



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Training for Success and  
ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in  
Bryson FutureSkills

Report of an Inspection in  
November 2014

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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

CUSTOMER  
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## 1. Context

Bryson FutureSkills is a provider of vocational training and employment programmes. It is one of seven social business units within the wider Bryson Charitable Group, which is the largest social enterprise in Northern Ireland.

Bryson FutureSkills is contracted by the Department for Employment and Learning (Department) to provide professional and technical training under the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes.

Bryson FutureSkills has two main training facilities, both located in Belfast City Centre. It also has six satellite centres in North and East Belfast and in Newtownabbey, which are used to promote training and employment programmes. The organisation recruits young people who live in some of the most socially deprived wards in Northern Ireland, with very high levels of educational underachievement.

At the time of the inspection, the organisation was providing training in administration, children's care learning and development, construction (brickwork) and construction operations, hairdressing, hospitality and catering, information technology (IT) users, playwork, retail and wood occupations.

A total of 200 trainees were registered on the Training for Success programme and 19 apprentices were registered on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme. A small number (six) of trainees were registered on the legacy 2008 Training for Success contract, and 16 apprentices were registered on the legacy 2008 ApprenticeshipsNI contract. Just over 70% of the trainees were registered on the Skills for Work level 1 strand of the Training for Success programme.

A significant minority (33%) of the trainees and apprentices undertake their professional and technical training with six other sub-contracted training providers. The sub-contracted providers are Bailie Conor Training Consultancy<sup>1</sup> (construction and construction operations), Belfast Metropolitan College and Paragon Training (playwork), Springvale Employment and Training Services (wood occupations and catering), The Academy Hair and Beauty Training School (hairdressing) and Workforce Training Services Ltd (wood occupations).

Nearly all the trainees enter the Training for Success programme with very low levels of prior educational attainment. Just under one-half of the trainees have no formal qualifications and very few (4%) had attained a General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) grade A\*-C or equivalent in English or mathematics. Although the entry profile of the apprentices is stronger, only 10% of them had achieved a GCSE grade A\*-C or equivalent in English or mathematics on entry to the ApprenticeshipsNI programme.

Many of the trainees present with multiple barriers to learning, including personal, social, motivational and behavioural problems. Bryson FutureSkills report that a significant number of the trainees had poor levels of attendance while at school. According to the organisation, 22 trainees have special educational needs and 74 of them are being supported by external agencies to address mental health issues, addictions and involvement with the criminal justice system. A minority of the trainees come from a care background or have caring responsibilities.

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<sup>1</sup> This arrangement was put in place two weeks in advance of the inspection following the resignation of a brick work tutor who had been employed by Bryson FutureSkills

At the time of the inspection, only 19% of the trainees on the Training for Success programme were in a work placement. Many of the trainees on entry to the programme require considerable input and development by the organisation before being placed with an employer.

## 2. Overall Finding

Overall, the quality of training provided by Bryson FutureSkills is satisfactory.

Overall Effectiveness	Satisfactory
Achievements and Standards	Satisfactory
Quality of Provision for Learning	Satisfactory
Leadership and Management	Satisfactory

Professional and Technical Area Performance Levels	
Administration	Satisfactory
Children's Care and Learning Development	Satisfactory
Construction	Satisfactory
Essential Skills	Satisfactory
IT Users	Satisfactory
Retail	Satisfactory

### What does Bryson FutureSkills need to do to bring about further improvement?

- Review the employer engagement strategy, in order to significantly increase work placement rates for the trainees on the Training for Success programme, and to expand the ApprenticeshipsNI provision;
- enhance the range and quality of the learning experiences of the trainees, including the quality of teaching, training and learning;
- provide more tailored support arrangements for those trainees who require additional learning support;
- develop a more holistic approach to curriculum planning, aligned with a more robust and evidence-based self-evaluation process; and
- improve retention rates across the Training for Success provision.

## 3. Key Findings of the Inspection

### 3.1 Achievements and standards are satisfactory.

In the directed training sessions, in spite of the encouragement from the tutors, a minority of the trainees are difficult to motivate and they show a lack of engagement in many of their learning activities. Attendance and punctuality of the trainees at directed training in a majority of the professional and technical areas is satisfactory at best. A majority of those trainees who progress to the second year of their training programmes display higher levels of motivation, and increased confidence in their work.

The trainees' knowledge and understanding of the world of work is overly limited which is not helped by the small number of trainees who have work placements. However, these placed trainees are developing appropriate occupational skills and wider employability skills, including team working and responding to the needs of customers; this does much to raise their levels of self-confidence.

Most of the apprentices display good occupational skills in their job roles; they competently apply their technical knowledge and skills to meet the needs of their employers and customers. The standards of work in the apprentices' portfolios are good and most are making very good progress in the professional and technical units.

A majority of the trainees make satisfactory progress, from a low base, in their literacy and numeracy skills. A minority of the trainees, who are engaged fully in their learning, are confident in their oral responses, make very good progress in developing their written communication skills, and apply their mathematical and problem-solving skills in their work. The majority of the trainees, however, struggle with independent reading and extended writing tasks.

Over the last four years, based on the information supplied by Bryson FutureSkills, only 42% of the trainees on the Training for Success programme are retained, but almost all (91%) of those who remain achieve their target qualifications.

The average retention rate on the Skills for Your Life strand of Training for Success is only 39%, and almost all who stay achieve their target qualifications. Over the past three years, the retention rate on the Skills for Work level 1 strand has improved to 69%, and almost all those who stay achieve. The retention rate on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand has been consistently unsatisfactory over the last four years, with an average of just 30% completing their training. Around 80% of the Programme-Led Apprentices who were retained achieved their full framework qualifications.

The management team has robust arrangements in place to record and analyse those trainees who do not complete their training programmes. Last year, nearly two-thirds of the trainees who left early were dismissed from the programme, as per the Department's Operational Guidelines, due to poor attendance in directed training.

The majority of the trainees (64%) who complete their training progress to further training or employment. While progression rates on most strands of the programme are good or better, only 28% on the Programme-Led Apprentices progressed to further training or employment.

Over the last four years, the average retention rate on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme was good at 75%, and nearly all (97%) of the apprentices who stay achieved their full training frameworks.

Over the last four years, the average achievement rates in the essential skills of literacy and numeracy have been very good at 86% and 85% respectively. Only a minority of the trainees and apprentices, however, achieve the essential skills at a level higher than that required by their framework, and most from a very low baseline on entry. The achievement rate in the information and communication technology (ICT) essential skill, however, is unsatisfactory at just 32%.

### **3.2 The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory.**

The range of the provision under the Training for Success programme meets the needs of most of the trainees. The organisation, through its development officers who work in the six satellite centres, is able to offer relevant training pathways to young people who live in some of the most disadvantaged communities in Greater Belfast. The capability of the organisation to engage with those young people who are the 'hardest to reach' and farthest from the labour market is a strength of the provision.

Trainees on the Training for Success programme are provided with opportunities to achieve beyond the minimum required in their training frameworks. The trainees, irrespective of the level and extent of prior achievements can eventually progress to level 2 professional and technical and essential skills qualifications. These arrangements are particularly well-planned in the provision for IT users.

The provision under the ApprenticeshipsNI programme is much too narrow and has declined significantly over recent years, with only three apprentices currently registered under the 2013 contract.

The quality of the pastoral care provided for the trainees and apprentices is good. The management team and staff demonstrate a firm commitment to meeting their pastoral care and welfare needs. The staff work hard to ensure that the trainees have good access to an appropriate range of support services, including Disability Action and counselling services within Bryson FutureSkills. As a result, they have access to a range of external support agencies through appropriate signposting and referral. A particular and appropriate focus of Bryson FutureSkills is to establish collaborative links with the parents or carers of the trainees, in order to strengthen the support they receive at home to help them to remain on their training programme. The responses from the online questionnaire and discussions with the trainees and apprentices were mostly positive and indicated that they feel well cared for in the organisation.

The quality of the teaching, training and learning in the directed training sessions observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding; it is a concern that just over one-half of the sessions were satisfactory. In these lessons, the range of teaching and learning strategies were limited, with too few opportunities for the trainees to undertake practical work. The tutors work hard to maintain and sustain positive relationships in the lessons. A key challenge faced by the tutors is to deploy teaching approaches that meet the needs of all of the trainees. This is compounded by the wide ability range and differing occupational experiences of the trainees in these sessions. The timetabling arrangements are not always conducive to effective learning, with the use of lengthy teaching blocks in key areas of the curriculum, particularly in the essential skills. The better sessions had clear learning objectives and the tutors made effective use of a broad range of approaches including the effective use of information and learning technology (ILT), to engage the trainees in their learning.

For those trainees who have work placements, and the apprentices, the quality of work-based training is good or better, and is matched well to the assessment requirements for their training frameworks.

The quality of additional learning support is satisfactory. While Bryson FutureSkills provides all of the trainees with a structured programme of employability and personal and social development, this needs to be developed further to meet more effectively the individual needs of the trainees and to widen their understanding and awareness of the impact and consequences of their behaviours. There are good examples of practice which can be shared across the provision, including the intensive support for the development of the essential skills of a small group of trainees, and the provision of intensive residential support for the most disengaged trainees.

The quality of the personal planning process is satisfactory. While the existing processes and systems for identifying and managing individual trainee support needs identify well the personal, social and emotional barriers to learning, they do not sufficiently identify the trainees' individual learning support needs. There is a need for a more coherent and cohesive approach to planning, identifying, reviewing and supporting the trainees' individual needs and barriers to learning, including the development of detailed, coherent action plans across all elements of their training programme.

Although the trainees undertake accredited courses in employability, the opportunities for them to develop a knowledge and understanding of careers within their professional and technical areas are not sufficient. Many of the trainees display only low levels of knowledge and understanding around potential career pathways. In addition, the trainees are not provided with enough opportunities to develop an understanding of the world of work through appropriate site visits and the use of guest speakers.

While the trainees on the Training for Success programme are provided with opportunities to participate in a range of extra-curricular activities, the range of enrichment activities are underdeveloped across the provision, including project work, participation in competitions, and cultural and social activities.

Summative assessment arrangements are implemented effectively and are subject to systematic internal verification procedures.

### **3.3 Leadership and management is satisfactory.**

Over the last year, Bryson FutureSkills has undergone a process of significant change, including a decrease in management and staffing levels. Just under one-half of the workforce (35 members of staff) left the organisation two weeks in advance of the inspection. The management team is in the process of developing a new strategic plan for the 2015-18 period, as part of the wider plan for the Bryson Charitable Group, and this is timely.

The Executive Director and the management team have extensive experience in leading and managing training programmes. The team comprises a head of programmes, a curriculum manager and a training manager, who are responsible for the planning and delivery of the training programmes. In addition, a dedicated employment team is tasked with recruiting trainees and apprentices and securing work placements.

Although the management team has clearly identified roles and responsibilities in the delivery of the provision, much of the curriculum planning is discrete with insufficient opportunities for collaborative working between the professional and technical, essential skills, and learner support tutors to plan and review the provision.

The Board members of Bryson FutureSkills have relevant management expertise in business and the educational and voluntary sectors. The Board exercise an appropriate scrutiny function to the management team for the employment programmes that are offered by Bryson Future Skills. This role, however, in respect of the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI provision is underdeveloped, including the reporting and analysis of relevant key performance indicators on outcomes and achievements.

The organisation invests significant resources in quality improvement planning, with high levels of commitment from the Executive Director and the deployment of an external consultant. The views of employers, apprentices, trainees and staff are captured effectively in the process. The whole organisation self-evaluation report, however, is not sufficiently self-critical and it gives an overly positive evaluation of the overall quality of the provision. While the collation and use of management information by the management team is good, this information is not shared effectively with the professional and technical tutors.

The systems and procedures in place to monitor the quality of the provision that is sub-contracted to other training providers are variable. These arrangements are effective for the provision sub-contracted to Baillie Conor Consultancy. The arrangements with the other providers, however, do not evaluate sufficiently the quality of training and learning, and the overall standards and achievements.

The organisation has an effective online tracking system to record and track the progress of the trainees and apprentices in their professional and technical units, the essential skills and the milestones in their training framework.

Bryson Future Skills has a well-considered employer engagement strategy, a feature of which is the establishment of good links with a range of employers. These links, however, have not been used effectively to help trainees secure work placements. In addition, more work is needed to ensure that the employer engagement strategy addresses the decline in the numbers enrolling on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme.

The tutors and support staff are well-qualified and experienced in their professional and technical areas, and show considerable commitment to their work and meeting the needs of the trainees and apprentices. They have access to a wide range of mandatory and elective staff development activities. The organisation has invested significant resources to up skill the pedagogic and management skills of the staff.

The arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable groups comply satisfactorily with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007. The Bryson FutureSkills policy is in line with current legislation and appropriate policies are signposted for learners during induction. Information regarding the designated safeguarding staff is displayed prominently in the organisation. Reporting arrangements are clear and are known to staff, and shared with the trainees and their parents/carers. Almost all of the trainees stated that they feel safe and secure in the organisation.

More attention needs to be paid by Bryson FutureSkills to the promotion of positive behaviour management, including classroom management and the Code of Conduct for trainees. The organisation needs also to improve the personal and social development curriculum to better develop the trainees' knowledge and understanding of current and emerging issues such as e-Safety. The service level agreements between Bryson FutureSkills and their sub-contracted training partners do not incorporate clear enough reporting arrangements for dealing with any safeguarding issues.



The overall quality of the accommodation and the physical resources available to the trainees and apprentices requires improvement. Overall, the layout and maintenance of the building and the quality of the classroom and other learning accommodation in Stockman House are not conducive to effective learning and teaching.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Overall, the quality of the provision in Bryson FutureSkills is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in leadership and management, the provision for learning, and achievements and standards which need to be addressed if the needs of all the trainees and apprentices are to be met more effectively.

#### **5. Professional and Technical Reports**

##### **5.1 Administration**

###### **Key findings**

In administration, the quality of training provided by Bryson Future Skills is satisfactory.

###### **Context**

At the time of the inspection, 32 trainees were registered on the Training for Success programme. Four trainees were registered on the Skills for Your Life strand, 22 on the Skills for Work level 1 strand and three on the Skills for Work level 2 strand. Three trainees were registered on the legacy Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand. In addition, three apprentices were registered on the level 3 ApprenticeshipsNI programme. At the time of the inspection, only five trainees were in a work placement.

###### **The quality of achievements and standards is satisfactory.**

The trainees are well-supported by the tutor to overcome many of their educational, personal and social barriers to learning. They report that they have gained in confidence and can communicate more effectively through their participation in the training programme. In directed training, they develop a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of business practices, including the filing and classification of business information. In addition, they understand the importance of presentation skills in a business environment and in the world of work. The standard of work for most of the apprentices is good. They develop well their understanding of administrative processes and are provided with good opportunities to develop their supervisory skills in the workplace.

The trainees have insufficient opportunities to develop their occupational skills through work placements. Most of the trainees are not placed, and as a consequence, their occupational skills and knowledge of working in relevant commercial settings is underdeveloped. Those trainees in a placement develop good occupational skills. They are able to carry out a range of administration activities, including dealing with customers, using IT packages and general office duties such as filing and photocopying.

The trainees' and apprentices' portfolios of evidence are well-structured and contain appropriate evidence. There are good opportunities in the workbooks for them to extend the quality of their written work, although their independent writing skills need further development. Most of the trainees are making satisfactory progress in their professional and technical units. While a significant minority of the trainees are well-motivated in their learning, attendance and punctuality in directed training is poor for a majority of the trainees.

The average retention rate on the Training Success programme is inadequate at 43%, but nearly all (94%) of those trainees who complete their training achieve. The average progression rate to further education, employment or training is satisfactory at 67%. The average retention rate on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme is very good at 83%, and the achievement rate is outstanding at 95%.

### **The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory.**

The planning for the training sessions is mostly good and the tutor works hard to support and encourage the trainees and apprentices in their learning. The quality of the directed training sessions is mostly satisfactory. Much of the teaching is whole class and overly tutor-led with insufficient active learning strategies and a lack of emphasis on developing the trainees' interpersonal and communication skills. While most of the trainees make satisfactory progress in their professional and technical units, those trainees without a work placement have too few opportunities in the directed training to sufficiently develop their oral communication skills through active learning activities or project work. The use of ILT and resources to support and enhance the learning is largely underdeveloped.

The personal training planning process is satisfactory. The progress of the trainees and apprentices is monitored regularly and assessment is mostly well-planned. The personal training plans, however, do not capture effectively enough the trainees' barriers to learning to inform the progress reviews.

The workplace assessments, for the apprentices and the minority of trainees who are in a placement, are undertaken regularly. The trainees and apprentices receive good feedback on how to improve their occupational skills and competences. Careers advice and guidance is underdeveloped and does not give sufficient attention to employment opportunities in the industry. In addition, enrichment activities including study visits and industry speakers are also underdeveloped.

### **The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.**

The tutor is suitably qualified and works hard to support the trainees and apprentices to help them to overcome their barriers to learning. There are insufficient opportunities, however, for the tutor to plan the provision, along with the essential skills, personal development and employability tutors. While internal verification processes are applied rigorously, the use of self- evaluation to help plan for improvement is underdeveloped. These processes do not use data effectively to identify the strengths and the areas for development within the provision.

The trainees and apprentices have access to a satisfactory range of resources in their directed training sessions. There is a need for additional industry-relevant equipment to enhance the environment and provide a more relevant business-related experience for the trainees. The trainees and apprentices would benefit from more access to electronic learning resources to support and broaden their work and experiences.

## **5.2 Children's Care Learning and Development (CCLD)**

### **Key findings**

In children's care learning and development, the quality of training provided by Bryson FutureSkills is satisfactory.

## **Context**

At the time of the inspection, 31 trainees and one apprentice were registered. Six trainees were registered on the Skills for Your Life strand, 21 on the Skills for Work level 1 strand, and three on the Skills for Work level 2 strand. One trainee was registered on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand of the legacy Training for Success programme. At the time of the inspection, only four of the trainees were in a work placement.

### **Achievements and standards are satisfactory.**

The tutor has a very good working relationship with the trainees and works hard to engage them in their learning. Most of the trainees, however, have low aspirations and present with significant barriers to their learning, including a lack of resilience and motivation to learn. While most of the trainees are well-behaved in the directed training they require considerable support and guidance from the tutor. The trainees are working through the professional and technical mandatory units of work and are making satisfactory progress. The majority of the trainees have poor communication skills and they are particularly reticent in their oral responses. Most of the trainees have only a limited knowledge and understanding about potential career pathways, and too few of them show a commitment to seeking employment in the sector. The lack of work placements severely inhibits the trainees' opportunities to develop their occupational skills and apply their learning in the workplace. The apprentice and nearly all of the trainees in work placements are well-motivated and are developing good occupational skills.

Over the last four years, average retention rates on the Training for Success programme are satisfactory at 58%. Retention on the Skills for Work level 1 strand is good at 68%, but it is very low on the other strands of the programme. Retention on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme is satisfactory at 67%. The average achievement rate across all of the provision is high at 91%.

### **The quality of provision is satisfactory.**

The timetabling of composite directed training sessions across each strand of the Training for Success programme is a particular challenge for the tutor, as most of the trainees require high levels of individual support. Consequently, there is little opportunity for whole-class teaching or active learning activities to help the trainees contextualise their knowledge and understanding of childcare and development. The excessive use of worksheets limits the opportunities for the more able trainees to provide extended answers in their written work. Work-related learning, including site visits and guest speakers from the early year's sector, is underdeveloped. The trainees make good use of ILT in their directed training where they research aspects of their course and re-draft assessed work. While the personal training plans outline the learning undertaken in each of the units, they do not record clearly enough individual, measurable targets by which the progress being made by the trainees can be effectively monitored.

For those trainees with a work placement, the quality of the work-based training is good; employers report that the trainees are suited to working with young children and they support them effectively in the application of their learning with young children.

### **The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.**

The tutor is well-qualified and experienced. She knows the trainees well, is aware of their individual needs and is committed to their learning, progress, care and welfare. All of the trainees spoke highly of the support they receive from their tutor. While there are clearly defined roles and responsibilities within the management team, there are too few opportunities for the tutor to coherently plan the provision with those tutors who deliver the essential skills, personal and social development and employability qualifications. This is particularly so in the development of a programme that will extend the trainees' written communication skills specific to this sector.

The self-evaluation arrangements across the provision for children's care learning and development are underdeveloped.

### **5.3 Construction**

#### **Key findings**

In construction, the quality of training provided by Bryson FutureSkills is satisfactory.

#### **Context**

At the time of the inspection, 17 trainees were registered on the Training for Success programme. Five were registered on the Skills for Your Life strand, eight on the Skills for Work level 1 strand and four on the Skills for Work level 2 strand. The directed training for this provision was recently sub- contracted to another provider, Bailee Connor Training Consultancy.

Ten apprentices were registered on the level 3 ApprenticeshipsNI programme in wood occupations. The apprenticeship training is sub-contracted to Springvale Employment and Learning Solutions and Workforce Training Services. Nine apprentices were awaiting final accreditation under the ApprenticeshipsNI legacy contract.

At the time of the inspection, only one trainee was in a work placement.

#### **Achievements and standards are satisfactory.**

The general standard of the trainees' behaviour is good and most of them have satisfactory or good oral communication skills. The standard of the written work in the portfolios of evidence is mostly good, with appropriate evidence of the development of their extended writing skills. A majority of the trainees are developing good occupational skills and knowledge in bricklaying; they are able to construct solid brick walls accurately within the required tolerances. A minority, however, are making slow progress in the development of their hand skills and overall work-readiness. The overall attendance of the trainees in the directed training sessions is generally low. The trainee with a work placement attains good occupational skills and is able to undertake tasks with minimal supervision.

Almost all of the apprentices work effectively with other trades, colleagues and contractors in the workplace. The apprentices competently use and apply their technical knowledge, occupational skills and practical experience, and produce work to a good or better standard.

Over the last four years, the outcomes on the Skills for Your Life strand are low due to the unsatisfactory (27%) retention rates. Retention rates have increased on the Skills for Work level 1 strand and, in 2013/14, a majority (73%) of the trainees were retained, and all of those who completed their training achieved. The outcomes on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand are low due to low retention and achievement rates.

Over the last four years, the outcomes on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme are very good; retention and achievement rates are 81% and 92% respectively.

**The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory.**

The quality of the teaching, training and learning in the directed training sessions observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. The low attendance adversely affects the tutor's planning. In the better directed training sessions, the tutor uses a wide range of approaches to training, well-focused questioning and on-going assessment tools effectively to develop the apprentices' knowledge and understanding. Overall, the use of active learning strategies to enhance the trainees' learning experiences is underdeveloped. Only limited use is made of ILT to enhance and enrich training and learning.

Induction arrangements are effective in introducing the trainees to the key elements of their professional and technical programme, including some careers education and guidance. The trainees, however, have too few opportunities in their training to develop a sufficient knowledge or understanding of careers in the construction sector, through site visits, guest speakers or participation in relevant competitions. The lack of work placements restricts the opportunities for the trainees to apply and develop further their practical and wider employability skills.

The quality of the personal training plans is satisfactory; they record well the prior achievements of the trainees and the outcomes of the initial assessments. They do not, however, consistently identify the trainees' barriers to learning and the support arrangements planned.

**The quality of the leadership and management is satisfactory.**

Bryson FutureSkills has appropriate systems in place to track the destinations of the trainees and apprentices. The staff work hard to encourage the trainees to take more responsibility for their own learning and to involve the parents/carers more fully in the training programme.

The organisation took effective action to address the potential gap in provision due to the sudden resignation of the organisation's construction tutor, by sub-contracting the provision to another training provider, Bailee Connor Training Consultancy. Although this arrangement is underpinned by a robust service level agreement, there has been insufficient sharing of information about the trainees' progress to date in their professional and technical units.

Internal verification arrangements are applied effectively across the provision. The self-evaluation and quality improvement planning process as applied to this professional and technical area, however, is underdeveloped. The low number of trainees in a work placement is a concern and strategies are needed to increase this and to address the decline in enrolments to the ApprenticeshipsNI programme.

The professional and technical tutors are well-qualified and experienced. They are provided with good opportunities to engage in appropriate staff development, including the University of Ulster Certificate in Teaching.

## **5.4 Essential Skills**

### **Key findings**

In the essential skills, the quality of the training provided by Bryson FutureSkills is satisfactory.

Essential skills training is offered in literacy, numeracy and ICT up to, and including, level 2 for trainees and apprentices, including those for whom the essential skill of ICT is not a requirement of their framework. A high number of trainees and apprentices require essential skills support. At the time of inspection, 187 of the 201 trainees and 16 of the 19 apprentices were undertaking qualifications in the essential skills. No directed training for the essential skills as part of the ApprenticeshipsNI programme was timetabled during the inspection window.

### **The achievements and standards are satisfactory.**

Most of the trainees and apprentices who complete their training achieve all of the essential skills required by their framework. A minority of them achieve the essential skills at a level higher than that required by their framework, most from a very low baseline on entry. Of those trainees who completed their training in 2013/14, 14% achieved at level 2 in numeracy, and 11% and 4% achieved at level 2 in literacy and ICT respectively.

The trainees' levels of motivation are variable. Approximately one-third of the trainees observed do not engage sufficiently with their learning in the early stages of their programme. There is, however, a noticeable improvement in their levels of maturity, motivation and learning dispositions after the first year. Whilst the achievements in the essential skills over the last four years are very good in literacy and numeracy, they are unsatisfactory in ICT.

Those trainees who engage effectively and responsively in their learning develop an appropriate range of skills and competencies and demonstrate growing levels of confidence in their use of English, mathematics and ICT in their essential skills classes. There is more limited evidence, however, of the application of these skills by the trainees to support their work in their professional and technical areas.

Whilst most of the trainees' oral communication skills are developing well, a minority of the them are reticent communicators; these trainees need more support to develop their communication skills.

The trainees' writing skills are variable; the more highly motivated trainees achieve good outcomes but, overall, too many of them struggle with extended writing and with independent reading and writing; this impacts negatively on their progress in the essential skills and in other areas of the curriculum.

### **The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory.**

The punctuality and attendance by the trainees in the essential skills classes are variable, and only satisfactory overall. Whilst the essential skills staff are supportive of all of the trainees and work hard to encourage them, persistent absences and late-coming to classes by a minority of the trainees remain a challenge, and adversely impact on the tutors' planning. While appropriate initial and diagnostic assessment processes are in place, more needs to be done to match the outcomes from these processes to planning for learning.

The quality of the teaching and learning in the sessions observed ranged from good to satisfactory, and was mostly satisfactory. In the better sessions, the pace was brisk; trainees were well-engaged in their learning through good task variety. The tasks activities were planned well and pitched appropriately to build progressively upon, and to extend, the trainees' existing knowledge and understanding. In the satisfactory practice, there was limited use of innovative strategies, including the use of ILT, to stimulate and motivate the trainees and, in a minority of instances, an over-reliance on trainees completing worksheets, many of which were not contextualised. Recent staff changes have impacted adversely on the composition of some of the essential skills sessions. As a consequence, the spread of levels within a minority of the groups is too wide, and resulting in more whole class teaching, less effective group work and limited opportunities for one-to-one support. Where tutors do provide one-to-one and small group support, it is mostly of a good quality and is largely effective.

### **The quality of the leadership and management is satisfactory.**

The overall planning for the essential skills is satisfactory. The essential skills provision is not linked sufficiently to the planning for the personal development, employability and professional and technical areas of the Training for Success programme. As a consequence, opportunities to contextualise, transfer and embed the essential skills are not exploited well enough. Within the current model of delivery, the sessions are too long, particularly for trainees who struggle with their literacy and numeracy.

The management team are committed to the essential skills provision and have underpinned this with a substantial investment. The organisation provides opportunities for the trainees to progress across more than one level of the essential skills during their training programme; this is helpful and confidence-building for those trainees who enter the programme from a very low baseline. Bryson FutureSkills has invested in a co-ordinator's post for the essential skills and this is a supportive role which is appreciated by staff. A cycle of tutor observation is in place, the outcomes from which are shared with the tutors to bring about improvements in practice. The observations occur too late in the year, however, to support effectively the sharing of good practice.

The organisation has also invested in appropriate external training for most of its essential skills tutors, to improve and to support the development of practice and this is beginning to have an impact on classroom practice.

Whilst an overall organisation-wide self-evaluation process is in place, the self-evaluation of the essential skills, including the evaluation of the impact of the development of these skills across the breadth of the Training for Success provision, does not feature strongly enough in this process.

## **5.5 Information Technology (IT) User**

### **Key findings**

In IT user skills, the quality of training provided by Bryson FutureSkills is satisfactory.

### **Context**

At the time of the inspection, 34 trainees were registered on the Training for Success programme. Five were registered on the Skills for Your Life strand, 26 on the Skills for Work level 1 strand and three on the Skills for Work level 2 strand. At the time of the inspection, only five of the trainees had a work placement.

### **The achievements and standards are satisfactory.**

Most of the trainees work well in their directed training, both independently and in small groups, and produce work in line with their ability levels. In one session, the trainees used photo-editing software well to add different effects to various images and in another they used the internet effectively to research and give definitions of various computer terms. The trainees' oral skills are mostly good, they engage well with their tutor and peers, and demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the lesson content when questioned by the tutor. The quality of their written work is variable, however, and there is only limited evidence in their portfolios of evidence of extended writing. Their assessment tasks consist mostly of short written answers with a minimum amount of detail and content. The trainees have insufficient opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills through their professional and technical training.

Over the past four years, the retention rate on the Skills for Your Life strand is good at 64%, and satisfactory at 56% on the Skills for Work level 1 strand. All of the trainees who are retained achieve. On the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand, the low retention and achievement rates account for the very poor outcomes.

### **The quality of the provision for learning is good.**

The quality of the directed training session is consistently good. The sessions observed had clear learning objectives and the tutor made effective use of a good range of bespoke learning resources to support the delivery of the training. Despite the lengthy timetabled sessions, relationships are harmonious and the trainees are well-motivated. The attendance and behaviour of the trainees in directed training are good and they receive effective pastoral support from the tutor. The use of ILT to enhance training and learning is good, and it helps the trainees to engage in their learning, and to work independently in their professional and technical units.

Although the induction programme is well-planned and delivered, the trainees have too few opportunities to develop a sufficient knowledge and understanding about relevant careers or progression opportunities within the IT sector; a minority of the trainees interviewed were unaware of the possible progression routes available to them on completion of their programme. The use of guest speakers, industry and other external visits to enhance the trainees' learning experiences is underdeveloped. Too few of the trainees benefit from the opportunity to apply their professional and technical skills within the context of a suitable work placement.

The quality of the personal training plans is satisfactory. While the organisation has an appropriate tracking and monitoring system to record the overall progress of the trainees, the personal training plans are not updated in a timely manner to record the outcomes of the progress reviews.

### **The quality of the leadership and management is satisfactory.**

The programme is co-ordinated effectively by the programme tutor who is well-qualified and experienced in the delivery of IT programmes. The tutor has developed innovative approaches to allow the trainees to develop professional and technical skills beyond the requirements of the training frameworks. The curriculum content, however, is not matched well to current IT industry needs and does not provide the trainees with the relevant skills needed to pursue a career in the industry. The choice of units does not allow the trainees to develop skills such as software development, app design, principles of system security or network configuration and, as a result, their career progression opportunities beyond level 2 are limited. In addition, links to IT companies and other industry-related bodies such as the sector skills council are underdeveloped.



While no individual self-evaluation report for IT user skills was available, it is noteworthy that staff involved in the delivery of the programme had identified the key issues that required improvement. The quality of the accommodation and hardware and software resources used to support the delivery of the programme is mostly good.

## **5.6 Retail**

### **Key findings**

In retail, the quality of the training provided by Bryson FutureSkills is satisfactory.

### **Context**

The levels of recruitment to the retail training programmes have declined. Over the last four years, around 60 trainees were recruited annually to the Training for Success programme. Over the same period, a total of 44 apprentices were recruited to the ApprenticeshipsNI programme. At the time of the inspection, 51 trainees were registered on the Training for Success programme: 11 were registered on Skills for Your Life, 38 on Skills for Work level 1 and two on Skills for Work level 2 strands. No apprentices were registered on ApprenticeshipsNI. Only eight trainees were in a work placement.

### **Achievements and standards are satisfactory.**

The standard of work for most trainees with work placements is good. They develop a sound understanding of the key principles and practices relating to the retail environment, which they apply competently in the workplace. They are, for example, able to interact efficiently with customers, restock displays to the appropriate standard and confidently process payments. The trainees report that they are enjoying their workplace training, increasing their self-confidence and improving their interpersonal skills. The standards of work of those trainees without work placements are much more variable and just satisfactory overall. They are reticent to learn or to take responsibility for their own development. In particular, their communication and interpersonal skills are mostly below those required by the retail sector. The trainees' level of understanding of the world of work and associated career planning and progression opportunities is limited.

Over the last four years, the rate of retention (41%) for trainees on the Training for Success programme is inadequate, but almost all (95%) of those who remain achieve. Over the same period, the rate of retention (70%) of apprentices on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme is good and all who remain achieve. While retention rates have improved steadily on the level 1 Training for Success strand, from a low base to just over 70% for 2013/14, the retention and progression rates on the level 2 strand remain a concern.

### **The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory.**

While the learning programme for the trainees is well-organised, the various aspects of their training are delivered in an overly discrete manner. Consequently, there is little integration of the essential skills and personal development within the professional and technical training. The quality of the directed training ranges from satisfactory to good, and is satisfactory overall. The training sessions are mostly well-organised and characterised by a positive and affirming learning ethos; relationships of mutual respect and co-operation are expected and fostered. The range of teaching and learning strategies deployed, however, is too narrow. Much of the teaching and training is imparting knowledge to the whole group, with associated questioning to assess knowledge recall. Insufficient emphasis is placed on developing the trainees' critical thinking skills and personal capabilities. More needs to be

done to engage them in a wider range of stimulating and practically-based learning activities that develop their employability and independent learning skills. The use of ILT to enhance and support learning is underdeveloped.

In the workplace, the trainees are provided with a broad range of learning experiences, which are used to good effect to develop their occupational skills. The assessment arrangements are satisfactory. While summative assessment is well-organised, including well-presented portfolios of evidence, there is insufficient focus on formative assessment to consolidate learning, celebrate interim success and inform the planning of future learning. The personal training plan process is satisfactory. The reviews lack sufficient detail, particularly in the setting of precise, incremental targets to underpin the monitoring of the trainees' progress and achievements in a timely manner.

### **The quality of the leadership and management is satisfactory.**

Although there is a clear progression pathway that allows trainees, irrespective of their entry profile, to target level 2 qualifications, the curriculum is not matched well enough to their learning dispositions or prior experiences. Around two-thirds of the programme content is theory-based and delivered on the organisation's premises in a classroom setting. In addition, the lack of work placements results in long periods of classroom-based learning activities for most trainees, which accentuates their low levels of engagement in learning. There are insufficient innovative strategies to provide practically-based learning tasks to engage the trainees better in learning and prepare them for the world of work. It is a concern that just over 40% of the trainees in the second year of their training have secured a work placement.

The training facilities are dull and uninspiring; there is insufficient retail-related equipment, relevant displays and electronic learning resources to enhance and support learning. The tutor is well-qualified, suitably experienced, and very adept at building productive relationships with the trainees. It is noteworthy that approximately two-thirds of the trainees who commenced their training last year have now progressed to year 2 or successfully completed their training. This represents an important improvement in retention, which has been a focus of the organisation's quality improvement plan. However, there is limited critical self-evaluation of the provision, in light of best practice, to bring about the necessary sustained improvements.

## **6. Inspection method and evidence base**

The inspection focused on:

- the quality of the leadership and management of the organisation;
- the effectiveness of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes;
- the achievements and standards; and
- the quality of provision for training and learning.

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 ETI's publication *Improving Quality: Raising Standards Work-based Learning* <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/improving-quality-raising-standards/improving-quality-raising-standards-igrs-work-based-learning.htm>

A team of ten inspectors observed a total of 35 directed training sessions. Inspectors visited workplaces and trainees and apprentices were interviewed in focus groups. The inspectors also held discussions with the management team, co-ordinators and tutors. In addition, inspectors examined samples of the trainees' and apprentices' work, tutors' schemes of work and lesson plans and trainees' and 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 the safeguarding of vulnerable groups. The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the trainees and apprentices to complete a confidential online questionnaire prior to the inspection.

The returns from the apprentices and trainees were mostly positive and indicated that they were well cared for in the organisation.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned (%)	Number with comments
Learners	218	139	60%	10

## 7. Information about Bryson Future Skills

### Current registrations by programme

Programme	Number of trainees/ apprentices	% of total registrations
ApprenticeshipsNI	19	9
Training for Success (2008) Skills for Work	3	1
Training for Success (2008) Programme-Led Apprenticeship	3	1
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Your Life	36	16
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Work (level 1)	142	65
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Work (level 2)	16	7

### Current registrations by professional and technical area

Professional and technical area	Number of trainees	% of total registrations
Administration	32	15
Child Care	31	15
Construction	17	17
Hairdressing	14	7
Hospitality and Catering	13	6
IT	34	16
Play Work	16	8
Retail	51	51

Professional and technical area	Number of apprentices	% of total registrations
Administration	3	21
Child Care	1	7
Construction	10	72

### Qualifications of current trainees/apprentices on entry to their programme

Programme	Training for Success (%)	ApprenticeshipsNI (%)
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C including English and mathematics	2	10
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C	7	20
(%) of learners with GCSE English and mathematics or equivalent at Grades A*-C	4	10
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-G	25	25
(%) of learners with no prior level 1 or level 2 qualifications	40	5

Note: All data was sourced from Bryson FutureSkills at the time of the inspection.

### 8. Quantitative terms used by the ETI

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%

### Performance levels

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

<b>DESCRIPTOR</b>
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

## Key Performance Indicators

<b>Key Performance Indicators and Definitions</b>	
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.

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