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25 April 2012

Mrs L Chatburn  
Principal  
Bury College  
Market Street  
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Greater Manchester  
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Dear Mrs Chatburn

**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 17 and 18 November 2011 and 7 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, partners, participants and employers; scrutiny of relevant documents; analysis of participants' work; and observation of five learning sessions.

**Key findings**

- The development of sustainable employment provision since August 2011 has been a key strategic aim of Bury College, building on a strong track record of European Social Fund provision. It has strong partnerships with Jobcentre Plus and some major employers, which it is using well to develop the provision, particularly bespoke courses for individual employers. The number of participants continues to rise and the range of courses offered meets local needs more effectively. However, responsibility for managing the quality of employability programmes across the college is not sufficiently clear.
- The college uses its funding effectively to plan, market and deliver suitable provision for unemployed participants. In particular, it has prioritised

funding to develop short vocational and employability courses at level one, to recruit staff and to develop resources and facilities specifically for unemployed adults. Its use of labour market information to plan provision is good and improving.

- Employability programmes are well prioritised and delivered effectively. Teaching and learning are generally well planned with a good range of interesting activities. Vocational options stimulate participants and generally make good use of previous experience and learning. The participants interviewed spoke highly of the support provided by the teaching staff who are well qualified and experienced.

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

- defining a clear lead across the employability provision on how to improve the quality of the offer, including:
  - the use of appropriate monitoring processes
  - more focused observations of teaching and learning
  - more effective use of vocational initial assessments
  - fast-monitoring of more capable participants for employability programmes to drive up job outcomes
- continuing to work with partners, particularly staff at the local jobcentres, to increase the number of participants referred to employability training
- making better use of work-experience and voluntary opportunities to update participants' work skills and improve their confidence in a realistic working environments.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop employability provision at Bury 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

**June Cramman**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**