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28 February 2012

Mr D Wood
The Principal
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Dear Mr Wood

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 visits on 10 and 11 November 2011 and 20 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, employers and other partners; visits to the learning centre in Morecambe; scrutiny of relevant documents; and observation of five learning sessions.

Key findings

- The college has built on its previous work to support people on benefits very effectively since August 2011. Innovative curriculum planning and good financial management are key features of the newly developed provision. The college has helped Jobcentre Plus, employers and other providers respond quickly to an identified need for short employability programmes. The college has recently decided to develop employability as a main strategic priority across the college.
- The college has linked its short 'Pathways' employability programmes to the job market well and it is continuing to expand the range of vocational areas offered. The well-designed programmes provide participants with

good opportunities to develop practical vocational skills and to gain useful background information. Bespoke programmes developed with employers to support a forthcoming recruitment drive have been particularly successful.

- Vocational tutors have good specialist vocational expertise and the participants interviewed valued the opportunities to use a variety of industry-standard resources. Staff have recently increased the focus on identifying participants' personal barriers to employment and they mostly use this information well to identify development needs. However, the short programmes do not help learners sufficiently to develop the work-related literacy and numeracy skills that may be a barrier to employment.
- Participants receive good individual support and jobsearch training from the key workers, including opportunities to use well-designed self-access materials on relevant topics, such as using external websites and understanding the tax and benefits systems. However, participants receive insufficient detailed guidance to help them identify specific careers or employment goals.
- The participants interviewed had developed good employability skills and reported that the support and training had had a significant impact on increasing their self-confidence and motivation. However, not all participants receive sufficient feedback on failed job applications, especially where this could be available from employers involved in the development of the programmes that guaranteed an interview for all participants who completed the course.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- providing further guidance on the full range of job options within vocational areas to identify more specific job goals
- developing further the opportunities for participants to develop work-related literacy and numeracy skills
- continuing to develop links with employers to provide more work experience and, where feasible, to provide participants with more detailed feedback from their job applications.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop employability provision at Lancaster and Morecambe College

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