



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

## Steps to Work Provision in People 1<sup>st</sup> South Eastern Contract Area

Report of an Inspection  
in May 2011



# CONTENTS

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>PART ONE: SUMMARY</b>	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. CONTEXT	2
3. PROVISION	3
4. THE INSPECTION	3
5. MAIN FINDINGS	3
<b>PART TWO: OVERALL QUALITY OF PROVISION</b>	
6. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	5
7. EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS	7
8. QUALITY OF TRAINING AND SERVICES	9
<b>PART THREE: KEY PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT</b>	
APPENDIX	

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%

## Statistics

This report uses the most recent statistical data published by the Department for Employment and Learning<sup>1</sup>. Any additional data and performance statistics in this report have been supplied and verified by People 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Performance Levels

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

Performance Level
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

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<sup>1</sup> Statistical Bulletin Steps to Work: Statistics From September 2008 to March 2011 (Department for Employment and Learning, June 2011)

## **PART ONE: SUMMARY**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 In September 2008, the Department for Employment and Learning (Department) introduced its new employment programme, Steps to Work which subsumed the main New Deal programmes. The primary purpose of the Steps to Work programme is to help participants who are unemployed or economically inactive to find and sustain employment. The programme has been devised to ensure a more flexible approach to provision which can be targeted at the individuals' personal barriers to employment. Participation in Steps to Work is a mandatory requirement for all Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants aged 18 to 24 years who have been claiming JSA for six months or more, and those aged 25 and over who have been claiming JSA for 18 months or more. Steps to Work is also available on a voluntary basis to participants who are unemployed or economically inactive and who want to start or return to work.

1.2 Steps to Work is delivered in a '3 step' process:

**Step One:** Participants receive ongoing one-to-one support and guidance from an Adviser from the Jobs and Benefits office with the primary aim of helping the participants find work as soon as possible. Available provision is focused on interventions of short duration such as Short Accredited Courses or Core Gateway.

**Step Two:** This is targeted at participants who require additional assistance to bring them closer to the labour market and help them find and sustain employment. The participant is offered and provided with a wider range of longer-term support; the provision will normally last for up to 13 weeks but can be up to 52 weeks.

**Step Three:** This is targeted at participants who have completed Step Two but have not found employment. The participant is provided with follow-up support and advice from an adviser for a period of up to six weeks. They may also access some provision such as Short Accredited Courses or elements of Core Gateway, if needed.

### **2. CONTEXT**

2.1 People 1<sup>st</sup> is contracted by the Department as Lead Contractor for the delivery of the Steps to Work employment programme in the South Eastern region of Northern Ireland. Participants are referred to the Lead Contractor through the Lisburn, Banbridge and Kilkeel Jobs and Benefits offices, and the Ballynahinch, Downpatrick and Newcastle JobCentres.

2.2 People 1<sup>st</sup> is a private limited company and has worked in the provision of work-based training and employment programmes since 1992. The company is run by a management team of three directors and manages the Steps to Work contract from its office in Lisburn. While one of the directors has overall responsibility for the delivery of the Steps to Work contract, she is supported in its day-to-day operational management by a designated Steps to Work manager. In the last year, the Lead Contractor has reviewed the staffing structure for the operational delivery of the contract and has appointed an additional complement of four dedicated Steps to Work staff; two administrative staff and two job coach/mentors.

2.3 Data supplied by the Department in February 2011 indicates that there were 5,975 Jobseeker's Allowance claimants in the South Eastern region. This represents an increase of 26% from April 2009. The number of participants eligible for mandatory participation on Steps to Work in this region has risen from 405 in April 2009 to 1,220 in February 2011, an increase of approximately 200%.

2.4 Statistics provided by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for May 2011 show that the Banbridge and the Newry and Mourne District Council areas have two of the highest levels of the available workforce registered as claiming a specific unemployment related benefit, at 9.3% and 10.6% respectively, well above the Northern Ireland average of 7.2%. In contrast, the overall percentage of claimants in the Lisburn District Council area at 4.8% and the Down District Council area at 6.1%, are below the Northern Ireland average.

### 3. PROVISION

3.1 At the time of the inspection, there were 406 participants on the Steps to Work programme across the South Eastern contract area. Fifty-seven of these were registered on Step One; 51 on Core Gateway and six on a range of Short Accredited Courses. Three hundred and 49 participants were registered on Step Two; 197 (57%) on Back to Work, 65 (19%) on National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) lasting 52 weeks, 33 (10%) on Self-Employment Test Trading, 22 (6%) on Step Ahead, 19 (5%) on Essential Skills Training (EST), eleven (3%) on the Graduate Acceleration Programme (GAP) and only two on Vocationally Related Qualifications (VRQs) lasting 26 weeks. Of the current participants, 75% are male, and 42% are aged between 18 and 25 years. Data provided by People 1<sup>st</sup> reports that around 19% of the starts on Steps to Work provision are voluntary registrations. The same statistics show that a significant minority (28%) of the participants have been on a Steps to Work, or a New Deal programme, on three or more previous occasions.

3.2 Of the 349 participants currently on the Step Two programme, over 177 (51%) of them had achieved no or few qualifications on entry to the provision; 90 (26%) had achieved between one and three General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) passes at grade C or above, with a further 26 (7%) having achieved four or more GCSE passes at grade C or above. Of the Step Two participants, 75 (21%) of them had achieved GCSE English and 70 (20%) had achieved mathematics at GCSE grade C or above, or equivalent. A further 22 (6%) participants had achieved a Level 3 or higher qualification, and of these, 14 (4%) held a Higher National Diploma or degree level qualification.

3.3 As the Lead Contractor, People 1<sup>st</sup> is working directly with 142 (41%) of the registered participants in the Lisburn and Banbridge offices. Nine of the eleven sub-contractors are actively working with participants: H J O'Boyle (109), Southern Regional College (26), Mentor (24), Lisburn YMCA (20), Business in the Community (8), Craigavon Industrial Development Organisation (7), Armstrong Learning (4) and Community Service Volunteers Media (CSV Media) and Ulster Supported Employment Limited (USEL) with one participant each. People 1<sup>st</sup> are also working in partnership, on a pilot basis, with Serious about Work to help secure additional work placements, predominantly in the construction industry.

3.4 On the Step Two strand, almost all of the participants are receiving some form of employability preparation, such as Jobsearch, curriculum vitae (CV) building, and interview skills, alongside their main strand of Back to Work, EST, Step Ahead and Self-Employment Test Trading opportunities. In order to raise occupational skills, 67 of the participants are engaged in NVQs and VRQs in an appropriate range of professional and technical areas, including: business administration; catering and hospitality; children's care, learning and development; hairdressing; motor vehicle repair and performing engineering operations.

#### **4. THE INSPECTION**

4.1 This report is based on an inspection of People 1<sup>st</sup> and a sample of the sub-contractors' provision; the work of eight of the sub-contractors was inspected. The inspection took place over five days in May 2011 and involved a team of seven inspectors and an associate assessor.

4.2 During the inspection, the inspectors:

- observed 107 participants in 18 directed training sessions delivered by People 1<sup>st</sup> and its sub-contractors;
- interviewed 97 participants in workplace training;
- held discussions with over 120 participants, individually and in small groups;
- held discussions with members of People 1<sup>st</sup>'s management team and senior staff from almost all of the sub-contractors within the contract area;
- held discussions with key training and support staff;
- examined a wide range of documentation including samples of participants' written work and their Personal Training Plans (PTPs);
- held discussions with 74 employers; and
- held discussions with the Regional Manager, District Managers, team leaders and Advisers from the Jobs and Benefits Offices and JobCentres.

#### **5. MAIN FINDINGS**

5.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of the Steps to Work employment programme provided by People 1<sup>st</sup> is very good. The organisation is meeting very effectively the needs of the participants; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

5.2 The main strengths are the:

- very good leadership and management of the contract by the Steps to Work manager, who has established an inclusive, responsive and participant-centred ethos;
- very good collaborative working relationships between the Lead Contractor and the staff of the sub-contractors and the Jobs and Benefits Offices and JobCentres, who all work effectively to provide very good support to the participants;

- significant investment by the Lead Contractor in staffing and resources to support the delivery of the contracted provision;
- good or better quality of all of the directed training sessions observed, with one-half of them evaluated as very good;
- very good quality of almost all of the work experience placements visited, which contribute effectively to the development of the participants' work-readiness, transferable and personal skills; and
- very good progress made in increasing the number of participants moving into sustained employment for 13 weeks, which is now at 22%.

5.3 The main area for improvement is the:

- further development of the quality assurance processes, including the better analysis of data to identify trends across the Steps to Work strands and sub-contractors, to inform more effectively improvement planning.

<b>Overall performance level</b>	<b>Very Good</b>
<b>Contributory performance levels:</b>	
Leadership and management	Good
Employment outcomes and achievement	Very Good
Quality of training and services	Very Good

## **PART TWO: OVERALL QUALITY OF PROVISION**

### **6. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

6.1 The overall strategic leadership and management by People 1<sup>st</sup> of the Steps to Work contract for the South Eastern area is good. Recently, the management team has made a significant investment in the provision of additional staff and resources, including better access by participants and tutors to information and learning technology resources and equipment. Plans are well advanced for significantly improved accommodation in the Lisburn area, in order to support the increasing demands of the Steps to Work provision in this contract area, and to support the work of the designated Steps to Work manager who provides very good operational management of the contract. The revised arrangements for the administration of the Steps to Work programme have already made a positive impact with both Jobs and Benefits Office and JobCentre staff and sub-contractors, through the clearer roles and responsibilities that have been established. More work, however, needs to be done on further clarifying and delegating roles and responsibilities within People 1<sup>st</sup>, to ensure that the Steps to Work manager can focus more directly on the strategic development of the various aspects of the employment programmes across the contract area.

6.2 The Steps to Work manager has established very good collaborative links and partnerships with the sub-contractors, employers, the Jobs and Benefits offices and JobCentre staff, and other relevant stakeholders. He works closely with the District Managers to make joint approaches to a number of key agencies and employers, in order to identify actual and potential employment opportunities throughout the region. These effective working relationships have been fundamental to the successful strategic links with large and important employers, including Tesco, B&Q, and Dobbies. Ongoing contact has been made and maintained with the Health and Social Services Trusts and with the District Councils across the region, and significant progress has been made in securing good work experience placement opportunities for a number of participants.

6.3 Regular, well-attended meetings are held by People 1<sup>st</sup> with the sub-contractors, which provide good opportunities to resolve any management or administrative issues that arise in a responsive, efficient and timely manner. However, there are as yet no formal arrangements for small groups of sub-contractors to meet at additional times to address specific issues and share best practice in relation to the delivery of particular strands of the provision. Similarly, regular case conferences are held with Jobs and Benefits Office and JobCentre staff to address the very significant backlogs and to devise individual action plans for participants who are on waiting lists for work experience placements. However, there remain too few referrals to Steps to Work strands such as Confidence and Motivation, the GAP and Enhanced Support and this issue needs to be addressed with the Jobs and Benefits Office and JobCentre staff. Despite the very good work that has been undertaken in increasing the range of available and potential employment opportunities, the Lead Contractor recognises the need to continue to identify further opportunities to address the needs of the increasing numbers of participants coming onto the programme and to reduce the backlog of referrals.

6.4 People 1<sup>st</sup> demonstrates a sound commitment to continuous improvement and has invested significantly in appropriate and focused training and development for staff in this important aspect of their work. While the organisation's self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes are satisfactory, they do not reflect fully enough the knowledge and understanding that the Steps to Work manager and other key staff have of the quality of the provision and the actions which are necessary to effect further improvement. Appropriate systems are in place for the regular monitoring and review of



almost all aspects of the provision across the contract area, including structured observations of the directed training and learning sessions, visits to employers, the scrutinising of PTPs, observation of participant reviews and the sampling of relevant documentation. Good feedback, including any identified areas for improvement, and an action plan are provided to and valued by the sub-contractors. This has proved effective in the promotion of consistency and standardisation in the provision, and to effect improvements. Many of the sub-contractors, however, require further support and guidance on developing more effective self-evaluation and quality assurance processes. The Lead Contractor has recently invested in a bespoke management information system which will support data collection and interrogation across all of the strands of the programme, including the impact of the work of all of the sub-contractors. At the time of the inspection, however, the available data was not being used well enough to inform effectively the self-evaluation process. Investment has also been made by People 1<sup>st</sup> in a virtual learning environment, although this has yet to be implemented across the contract area.

6.5 The Steps to Work manager has established to good effect a collegial approach to the delivery of the employment programme across the contract area. For example, across the sub-contractors providing the Back to Work strand, there is a shared understanding of how to improve the quality of the provision and raise the progression rate to sustained employment. This is demonstrated in a mostly consistent approach to: writing and monitoring the participants' PTPs and recording progress; developing links with a good range of employers; sourcing good quality work experience placements; and facilitating progression to sustainable employment. It is clear that the Lead and sub-contractors share good practice and this has been successful in raising the progression rate to sustainable employment.

6.6 The Lead and sub-contractors have established access for the participants to a good range of NVQs, for those who wish to enhance their employability by engaging in an appropriate training programme. The Lead Contractor is well aware that a key challenge over the next few months is to develop and implement an appropriate range of VRQs, to replace the NVQ qualifications, and which will serve to reinforce the development of the participants' employability skills.

6.7 The quality of the leadership and management of the Self-Employment Test Trading strand of the Steps to Work programme is very good. The excellent relationships with the three providers sub-contracted to provide this strand are well-established and are sustained by clear and effective channels of communication, and the responsive, decisive approach adopted by the Steps to Work manager. There is, however, within this strand, some variation in the quality of the participants' PTPs and progress review records and this should be addressed.

6.8 The Lead and sub-contractors have extensive experience of, and a strong commitment to, working with unemployed people. The staff, at all levels, are particularly enthusiastic and bring a wide range of life experiences to the Steps to Work programme. The Lead Contractor has provided appropriate continuous professional development opportunities for mentoring staff, to ensure that they use a variety of appropriate and challenging strategies to develop the work-readiness and employability skills of the participants, and move them towards sustained employment. In addition, good links have been developed across the contract area with a wide range of well-established external agencies, which provide specialist support services for those participants who present with a range of barriers to employment, including alcohol and substance abuse, and mental health issues.

6.9 The quality of the work experience placements is very good in this contract area. The Lead Contractor and sub-contractors source appropriate work placements that are matched well to the participants' aptitudes and aspirations, and that provide potentially good opportunities for progression to sustained employment. They have worked hard to increase the number of work experience placement opportunities in the private sector. The employers, for the most part, work effectively with the Lead sub-contractors to help participants develop their skill levels and improve their potential to secure permanent employment. In addition, the Lead Contractor needs to continue to work to increase the availability of work experience placement opportunities across the public sector.

## **7. EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

7.1 During the period September 2008 to September 2010, and based on data supplied by the Department, the overall progression rate from Step Two provision into sustained employment for 13 weeks was 22%. This matches the Department's revised target of 22%, which was introduced on 1 April 2011 and represents a notable achievement by People 1<sup>st</sup> during a period of economic downturn, with significant rises in the unemployment rates and falling employment opportunities, particularly in the Banbridge and the Newry and Mourne areas. People 1<sup>st</sup> should continue to build on this solid foundation to increase further the number of participants moving into sustained employment. The performance data for the South Eastern contract area can be found in the Appendix.

7.2 Between April 2009 and March 2011, 68% of all leavers from Step Two participated in the Back to Work strand. The numbers of leavers that have progressed into sustained employment has improved, from 17% in the period April 2009 to March 2010, to 20% from April 2010 to March 2011, despite the significant increase in the number of participants entering the Steps to Work programme. The Lead Contractor has devised and implemented a range of strategies to address the increased numbers of participants being referred and the challenges this brings, including the piloting of a pre-employment project in partnership with Lisburn YMCA, which seeks to address the employability skills of the most hard to reach participants. The Lead Contractor has also employed four additional administrative and mentoring staff who have worked effectively, since October 2010, to reduce the backlog of participants waiting for work experience placements. The most recent data shows a significant drop in the number of referrals awaiting a placement. While People 1<sup>st</sup> have responded positively to requests from Jobs and Benefits office and JobCentre staff, from across the contact area, to facilitate more participants coming through Core Gateway, there still remains a significant backlog of participants waiting to be placed in work and People 1<sup>st</sup> need to decrease further the backlog.

7.3 Between April 2009 and March 2011, there has been an increase in occupancy in the Back to Work strand of 50%. Almost all of work experience placements are now in the private sector, at 87%, with only 9% of participants in voluntary or community placements. Further work is, however, required by the Lead Contractor to increase the small number of placements that are in the public sector, at only 4%. Almost all of the participants inspected in their work placement displayed high levels of motivation and enthusiasm for the programme and they are developing very good employability skills along with the increased levels of confidence. Most of the participants on the Back to Work strand are able to respond to and carry out instructions effectively, maintain good timekeeping, develop their confidence in initiative taking and problem solving, and to work effectively as part of a team. In addition, the majority of them are developing relevant professional and technical skills which are aligned well to local employment opportunities. These include basic engineering, administration, hospitality and catering and retail skills.

7.4 Almost all of the participants on the EST are well-motivated and enthusiastic, achieve good standards of work in their essential skills, and are making very good progress in their learning. The quality of the work experience placements are very good for most of the participants, and are well matched to their needs and career aspirations. They have the opportunity to develop general employability skills as well as specific vocational skills that will help them progress into sustained employment. Attendance and time-keeping in this strand are also good overall. Achievements for those participants who complete their training are excellent at 100%. The findings from the initial assessment process are used effectively to identify the level of qualification that is most appropriate to the needs of the participants. It is a positive feature of the provision that in the in the last two years of the 56 participants who achieved essential skills qualifications: 5% achieved at level 2, 38% at level 1, 27% at entry level 3, 25% at entry level 2 and 5% at entry level 1.

7.5 At the time of the inspection, 62 (18%) participants were working towards the achievement of an NVQ qualification; almost one-half of them had joined the programme on a voluntary basis. Only two participants were working towards the achievement of a VRQ over 26 weeks. The participants currently have access to a good range of NVQ qualifications, across a broad range of areas which provide them with appropriate opportunities to enhance or update their professional and technical competence. Available options include: business administration; catering and hospitality; children's care, learning and development; hairdressing; motor vehicle repair and performing engineering operations. The outcomes for participants progressing to sustained work for 13 weeks have improved from 15% between April 2009 and March 2010, to 24% between April 2010 and March 2011.

7.6 Between April 2010 and March 2011, the outcomes for the Self-Employment Test Trading strand are very good, with 49% of the participants progressing to sustained employment, which is well above the Departmental target. Although there has been a gradual increase in the numbers participating on the strand, it remains under-utilised, accounting for only 6% of all leavers.

7.7 At the time of the inspection, there were 23 participants on the Step Ahead strand. Almost all of the participants involved in the provision are enthusiastic, are keen to progress in their work placement, and to contribute positively to it. They value the support provided by the employers and the Lead Contractor. The uptake on opportunities to achieve accredited qualifications in areas related to the participants' job roles, however, is very low, and the Lead Contractor needs to work more proactively in the promotion of these courses. The outcomes into employment are poor on the Step Ahead strand, with none of the participants, to date, having progressed to sustained employment.

7.8 The Graduate Acceleration Programme is well managed by Business in the Community. At the time of the inspection there were 11 graduates on the programme. The standards of work achieved by the graduates ranged from outstanding to good, and are mostly good. Almost all of the graduates contribute effectively to the work experience placement provider. Although just under 30% of the graduates have progressed to full-time employment, the outcomes from this particular strand should be higher.

7.9 The Lead Contractor offers a good range of Short Accredited Courses to the participants in response to direct referrals from the Jobs and Benefits Offices and the JobCentres. The success rates across these courses are excellent at 100%.

## 8. QUALITY OF TRAINING AND SERVICES

8.1 The arrangements for the inspection of personal support and the safeguarding of vulnerable adults includes the opportunity for the participants to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings by the inspection team with groups of participants across the Lead and sub-contractors. Prior to the inspection, 200 questionnaires were issued to the participants, almost all of which were returned to the Inspectorate and many of which contained additional written comments. The returns show that the participants' experiences in the South Eastern contract area are very good. The Inspectorate has reported the outcomes of the questionnaires and the discussions held with the participants to the Lead Contractor.

8.2 The provision for Core Gateway is very good; it is well-managed and the Lead Contractor is responsive to the needs of the staff in the Jobs and Benefits Office and JobCentres with extra sessions being organised and provided where required. There are very good relationships between the Lead Contractor and the sub-contractors delivering the Core Gateway provision. A workshop, for example, has been organised to allow the tutors from across the contract area to share good practice and materials. People 1<sup>st</sup> have plans in place to continue the sharing of best practice in Core Gateway, Jobsearch and to extend it into the programme strands. The quality of the training observed was good or very good. The tutors are well-prepared and work hard to develop good working relationships with all of the participants. In one session, where two tutors were team teaching, group work was used very effectively to challenge and reinforce the necessity of team work in the workplace. Good use is made of appropriate guest speakers, both in-house and external, to provide the participants with a range of useful information to help them make informed choices about the strands available in Step Two. Between April 2010 and March 2011, nearly all (94%) of the participants who started Core Gateway, completed the strand.

8.3 The quality of the Jobsearch provision is also good. The Lead Contractor has provided opportunities for staff to share good practice and materials and, as a result, a standardised programme has been developed including a good range of resources which are matched well to the interests and capabilities of the participants. The programme includes the development of CV, searching for employment vacancies using the internet, completing job application forms and preparing for interviews. While a minority of the Back to Work participants visited during the inspection reported that they do not have regular opportunities to attend Jobsearch, almost all of the participants inspected had compiled a comprehensive job log during their Jobsearch activities.

8.4 The quality of provision for participants on the Back to Work strand is very good. Most of the participants are placed in work experience placements that are aligned well to their interests and career aspirations. Most are placed with employers in the private sector, which provide the participants with very good opportunities to develop relevant professional and technical, and transferable skills that are relevant to the employment opportunities which exist within the current labour market. These include, for example, construction workers developing new skills in other professional and technical areas, such as retail, engineering, and manufacturing. The participants' employment objectives within their PTPs are matched appropriately to the training opportunities that exist within their work placements and which provide suitable progression targets. The monthly progress reviews are mostly comprehensive, and include joint target-setting between the participants and their employer. In most instances, these targets are appropriate and are referenced to the employment objectives within their PTP, indicating the extent of their progress or distance travelled. The individual participant's personal barriers to employment are, however, not articulated clearly enough within their PTPs, leading to a lack of specific information on their progress in addressing these particular barriers.

8.5 Almost all of the participants on the EST strand attend discrete classes for literacy and/or numeracy, and in addition, those participants identified with very low levels of literacy are provided with appropriate and intensive one-to-one support. The initial assessment process is rigorous and the findings are used effectively to plan learning through individual learning plans, which are updated regularly. The quality of the training and learning is predominantly very good across the provision. The lessons are well-planned and are tailored appropriately to meet the individual needs of the participants; there is very good use of differentiation to accommodate the different levels of ability within the groups. The tutors use a range of teaching strategies and a variety of resources, both paper based and online, to support teaching and learning. As a result, the lessons are interesting and stimulating and the participants are making good progress in their learning. The Lead Contractor, as part of their quality assurance process, carries out classroom observations of all essential skills tutors and good oral and written feedback is provided to the tutor and the sub-contractor.

8.6 The overall quality of the existing NVQ 52 week provision is good. The quality of the directed training varies from good to very good and was very good in one-quarter of the sessions observed. Training sessions are well-planned and managed with clear learning objectives, and the content is organised carefully to support the development of the skills required by the participants in their workplaces. The work experience placements are of good or better quality and are matched well to the needs and aspirations of individual participants. Reviews are regular and thorough and the employers are involved well in the monitoring and review of the participants' progress.

8.7 Most of the participants on the Self-Employment Test Trading strand are enthusiastic and highly motivated. They are developing the appropriate skills to enable them to build up and manage a business. All of the participants receive very good financial and administrative support from their business advisers which is supplemented appropriately with additional specialist support, for example, insurance provision and accessing funding to support business start up. However, the provision of support to test traders in aspects of development such as marketing, networking and in developing other relevant skills such as communication, presentation and information technology skills is under-developed.

8.8 The Lead Contractor has developed a satisfactory employer base within the voluntary and community sector, and the work placements on the Step Ahead programme are mostly well matched to the skills and personal attributes of the participants. These participants value the opportunities to develop their employability skills in a range of occupational areas. Almost all of the participants involved in this strand experience a satisfactory range of job challenges and display good standards of work.

8.9 The provision for the Graduate Acceleration Programme is very good. Almost all of the work placements inspected are appropriate and provide the participants with very good opportunities to develop their skills in line with their degree specialism and professional interests. However, the quality assurance of the overall experience of the graduates is under-developed, and the Lead Contractor should engage more actively with Business in the Community to strengthen considerably the monitoring and review processes.

8.10 The Lead Contractor has a strong ethos of care and support for all of the participants, and responds to their support needs proactively as they arise. The organisation reports that sub-contractors across the contract area have accessed support for participants from some 31 external support agencies during the course of the last year. Currently, however, the

organisation has no participants receiving in-work support, and has overly low numbers in receipt of enhanced support. People 1<sup>st</sup> includes enhanced support as an agenda item for its sub-contractor meetings and should continue to work closely with Jobs and Benefits Office and JobCentre staff to monitor and review the support needs of all of the participants.

8.11 People 1<sup>st</sup> promotes effectively the safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults. The arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable groups comply satisfactorily with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007.

### **PART THREE: KEY PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT**

In order to raise the quality of its provision, People 1<sup>st</sup> should:

- embed further self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes, including the better analysis of data to inform decision-making; and
- continue to extend the range and availability of work experience placements in order to further increase the opportunities for participants to find and sustain employment.

**PERFORMANCE TABLES FOR SOUTH EASTERN CONTRACT AREA**

**Table 1: South Eastern Contract Area: 13 Week Sustained Employment Performance**

All participants in the South Eastern Contract Area who moved from Step 2 into unsubsidised or subsidised employment sustained for 13 weeks compared to NI Total (September 2008 to September 2010)						
Contract Area	South Eastern Contract Area				South Eastern	Northern Ireland Total
Period	Sep 2008 - Mar 2009	Apr 2009 - Mar 2010	Apr 2010 - June 2010	July 2010 - Sept 2010	Total for September 2008 to September 2010	
Total Leaving Step 2 Lead Contractors	42	329	120	167	658	8529
Moved to Subsidised or Unsubsidised Employment	17%	26%	30%	38%	29%	23%
Sustained 13 Wks	5%	19%	23%	30%	22%	17%

**Table 2: South Eastern Contract Area: 13 Week Sustained Employment Performance by Step Two Strands**

13 Week Performance for the South Eastern Contact Area by Step 2 Strands						
Period		Sep 2008 - Mar 2009	Apr 2009 - Mar 2010	Apr 2010 - June 2010	July 2010 - Sept 2010	Total
<b>Back to work</b>	Total Leaving Steps to Work	27	200	76	105	408
	Sust. 13 Wks	4%	17%	18%	29%	19%
<b>Essential Skills</b>	Total Leaving Steps to Work	3	32	9	9	53
	Sust. 13 Wks	0%	13%	11%	11%	11%
<b>NVQ</b>	Total Leaving Steps to Work	7	48	17	22	94
	Sust. 13 Wks	0%	15%	29%	36%	21%
<b>Qualifications</b>	Total Leaving Steps to Work	5	15	6	11	37
	Sust. 13 Wks	20%	20%	50%	45%	32%
<b>Self Employment</b>	Total Leaving Steps to Work	0	34	11	18	63
	Sust. 13 Wks	0%	47%	45%	33%	43%
<b>Step Ahead</b>	Total Leaving Steps to Work	0	0	1	2	3
	Sust. 13 Wks	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%



**Table 3: South Eastern Contract Area: 26 Week Sustained Employment Performance**

All participants in the South Eastern Contract Area who moved from Step 2 into unsubsidised or subsidised employment and sustained for 26 weeks compared to NI Total (September 2008 to June 2010)						
Contract Area	South Eastern			South Eastern	Northern Ireland Total	
Period	Sep 2008 - Mar 2009	Apr 2009 - Mar 2010	Apr 2010 - June 2010	Total for September 2008 to June 2010		
Total Leaving Step 2 Lead Contractors	42	329	118	489	6,633	
Sustained 13 Wks	2	63	28	93	1,090	
Sustained 26 Weeks	Total	2	51	21	74	883
	% of Total Leaving	5%	16%	18%	15%	13%
	% sustaining 13 Wks which continued to sustain 26 Wks	100%	81%	75%	80%	81%

**Table 4: South Eastern Contract Area: 26 Week Sustained Employment Performance by Step Two Strands**

Table 4 - 26 Week Performance for the South Eastern Contract Area by Step 2 Strands					
Period		Sep 2008 - Mar 2009	Apr 2009 - Mar 2010	Apr 2010 - June 2010	Total
Back to work	Total Leaving Steps to Work	27	200	75	302
	Sustained 13 Wks	1	33	14	48
	% of 13 Wks which continued to sustain 26 Wks	100%	76%	57%	71%
Essential Skills	Total Leaving Steps to Work	3	32	9	44
	Sustained 13 Wks	0	4	1	5
	% of 13 Wks which continued to sustain 26 Wks	0%	75%	0%	60%
NVQ	Total Leaving Steps to Work	7	48	16	71
	Sustained 13 Wks	0	7	5	12
	% of 13 Wks which continued to sustain 26 Wks	0%	86%	100%	92%
Qualifications	Total Leaving Steps to Work	5	15	6	26
	Sustained 13 Wks	1	3	3	7
	% of 13 Wks which continued to sustain 26 Wks	100%	100%	100%	100%
Self Employment	Total Leaving Steps to Work	0	34	11	45
	Sustained 13 Wks	0	16	5	21
	% of 13 Wks which continued to sustain 26 Wks	0%	88%	100%	90%
Step Ahead	Total Leaving Steps to Work	0	0	1	1
	Sustained 13 Wks	0	0	0	0
	% of 13 Wks which continued to sustain 26 Wks	0%	0%	0%	0%

**Table 5: Progression Rates to Sustained Employment by Lead Contractor and Sub-contractors  
April 2009 – March 2011**

<b>Progression Rates to Sustained Employment from Step Two (01/04/2009 – 31/03/2011)</b>			
<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Number of leavers</b>	<b>Number of Leavers who found sustained employment for 13 weeks</b>	<b>% into sustained employment for 13 weeks</b>
People 1 <sup>st</sup> , Lisburn	235	75	32%
People 1 <sup>st</sup> , Banbridge	118	10	8%
Armstrong Learning	10	4	40%
Banbridge District Enterprises	11	1	9%
BITC	14	4	29%
CIDO (Inbiz)	9	3	33%
CSV Media	11	1	9%
Mentor Training	67	39	58%
H J O' Boyles	495	54	11%
Southern Regional College	65	13	20%
Lisburn YMCA	160	35	22%
Possibilities NI	12	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1207</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>20%</b>

(The data in this table was provided by the Lead Contractor at the time of the inspection)

**Table 6: South Eastern Contract Area: Overall Steps to Work Backlog Trends Benchmarked to the Northern Ireland Average for all Step Two Strands**

Period	Steps to Work Backlogs - NI Benchmark Data – All Step 2 Strands					
	Total No. of S.E. Area Referrals	% of Northern Ireland Total	>4wks < 15wks		> 15 wks	
			S.E. Region	N.I. Avg.	S.E. Region	N.I. Avg.
Q1 2010	988	19%	61%	46%	44%	26%
Q2 2010	1,086	21%	26%	41%	51%	28%
Q3 2010	1,043	18%	31%	40%	46%	29%
Q4 2010	1,460	17%	33%	44%	43%	32%
Q1 2011	1,082	17%	32%	46%	31%	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,659</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>29%</b>

**Table 7: South Eastern Contract Area: Overall Steps to Work Backlog Trends Benchmarked to the Northern Ireland Average by Strand**

Period	South Eastern Contract Area - StW Backlogs																													
	Back to work					Essential Skills					NVQ				Qualifications (7)				Self Employment				GAP							
	No. Referrals	>4wks < 15wks		> 15 wks		No. Referrals	>4wks < 15wks		> 15 wks		No. Referrals	>4wks < 15wks		> 15 wks		No. Referrals	>4wks < 15wks		> 15 wks		No. Referrals	>4wks < 15wks		> 15 wks						
		No.	%	No.	%		No.	%	No.	%		No.	%	No.	%		No.	%	No.	%		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%			
Q1 2010	714	453	63	323	45	93	58	62	37	40	123	67	54	68	55	14	5	36	1	7	37	21	57	8	22	7	3	43	0	0
Q2 2010	745	173	23	400	54	108	29	27	54	50	161	46	29	77	48	12	3	25	7	58	44	25	57	11	25	16	10	63	1	6
Q3 2010	701	198	28	356	51	84	26	31	42	50	172	61	35	60	35	15	5	33	4	27	43	18	42	17	40	28	16	57	2	7
Q4 2010	1,066	347	33	468	44	123	40	33	65	53	151	48	32	70	46	21	14	67	3	14	51	16	31	21	41	48	19	40	4	8
Q1 2011	864	285	33	285	33	86	34	40	33	38	-	-	-	-	-	39	10	26	4	10	59	9	15	9	15	34	8	23	2	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>4090</b>	<b>1456</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>1832</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>

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