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*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



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of an Inspection

**The Share Centre
Lisnaskea**

Inspected: April 2007

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1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Share Village (Share) occupies a spacious site of some 60 acres on the shores of upper Lough Erne near Lisnakea, County Fermanagh. Share is owned by Discovery '80' Limited, a non-profit company with charitable status. Since it was founded in 1981 Share has developed its facilities to currently include a reception and administration block, an extended dining area, an arts arena, including a 300 seat auditorium, a caravan site, and a 30 berth marina. The location of Share makes it an excellent site for water-based activities. Share provides facilities for residential and day visitors including children, young people and adults of all ages to participate in a range of educational, recreational and creative arts programmes. The staff place an important focus on inclusion between disabled and non-disabled people and those with additional learning needs.

1.2 Share is run by a well-informed and committed Board of Directors made up of people from a range of backgrounds including business and education. The day-to-day operation of Share is managed by a Chief Executive and a Senior Manager of Operational Developments. Share has a staff of 50 full-time instructors and trainees, supported by 200 volunteers. In addition Share has an effective team who provide administrative support, maintain equipment and buildings and provide good quality meals for users. A feature of the work of all of the staff and volunteers is their ability to work skilfully across a range of tasks in the interests of supporting users and ensuring their enjoyment of the activities.

1.3 Figures provided by Share indicate that on average 10,000 residential and 5,000 day visitors take part in the activities offered by Share each year.

2. THE INSPECTION PROCESS

2.1 During the week beginning 30 April 2007, members of the Education and Training Inspectorate observed a range of programmes which were identified as being typical of the learning experiences on offer at Share at that time of year. The programmes included primary school multi-activity sessions, a post-primary school business education initiative, a post-primary school renewable energy project, a cross-border programme for adults with additional learning needs and Education for Mutual Understanding link activities with three special schools. In addition, the inspection team observed a dance rehearsal and performance by adults with additional learning needs. At the weekend, a member of the inspection team observed a mainly water-based programme of activities for over 350 Sea Scouts from the Republic of Ireland, as well as a largely self-programming group of young people engaged in the Spirit of Enniskillen project. In total the inspection team observed 19 sessions; they met and interviewed Share full-time and part-time instructors, volunteers, trainees, members of the Board of Directors, the Chief Executive and the Senior Manager of Operational Developments. In addition discussions were held with the children and young people from the schools and youth organisations, their teachers and youth leaders, and the adults with additional learning needs from the Killadeas Day Centre including those staff who support them.

3. STRENGTHS OF THE PROVISION

3.1 The ethos of Share is excellent. There is a strong sense of community within Share and a warm and welcoming atmosphere is clearly evident to visitors. Excellent relationships exist among the staff and volunteers. This is an open and inclusive community focused on building effective links in the local area and further afield. A particular feature of the ethos is the inclusive nature of the work. Importantly, useful job opportunities are provided for some of those who attend the Killadeas Day Centre. Effective communication between the manager of the day centre and the staff of Share ensures that opportunities for developing key social skills for the adults with additional learning needs are maximised.

3.2 The instructors, trainees, volunteers and the support staff are highly committed to making the visitors experiences as broad and productive as possible. They work well as a team and there is a strong sense of common purpose amongst all of the staff. The staff are hard-working and have created a safe, orderly atmosphere and a climate of concern for the well-being of those who use Share as day visitors or as residential guests.

3.3 Share runs an extensive trainee programme which offers intensive training opportunities across a wide range of outdoor education and other disciplines. Within the course there are excellent opportunities to gain governing bodies of sport qualifications which can be extended during a second year of training. In addition, the course also provides a wide range of opportunities to gain important communication and teaching skills in a variety of situations including the creative arts and information technology and to work with a varied range of client groups.

3.4 The effective involvement of over 200 volunteers in all aspects of Share activities, is a vital element in the work of the organisation. The training of all volunteers to a very high standard is a high priority. The volunteers support effectively the wide range of experiences which are offered to the various client groups. Many of the volunteers develop further their own skills and qualifications. Recently, the volunteers who work with a community swimming club for disabled children won a national volunteering award in recognition of their dedicated work.

3.5 In all the sessions observed, the safety of the participants was given high priority. The participants were encouraged to develop an awareness of their own personal safety and that of other group members. Effective risk assessments were carried out before the activities took place. Greater clarification of roles and responsibilities is required to ensure that teachers and other group leaders are made more aware of the key risks involved in any activity.

3.6 The quality of teaching in all sessions observed ranged from satisfactory to excellent. In most of the sessions observed, the instructors used a variety of strategies to develop further the participants' skills, attitudes, self-confidence and self-esteem. In the best practice, the activities were well-paced and involved the participants actively in their learning. The sharing of intended outcomes for the session with participants provided a clear focus for the tasks set and helped those involved to reflect meaningfully on them at the end of each session. On many occasions the learners showed understanding of how the activities they were involved in had clear links to the work they were completing back in their schools. Appropriately, Share has identified the need to focus on the development of key outcomes for each programme and to communicate these more effectively to participants.

3.7 The planning for progression in learning for the youth groups using Share at the weekend, allowed a degree of flexibility that ensured the outcomes that had been planned for these groups were achieved. The planning of programmes for school groups needs to develop further to ensure that students' residential experiences support more effectively, current and future developments in the Northern Ireland Curriculum (NIC).

3.8 During the primary school multi-activity programmes observed, the children worked co-operatively with one another engaging in activities such as climbing, canoeing, banana-boating, sailing, T-shirt painting and pedal-karting. The instructors and teachers interacted fully with the children and supported and challenged them to achieve to the best of their abilities. At the beginning of each session an appropriate focus was placed on the safety requirements of the activity. At the end of the sessions there is a need to ensure that opportunities are provided for the children to talk about their experiences and achievements.

3.9 Share staff and a volunteer with specialist expertise, used an examination of the working resources of Share to develop further a group of post-primary pupils' understanding of sustainable sources of energy. The pupils responded well to the demonstrations with good questions on the energy efficiencies made by Share through the use of wind turbines and wood pellet burning boilers. This very good work built effectively upon the pupils' previous learning in science, business education and environmental education. Share has identified opportunities to develop this work and to explore further links with schools which are engaged in active learning approaches related to producing electricity from renewable sources.

3.10 In the 'Key' Programme Share staff supported the course facilitators in helping the young people take full part in the activities and achieve the planned learning outcomes. The pupils found the tasks relevant and fully engaged in completing them to the best of their ability. In taking part in the challenging and unfamiliar activities the participants developed further their physical, social and inter-personal skills. The young people reported that they had developed greater career awareness as a result of participating in the programme.

3.11 Adults with additional learning needs worked effectively with a dance tutor and centre worker in preparation for a performance at a local arts festival. The dancers worked hard in a supportive environment and responded well to the many opportunities to adapt and refine their movements. They worked very well together to perform, in a local theatre, a choreographed piece on an African theme.

3.12 Over the weekend period of the inspection, a large group of Sea Scouts visited Share. The quality of the programme for the Sea Scout camp was of a very high standard. The wide range of mainly water-based activities were delivered, in the main, by a large group of well-trained, well-organised and enthusiastic volunteers, who gave due attention to all aspects of the safety of the young participants.

3.13 The variety of activities on offer at Share promotes well the development of a range of personal and social skills through active participation. In particular the participants make good progress in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding of themselves, of others, and of the environment. In addition, there is clear evidence of positive outcomes for participants in terms of enhanced self-esteem, self-confidence and a developing sense of independence.

3.14 Under the strong leadership of the Chief Executive, Share has become involved in a wide range of suitable developments and associated initiatives. The Chief Executive, working effectively with the Senior Manager of Operational Developments and a dedicated Board of Directors, continues to develop rigorous and systematic processes to quality assure internally all aspects of Share's provision, practices and procedures that lead to improvement. This good work is guided by a well-conceived corporate plan that outlines key developments and associated initiatives for the future.

3.15 While setting and achieving high standards, the evaluation of planning, assessment and learning continues to be a key focus for improvement. Share is building a self-evaluative culture and is appropriately, at operational level, developing reflective and self-evaluative practices. To support this good work, evaluations by staff and user groups could be usefully developed further.

3.16 Share has placed a strong emphasis on the development of its pastoral provision and the high quality of pastoral care is a significant feature of the centre. There is a range of policies in place to inform and guide the work of Share in relation to pastoral care and child protection. There is evidence of a strong commitment to the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. The pastoral care and child protection policy, including a useful code of practice for staff, is in place and is presently being updated in line with recommendations from the Voluntary Development Agency. Appropriately Share has identified the need to benchmark their policies and procedures against best practice in this area. In addition, due to the increasing number of school groups using Share's facilities, it is important for the centre to ensure that its policies and procedures are in line with the relevant Department of Education circulars regarding pastoral care and child protection.

3.17 Staff development is set within the corporate plan's strategic goals. There is a need to link careful analysis of the recommendations derived from Share's quality assurance procedures to the staff development needs. It will be important that elements of the staff development policy focus on the active learning opportunities proposed within the revised NIC at primary and post-primary levels.

3.18 The quality of the accommodation and resources is very good. A suitable range of specialist equipment is maintained to a good standard. The recent addition of a leisure centre, including a swimming pool, has enhanced greatly the range of activities that Share can offer on site and improved the opportunities for physical recreation of the people in the local area.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 The inspection has identified many significant strengths in the work of Share. These include:

- the inclusive ethos;
- the employment opportunities for adults with additional learning needs;
- the effective working relationships at all levels;
- the quality of the work undertaken by the instructors;

- the opportunities afforded to volunteers to make a contribution to Share, and the quality of the work those volunteers deliver;
- the outcomes for the children and young people;
- the outcomes for adults with additional learning needs;
- the quality of the training programme for trainee instructors;
- the breadth of the provision;
- the effective leadership and management at both strategic and operational levels;
- the strong support provided by the Board of Directors; and
- the quality of the accommodation and facilities.

4.2 The areas for improvement include the need to:

- focus on the development and communication of key outcomes within activity sessions; and
- develop further a culture of self-evaluation at all levels to meet the strategic goals identified in the corporate plan.

4.3 The quality of provision in Share is very good. The needs of the young people and adults are being well met.

APPENDIX

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Share provides a range of recreational facilities including a caravan site and open access to moorings on upper Lough Erne. Also, it is situated close to a public beach. The security of the site, in terms of personal safety requirements, needs to be kept under review and all visitors made aware of the access arrangements.

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