

EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE

WORK-BASED LEARNING INSPECTION

ApprenticeshipNI provision in Steer Training
Academy Limited

Report of an Inspection in May 2023



Providing Inspection services for:
Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



Contents

Introduction	2
Views of apprentices and staff	2
Focus of the inspection	3
Summary of overall findings	3
Key findings.....	4
Safeguarding.....	7
Overall effectiveness.....	7
Appendix 1	8
A. Programme Registrations.....	8
B. Methodology and evidence base.....	8
C. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate.....	8

Introduction

Steer Training Academy Limited (Steer) is a work-based training provider, based in Armagh, which has been contracted by the Department for the Economy (DfE) to deliver the ApprenticeshipsNI training programme (ApprenticeshipsNI 2021 programme) in health and social care since August 2021. In addition to the ApprenticeshipsNI training programme, Steer offers private training and supported online courses.

In May 2023, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an inspection in Steer on behalf of DfE, having previously carried out a baseline inspection visit for the ApprenticeshipsNI training programme in June 2022.

At the time of the inspection, the current manager had secured another job outside of the organisation, and transition arrangements were in place, with one of the two tutors taking up the management role, alongside their tutoring responsibilities.

Twenty-six apprentices were registered on the programme, 11 at level 2 and 15 at level 3 (all data in this report was provided by the organisation). Forty-eight percent of the apprentices entered their programme with four or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics. Almost one-half (46%;12) of the apprentices, however, needed to undertake one or more of the essential skills.

Views of apprentices and staff

Inspectors met and spoke with six apprentices during their learning and teaching sessions and in a focus group meeting. The apprentices reported that they were encouraged by their employers to enrol on the apprenticeship programme to improve and enhance further their occupational knowledge and skills in order to be more competent health and social care workers and achieve an accredited qualification. They all stated that they are well supported by both their employers and by the organisation to engage in the sessions.

Fifty-four percent of the apprentices registered completed the online questionnaire. All of their responses indicated that: they find their training programme interesting and challenging; both the face-to-face and online sessions are well taught; their work is assessed regularly, and they are provided with useful feedback to improve their work; their assessments are well-planned; and overall, they are happy with their experiences on the training programme.

All of the staff completed the online questionnaire. They indicated that they are supported in their respective roles; there are good channels of communication within the organisation; and that staff receive accurate, timely updates and information about any changes that will affect them.

Focus of the inspection

The report is based on an inspection of the provision for the health and social care ApprenticeshipsNI training programme, and the essential skills. The inspection also included the capacity of the organisation to identify and bring about improvement, and the effectiveness of the arrangements for safeguarding.

Summary of overall findings

Overall effectiveness

At the time of the inspection, and in the areas evaluated, Steer needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the apprentices.

Overall quality of the programme inspected

Programme	Proportion of registrations	Performance Level
ApprenticeshipsNI	100%	Important area for improvement

Overall quality of the professional and technical areas inspected and the essential skills provision

Programme	Performance Level
Health and social care	Good
Essential skills	Requires significant improvement

Safeguarding

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding the apprentices reflect broadly current legislation and practice.

Strengths

- Flexible training delivery that enables greater access to apprenticeship training for employees with varying work patterns, and which is also aligned well to employers' needs and priorities.
- Good standards of occupational work attained by the apprentices, including for most of them, a development of professional and technical (P&T) skills for new or enhanced roles in the workplace, as reported by their employers.
- Increasing confidence of the apprentices who engage positively in the training and development, with a view to improving their knowledge, skills and understanding of their job roles.
- Good relationships fostered with the apprentices by the well-informed, enthusiastic and committed tutors.

Areas for improvement

- To address, as a priority, the lack of provision for those apprentices requiring the essential skills qualifications of literacy and/or numeracy.
- To develop and implement as a matter of urgency, an essential skills policy, with clear roles and responsibilities and models of timely delivery for all of the essential skills.
- To continue to increase recruitment to the apprenticeship training programme.
- To implement the new management arrangements, ensuring that roles and responsibilities are clear moving forward.
- To develop further the quality improvement planning processes, to include more effective action planning, with more sharply focused actions and targets set to ensure that the key areas for improvement are addressed in a timely and impactful manner.
- To develop further the safeguarding policy and procedures, to include the categories of abuse for both child protection and adult safeguarding.
- To develop discrete staff and apprentice codes of conduct and e-safety policies.

Key findings

- An appropriate curriculum, matched well to job roles, is in place for the P&T provision, at both levels 2 and 3, and has been developed with the apprentices and employers, to meet their learning and development needs. The suite of health and social care qualifications is designed to equip learners with the skills and knowledge needed to care for others in a broad range of health or social care settings.
- The curriculum is delivered flexibly using an appropriate blend of face-to-face and online delivery, which varies depending on the geographical spread of the employers and the numbers of apprentices on the training programme. For one employer, for example, face-to-face delivery takes place twice per month in their premises, whereas for another employer, most of the delivery is online. The apprentices and the employers who inspectors spoke with value this flexible delivery. The organisation communicates regularly with the employers and personal training plans and reviews are updated regularly. The apprentices and their employers are clear about progression in the achievement of their targeted P&T milestones.

- For the current cohorts, the retention rate on the ApprenticeshipsNI level 2 training programme is good at 79% and on the ApprenticeshipsNI level 3 training programme, it is very good at 89%. To date, of the small number of apprentices that have completed their training, they did not need to complete essential skills, and they have achieved the full framework qualification. Going forward, the organisation needs to continue to increase recruitment to its ApprenticeshipsNI programme.
- Through a recent update to the registration process, the entry qualifications of the apprentices are better captured, including the requirement to submit evidence of qualifications attained. As a consequence, those apprentices requiring the essential skills are being identified quickly and since the baseline inspection visit, diagnostic assessments are now completed on entry to training. This information is not however being used to inform organisational/sub-contractor planning of a tailored programme of learning for all of the essential skills, to meet the individual needs of all of the apprentices and secure successful outcomes. The development of an essential skills policy is required urgently, which sets out clearly the responsibilities of the essential skills tutors, the P&T tutors, the apprentices and the employers, and which also includes delivery arrangements. All of the apprentices need to commence any of the essential skills required towards the start of their programme.
- Those apprentices requiring the essential skills of literacy and/or numeracy have not as yet been provided with access to this provision. No delivery model is currently in place for these essential skills, despite the provision being sub-contracted to an external provider with tutors available to deliver these skills. Twelve percent of the current apprentices need to undertake the essential skill of literacy and almost one-fifth (23%) of them need to undertake the essential skill of numeracy. As a priority, the lack of provision for these apprentices needs to be addressed.
- Seven of the current apprentices need to complete the essential skill of Information and Communication Technology (ICT); there is curriculum provision in place for this essential skill (with the same external provider sub-contracted for the essential skills of literacy and numeracy). Progress of apprentices completing the ICT essential skill is tracked well.
- Overall, the standards of work attained and demonstrated by the apprentices in their training and written work, which was evidenced well in their portfolios, were good. As reported by their employers, almost all of them are making good progress in the development of industry-standard occupational skills and competences which they can apply confidently in their work settings.
- In the small number of online sessions observed, the quality of the learning, and teaching was effective. The tutors are suitably qualified, well-experienced and skilled in the delivery of health and social care training programmes, and they are knowledgeable in relation to both the content and the delivery of the sessions. They engaged the apprentices well in the sessions and provided

an appropriate range of activities to enable them to actively participate in their learning. The apprentices were developing well their confidence to make effective contributions, through sharing appropriate examples from their work experiences. The quality of the learning resources used to support the training was good.

- The tutors have good opportunities to undertake professional learning opportunities to maintain and develop their occupational skills. External consultants mentor the two tutors to ensure and maintain high standards across both the competence and the knowledge-based aspects of the health and social care qualifications, and to carry out external verification and quality assurance work.
- Appropriate processes have been put in place to track and monitor the progress the apprentices are making in their P&T training. This is underpinned by an e-portfolio system for the P&T training, to track and display clearly the overall progress being made by the apprentices in their learning and in their individual units. The processes should include the tracking and monitoring of the progress being made by those apprentices undertaking any of the essential skills qualifications required.
- The apprentices would benefit further from increased signposting to career and progression pathways within the health and social care sector, and awareness-raising around the progression pathways to further education and training.
- The roles and responsibilities of staff delivering the contract have been defined clearly and understood to date. However, imminent changes to the management structure and subsequent tutor deployment require that the emerging roles and responsibilities are clear moving forward.
- The self-evaluation processes in place need to be revised and strengthened further. The broad areas which require improvement have been recognised, informed by the baseline inspection visit. However, the actions identified to promote improvement are currently too low-level and operational and need to be more strategic. A more effective quality improvement plan needs to be developed, with clear identification of the actions to be taken to address the areas for improvement, including the use of more specific, time-bound targets against which progress can be measured.
- Employers value the programme for the development of their staff's confidence, knowledge and skills in important areas such as providing a safe, caring environment, dispensing medication, providing personal care, delivery of person-centred planning, and improved communication. Employers who inspectors spoke with reported that for most apprentices, the programme is preparing them well for new or enhanced roles in the workplace.

Safeguarding

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding apprentices reflect broadly current legislation and practice.

The organisation, however, needs to:

- develop further the safeguarding policy and procedures, to include the categories of abuse for both child protection and adult safeguarding; and
- develop discrete staff and apprentice codes of conduct and e-safety policies.

Overall effectiveness

At the time of the inspection, and in the areas evaluated, Steer needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the apprentices.

The areas for improvement are to:

- Address, as a priority, the lack of provision for those apprentices requiring the essential skills qualifications of literacy and/or numeracy.
- Develop and implement as a matter of urgency, an essential skills policy, with clear roles and responsibilities and models of timely delivery for all of the essential skills.
- Continue to increase recruitment to the apprenticeship training programme.
- Implement the new management arrangements, ensuring that roles and responsibilities are clear moving forward.
- Develop further the quality improvement planning processes, to include more effective action planning, with more sharply focused actions and targets set to ensure that the key areas for improvement are addressed in a timely and impactful manner.

The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

Appendix 1

A. Programme Registrations

Table 1 – Current registrations by programme

Programme	Number of registrations at level 2	% of total registrations	Number of registrations at level 3	% of total registrations
Health and Social Care	11	48%	15	52%

B. Methodology and evidence base

ETI inspectors observed two learning and teaching sessions (both online) and met with six apprentices in focus groups. The inspectors also had discussions with two employers and met with key staff involved in the delivery of the programme. Samples of the apprentices' work, personal training plans and online portfolios, and tutors' course reviews were examined. Apprentices and staff had the opportunity to complete a confidential questionnaire. The inspection was also informed by the organisation's quality improvement planning processes and associated documentation, including the organisation's self-evaluation report.

ETI's Inspection and [Self-Evaluation Framework for Work-based Learning](#) is available on the ETI website.

C. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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%

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the organisation:

The organisation has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.

The organisation demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.

The organisation needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

The organisation needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

Programme(s)/essential skills/P&T area outcomes

The ETI use the following performance levels:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

Safeguarding

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the arrangements for safeguarding:

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding the trainees and/or apprentices reflect current legislation and practice.

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding the trainees and/or apprentices reflect broadly current legislation and practice. The organisation, however, needs to: ...

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding the trainees and/or apprentices are unsatisfactory. < Insert detail >. The ETI will return to the organisation within six working weeks to monitor and report on progress in addressing the safeguarding issues which have been identified.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2023

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the [ETI website](#)

Follow us on  [@ETI_news](#)  [@ETInews](#)  InsPIRE