



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Training for Success and
ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in
The Link Works Training and
Placement Services

Report of an Inspection
in October 2013

Quantitative terms

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

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

Performance levels

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

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

Key Performance Indictors

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

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1. Context

The Link Works Training and Placement Services (The Link Works) was established in 1987 and is the training division of Felix O'Hare & Company Limited, a construction company based in Newry. The responsibility for the operational management of The Link Works resides with the management team, comprising the general manager and the training manager. The general manager reports to the board of directors of Felix O'Hare and Company Limited. The Link Works has offices in Newry and Kilkeel.

Since June 2013, under new contracting arrangements with the Department for Employment and Learning (the Department), The Link Works can deliver the Training for Success programmes in the following areas: administration, construction, health and social care, retail, and transport. The organisation has also been contracted to deliver ApprenticeshipsNI at levels 2 and 3 in advice and guidance, customer service, health and social care, playwork and youthwork. There has been no recruitment to date for the ApprenticeshipsNI programmes at levels 2 and 3.

At the time of the inspection, there were 69 trainees registered on the Training for Success programme; and one apprentice registered on the ApprenticeshipsNI at level 2. Of these, 29 were legacy¹ Training for Success trainees and 40 were registered under the new Training for Success 2013 programme. Of the newly registered trainees, there are 17 on the Skills for Work Level 1 strand; 22 on the Skills for Work Level 2 strand; and 1 trainee on the Skills for Your Life strand.

Of the 29 trainees currently registered on the legacy Training for Success programme, three of them hold four GCSE passes including English and mathematics at grade C or better. A further seven of the trainees hold a level 2 qualification; six of them in numeracy and one in literacy. Eight (28%) trainees entered the programme with no formal qualifications.

By contrast, the entry profile of the newly registered trainees is lower. Of the 40 trainees registered since June 2013, none hold four GCSE passes including English and mathematics at grade C or better. Three trainees (8%) hold a level 2 qualification in numeracy and six (15%) hold a level 2 qualification in literacy. Twenty (50%) of the trainees have declared no formal qualifications on entry to the programme.

A particular strength of The Link Works is that it recognises the importance of improving literacy and numeracy skills in the context of employability and supports and facilitates each trainee to target and achieve essential skills qualifications at level 2. The organisation invests substantially in the trainees in order to provide them with appropriate qualifications to strengthen progression opportunities.

¹ The legacy Training for Success programme was introduced in 2007 and was superseded by Training for Success 2013.

At the time of the inspection, initial and diagnostic assessments were well underway; the development of the personal training plans for the new entrants were at an early stage and few of the new trainees were in work placement.

2. Overall finding

Overall, the quality of training provided by The Link Works is very good.

Overall Performance Level	Very Good
Achievements and Standards	Very Good
Quality of Provision for Learning	Good
Leadership and Management	Very Good

Professional and technical areas performance levels	
Business Administration	Outstanding
Retail and Stores	Very Good
Children's Care Learning and Development	Good
Trowel Occupations (Bricklaying)	Good
Essential Skills	Outstanding
Wood Occupations (Joinery)	Good

What does The Link Works need to do to improve?

1. Continue to monitor, review and evaluate the implementation of the new Training for Success provision, particularly the preparation for employment component, to ensure more sustained attendance and progression in the work placements.
2. Continue to monitor and evaluate the impact of the support interventions on the retention and progression in the Training for Success provision.

3. Key findings of the inspection

3.1 Achievements and standards are very good.

Achievements and standards are outstanding in business administration and in the essential skills. They are very good in retail, warehousing and stores and good in children's care learning and development, joinery and bricklaying.

Almost all of the trainees and the apprentice are well-engaged in their training programmes and are motivated to develop good employability skills. Most of the trainees are developing good or better independent working skills in all of the professional and technical areas and display at least good standards of conduct and behaviour. Attendance was also mostly good at the time of inspection.

In a few of the professional and technical areas it is a concern that a significant minority of trainees have not sustained their work placement, although the organisation has introduced a range of support interventions to address this issue and plans to monitor their effectiveness on an ongoing basis. The standards of the trainees' literacy and numeracy skills are mostly good, as evidenced in the written work in the trainees' professional and technical folders and in their essential skills work. Overall, the achievements and standards represent significant value added for the trainees, particularly for those who have a low achievement profile on entry.

Over the past four years, based on the information supplied by The Link Works, a majority of the trainees on the Training for Success programme are retained, and almost all of those who remain achieve. Most of the trainees progress to further training or employment. Over the same period, almost all of the trainees on the Training for Success programme achieved their essential skills.

Over the past four years, almost all of the relatively small numbers of apprentices on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme are retained and those who stay achieve the full framework.

The quality of the provision for training and learning is good.

There is a broad and well developed curriculum in place for the trainees and the apprentice which provides them with good progression opportunities. A comprehensive induction programme is also in place. Appropriately, this has been reviewed, developed and strengthened recently to encompass important areas such as the employability skills and the self-esteem and motivation of the trainees, particularly those who are furthest from the work place. The Link Works has robust initial assessment processes in place which are supplemented well by a range of diagnostic approaches at regular intervals; the outcomes of both are used effectively to plan for the trainees' learning and progression.

In the sessions observed during the inspection, the quality of the teaching, training and learning is mostly good or better. All of the tutors demonstrate clear commitment to the trainees' learning and progression. Almost all of the sessions observed were underpinned by high expectations of the trainees and the apprentice and focused consistently on raising aspirations and on developing their potential. The very good or better (30%) training and learning sessions were characterised by effective planning with clearly defined learning objectives, the use of a range of suitably contextualised activities to engage and motivate the trainees, and very good one-to-one support to consolidate and embed learning. In the small minority of sessions where the teaching was satisfactory or below (12%) the tutors were new to the delivery of the strand and the pace and the levels of challenge of the lessons were not well enough matched to the varied needs of the trainees. In these sessions there was a predominance of restrictive, short task completion which left insufficient time for the trainees to reflect on, or articulate, their learning.

The quality of the pastoral care provided for the trainees and the apprentice is very good. The responses from the on-line questionnaire and discussions with the trainees were very positive and pointed particularly to the trainees' appreciation of the inclusive and supportive ethos of the organisation.

The quality of the careers education, information, advice and guidance provided to the trainees is good. In construction, however, the trainees would benefit from more opportunities to gain experience of the industry through access to a programme of activities, including site visits, guest speakers and engagement in competitions.

The quality of the personal training plans for those trainees on the legacy Training for Success programme varies, but is mostly good. Where the plans are good or very good, the reviews of the trainees' progress are systematic and progressive and set appropriate targets, including targets for the essential skills. In the better practice, contact with employers is regular and employer input into planning for progression is strong.

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

The Link Works is led and managed very effectively by the general manager who is supported very well by the training manager. The leadership and management, across all of the professional and technical areas and the essential skills, is also very good or better. The board of management is committed to the work of organisation. The roles and responsibilities of staff are clearly defined, there are very good working relationships between staff and management and staff report very positively on the internal and external opportunities for professional development, and on the support that they receive from management.

There are effective channels of communication between staff at all levels and regular meetings to share information. There is cohesive team work across the organisation which impacts positively on the support and development of the trainees. The quality and the effectiveness of the curriculum planning are very good and are in line with the ethos, mission statement and values of the organisation.

The staff in the Link Works are well qualified and experienced in their professional and technical area. There is a cycle of sensitively managed tutor observations in place and management have introduced a reflection log for staff to evaluate and improve their practice. At present, however, the outcomes of the reflection log process are not used as the basis for professional discussion or peer review. The organisation has developed very good links and partnerships with a range of employers and external agencies.

The quality of the accommodation and resources are mostly good in the organisation.

The processes for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning are well established. At a strategic level, management information is collated and analysed regularly and is very well used to benchmark internally, and to plan for improvement. The organisation has identified effectively and accurately any areas for improvement and has put appropriate plans in place to address these areas. Individual self-evaluation reports are compiled for each professional and technical area and for the essential skills. Consideration, however, should be given to developing further the tutors' capacity to write critically and to use data more incisively to inform their evaluations and decision- making.

The arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable groups comply satisfactorily with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007. Management are updating the safeguarding policy in line with current legislation and are aligning all aspects of their safeguarding policies with best practice arrangements. Appropriate policies on bullying and harassment, equal opportunities and a complaints procedure are signposted for all trainees during induction. Information regarding the designated safeguarding personnel is displayed prominently in both premises.

4. Conclusion

Overall, the quality of training provided by The Link Works is very good. The Link Works is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

5. Professional and technical area reports

5.1 Business Administration; Retail; Warehousing and Stores

Key findings

In business administration, the quality of the training provided by The Link Works is outstanding.

In retail, warehousing and stores (retail), the quality of the training provided by The Link Works is very good.

Context

Warehousing and stores is offered as a retail pathway and the provision was introduced in 2012 to provide an alternative learning pathway for those trainees who did not wish to complete their first choice of study. The programme is offered at levels 1 and 2, with a total of nine learners registered in 2012/13. During the inspection, there were eight learners on the Skills for Work programme.

The Skills for Work business administration pathway is offered at levels 1 and 2 and provides appropriate curriculum enhancement opportunity, including a level 2 certificate in Information Technology users and the option of a diploma in business administration.

Achievements and standards are very good in retail and outstanding in business administration.

The standards achieved in business administration and in retail range from very good to outstanding. Trainees are highly motivated in both areas and complete their work to a very high standard; a significant minority achieve above the level required for the respective frameworks. Attendance is good and the trainees have very positive relationships with their tutors and with their work placement employers. The trainees are in very good quality work placements, where employers understand well the range of skills to be developed and participate fully in the target-setting process.

The standards achieved by the trainees in written work range from good to very good in retail and are outstanding in business administration. Trainees have the opportunity to undertake appropriate additional qualifications which enhance the programmes. In retail all of the trainees were retained and all achieved. A majority of the trainees in business administration are retained and those who stay achieve.

The quality of the provision for learning is very good in retail and outstanding in business administration.

The quality of teaching and learning in the observed sessions ranged from good to outstanding. The sessions have clear learning objectives and a range of contextualised activities to motivate and challenge learners. There was good pace and expectations were high. In business administration, all trainees are targeting level 2 in the additional information technology qualification and all are well supported by their tutor.

Currently, one half of the Skills for Work level 2 trainees in retail are in a work placement. The new starts across the professional and technical areas, who are not yet in placement, are working towards securing a relevant placement. While some of these learners present major challenges in obtaining and maintaining a work placement, relevant support strategies are in place to manage and address these barriers to employment.

Assessment activities are well-planned across both professional and technical areas. Individual learning plans are detailed and are used well to inform learning strategies; they are of a particularly good quality in business administration. The use of Information and Learning Technology (ILT) in teaching and learning is well developed and there are good opportunities for learners to use Information and Learning Technology (ICT) and develop employability skills across both areas.

The internal verification processes are rigorous and well planned. Standardisation processes are also well embedded.

The quality of the leadership and management is very good in retail and outstanding in business administration.

There is a strong, inclusive and supportive ethos within the leadership and management of the provision. This underpins effectively the planning and work of the professional and technical areas, and is appropriate to meeting the needs of the changing entry profile of the learner groups. The professional and technical areas are well co-ordinated and the range of curriculum enhancement is well managed. Employers are well informed about the programme and in business administration are provided with clear summary detail in relation to the units offered, which they use well to inform the trainees' experiences in the workplace.

Curriculum planning is a clear strength of the provision; the emphasis across the leadership and management is on the achievement by the trainees of a full qualification along with a range of appropriate enhancements. The arrangements for the self-evaluation and quality assurance of the provision are very good.

5.2 Trowel Occupations (Bricklaying)

Key findings

In trowel occupations (bricklaying), the quality of training provided by The Link Works is good.

Context

The recruitment to the bricklaying provision is low, with only 12 trainees recruited in 2012/13, and the same number recruited in 2013/14. At the time of the inspection, there were four Programme-Led Apprentices on the legacy Training for Success programme. On the Training for Success 2013 programme there was one Skills for Your Life trainee, seven level 1 Skills for Work trainees and four level 2 Skills for Work trainees; the recruitment to the ApprenticeshipsNI programmes is poor with only one apprentice currently registered. The trainees present with a range of educational, personal and social barriers to learning; the majority (59%) of the learners hold no formal qualifications on entry to their programme. The directed training for bricklaying is delivered in the workshops located at Chancellors Road.

Achievements and standards are good.

The standards achieved by the new trainees in the practical sessions are mainly good; they are developing well their hand skills and the use of hand tools. They are provided with good opportunities to develop their numeracy skills in the practical sessions. The quality of most of the trainees' written work is good; their portfolios of evidence are well-organised and presented clearly and the marking for improvement is good. Most of the trainees demonstrate good or better literacy skills and are developing good levels of confidence in their oral communication skills. Over the last four years, most of the Skills for Work trainees were retained and all those who remained achieved and progressed to other training. A majority of the Programme-Led Apprentices are retained and achieve.

The quality of the provision for learning is good.

The quality of the teaching, training and learning is good. The tutor uses effective questioning to reinforce the learning, and appropriate differentiated learning approaches are used effectively. The trainees are well supported by the tutor, who has high aspirations for them, and the inclusive ethos contributes significantly to the development of the trainees' motivation and confidence. They are provided with good opportunities to enhance their employability skills through the achievement of the construction skills card. At the time of the inspection, none of the trainees were in work placement; the organisation has recognised the need to provide further support for them, with a particular focus on enhanced employability skills to help them to sustain their work placements and to raise their motivation and self-esteem. The quality of the personal training plans is good. The trainee reviews are progressive and they are set appropriate targets. While the trainees are provided with good on-going careers information and advice by their tutor, there are too few opportunities for the trainees to gain experience of the industry through access to a programme of activities such as site visits, visiting speakers and engagement in competitions.

The quality of leadership and management is very good.

The leadership and management have identified appropriately the key issues requiring improvement and a comprehensive review of the curriculum has taken place. As a result, a number of intervention strategies have been introduced; it is critical that the impact and effectiveness of these are monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis. Although there is very good tracking of the trainees' progress, the processes could be enhanced by the use of an overall group tracking sheet for all aspects of the trainees' programme. The Link Works has provided an appropriate range of staff development opportunities for the tutor, including the completion of the University of Ulster Certificate in Teaching qualification. The quality of the physical resources for the brickwork provision is good with significant investment in the provision of a new classroom and office accommodation. The arrangements for the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning of the trowel occupations provision needs to be developed further to strengthen the role of the tutor in the process.

5.3 Wood Occupations (Joinery)

Key findings

In wood occupations, the quality of training provided by The Link Works is good

Context

The recruitment to the wood occupations programmes has fluctuated over the last four years. The numbers recruited in the current academic year to the Training for Success 2013 have decreased significantly by 71% and, in the last two years, there has been no recruitment to the ApprenticeshipsNI programmes. At the time of the inspection, there were eight Programme-Led Apprentices and on the new Training for Success 2013 programmes there were three level 1 Skills for Work trainees and one level 2 Skills for Work trainee. The trainees present with a range of educational, personal and social barriers to learning; a significant minority (38%) of the learners hold no formal qualifications on entry to their programme.

Achievements and standards are good.

The standards achieved by the trainees in the practical sessions and the work placements are mostly good; the new trainees are developing their newly acquired hand skills, and are, for example, able to make mortise and tenon joints to an appropriate standard. Most of the trainees can work independently and display good standards of conduct and behaviour. The quality of most of the trainees' written work is good; most of them demonstrate good or better literacy skills and their use and understanding of relevant technical language is well developed. Over the last four years, a majority of the level 1 Skills for Work trainees are retained, and those who remain achieve, with most progressing to further training. A majority of the Programme-Led Apprentices are retained and most of them achieve the framework and progress to further training. Over the same period, almost all of the level 2 apprentices are retained, and all of those who remain achieve and progress.

The quality of the provision for learning is good.

The quality of the teaching, training and learning is good. The key features of the good sessions are: the supportive and inclusive ethos, the effective use of ILT, and the very good focus on the development of the trainees' extended writing skills. The work placements are of a good quality and the trainees are provided with good opportunities to develop and apply an appropriate range of occupational competences and wider employability skills. Most of the Programme-Led Apprentices are currently in relevant work placements. The Link Works has recognised the need to support further the development of the trainees' employability skills and to raise their motivation and self-esteem. The trainees are reviewed regularly and thoroughly in their work placement. The quality of the personal training plans is good. The reviews are progressive and they set appropriate targets. Whilst the tutor provides good on-going careers education, information, advice and guidance and the trainees are aware of the progression pathways available to them, the trainees' knowledge and understanding of industry could be enhanced through the use of guest speakers, or participation in competitions.

The quality of leadership and management is very good.

The leadership and management of the provision have identified, through the self-evaluation and improvement planning processes, the key issues for improvement. The Link Works has undertaken a comprehensive review of the curriculum and introduced a range of intervention strategies. The organisation should ensure that the initiatives are regularly monitored and evaluated to assess their effectiveness and to ensure that they meet the needs of the changing needs of the trainees. While there is good tracking of the progress of individual trainees, the process could be enhanced by the use of an overall group tracking sheet for all aspects of the trainees' programme.

The organisation is committed to high quality teaching, training and learning and has supported the tutor to complete appropriate further training including the University of Ulster Certificate in Teaching qualification. The tutor for wood occupations needs to be more involved in the processes for the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning of the provision.

5.4 Children's Care Learning and Development

Key findings

In children's care, learning and development, the quality of the training provided by The Link Works is good.

Context

At the time of the inspection there were 20 trainees registered on the Training for Success programme. All of the Programme-Led Apprentices have work placements and appropriate plans are in place for the newly registered Skills for Work 2 trainees to commence work placements post induction. Over the last few years, The Link Works reports that there has been a change in the profile of trainees recruited to the

children's care, learning and development programmes. Almost all of the current cohort of trainees, for example, have low levels of literacy and numeracy on entry; around one-third have no qualifications at all; and a significant minority have additional barriers to learning.

Achievements and standards are good.

Almost all of the trainees are well-engaged in their programme and are motivated to develop good employability skills. Attendance is very good and the behaviour of the trainees is of a good standard. Relationships between the trainees and members of staff are very good and the trainees speak highly of the support they receive from their tutors. During the inspection, all of the trainees on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand were in very good quality work placements which provide opportunities for the development of an appropriate range of knowledge and skills. While the standards of occupational competence achieved by the trainees in the workplace are mostly satisfactory, they are overly variable and in a small number of instances are inadequate. In order to raise standards of work achieved in the workplace, The Link Works needs to ensure that workplace providers are more closely involved in the ongoing process of setting individual targets and measuring trainee progress. The standards achieved in written work range from satisfactory to very good, and are mostly good. Over the last four years, most of the trainees were retained and almost all of them achieved.

The quality of the provision for learning is good.

The tutors are highly committed to the trainees' learning, care and welfare and have high expectations that they will achieve to their full potential. The quality of the teaching and learning in the sessions observed is good. The sessions are well planned and structured with clearly defined learning outcomes and most of the trainees make good progress. In order to enhance the teaching, training and learning, the tutors need to broaden the range of strategies used and provide more differentiated tasks to tailor the learning better to meet the needs of all of the trainees. The quality of the personal training plans is variable; whilst most are of a good quality, in a significant minority of plans, the specific barriers to progression and the milestones for individual trainees are not identified clearly enough. As a result, the monitoring and review processes for trainees with complex needs are not aligned sufficiently to the personal targets in the individual trainees' plans. The Link works need to communicate more effectively with workplace providers to outline more clearly to them the skills and knowledge that individual trainees need to develop while in work placement.

The quality of the leadership and management is very good.

The provision for children's care, learning and development is co-ordinated well; the management team along with the course team have a well-defined strategic view of how the professional and technical area can be improved and expanded. The tutors are well experienced in the delivery of the training and associated assessment programmes and are supported well in their work through an effective continuous

professional development programme. However, further review of the programme delivery is needed to meet more fully the changing learning and development needs of the current cohort of trainees. The arrangements for self-evaluation and quality improvement are good but need to be enhanced further to provide more ownership of the process by the course team.

5.5 The Essential Skills

Key findings

In the essential skills, the quality of the training provided by The Link Works is outstanding.

Context

The Link Works provides essential skills training in literacy, numeracy and ICT for the trainees. A small minority of the trainees hold either a GCSE pass at grade C or better in English and/or mathematics or a level 2 essential skills in literacy and/or numeracy on entry to their training. All of the trainees receive essential skills training until they finish their programme or achieve at level 2. The number of trainees requiring the essential skills qualifications is high. Most of the trainees require training in ICT (83%), literacy (90%), and numeracy (83%).

Achievements and standards are outstanding.

Almost all of the trainees who complete their programme achieve all of the essential skills required by their framework. Standards are very high with a majority, 67% in literacy and 63% in numeracy, achieving the essential skills at a level higher than that required by their training framework. Most of the trainees report positively on their essential skills achievements and in their reviews there is clear evidence of the trainees' motivation and confidence levels improving as they progress. The standards of the written work in the trainees' professional and technical folders range from satisfactory to outstanding, and are mostly good or better. In most professional and technical areas there are good opportunities for learners to consolidate the literacy, numeracy and ICT skills they have developed in essential skills. Almost all of the learners' spoken communication skills are well developed and they are able to explain clearly their career choices and programme content.

The quality of the provision for learning is outstanding.

The initial and diagnostic assessment processes are very effective and lead to well informed individual learning plans. The quality of the training observed ranged from good to outstanding with the majority being very good or better. The planning is outstanding and, in the training observed, all of the tutors had very high expectations for the trainees. The tutors had developed excellent relationships with the trainees in a relatively short time period, providing excellent support and encouragement both at whole-class level and for individual trainees when required. As a result, nearly all of the trainees who started in September have gained confidence, motivation levels have increased significantly and they are enthusiastic learners. The tutors use a very wide range of pedagogy, including ILT and active learning that is blended well

with more traditional methods to engage the trainees effectively. The work is differentiated appropriately and relevant contexts are used well in the teaching sessions and the assessment portfolios. The essential skills tutors are well supported by most of the professional and technical tutors who work to consolidate the development of the learners' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

The quality of the leadership and management is outstanding.

The planning and co-ordination of the essential skills provision is outstanding, which results in an excellent ethos for the development of the trainees' skills. The timetabling arrangements are well developed with appropriate scheduled breaks. The learners are provided with excellent opportunities to achieve essential skills qualifications at a level higher than required by their framework. All the learners have an opportunity to achieve an ICT qualification. The tutors are well qualified, highly experienced and most of them can deliver more than one skills area. The delivery model is kept under review to ensure that the provision meets the needs of the learners. At the time of the inspection, the comprehensive initial and diagnostic assessment process was well underway, the outcomes of which are used to determine individual learning plans and the most appropriate group allocations. A rigorous internal verification process is in place that provides excellent feedback to the tutors and facilitates the sharing of best practice. The self-evaluation of the provision is very good and makes very good use of data; feedback from learners, employers and tutors; and lesson observations, to inform the judgements.

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 Inspectorate'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 five inspectors observed a total of 58 trainees in seventeen training sessions, and a further 32 trainees and apprentices were interviewed in the workplace or in focus groups. The inspectors also held discussions with the general manager, the training manager, all of the professional and technical staff and the essential skills staff, the Financial Director (Felix O'Hare Construction Company) and

14 employers. In addition, the inspectors examined samples of the apprentices' work, tutors' schemes of work and session plans and the apprentices' personal training plans. The organisation's self-evaluation report and other relevant documentation were also scrutinised as part of the enhanced scrutiny inspection process.

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

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned (%)	Number with comments
Trainees	74	52	70%	8

The returns show that the trainees' and apprentices' training experiences are good. While almost all of the trainees and apprentices surveyed through the questionnaire were positive about their training experiences, a minority of those interviewed during the inspection raised some concerns regarding the speed of the computers in the Kilkeel building.

7. Information about The Link Works Training and Placement Services

Current registrations by programme

Programme	Number of apprentices/trainees	% of total registrations
ApprenticeshipsNI level 2	1	100%
Training for Success (2008) Skills for Work	4	14%
Training for Success (2008) Programme-Led Apprenticeship	25	86%
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Your Life	1	2%
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Work -1	17	43%
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Work - 2	22	55%

Current registrations by professional and technical area

Professional and technical area	Number of trainees	% of total registrations
Business Administration	9	(13%)
Bricklaying	16	(23%)
Joinery	13	(19%)
Retail; Stores and Warehousing	11	(16%)
Children's Care, Learning and Development	20	(29%)
Professional and Technical Area	Number of Apprentices	
Bricklaying	1	(100%)

Qualifications of current apprentices on entry to their programme

Qualifications of current trainees/apprentices on entry to their programme	Training for Success Number (%)	ApprenticeshipsNI Number (%)
Number (%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C including English and mathematics	3 (4%)	0 (100%)
Number (%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C	3 (4%)	1(100%)
Number (%) of learners with GCSE English and mathematics or equivalent at Grades A*-C	16 (23%)	0 (100%)
Number (%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-G	19 (28%)	
Number (%) of learners with no declared qualifications	28(41%)	

Note: All data was sourced from The Link Works at the time of the inspection.

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