessions observed, staff lacked sufficient language, literacy and numeracy awareness to embed these skills in their teaching to help increase participants' overall employability skills.

- Participants joining the college's job brokerage scheme develop good jobsearch skills. They receive good individual support and realistic advice and guidance when completing job applications and preparing for interviews. However, the college does not use initial assessments adequately to identify the personal barriers to employment of participants referred through Jobcentre Plus or their training needs to improve their employability skills. The participants interviewed did not have a clear idea of their development needs to increase their employability and very few of them had clear employment goals.
- Teaching staff involved in the employability provision have good expertise in teaching, with good industrial knowledge and experience. Attainment was good in the sessions observed, and the participants gained useful knowledge that helped them complete the written assessment packs required for the qualification. However, assessment practices were too narrow and did not focus enough on assessing participants' development of the practical skills required to work in the relevant industry.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing further the links with Jobcentre Plus to enable the college to implement its plans to offer short employability courses in the context of 10 vocational areas, including the specialist courses for those who speak English as an additional language
- implementing and using careers guidance and initial assessments to identify participants' personal barriers to work, their employability, literacy, numeracy and language skills to ensure that training programmes focus on meeting participants' training needs and employment goals
- reviewing assessment practices to ensure that assessments provide participants with constructive feedback on their development of the practical skills they need to increase their chances of sustained employment.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop employability provision at Newham College of Further Education.

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

Karen Adriaanse
Her Majesty's Inspector