



Education and Training
Inspectorate

ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in Babcock Training Limited

Report of an Inspection
in September 2012



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Quantitative Terms

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75% - 90%
A majority	-	50% - 74%
A significant minority	-	30% - 49%
A minority	-	10% - 29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

All the statistics in this report have been supplied and verified by Babcock Training Limited.

Performance Levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate use the following performance levels in reports:

Performance Level	Descriptor
Outstanding	Outstanding characterised by excellence
Very Good	Consistently good; major strengths
Good	Important strengths in most of the provision. Areas for improvement which the organisation has the capacity to address
Satisfactory	Overall sound but with areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed
Inadequate	A few strengths; significant areas for improvement which require prompt action
Unsatisfactory	Poor; major shortcomings which require urgent action

Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicators and Definitions	
Retention	The percentage of enrolments at week 4 of year one who completed their occupational training framework, measured over the full duration of their course.
Achievement	The percentage of trainees/apprentices who completed their occupational training framework and who fully achieved their framework qualification.
Success	The percentage of trainees/apprentices who completed 4 weeks and gained the full framework qualification.
Progression	The percentage of successful completers who progressed to further/higher education/training or employment.

Glossary of terms and abbreviations

The Department	Department for Employment and Learning
The Inspectorate	Education and Training Inspectorate
ANI	ApprenticeshipsNI
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILT	Information and Learning Technology
PTP	Personal Training Plan
NI	Northern Ireland

1. Introduction

1.1 Context

Babcock Training Limited (Babcock Training) is contracted by the Department to supply training under the ApprenticeshipsNI programme. The organisation is contracted to offer apprenticeships in hospitality and catering and retail at level 2, and customer service at levels 2 and 3. The organisation has its regional office in Antrim from which it provides training across the Belfast, Lisburn, North Down, Castlereagh, Londonderry, Limavady, Magherafelt, Coleraine, Ballymoney, Ballymena and Carrickfergus areas. Babcock Training is part of the Babcock International Group which holds a number of government training contracts across the United Kingdom.

1.2 Current registrations by programme

At the time of the inspection, there were 448 apprentices registered with Babcock Training. Almost all (91%) were registered on level 2 programmes in customer service, hospitality and catering and retail; the remaining 9% of the apprentices were registered on the level 3 qualification in customer service. However, Babcock Training also has a subcontracting arrangement with Belfast Metropolitan College to provide progression to level 3 in hospitality and catering; 61 apprentices were involved in this collaborative arrangement. Of the apprentices registered: 56% were male and 44% female; 28% were newcomers; 57% were aged over 25 years, 40% were aged 19-24 years and 4% were aged 16-18 years. Around 7% of the apprentices had an additional learning need or disability.

Programme	Number of apprentices	% of total registrations
ApprenticeshipsNI level 2	408	91%
ApprenticeshipsNI level 3	40	9%
Overall Total	448	

1.3 Current registrations by professional and technical area

Professional and technical area	Number of apprentices	% of total registrations
Customer Service	114	26%
Hospitality and Catering	288	64%
Retail	46	10%
Overall Total	448	

1.4 Qualifications of current apprentices on entry to their programme

Programme	ApprenticeshipsNI
% of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*-C including English and mathematics	18%
% of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*-C	21%
% learners with GCSE English and mathematics or equivalent at grades A*-C	29%
% of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*-G	28%
% learners with no qualifications	35%

Note: 1. All data sourced from Babcock Training at the time of the inspection.

1.5 Scope and method of the inspection

The inspection of Babcock Training focused on achievements and standards, the provision for learning and leadership and management, including the organisation's processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement. The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation in these three aspects of training supplier organisations, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the Inspectorate's publication *Improving Quality: Raising Standards Work-based Learning* at <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/improving-quality-raising-standards/improving-quality-raising-standards-igrs-work-based-learning.htm>. The evaluation, based on the quality indicators, enabled the Inspectorate to make a judgement on the overall quality of the provision provided by the organisation.

A team of eight inspectors and four associate assessors observed a total of 42 directed training sessions and interviewed 82 employers. One hundred and forty five apprentices were interviewed in the workplace. Extended discussions were held with a wide range of staff including the Director of Operations, the Operations and Regional Managers, Quality Managers, Vocational Learning Managers, vocational learning advisors and essential skills tutors. In addition, the inspectors examined samples of the apprentices' work, tutors' schemes of work and lesson plans, the online e-Track system and the apprentices' personal training plans. The organisation's self-evaluation report and other relevant documentation were also scrutinised.

The inspection also focused on the arrangements for care, guidance and support and the safeguarding of vulnerable groups. The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the apprentices to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Apprentices	250	143	57%	63

The returns from the questionnaires show that the apprentices' experiences in Babcock Training are mostly very good. All of the apprentices, for example, who wrote additional comments on the confidential questionnaires issued prior to the inspection indicated that they enjoy taking part in the programme and they commented on the high levels of care and support they receive from vocational learning advisors and essential skills tutors. The Inspectorate has reported the outcomes of the questionnaires and discussions held with the apprentices to the relevant managers.

2. Overall findings of the inspection

2.1. In the areas inspected, the quality of training provided by Babcock Training is good. The organisation has important strengths in most of its training and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which Babcock Training has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Inspectorate will monitor the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

2.2 Overall summary of key findings

The quality of the leadership and management of the provision is good with open channels of communication between staff at all levels and clear evidence of strong and effective teamwork.

Effective partnerships have been established with a wide range of employers, most of which provide good opportunities for the apprentices to develop and apply their technical knowledge and skills.

Babcock Training works hard to ensure that the training provided is flexible and responsive in order to meet the apprentices' and their employers' working patterns.

There is a good match between the qualifications undertaken by the apprentices and their job roles.

The structure and content of the existing personal training plan process needs to be improved to record more fully the monitoring, tracking and recording of the apprentices' progress towards the achievement of all aspects of their qualification framework.

The apprentices receive good support and encouragement from the vocational learning advisors and essential skills tutors.

The apprentices achieve good standards in both their professional and technical work.

Retention and achievement rates are good or better.

Although the quality of teaching, training and learning is good in a majority of the workplace training sessions observed, an overly narrow range of training and learning strategies is too often used by the tutors, resulting in an over-focus on assessment.

The self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes need to be developed further, in order to identify clearly and address the key areas for improvement in the professional and technical areas and in the essential skills.

Overall performance level	Good
Contributory performance levels:	
Achievements and Standards	Good
Quality of Provision for Learning	Good
Leadership and Management	Good
Area of Learning performance levels	
Essential Skills	Good
Customer Service	Good
Hospitality and Catering	Good
Retail	Good

2.3 What does Babcock Training need to do to improve further?

Babcock Training needs to revise its annual development plan to take account of the following key priorities for development:

- the use of a wider range of teaching, training and learning approaches to enhance the learning experiences for the apprentices, and address the over-focus on assessment;
- a review of the quality of the personal training planning process to ensure that the individual training needs of apprentices are identified clearly and progress measured effectively; and
- better use of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes to identify clearly areas for improvement in the professional and technical and essential skills areas.

3. Achievements and standards

3.1 The quality of achievement and standards is good

3.2 The apprentices are provided with good opportunities to consolidate their existing competences, knowledge and understanding, attain new skills and qualifications and update their knowledge of current legislation and health and safety requirements. They value highly the opportunity to improve and achieve their essential skills. As a result, they develop their self-confidence and self-esteem and often an interest in pursuing further their learning and career pathways.

3.3 Almost all of the apprentices spoken to during the inspection are well-motivated and enthusiastic; they generally enjoy their training and learning and make appropriate progress towards their target qualifications. Most of them achieve good standards of oral communication and most employers report improvements in the levels of confidence and in the communication skills of their employees.

3.4 The standard of the apprentices' written work ranges from good to satisfactory, but is mostly good. While the organisation is meeting awarding body requirements, marking for improvement is not undertaken sufficiently rigorously across the professional and technical areas resulting in an inconsistent approach to the correction of spelling and grammatical errors in the apprentices' written work. Also, they have too few opportunities to undertake writing activities as part of their vocational training. Most of the apprentices develop good speaking and listening skills. Last year, around 24% of the apprentices achieved beyond the minimum level required by their framework in literacy and, significantly, 36% of them in numeracy.

3.5 Almost all of the apprentices are provided with good opportunities to develop and apply appropriate occupational skills across the professional and technical areas. In customer service, the apprentices demonstrate a good understanding of effective customer service principles and techniques, which they apply well in their workplace. In hospitality and catering, the apprentices demonstrate a good understanding of legislative regulations, food and safety requirements and mostly good practical skills. In retail, there is a good enhancement of most of the apprentices' skills such as checking and rotating stock.

3.6 During the period 2008/09 to 2011/12, the overall retention rate on the ApprenticeshipsNI level 2 programmes is very good at 82% and good at 78% on the ApprenticeshipsNI level 3 programme in customer service. All of the apprentices who are retained achieve the framework.

3.7 Over the same period, for those apprentices who completed their essential skills, overall achievements in literacy and numeracy are high at 100%.

ApprenticeshipsNI: Averages over the last four years (2008-2012)

Programme/Strand	Numbers registered who completed 4 weeks training	Retention Rate %	Achievement Rate %	Success Rate %
ApprenticeshipsNI level 2	1611	82	100	82
ApprenticeshipsNI level 3	171	78	100	78
Overall Totals	1782	81	100	81

Note: 1. All data sourced from Babcock Training at the time of the inspection.
2. Achievement rates are for the full framework.

4. Provision for learning

4.1 The quality of provision for learning is good.

4.2 Babcock Training has a strong pastoral ethos characterised by good internal relationships at all levels across the staff team. There are very good working relationships between the apprentices and the vocational learning advisors and essential skills tutors, which contribute significantly to the development of the apprentices' confidence and self-esteem. There is a supportive and inclusive ethos in the one-to-one training sessions based on mutual respect. A good match exists between the qualifications undertaken by the apprentices and their job roles.

4.3 Most (55%) of the workplace training sessions observed during the inspection were good; a further 21% of them were very good but the remaining 24% were just satisfactory or below. The good or better sessions were characterised by effective planning to meet the individual needs of the apprentices, resulting in good pace and challenge and an appropriate range of training and learning methods used by the vocational learning advisers. Those workplace training sessions which were satisfactory or below were characterised by an over-focus on the identification of assessment opportunities, and the completion of administrative aspects of the programme. As a result, there was a lack of variety in the teaching and training methods and too few opportunities for the apprentices to acquire and apply new technical skills. Overall, there is an over-emphasis across the provision on the identification and assessment of existing competences as opposed to specific training and development to further upskill the apprentices. More needs to be done in identifying and addressing skills and knowledge gaps, to ensure competence before assessment takes place. There is a need for the vocational training staff to further develop their pedagogical skills and to use a wider range of teaching, training and learning approaches which will target and address skills gaps, further inspire the apprentices and improve the overall training and learning outcomes.

4.4 Babcock Training needs to collate more effectively the entry qualifications of the apprentices when they join the programme, particularly in relation to those apprentices who have already achieved a GCSE grade D in their English and/or mathematics. Frequently, the essential skills tutors are not sufficiently aware of the attainments of the apprentices on entry, and the prior attainments are not well enough integrated into the diagnostic assessment process. As a consequence, progression is at times limited. In addition, the essential skills tutors need to consistently identify and record the skills, knowledge and essential skills gaps of the individual apprentices and to plan in a more coherent manner how these essential skills needs will be met over the period of the apprenticeship programme.

4.5 While the essential skills are delivered alongside the professional and technical qualification, the evidence is clear that there is not enough integration with the vocational training and learning, which results in many missed opportunities for the development of the apprentices' literacy and numeracy skills within the professional and technical programme. The vocational learning advisors need to support better the development and application of the apprentices' literacy and numeracy skills through the professional and technical training.

4.6 Babcock Training has established productive working relationships with a wide range of local employers, which are used to good effect for the benefit of the apprentices. The links with employers are mostly managed well to provide the apprentices with access to flexible and appropriate workplace learning. Most of the employers contribute well to the monitoring and review processes, which are carried out regularly and systematically.

4.7 The quality of the personal training plans is mostly satisfactory. While the plans are individual in nature and take account of the outcomes of the initial assessments, their structure and content need to be improved to record more fully the monitoring and review of the apprentices' progress towards the achievement of all aspects of their qualification framework.

4.8 Although the quality of the careers education, information, advice and guidance is mostly satisfactory, it is not sufficiently formalised and there is only limited guidance provided in relation to the progression routes that are available, in particular to appropriate level 3 training. While the apprentices are provided with careers education during induction, and at the end of their programme, there is insufficient provision of ongoing information, advice and guidance. As a consequence, the apprentices' knowledge of progression opportunities is not well enough developed. There is good signposting, however, of contact details for a wide range of support organisations and for English for Speakers of Other Languages for newcomers. There is also a good emphasis on health and safety across the professional and technical areas.

5. Leadership and management

5.1 The quality of leadership and management of the provision is good.

5.2 The Regional Manager of Babcock Training is well supported through relevant staffing levels and an appropriate range of resources supplied through the wider company. The Operations Manager, who also manages the company's training provision in Wales, Scotland and South West England, knows and understands the local work-based learning sector well and works effectively with the Regional Manager to ensure that local needs are met and that the programmes delivered are effective. The Operations and Regional

Managers work well together to plan for the strategic and operational delivery and future development of the ApprenticeshipsNI programme. There are open channels of communication between staff at all levels, regular meetings and clear evidence of strong and effective team work. Planning has started to adapt the way in which recruitment will take place to match more effectively the changing age, experience, prior learning and competence of prospective apprentices.

5.3 The ApprenticeshipsNI programme is delivered by a team of 19 vocational learning advisors and 6 essential skills tutors whose work is managed on a geographical basis by a team of three vocational learning managers. A systematic approach is taken to quality assurance and there are two full-time Internal Verifiers locally, whose work is overseen by a Lead Verifier and a Quality Manager.

5.4 Babcock Training has developed effective partnerships with a wide range of employers, including large, medium-sized and small organisations. Almost all of the employers report that their employees benefit from their training, particularly in relation to an increased knowledge of legislation and health and safety requirements, and improved levels of confidence and self-esteem, often as a result of progress in addressing existing essential skills deficits. The employers value the work-based model where the training is delivered in-house by the vocational learning advisors and essential skills tutors on a well-planned, regular, flexible and collaborative basis. They also value the regular written feedback provided by Babcock Training on the progress being made by their employees. Almost all of the training takes place during one-to-one sessions with a small number of group sessions where there are sufficient apprentices placed with a single employer.

5.5 The planning of the provision in Babcock Training is good and it is characterised by its flexibility and responsiveness; the vocational learning advisors work closely with the employers and apprentices to match the content and timing of the training to the business needs of the organisation. As a result, the provision is mostly well matched to the needs of the employers.

5.6 Over the last few years, Babcock Training has made a significant investment in the appointment of an appropriate number of full-time staff to meet the growth in provision. The records of staff training demonstrate clearly the organisation's commitment to the continuous professional development of their staff, and most of them are well-qualified and experienced. However, a small number of staff across the professional and technical areas would benefit from an opportunity to gain further accreditation and/or to update their skills and knowledge of contemporary industrial practice. The arrangements for the induction of newly appointed vocational learning advisors, which include work shadowing and mentoring opportunities, are comprehensive and provide staff appropriately with the skills and knowledge to carry out their vocational training role.

5.7 As all of the apprenticeship training takes place on the employer's premises most of the apprentices have access to an appropriate range of resources and equipment. Babcock Training has invested appropriately in good specification mobile technologies to support staff in the remote delivery of the programme. There is a need, however, to encourage the apprentices to take more responsibility for their learning through a greater use of information and learning technologies. Babcock Training has also recently invested in a bespoke on-line e-Track management information system and an on-line information resource, "The Knowledge", for apprentices. The learning information provided through "The Knowledge" is mirrored by hard copy workbooks which contain generally good quality materials. The use of e-Track is at an early stage of development but the vocational learning advisors have started to use the system to plan work with individual apprentices and to record the outcomes of assessments. At present apprentices and employers do not have sufficient access to the system.

5.8 While the Inspectorate has confidence in Babcock Training's self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes, which are well-embedded in the organisation's business improvement review activities, further development of these processes are necessary to identify more clearly, and address, the areas for improvement within the individual professional and technical areas and the essential skills. There is a need for all staff in the organisation to develop a better understanding of the self-evaluation process and how it informs the actions for quality improvement.

5.9 On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the organisation has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding. The arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable groups comply with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007. Babcock Training take seriously their duty of care to staff members and have carried out appropriate risk assessments and provided a range of guidance and support materials for staff working in lone situations.

Professional and technical area reports

6. Essential skills

Key findings

In the essential skills, the quality of training provided by Babcock Training is good.

Context

Babcock Training provides the essential skills of literacy and numeracy to apprentices who have not already achieved recognised level 2 qualifications. In nearly all cases, the team of six tutors deliver the essential skills qualifications in the workplace in one-to-one sessions with the apprentices. At the time of the inspection, there were 270 apprentices undertaking an essential skills qualification.

The achievements and standards are good.

The standard of the apprentices' work is mostly good or better. In literacy, the standards of speaking and listening are good. However, there is limited evidence available, beyond that required for assessment, of progression in their writing, and an overall lack of opportunities for them to undertake extended writing activities in their occupational training. Most of the apprentices report that their confidence and self-esteem has improved as a result of undertaking work in the essential skills. All of the apprentices who complete their training programme achieve an essential skills qualification. Last year, approximately 24% and 36% of the apprentices achieved beyond the minimum level required by their framework in literacy and numeracy respectively.

The quality of the provision for learning is good.

Of the essential skills training sessions observed, the majority (71%) were good or better. The essential skills tutors are committed, flexible and responsive and provide good levels of support and positive encouragement to the apprentices. There are very good relationships between the tutors and the apprentices. Most of the assessments are related appropriately to the apprentices' professional and technical area. In the sessions that were just satisfactory, there were limited levels of pace and challenge for the apprentices. Also, a minority of the apprentices are working towards accreditation of existing knowledge, resulting in limited opportunities for new learning. The initial and diagnostic assessment process does not take sufficient account of previous experience and qualifications.

The quality of the leadership and management is good.

Good support is provided to new tutors who are allocated a mentor and receive regular support from the internal verifiers. There are regular team meetings and a good tracking system is in place to monitor the apprentices' progress. However, further improvements are required in the collation and use of data to identify, monitor and evaluate the apprentices' progression in their literacy and numeracy and to ensure they are working at a level commensurate with their ability and the demands of their job role.

Table of achievements over the last four years

ApprenticeshipsNI level 2 and level 3	Numbers registered who completed 4 weeks training	Achievement Rate %
ES Literacy	758	100
ES Numeracy	840	100

7. Customer service

Key Findings

In customer service, the quality of training provided by Babcock Training is good.

Context

Annual recruitment to Babcock Training's level 2 and level 3 ApprenticeshipsNI programmes in customer service has grown steadily over the last four years, from 24 in 2008/09 to 128 in 2011/12. Currently, 74 apprentices are registered on level 2 and 40 on level 3 programmes, with the majority (54%) holding GCSE passes at grade C or above in English and mathematics. Babcock Training's staff provide the apprentices with one-to-one training on their employers' premises on a monthly basis.

The achievements and standards are good.

The apprentices demonstrate a good understanding of effective customer service principles and techniques, which they apply well in their workplace. In particular, they consolidate their existing occupational skills in line with their employer's business objectives, develop a better understanding of relevant legislation, and increase their self-confidence and capacity for further learning and development. The average retention rate over the last four years is good at 77%, and all those who complete their programme achieve the framework. The progression rate from level 2 to level 3 programmes is low at 26%.

The quality of the provision for learning is good.

The vocational learning advisors and essential skills tutors provide the apprentices with good one-to-one support and encourage them well. The assessment activities are planned and prepared for thoroughly, with a suitable range of assessment methods. Although the quality of most of the teaching, training and learning is good, the range of learning strategies to engage the apprentices and their workplace mentors actively in their learning is too narrow. The apprentices' individualised learning objectives and training opportunities are not articulated clearly enough. Consequently, the measuring of their progress in learning and development, and the planning of any necessary further learning, is underdeveloped.

The quality of the leadership and management is good.

The apprentices' training, particularly at level 3, is aligned well to their work roles and responsibilities, including good opportunities for them to develop and demonstrate relevant occupational competencies. Good links are established with the apprentices' employers to involve them in influencing the content of the training to meet their business needs. The tutors have relevant commercial experience which they use to good effect in the delivery of the programme. The quality of the learning and assessment resources is good. The independent use of these resources by the apprentices and their employers is, however, underdeveloped.

Table of achievements over the last four years

Programme	Numbers registered who completed 4 weeks training	Retention Rate %	Achievement Rate %
ApprenticeshipsNI level 2	96	77	100
ApprenticeshipsNI level 3	133	78	100

8. Hospitality and catering

Key findings

In hospitality and catering, the quality of training provided by Babcock Training is good.

Context

Babcock Training provides the ApprenticeshipsNI programme in hospitality and catering, mostly at level 2. Recruitment to the programme has increased by 37% over the last four years, from 277 in 2007/08 to 379 in 2011/12. Currently there are 288 apprentices registered across a range of strands in hospitality and catering. Only a significant minority (33%) of the apprentices hold GCSE passes at grade C or above in English and mathematics, on entry to their programme. Around 55% of those registered are aged over 25 years, 41% are between 19 and 24, and only 4% are aged between 16 and 18 years.

The achievements and standards are good.

Most of the apprentices are well-motivated and enthusiastic, and demonstrate a good understanding of relevant legislation and regulations, food and safety requirements and effective customer service. The vocational learning advisors place an appropriate emphasis on developing the apprentices' personal and transferable skills and standards that are needed in a busy work situation. As a result, the apprentices display good levels of professionalism and most report that their confidence has increased significantly as a result of their participation in the ApprenticeshipsNI programme. The standards of the apprentices' oral skills range from satisfactory to very good, but are mostly good. However, there is a lack of opportunity for the apprentices to undertake extended writing. The average retention rate over the last four years is very good at 83%, and those who remain on the programme achieve the framework.

The quality of the provision for learning is good.

The ApprenticeshipsNI provision is well-matched to the work roles of the apprentices, many of whom are in promoted posts as a result of their engagement in the programme. The quality of a majority of the teaching, training and learning is good or better; in these workplace training sessions it is characterised by good individualised planning, a high level of engagement by the apprentices, an appropriate level of challenge and the good involvement of employers in the training process. It is a concern, however, that the quality of the teaching, training and learning in around one-third of the workplace training sessions is just satisfactory; in these sessions, a limited range of training approaches is used to engage the apprentices in their learning and there is an over-emphasis on the identification of

assessment opportunities as opposed to an appropriate focus on training and development. In addition, the personal training plans are not sufficiently tailored to capture effectively the development needs of the apprentices. While apprentices have access to relevant careers advice and guidance, more planning is required to ensure it is provided in a timely manner to better inform the apprentices on appropriate progression pathways.

The quality of the leadership and management is good.

The hospitality and catering programmes are managed well. Staff are deployed well and communication across the organisation is good. While the vocational learning advisors are suitably qualified, there is a need for a minority of them to have the opportunity to undertake appropriate industrial placements in relevant settings to update their knowledge and understanding of the latest developments in contemporary practice. In addition, a small number of the vocational learning advisors would benefit from the opportunity to gain further professional qualifications in their specialist areas. Effective partnerships have been established with a wide range of appropriate employers who provide good opportunities for the apprentices to apply their skills. The frequency and regularity of engagement with employers are good. The procedures for the induction of new vocational learning advisors are good; for example, vocational learning managers’ induction visits are supportive and instructive and are effective in enabling new staff to learn the job, as well as to grow in confidence. There are good opportunities for work-shadowing of, and mentorship from, experienced colleagues.

Table of achievements over the last four years

Programme/Strand	Numbers registered who completed 4 weeks training	Retention Rate %	Achievement Rate %
ApprenticeshipsNI level 2	1226	83	100

9. Retail

Key Findings

In retail, the quality of training provided by Babcock Training is good.

Context

The recruitment to the ApprenticeshipsNI programme in retail at level 2 has fluctuated over the last 4 years, but an average of 72 apprentices are recruited annually. At the time of the inspection, there were 46 apprentices on the programme. A significant minority (46%) of the apprentices hold GCSE passes at grade C or above in English and/or mathematics on entry to their programme. Nearly all the apprentices’ directed training is delivered on a one-to-one basis in their workplace.

The achievements and standards are good.

Almost all of the apprentices are well-motivated and enthusiastic. They display increased levels of confidence, are more adaptable and competent and, as a consequence, have the capacity to work in a wider range of job roles and to take on greater responsibility in their workplace. There is good enhancement of most of the apprentices’ retail skills and they

develop a good knowledge and understanding of the retail industry. The majority of the employers recognise that the level 2 retail programme is a good indicator of an apprentice's suitability for promotion. Over the last four years, the retention rate in the level 2 apprenticeship programme is good at 77% and those who are retained achieve the full framework.

The quality of the provision for learning is good.

The quality of the one-to-one workplace training sessions is good or better and just over one-half of them are very good. The sessions are planned effectively with clear objectives. The training programme is matched well to the apprentices' roles and responsibilities in the workplace. The vocational learning advisers use good questioning strategies to develop further the apprentices' knowledge and understanding. While assessment arrangements are satisfactory overall, an overly narrow range of assessment methods are used by the vocational learning advisers. The apprentices would benefit from more opportunities to develop their written work. The quality of the progress reviews is good. Although implementation of the e-Track system is at an early stage, the vocational learning advisers use it effectively to plan the apprentices' programme and to track their achievements. The provision of care, guidance and support is good. Relationships between the apprentices and the vocational learning advisers are very good and the vocational learning advisers provide the apprentices with very good individualised support; they care about the apprentices' welfare and support them effectively to make good progress in their learning. The provision of careers education, information, advice and guidance is satisfactory. While careers information is provided to the apprentices at induction and during the exit interview, it is not fully embedded into the apprentices' programme. The apprentices, therefore, do not benefit from ongoing information and guidance to enable them to plan effectively for progression beyond the level 2 programme.

The quality of the leadership and management is good.

The quality of leadership and management of the retail provision is good. Staff at all levels work hard to develop strong and productive relationships with a wide range of employers. There are good links and frequent communication with the employers to plan and monitor the apprentices' programme. The vocational learning advisers are committed and work hard to deliver a flexible and responsive training programme. The workplace training sessions are scheduled at times suitable to the employers and apprentices. The arrangements for the self-evaluation of the apprenticeship provision needs strengthening to include a more targeted review of the retail provision. The current arrangements are not robust enough to address weaknesses in the retail provision, including the use of a broader range of assessment methods by the vocational learning advisers.

Table of achievements over the last four years

Programme/Strand	Numbers registered who completed 4 weeks training	Retention Rate %	Achievement Rate %
ApprenticeshipsNI level 2	289	77	100

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