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Mr D Harper  
Chairman  
Talent Training (UK) LLP  
04-05 Merchant Court  
Monkton Business Park South  
Hebburn  
NE31 2EX

Dear Mr Harper

**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 22 and 23 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, employers and other partners; scrutiny of relevant documents; analysis of participants' work; and observation of one learning session.

**Key findings**

- Talent Training (UK) LLP (Talent Training) has responded very well to the initiative to build capacity in preparation for job outcome payments by developing an employability programme for participants aged 18–24, known as 'Talentstart'. The pilot 12-week course started in February 2012. Talent Training has also subcontracted with a provider to deliver short four-week courses in using computers, with a focus on developing employability and jobsearch skills. Managers are currently evaluating the 30 pilot programmes that took place on community-based sites across the South Tyneside region between September and December 2011.
- Talentstart is very well designed. It focuses very effectively on helping young people receive information, support and training to help them take

responsibility for improving their chances of employment. The programme involves a particularly wide range of stimulating resources and activities. Although all the activities are designed to develop participants' employability skills, such as team building and responding to others, as well as literacy and numeracy skills, the participants do not get sufficiently detailed feedback on their progress in developing these skills.

- The provider has excellent links with a wide range of employers who make a significant contribution to 'Talentstart' through collaboration on the course content and 'master classes' on different aspects of working in their specialist vocational areas. In particular, the provider uses the programme well to promote to employers the very good potential of the young people who may not have succeeded at school but have agreed to commit to the programme and take responsibility for their own development.
- The company is using sound procedures to evaluate both programmes and managers have prioritised direct discussion with former participants to help them review the impact of the programmes on increasing their chances of employment. Participants interviewed on 'Talentstart' said that they had increased their confidence in communicating with different people and they had found the discussions with employers very useful. Although the individual learning plans highlight realistic goals to help them overcome personal barriers to employment, few participants had clear plans for progressing to work and further training.

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

- ensuring that all participants gain sufficient careers information and advice early on in the provision to help them develop their employability skills in the context of specific medium- and long-term plans
- ensuring that participants have sufficient opportunities to develop their skills in literacy and numeracy during the programme and that they receive sufficient feedback on their progress in developing employability skills
- developing procedures to capture accurate job outcomes and participants' other destinations on leaving a programme.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop employability provision at Talent Training.

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**