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Mr S Ward  
Managing Director  
Profound Services Limited  
Unit 13  
Judson Road  
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Peterlee  
SR8 2QJ

Dear Mr Ward

**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, participants, and partners; scrutiny of relevant documents; analysis of participants' work; and observation of two learning sessions.

**Key findings**

- Profound Services Limited (Profound) has consulted extensively with partners and participants and devised employability programmes that meet the workforce needs of the local area very well. Participants have very clear progression routes from the employability course to vocationally specific qualifications that link well with Profound's apprenticeships.
- Tutors thoroughly discuss and review with participants their goals for improving their skills, qualifications and employment prospects. Participants complete excellent learning materials, which they use well to identify their barriers to employment honestly and critically. They develop

a good awareness of how their behaviour is viewed by potential employers and apply decision-making, anti-stress and self-confidence building strategies well within their personal action plans.

- In the learning sessions observed, tutors used innovative and cohesive learning activities to motivate and interest participants. They incorporated very current and relevant recruitment and selection tasks from local companies which increased participants' confidence in performing well during job interviews. At the end of each learning session, participants applied their learning effectively by setting short-term actions for jobsearch activities.
- Profound has good links with employers, which they use to very good effect on the taxi-driving course to guarantee participants a job interview at the end of their course. Participants on some programmes complete two weeks' work experience but not all have the opportunity to apply their skills and knowledge with an employer.
- Participants receive very good careers advice through the use of a computerised careers package, and support and guidance from partner organisations and from their tutors. Most participants are given clear initial information about what their course includes, although a small number were not aware that they would need to complete the employability course before starting the vocationally specific qualification.

**Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- increasing the clarity of information that is given to participants, before they start, about the content of the employability course and how it links to the vocationally specific qualification
- incorporating work experience for all participants to help them apply their skills and support their progression to apprenticeships and employment.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop employability provision at Profound Services Limited.

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**