Education and Training Inspectorate

ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in Engineering Training Services

Report of an Inspection in April 2013

The Education and Training Inspectorate - Promoting Improvement

Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE CSE

Contents

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 Engineering Training Services.

Performance Levels

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

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

Key Performance Indictors

Key Performance Indictors 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.
Progression	The percentage of successful completers who progressed to further/higher education/training or employment.

Glossary of terms and abbreviations

ANI	ApprenticeshipsNI
A Levels	General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
Department	Department for Employment and Learning
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate (The Inspectorate)
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILT	Information and Learning Technology
IT	Information technology
NI	Northern Ireland
PLA	Programme-Led Apprenticeship
PTP	Personal Training Plan
TfS	Training for Success
UK	United Kingdom
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment

SECTION ONE: OVERALL PROVISION

1. Introduction

1.1 Context

Since 2007, Engineering Training Services has been contracted by the Department to supply training for the ApprenticeshipsNI programme. Engineering Training Services is a wholly owned subsidiary company of the Engineering Training Council Northern Ireland. The Engineering Training Council is an employer-led body, governed by a council whose members are drawn from the engineering industry across Northern Ireland. The Engineering Training Council also represents Northern Ireland on Semta, the UK-wide sector skills council for science, engineering and manufacturing technologies. Engineering Training Services is responsible for the engineering apprenticeships and is located in Sketrick House, Newtownards.

The organisation is contracted to deliver level 2 apprenticeships in business improvement techniques, communications technology, engineering, and in the glass industry, across all the contract areas of Northern Ireland.

Engineering Training Services is led by the training manager, who is supported by two training consultants. The training and assessment for the apprentices' vocational qualifications is either sub-contracted to Springvale Learning or provided by a number of self-employed peripatetic tutors/assessors. At the time of the inspection, Springvale Learning was providing training and assessment to 70 (69%) of the apprentices. For the remainder (31%), the training and assessment is provided by self-employed peripatetic tutors. Peripatetic tutors are also used to deliver the essential skills provision.

1.2 Current registrations by programme

Programme	Number of apprentices	% of total registrations
ApprenticeshipsNI level 2	102	100%

1.3 Current registrations by professional and technical area

Professional and technical area	Number of apprentices	%of total registrations
Business improvement techniques	26	26%
Communications technology	25	24%
Engineering	51	50%
Total	**102**	**100%**

1.4 Qualifications of current apprentices on entry to their programme

Programme	ApprenticeshipsNI % (Number)
% of apprentices with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C including English and mathematics	54% (55)
% of apprentices with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C	56% (57)
% apprentices with GCSE English and mathematics or equivalent at Grades A*-C	63% (64)
% of apprentices with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-G	63% (64)
% apprentices with no qualifications	10% (10)
Overall Total	**102**

Note: All data sourced from Engineering Training Services at the time of the inspection.

1.5 Scope and method of the inspection

The inspection of Engineering Training Services 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* http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/improving-quality-raising-standards/improving-quality-raising-standards-iqrs-work-based-learning.htm

A team of four inspectors observed a total of 39 apprentices in nine training sessions, and a further 39 apprentices were interviewed in the workplace or in focus groups. The inspectors also held discussions with the main sub-contractor, key staff and eight employers. In addition, the inspectors examined samples of the apprentices' work, tutors' schemes of work and session plans 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, support and guidance and 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	100	39	39	26

The returns show that the apprentices' training experiences are mostly good. While almost all of the apprentices surveyed through the questionnaire were positive about their training experiences, a minority of those interviewed during the inspection raised some concerns regarding the quality and quantity of the practical training equipment.

The Inspectorate has reported the outcomes of the questionnaires and discussions held with the apprentices to the training manager.

2. Overall findings of the inspection

2.1 Overall, the quality of training provided by Engineering Training Services is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in the quality of the teaching, training and learning and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the apprentices are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement, over a 12-18 month period.

2.2 Overall summary of main findings

Very good links and effective partnerships have been established with a wide range of employers to support them in the training and development of their workforce.

In the workplace, the apprentices are well-supported and provided with very good opportunities to develop and apply relevant occupational skills to a very good standard.

The quality of the pastoral care provided for the apprentices is good; they are visited regularly in the workplace and most of them have a workplace mentor to support them in their workplace training.

The quality of the careers education, information, advice and guidance provided to the apprentices is good.

In engineering, there is a significant variation in the quality of the training facilities and equipment used to deliver the apprentices' practical skills training, ranging from outstanding to inadequate. For a majority (65%) of the apprentices, it is inadequate that there is an insufficient range of industry standard equipment to provide them with high quality practical skills training.

The self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes are inadequate; the analysis and interpretation of data to inform self-evaluation judgements is weak and it is inappropriate that the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes are not applied to each professional and technical area or the essential skills.

While the tutors and assessors have suitable qualifications and experience, care needs to be taken to ensure that assessors with the most suitable specialist expertise and experience are deployed to assess apprentices' occupational competences.

For a majority of the apprentices in communications technology and engineering, the curriculum is not matched well enough to their prior achievements or experiences. The vocationally related qualifications at level 2 provide insufficient stretch and challenge for those apprentices with existing qualifications at levels 3 to 5.

In essential skills, there is a lack of cohesion and consistency in the planning and delivery of the training to meet the apprentices' development needs in a timely manner, to ensure continued development and consolidation of their literacy and numeracy skills within their professional and technical training.

The quality of the apprentices' personal training planning and reviewing process is satisfactory; there is lack of cohesion in the recording and tracking of their progress across the personal training plans, monitoring reviews and assessment records.

The quality of the teaching, training and learning ranges from good to satisfactory, and is mostly satisfactory. The pace and challenge in the learning is often at too low a level, and there is inadequate use of ILT to support and enhance the apprentices' learning.

The overall retention rate is very good at 85%, and the achievement rate is outstanding at 100%. Progression from level 2 to level 3 apprenticeships is good at 77%.

Overall performance level	Satisfactory
Contributory levels:	
Achievements and standards	Good
Provision for learning	Satisfactory
Leadership and management	Satisfactory

Professional and technical areas performance levels	
Business improvement techniques	Good
Communications technology	Good
Engineering	Satisfactory
Essential skills	Satisfactory

What does Engineering Training Services need to do to improve further?

- Review and further develop the curriculum to ensure that there are appropriate levels of challenge, matched to the range of abilities of the apprentices in the professional and technical areas of communications technology and engineering;

- Improve the quantity and quality of the specialist training equipment to ensure that all of the engineering apprentices are provided with relevant and high quality practical skills training;

- Provide professional development to support improvement in the quality of the teaching, training and learning, including the better use of ILT to enhance learning;

- Develop and implement a cohesive planning, tracking and monitoring system to record clearly and accurately the apprentices' progress and achievements, and to inform planning for future training, including their essential skills training;

- Improve the planning for the provision of the essential skills to support more effectively the apprentices' learning and development within their professional and technical areas, in a more timely manner; and

- Establish more rigorous self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes across each of the professional and technical areas and the essentials skills, including the use of key data to inform judgements.

3. Achievements and standards

3.1 The achievements and standards are good across all of the professional and technical areas and the essential skills.

3.2 In business improvement techniques, communications technology and engineering, the standards of the work achieved by the apprentices are mostly good. Almost all of them develop good employability skills; they are reliable, well-motivated, have good problem-solving skills and are able to maintain effective working relationships.

3.3 In the workplace, most of the apprentices develop and are able to apply very good occupational skills. They are able to carry out an appropriate range of practical tasks and activities, which they perform effectively and efficiently with minimal supervision. These tasks include the: manufacture of metallic components to a suitable degree of accuracy and surface finish using computer-controlled manufacturing equipment; repair and routine maintenance of complex production machinery; installation, maintenance and repair of telecommunication systems; fabrication and welding of steel assemblies; and the implementation of cost-saving measures in manufacturing processes.

3.4 In directed training, the standards of work achieved by the apprentices are mostly good. In business improvement techniques, the apprentices through their project work demonstrate good levels of understanding on how to improve the efficiency of the manufacturing processes they are involved in. In communications technology and engineering, the majority (70%) of the apprentices are appropriately developing their knowledge and understanding of the key principles which underpin practical tasks in the workplace, at a level which is commensurate with their prior achievement. This includes, for example, welding principles, science of materials, using engineering drawings and the principles of computer systems and networks. For a significant minority (30%) of the apprentices who already hold qualifications at levels 3 to 5, however, the stretch and challenge of the level 2 vocationally related qualifications are insufficient.

3.5 The standards of the apprentices' literacy and numeracy skills are good. Almost all of them have well-developed verbal communication skills; they are able to communicate clearly with their workplace supervisors and colleagues. The apprentices' written communication skills are mostly good; they are able to use instruction manuals and drawings competently and present written work in their assessment portfolios to a good standard. Most of the apprentices have well-developed numeracy skills; in the workplace they are able to perform basic arithmetic functions accurately to enable them to complete their occupational tasks to an appropriate standard.

3.6 The overall achievement rate is outstanding at 100% for those apprentices who are retained and complete their qualifications.

3.7 The overall retention rate is very good, at 85%. The progression rate to level 3 apprenticeship programmes for those who successfully complete at level 2 is good at 77%.

Table of Achievements over the last three years[1].

Programme/Strand	Numbers registered who completed 4 weeks training	Retention rate %	Achievement rate %	Progression rate* %
ApprenticeshipsNI level 2	147	85	100	77

*Progression to level 3 apprenticeships only, the remainder continued in employment

[1] Retention, achievement and progression rates based on data for period 2009/10 to 2011/12. Data for 2008/2009 was not made available during the inspection.

4. **Provision for learning**

4.1 The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory overall.

4.2 The quality of the provision for learning is good in the professional and technical areas of business improvement techniques and communications technology but is satisfactory in engineering and the essential skills.

4.3 In business improvement techniques, there is a cohesive programme of learning that is matched well to the development needs of the apprentices and to the training needs of their employers. The training programme is integrated fully within the apprentices' work roles and very good opportunities are available in the workplace for them to apply the principles of business improvement techniques to good effect. Through the practical projects, the apprentices work in teams, solve realistic problems and make presentations to supervisors.

4.4 In communications technology, the apprentices' training programme is mostly matched well to their present and future work roles. While the directed training appropriately focuses on developing their computing technology skills and knowledge, there are only limited opportunities during directed training for them to apply and consolidate their practical skills using bespoke industry standard telecommunications equipment. The apprentices' workplace training is appropriately structured and well-planned to support them in developing relevant occupational skills. The provision of underpinning knowledge for some aspects of the apprentices' practical work is, however, underdeveloped with insufficient theory training and accreditation for communications network fault finding and rectification.

4.5 In engineering, Engineering Training Services has made a good start in planning and developing a number of specialist engineering pathways which are matched well to the needs of the apprentices and their employers. For a significant minority (35%) of the apprentices, the training and development of their practical skills is well-planned and integrated fully within their workplace training. For the remainder, however, the practical skills training is underdeveloped; there are insufficient training facilities for the apprentices to develop a good enough range of practical skills to industry standards.

4.6 There are good opportunities for the apprentices to achieve accredited qualifications in the essential skills of ICT, literacy, and numeracy at level 2. There is, however, insufficient planning for the integration and development of the apprentices' essential skills within their professional and technical training. The poor planning for the delivery of a minority of the essential skills sessions in a timely manner impacts negatively on the opportunities for the apprentices to consolidate their learning through their professional and technical training.

4.7 The quality of the teaching, training and learning varies from good to satisfactory, but is satisfactory overall. Most (78%) of the directed training sessions observed were satisfactory, and the remainder were good. In the good sessions, the learning is well-planned with a good range of learning tasks and activities along with appropriate levels of challenge. In these sessions, the apprentices respond positively, engage well in the practical activities and make good progress in their learning. It is a concern, however, that the quality of most of the teaching, training and learning observed is satisfactory. In these sessions, the pace of the learning is too slow, there are inappropriate levels of stretch and challenge for a significant minority of the apprentices, and the learning is not supported well enough with good quality learning resources, particularly the use of ILT to stimulate and enhance learning.

4.8 The quality of the induction and initial assessment arrangements is satisfactory. While Engineering Training Services has well-developed recruitment, initial assessment and induction processes, there is inadequate use of the results from initial assessment to inform curriculum planning. Consequently, the range and level of the units selected for the apprentices' professional and technical qualifications are not matched well enough to all of the apprentices' prior achievements and experience, particularly for those holding a range of qualifications at level 3 or above.

4.9 The quality of the apprentices' personal training plans and monitoring reviews are satisfactory. While there is regular, frequent and supportive monitoring and reviewing of the apprentices' progress and achievements, the recording and tracking of their progress lacks cohesion. There is undue variation in the accuracy of the recording of their progress across assessment records, six-weekly review documentation, and in the personal training plans. The measuring of apprentices' progress against suitable targets lacks sufficient rigour; at the outset of their training, the key milestones do not contain sufficient detail against which the apprentices' progress can be robustly tracked and measured.

4.10 The quality of the assessment of the apprentices' work and skills is mostly satisfactory. In business improvement techniques, the apprentices make good progress in completing their assessments. Across the remaining professional and technical areas, there is undue variation in the pace of assessment. A minority of the apprentices are making too slow progress in completing the practical assessments for their vocational competency qualification.

4.11 The quality of the care, guidance and support provided for the apprentices is good. The tutors, assessors and training consultants are flexible and supportive. They work hard to meet the training needs of the apprentices, particularly in arranging training sessions in the workplace at appropriate times that suit their working patterns. The apprentices are visited regularly in the workplace by the training consultants, who are able to signpost them to a range of health support services, and provide them with appropriate careers information and guidance. The quality of the career education, information, advice and guidance is good. There is a suitable range of careers information for the apprentices to inform them of the various career options and progression pathways available to them. In addition, the careers officer provides extensive information and talks to schools across Northern Ireland in order to promote engineering apprenticeships as a priority skills sector within the local economy, including the career opportunities in engineering for women learners.

5. **Leadership and management**

5.1 The quality of leadership and management of the ApprenticeshipsNI programme is satisfactory. In communications technology, engineering and in the essential skills the quality of the leadership and management is satisfactory. In business improvement techniques it is good.

5.2 Over the last two years, the recently appointed training manager has worked hard strategically to establish new sub-contract arrangements for directed training, broaden the curriculum offer and develop a more flexible delivery model that is tailored to the needs of employers. At the time of the inspection, Engineering Training Services had appropriately extended its curriculum offer to include a new apprenticeship in business improvement techniques, which had been piloted successfully in two large manufacturing companies. In order to provide greater flexibility in the delivery of directed training, the organisation piloted new sub-contract arrangements with Springvale Learning and with self-employed peripatetic

tutors to deliver bespoke directed training. Consequently, through Springvale Learning and the self-employed peripatetic tutors, Engineering Training Services now provide directed training on either Springvale Learning's premises or on those of some employers. While this model of delivery is flexible and responsive to the employers' business needs, access by the apprentices to training and learning resources of the required quality is inconsistent, and is having a detrimental impact on their practical skills development.

5.3 Curricular leadership and development in the business improvement techniques provision is good, but in the remaining professional and technical areas it is satisfactory. In these areas, there is insufficient development of the curriculum to ensure the vocationally related qualifications are meeting the needs of all of the apprentices, particularly for those with very good level 2 or higher qualifications on entry to their apprenticeship. It is inappropriate that these apprentices are unable to progress directly to level 3 vocationally related qualifications. This is a particular concern in communications technology where the majority (52%) of the apprentices hold a range of General Certificate of Education advanced level passes on entry.

5.4 The quality of the communication links between Engineering Training Services and its main sub-contractor and the employers is mostly good. There are regular meetings with Springvale Learning, with an appropriate focus on improving the quality of the provision. An action register is used to good effect to record and track progress on addressing action points arising from these meetings. Through regular monitoring visits to the apprentices, the training consultants also develop good relationships with employers. Employers are kept well-informed of their employees' progress.

5.5 The quality of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning is inadequate. Although Engineering Training Services has developed a suitable action register for recording and tracking the progress of operational planning objectives, the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes are weak. While the organisation collects a range of information from training observations and apprentice and employer surveys, this information is not analysed adequately or benchmarked sufficiently for each professional and technical area or the essential skills, to identify key trends and to inform judgements. Consequently, the key weaknesses in curriculum planning and in the quality of the teaching, training and learning are not identified clearly enough in the self-evaluation report. In addition, the quality improvement plan does not sufficiently prioritise or address these key weaknesses in the provision. There is, therefore, a poor match between the inspection findings and the organisation's self-evaluation findings and performance levels.

5.6 The staffing arrangements are satisfactory. The staff are suitably qualified and experienced to meet most of the curricular training and assessment needs. The deployment of assessors is, however, not always appropriate. On occasions, there is a poor match between the assessors' specialist expertise and experience with the apprentices' occupational competences being assessed. There are good opportunities for the organisation's permanent staff to access relevant professional development through appropriate further education or training. Most of the tutors hold relevant teaching qualifications.

5.7 While the quality of the accommodation and the training resources are overly variable, they are satisfactory overall. For the practical skills training provided by employers on their own premises, the quality of the training facilities is mostly very good or outstanding. The apprentices have access to a wide range of industry standard tools and equipment to complete their occupational skills training. The quality of the training workshops provided by Springvale Learning for the apprentices' practical skills training is inadequate. The range of

modern industry standard equipment to provide a full range of occupational skills training for fabrication and welding, maintenance engineering, and for computer-controlled machining is insufficient. There is inadequate provision of ILT to enhance the quality of the learning and support independent learning, including the provision of an appropriate virtual learning environment.

5.8 The quality of the links and partnerships are mostly very good. Engineering Training Services has established effective links with a wide range of employers in the engineering sector. They have also developed a number of important partnerships with specialist engineering or manufacturing companies to create bespoke apprenticeships to meet the training and development needs of these employers, which are delivered in conjunction with their own training programme for apprentices. The links with the further education regional colleges, however, who currently hold the contract for the level 3 ApprenticeshipsNI in engineering, are underdeveloped.

5.9 On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable groups comply satisfactorily with the Safeguarding Groups (NI) Order 2007.

SECTION TWO – PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL AREA REPORTS

6. Business Improvement Techniques

KEY FINDINGS

In business improvement techniques, the quality of the training provided by Engineering Training Services is good.

CONTEXT

Engineering Training Services offers the business improvement techniques apprenticeship at level 2 only. The apprenticeship has been offered since April 2012, with a total of 30 apprentices registered with two manufacturing companies; during the inspection, 26 apprentices were still on the programme. The apprenticeship is delivered entirely in the workplace with a flexible delivery model devised to meet the needs of the apprentices and employers. At the time of the inspection, none of the apprentices had completed the full framework.

Achievements and standards are good.

All of the apprentices interviewed reported that as a result of the apprenticeship programme they have developed new skills and increased their self-confidence. In particular, they value the opportunity to achieve a formal qualification and to improve their essential skills. The employers also speak positively about the outcomes and benefits the programme has had for their companies. They report that all of the projects have led to improvements in the workplace in terms of health and safety, quality improvement and financial savings. The quality of the work in the apprentices' portfolios of evidence is of a good standard. Most of them are making good progress in their learning; they have all completed their vocationally related qualification and one essential skill, and most have completed or are making good progress towards completion of their vocational competence qualification. The retention rate for the apprentices is very good at 87%. As there is currently no level 3 apprenticeship in business improvement techniques, opportunities for the apprentices to progress beyond level 2 are limited.

The quality of the provision for learning is good.

The apprentices work well in teams to develop and implement projects which lead to improvements in their job role or in the manufacturing processes, and also are a benefit to their employers. Through presentations of project findings or proposals to management, the apprentices have good opportunities to develop and apply their communication skills. In the projects observed, the project documentation developed is appropriately linked to the companies' internal quality systems and processes, which underpins the apprentices' understanding of quality improvement techniques. The apprentices are well supported in their learning by Engineering Training Services staff. There is good coherence across all of the apprenticeship framework elements; the vocationally related qualification is mapped well to the vocational competence qualification and, when delivered, the apprentices report that the essential skills are contextualised within their professional and technical work. The quality of the personal training plans is variable; in some plans, the milestones or essential skills achievements are not recorded clearly enough. As a result, the monitoring and reviewing process is not aligned sufficiently to the milestones in the apprentices' plans. The planning for the delivery of the apprentices' essential skills training is inconsistent; there are excessive gaps and poor timing emerging between the timetabling of the essential skills training and that for the professional and technical training.

The quality of the leadership and management is good.

The business improvement techniques apprenticeship is co-ordinated well; the management team has a well-defined strategic view of how the apprenticeship can be used to complement and support the quality improvement planning processes within engineering or manufacturing companies. Consequently, effective links have been established with a number of manufacturing companies to pilot this apprenticeship, with a clear aim of enabling employers' staff to make efficiency savings. The tutors are well experienced in the delivery of the training and assessment programmes. The management team have reviewed and developed the most appropriate models of delivery for the vocationally related qualification, and have developed appropriate systems to track and monitor the progress of the apprentices. The arrangements for self-evaluation and quality improvement are underdeveloped; a self-evaluation report and quality improvement plan for this area was not available during the inspection.

7. Communications Technology

KEY FINDINGS

In communications technology, the quality of the training provided by Engineering Training Services is good.

CONTEXT

Engineering Training Services provides this apprenticeship programme for apprentices who are training to work in the telecommunications industry. Currently, there are 13 first year apprentices, and 12 second year apprentices. The provision of the apprentices' training and assessment for their vocationally related qualification and the assessments in the workplace for their vocational competence qualification, are sub-contracted to Springvale Learning. Most of the apprentices join the programme with very good entry qualifications, having completed either A Levels, an apprenticeship in another professional and technical area, or a higher education programme.

Achievements and standards are good.

The apprentices are very highly motivated and display high levels of commitment. The standards of the apprentices' work in the workplace are good or better. The second year apprentices are able to work independently or as part of a team to either diagnose, locate and repair faults in a telecommunication system or to make new installations. They have excellent communication skills and are able to use effectively technical documentation to support their practical work. The quality of the work in their portfolios of evidence is good or better. The progress being made by the first years in developing their professional and technical knowledge and achieving the vocational competence qualification is, however, too slow; a minority of the apprentices have completed only one unit. Within the apprentices' current employment, there are very good progression pathways and promotion opportunities available for them. It is a concern that no performance data for retention or achievement rates for this programme is available.

The quality of the provision for learning is good.

The apprentices work alongside an experienced telecommunications engineer for the first 12 months of their apprenticeship, which provides them with very good opportunities to develop and apply their occupational skills. At the end of this period, they progress to work independently but continue to receive very good levels of support from experienced

engineers when necessary. In the workplace, during induction, the apprentices are provided with a very good range of bespoke training programmes. These include working safely at heights, working on poles, working with overhead and underground cables and jointing techniques. The directed training provided by Springvale Learning is satisfactory. In the sessions observed, the apprentices did not have access to adequate practical training resources to enhance the quality of their learning experiences. The quality of the apprentices' personal training plans is satisfactory. While they contain most of the required information, they are too generic, do not take sufficient cognisance of the apprentices' previous experiences or qualifications, and do not capture any of the training provided by their employer.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.

There are regular meetings between staff from Engineering Training Services and Springvale Learning at both management and operational level to monitor apprentice progress, resulting in an action register. The apprenticeship programme has been developed in conjunction with Engineering Training Services, Springvale Learning and the apprentices' employer. As a result, the programme has an Information Technology (IT) focus to meet the employer's future business needs. The apprentices' employer also provides a comprehensive training programme to develop their occupational skills to ensure they are able to perform their telecommunication installation or repair duties competently and safely. This training provision is not, however, recorded on the apprentices' personal training plans, and as a result the apprentices do not consider it as an integral part of their training programme. Consequently, they report that the directed training has an undue IT bias which is not matched to the majority of the tasks they carry out in the workplace. It is a concern that apprentices with either A Levels, an apprenticeship in another professional and technical area, or a higher education qualification are targeting a level 2 vocational qualification, which provides them with insufficient stretch and challenge. The planning of the directed training delivery is underdeveloped; the apprentices' have insufficient access to relevant, industry standard practical training equipment to enhance the quality of their learning experiences. While this lack of practical training facilities is indentified in the organisation's self-evaluation report, there is insufficient discrete self-evaluation and quality improvement planning for this specialist area, supported with key performance data.

8. Engineering

KEY FINDINGS

In engineering, the quality of the training provided by Engineering Training Services is satisfactory.

CONTEXT

Currently, there are 51 apprentices registered on a range of level 2 engineering ApprenticeshipsNI programmes. These include engineering machining, engineering maintenance, and fabrication and welding. The directed training is provided either by Springvale Learning or by self-employed peripatetic tutors. For a significant minority (47%) of the apprentices, their directed training is provided on their employer's premises, with the remainder in Springvale Learning. Most of the apprentices attend directed training one day each week and complete their apprenticeship within one year. The majority (59%) hold four of more GCSE passes at grade C or above; two-thirds of them hold level 2 qualifications in both literacy and numeracy, and a minority (20%) have level 3 qualifications on entry to the programme.

Achievements and standards are good.

Most of the apprentices are highly motivated, maintain positive relationships and are able to work effectively as a team or independently. Most of them achieve very good standards of occupational work. They are, for example, able to diagnose and repair faults in electrical machinery, use complex computer-controlled machinery for the manufacturing of components, fabricate and weld a range of steel assemblies and produce drawings using computer-drafting systems. Their numeracy and communication skills are mostly well-developed; they are, for example, able to read and interpret correctly a range of technical documentation. For those apprentices receiving practical skills training in the workplace, the standards of their work is at least very good; they achieve industry standard tolerances and surface finishes. In contrast, the standards of the practical skills achieved by apprentices attending Springvale Learning are mostly satisfactory. There is an insufficient emphasis on completing practical work to industry standard. Although the organisation's overall retention and achievement rates are very good (85%) and outstanding (100%) respectively, it is a concern that the performance data relating to this professional and technical area is not collated and monitored adequately.

The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory.

The apprentices are provided with an appropriate range of pathways and units aligned to their workplace training. For a significant minority (35%) of the apprentices, there is a well-balanced programme of practical skills training and theory training. They spend around six months on well-planned practical skills training and assessment, which is mapped to their qualifications. They are also provided with good quality theory training, which underpins their practical training. For the remainder of the apprentices (65%), there is insufficient development of their practical skills; in the provision sub-contracted to Springvale Learning, there is an inadequate focus on providing good quality practical skills training. Overall, the quality of the directed training ranges from good to satisfactory; the majority (60%) of the training sessions observed were satisfactory and the remainder good. It is a concern that the majority of the training lacks sufficient pace and challenge, matched to the prior achievements and experiences of the apprentices. In addition, the directed training is not supported with good enough quality ILT. The apprentices' work-based training is mostly very good; there are good opportunities for them to develop relevant occupational skills. There is regular and frequent monitoring of the apprentices' progress in the workplace, which is used to good effect to review their progress with employers.

The quality of the leadership and management is satisfactory.

While there is a suitable range of option pathways and units available for the apprentices, matched to their workplace training, there is a need to enhance the curriculum to provide more differentiation in the training to prepare apprentices to work either as craft or technician engineers. There are insufficient opportunities for apprentices with good entry qualifications to progress to vocationally related qualifications with appropriate levels of stretch and challenge in mathematics or engineering principles. The links and partnerships with employers are very good, leading to training arrangements that are tailored to their business needs. The directed training facilities vary from outstanding to inadequate. Those provided by employers are very good to outstanding. In contrast, the quality of the specialist training facilities and equipment provided by Springvale Learning is inadequate. This weakness in the provision is recognised by Engineering Training Services, and as a result planning is underway to source more suitable premises and training equipment. While there is an appropriate range of staff with suitable qualifications and experience, assessors without suitable specialist expertise and experience are, on occasions, inappropriately deployed to assess the apprentices' occupational competences. The apprentices' personal training

planning and reviewing process is satisfactory; there is lack of cohesion in the recording and tracking across their personal training plans, monitoring reviews, and assessment records. The self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes are inadequate; there is no individual self-evaluation report and improvement plan for this professional and technical area, supported with key performance data.

9. Essential Skills

KEY FINDINGS

In the essential skills, the quality of the training provided by Engineering Training Services is satisfactory.

CONTEXT

Engineering Training Services provides essential skills training in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) for the apprentices undertaking the ApprenticeshipsNI frameworks up to and including level 2. The majority of apprentices hold a GCSE pass at grade C or better in English and/or mathematics on entry to their training, and a minority hold an essential skill in literacy and/or numeracy at level 1 or level 2. The number of apprentices requiring the essential skills qualifications is low. Of the 102 apprentices registered with Engineering Training Services at the time of the inspection, 18%, 20% and 7% required training in ICT, literacy, and numeracy respectively.

Achievements and standards are good.

Almost all of the apprentices report positively on their achievements and those who complete their training achieve the essential skill(s) required by their apprenticeship framework. It is noteworthy that a significant number of them achieve at level 2, which is a level above that required by their frameworks. The standards of written work in the apprentices' professional and technical folders range from satisfactory to good, and are mostly good. There is, however, a limited range of formative written work available in the essential skills folders and more needs to be done to develop, embed and record formative learning. Almost all of the apprentices' spoken communication skills are well-developed; they articulate clearly the reasons for their career choices and the benefits they have accrued from their study of the essential skills.

The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory.

The delivery models for the essential skills training range from one-to-one provision to group provision either in the workplace or in Engineering Training Service's premises. Management and staff work hard to accommodate flexibly the apprentices' working patterns and to organise training at times that match the needs of their employers. There was only limited provision scheduled during the inspection. In the training observed, there was good support for the apprentices; the variety of their learning needs was met well through the use of a range of one-to-one and whole group approaches. There was also good evidence of peer learning as the apprentices supported each other in the development of their essential skills. There was, however, also evidence of gaps in training which need to be addressed to ensure more consistent embedding of the learning. Furthermore, while Engineering Training Services has prepared contextualised training materials for use in the engineering sector, there was insufficient evidence of the use of contextualisation in the work observed and too limited evidence of the recording of progress made in learning.

The quality of the leadership and management is satisfactory.

The planning of the essential skills provision is satisfactory and the tracking and monitoring of the provision are good. The training manager works hard to ensure that all apprentices have access to appropriate and challenging essential skills training and has taken good account of the need to support learners to achieve a level 2 in literacy and in numeracy where possible. There is, however, evidence of prolonged gaps in the timetabling of essential skills training. As a result, learning support for the development of the apprentices' essential skills in conjunction with their professional and technical training, is not timely enough. The self-evaluation process is at an early stage of development and more needs to be done to include feedback from the employers about the impact in the workplace of the essential skills training. Engineering Training Services are aware that staff shortages can impact negatively on provision and are in the process of appointing additional staff.