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Dear Nissa

Ofsted Good Practice Survey Programme 2008/09

An evaluation of adult progression in learning

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on the 14th of January 2009. I am particularly grateful to you and all your staff for the hard work involved in preparing for the visit and for giving up a great deal of time during the visit to meet with me. Please pass on my thanks to all those concerned.

The visit provided much useful evidence, which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting for the Adult Progression survey, as well as a wider survey we are carrying out on progression, titled 'Moving Through The System'. It was particularly interesting to see provision in hairdressing and health and social care.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made on this one-day visit included: interviews with staff, partners and learners and scrutiny of the examples of good practice provided. I reviewed a range of documents.

Overall, the progression rates and arrangements to facilitate adult progression provided by Training for Today are excellent. I agreed to provide a summary of the good practice seen and to identify some areas for development, and I outline the main findings as bulleted points below.

The main strengths are:

- Good progression rates and opportunities for career development: Training for Today provides for very clear progression routes for learners. Learners are able to complete additional awards and extend their choice of optional units for the NVQ. Many learners take other qualifications that enhance their effectiveness in

the work place such as customer service and team leading. Learners progress well through the levels of the qualifications. In 2007-08 of the 116 advanced apprentices, 50 (43%) have progressed from apprenticeship programmes and of the 353 apprentices on programme, 89 (25%) have progressed to achieve additional qualifications at the same level. Training for Today encourages learners to raise their aspirations and consider other training opportunities. Many learners go on to achieve the assessor awards and teaching certificates. Learners are successful in gaining promotion in their chosen careers. For example they are promoted to be salon owners and managers, nurse trainers and to senior positions in nursing homes.

- Good development of work-related skills and application of learning  
Learners gain confidence and establish good professional attitudes to their training and employment. Learners use their newly gained confidence effectively in their work roles. The training they receive in the taught sessions complements well their work-place learning and training. Learners quickly contribute to the work of their organisations. They are able to take responsibility for key aspects of their job roles and deal effectively with clients. They demonstrate good development of knowledge and understanding at the level and stage of their programme. Health and social care learners benefit from a wide range of placements and gain a good understanding of the breadth of the industry to help them identify their preferred areas of work.

- Highly flexible support to meet individual needs and encourage learners to progress

The learning programmes encourage and challenge learners well, and provide effective support to meet individual needs. Tutors plan appropriately for regular contact, usually every two weeks, which meets the needs of learners' work commitments and their employers' needs effectively. Tutors increase their frequent visits to the workplace if learners require additional support, training or assessment, which often includes visits at weekends and in the evenings. Learner progress is reviewed every twelve weeks by the internal verifiers and those learners who have additional support needs to develop literacy and numeracy skills take part in a review every six weeks. Celebrating learner success is of high importance, and Training for Today has well conceived incentive schemes and events to motivate and reward apprentices.

- Competent training staff to support learner progression  
Competent and experienced tutors have very good vocational experience and considerable industrial credibility. Hairdressing tutors use their knowledge of the sector to encourage learners to enter for hairdressing competitions, and ensure learners have the opportunity to attend hair exhibitions and shows.

- Very good working relationships with employers who are responsive and supportive.

Staff have well-established, strong and effective links with employers, and both employers and tutors work well together to benefit learners and help them to progress. Training for Today currently works with over 270 employers. Existing

employers refer new learners to the provision. Currently, 70% of the learners are from returning businesses, some as longstanding as 22 years, and 35% of the current employers are ex-learners. Learners benefit from their employers' knowledge of Training for Today and its values. Effective communication exists between training staff and employers, which includes useful newsletters and information on new programmes and funding available. Employers work well with training staff to help learners to progress.

- Very effective partnership working to plan and support progression

Training for Today works with several cluster groups to promote progression onto the apprenticeship programmes and to help apprentice learners to progress. Groups include the Bolton Local Authority Consortia, Bolton and Bury Work-based Learning Provider Partnerships, the North West Health and Social Care Provider Network, the Greater Manchester Learning Provider Network and the Bolton Diploma Strategic Group. In addition, learners benefit from the Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) for Health and Care in partnership with five local colleges. Good information, advice and guidance are provided by taster sessions for key stage 4 provision and year 11 careers events. This smoothes the transition to the apprenticeship programmes. Good use is made of external agencies to pursue personal issues such as finance, housing, health and well-being to support learner retention and progression.

Areas for further development:

- Improve the timely success rates for apprenticeship programmes

Overall success rates on apprenticeship programmes are above the national rate. However, the timely success rates for the hairdressing and health and care learners are below the national rates.

- Provide further opportunities to support learner progression into higher education

A number of learners have progressed to degree level programmes. Training for Today is working with higher education institutions to develop easier access to foundation degree programmes.

- Action to encourage under-represented minority ethnic groups to access training programmes.

Although the number of minority ethnic learners reflects the national picture, at 9%, Training for Today is looking at ways in which they can engage learners in line with the local rate of 11% and encourage progression onto apprenticeship programmes.

- Obtain and evaluate learners' progression data after completing the training programmes

The Training for Today management information system holds data on progression onto and through the levels of the qualification and onto other qualifications, which staff analyse well. However, they do not hold sufficient information to clearly track

learners' career progression beyond the completion of the apprenticeship programmes.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop your adult provision. If there are any points or aspects of the visit you wish to discuss, please contact me. As we will be evaluating the survey, you may be contacted in the future to find out your views. I hope you will contribute to this evaluation.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted Website.

Yours sincerely

Linda Gallacher

Additional Inspector