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Ms C Harcula
Derby City Council
Adult and Community Learning
Allen Park Centre
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Dear Ms Harcula

Ofsted 2012–13 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 24 and 25 April 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 managers, staff, participants, employers and other partners; scrutiny of relevant documents; analysis of participants' work; and observation of three learning sessions.

Key findings

- Derby Adult Learning Service works extremely effectively with key stakeholders, including Jobcentre Plus and the National Careers Service, to plan provision to meet identified local need. The service has recently developed bespoke courses for participants that are over 45 years of age and for those wanting to be self-employed. Courses provide participants with good opportunities to improve their employability skills in well-resourced local learning centres. However, links with employers to enable them to undertake work trials or meaningful work-experience are underdeveloped.

- Participants receive good initial advice and guidance before starting courses. Initial assessments are comprehensive and used well to enable courses to be tailored to meet participants' individual needs. However, the targets set on their individual learning plans are not always sufficiently specific or useful in aiding their development or progress.
- In the learning sessions observed, participants received highly effective tuition and support. They developed skills and knowledge well in relevant contexts on well-designed courses that were tailored effectively to meet their individual needs. In particular, they gained considerable confidence through improved listening and speaking skills.
- The employability provision is managed well and the resources used for teaching and learning are of high quality. Marketing and publicity materials promote the courses very effectively. Administrative processes are well managed and quality assurance arrangements are good. However, arrangements for tracking and monitoring participants' post-course destinations are underdeveloped and the information is not used to inform improvements to the quality of provision.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the targets set on participants' individual learning plans include more specific learning goals to support their development and progress to increase their chances of employment
- developing links with employers to enable participants to complete work trials or meaningful work-experience so that they can demonstrate their skills in real work settings
- enhancing arrangements to ensure that participants' post-course destinations are tracked and monitored more effectively and using this information to evaluate and improve the quality of the provision.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop employability provision at Derby Adult Learning Service.

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

Paul Joyce
Her Majesty's Inspector