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Mr P Sapsford
Principal Adult Learning Officer
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Dear Mr Sapsford

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 15 and 16 March 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 a representative from Jobcentre Plus; scrutiny of relevant documents; analysis of participants' work; and observation of four learning sessions and an induction session.

Key findings

- Since August 2011, Leicestershire Adult Learning Service (LALS) has used its funding effectively to develop its courses enabling participants to have good progression routes on to further education and training. The service is very flexible in its approach to set up courses in diverse localities across the county and adapts individual courses very effectively to meet participants' needs. Managers are at a relatively early stage of using data and feedback from participants and employers to develop the employability programme.
- The recruitment of a development worker has greatly enhanced the links that LALS has with its partners, which are very strong. Participants receive

effective advice and guidance and a high proportion of those referred to courses start and complete them. They discuss their barriers to work and goals with guidance workers but these are not always passed on to their course tutors to use when agreeing targets.

- Tutors use a variety of methods to initially assess participants' literacy, numeracy and language skills. While most participants' skills levels are appropriately identified, for some this is less effective as the identification of any additional learning needs are primarily based on self-declaration.
- In the observed learning sessions, tutors used good questioning techniques to ensure that participants understood concepts and new tasks. Participants completed good quality and well-planned learning activities that prepared them well for external tests. Tutors made highly relevant links between the course subjects and the world of work to give participants an insight into available jobs and potential opportunities.
- LALS creates good opportunities for participants to volunteer, including through initiatives like community learning champions and e-champions. This is invaluable in helping develop participants' confidence, skills and work ethos, particularly when they are not ready to seek employment.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- continuing to use feedback from participants and employers and data to evaluate and develop the vocational employability programmes
- ensuring that participants' targets for their training take into account their barriers to employment and their career or employment goals
- ensuring that all participants' literacy, numeracy and language skills are assessed appropriately to identify their support and development needs.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop employability provision at Leicestershire County Council.

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