



Education and Training
Inspectorate

ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in
Global Horizon Skills Limited

Report of an Inspection
in January 2019



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

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1. Context

Global Horizon Skills Limited (Global) is a private limited company, based in Omagh, providing privately and government funded training programmes across Northern Ireland (NI). It is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the ApprenticeshipsNI programme. At the time of the inspection, 138 apprentices at level 2 and 3 were registered across the professional and technical areas of customer service, food and drink industry skills, hospitality, and providing financial services. Global has previously recruited apprentices to the professional and technical areas of business administration, creative and digital media, management, professional cookery, retail, team leading and warehousing and storage; at the time of the inspection, there were no apprentices registered in these areas. Planning is in train to recruit apprentices to active leisure and electrical power training programmes.

The organisation is managed by two directors, three senior managers and five middle manager/support officers. Four full-time tutors and 33 associate part-time tutors support the delivery of the directed training for the apprenticeship programmes. The apprentices' directed training is delivered on their employer's premises, either in group training or one-to-one sessions.

Only a small number of the apprentices have additional learning support needs. A majority (50%) of them entered their programme with four or more GSCE passes at grades A* to C or equivalent, including English and mathematics. A minority (20%) of the apprentices hold a level 3 qualification or higher on entry to their programme, especially in providing financial services where a majority have at least a level 3 qualification.

2. Views of apprentices

As part of the evaluation of Global's arrangements for care, guidance and support and for safeguarding young people and adults at risk, 30 of the apprentices took the opportunity to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, and a few of the returns contained additional written comments. The returns show that almost all (97%) of the apprentices who responded were positive about their training experiences and reported that it caters well for their needs. They report that they are well-supported by the staff and that they feel safe and secure.

In addition, inspectors met with 36 apprentices, in focus groups, from across the provision. The apprentices report that the training is tailored well to meet their individual needs and that the staff are approachable, encouraging and proactive in supporting them to achieve to their potential.

3. Focus of the inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all learners, the inspection linked internal and external approaches to evaluate the:

- outcomes for learners;
- quality of provision; and
- effectiveness of the leadership and management.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Outcomes for learners	Very good
Quality of provision	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good

Overall quality of the programmes inspected		
Programme	Proportion of registrations	Performance level
ApprenticeshipsNI	100%	Very good

Overall quality of the professional and technical areas inspected ¹ and the essential skills provision	
Essential skills	Very good
Food and drink industry skills	Very good
Providing financial services	Good

KEY FINDINGS

Strengths:

- The good to very good standards of work attained by the apprentices, including for most of them, a notable development of professional and technical skills for new or enhanced roles in the workplace.
- The good retention (76%) and outstanding achievement rates, along with the very good outcomes attained by the apprentices in the essential skills, particularly at level 2.
- The increasing confidence of the apprentices who engage positively and enthusiastically in the training and development with a view to improving their career progression opportunities.
- The flexible curriculum 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.
- The very good quality of most of the learning, teaching and training observed.
- The very good quality and impact of the leadership and management at all levels, particularly the clear ambition and commitment to bringing about continuous improvement.

¹ A representative sample of professional and technical areas, agreed with the organisation, was selected for inspection.

- The effective development of links and partnerships with a wide range of employers that is underpinned by a shared commitment to the provision of high quality training for the apprentices.
- The very good quality of the provision in the essential skills and in food and drink industry skills, and the good quality of the provision in providing financial services.

Areas for improvement:

- The further refinement of the quality improvement planning process, particularly to underpin more systematic development and sustaining of best practice at course-team level.
- The communication arrangements with a few of the employers to ensure that the scheduling of the apprentices' training is more consistent.

5. Outcomes for learners

The standards of the professional and technical skills and knowledge attained by the apprentices range from good to very good; overall, they are mostly very good. Most of them make very good progress in the development of their occupational skills and professional practice for new or enhanced roles in the workplace; particularly for a significant minority of the apprentices who commence their training with no formal qualifications.

In food and drink, for example, the apprentices develop a clear understanding of the relevant food safety legislation and are able to carry out food temperature checks and log information accurately in line with the employers' procedures. In the food and drink retail environment, the apprentices are able to display and present a wide range of food products in order to maximise sales and to meet effectively customer expectations. In addition, the level 3 apprentices are developing well their supervisory roles and functions; they understand well, for example, the application of employment law, personal development of team members, effective communication strategies and how to motivate staff and manage conflict.

In providing financial services, the apprentices develop well their communication and analytical skills. They are able to, for example, establish and maintain positive relationships with colleagues and customers in order to achieve optimal and workable solutions. They can analyse and prioritise confidently a wide range of information and data to good effect when dealing with customers' needs. They also develop a sound understanding of the practice and legislation relating to the financial services they provide.

In the essential skills, the apprentices demonstrate good or better standards of work; they engage positively and make good progress in their learning. In numeracy they can carry out occupationally-related calculations with increased flexibility and confidence, including complex problem-solving. In literacy they develop well their oral and written communication skills. They are articulate and are able to establish effective communication channels with their peers, supervisors and customers, including in challenging circumstances. The standard of the work presented in the apprentices' portfolios varies from good to very good; mostly, the written work is presented clearly, comprising well-structured coherent text. On occasions, however, the written responses in their vocational work are overly brief and there is limited evidence of a deeper understanding and of extended learning where the skills and knowledge are transferred and applied confidently to other workplace contexts.

The achievement rate for the last three years is outstanding; all of the apprentices who complete their apprenticeship training achieve all of the targeted qualifications. Over the same period, the outcomes in the essential skills are very good; all of the apprentices achieve their targeted qualifications, with a majority (73%) of them achieving at level 2.

The apprentices make very good progress in their learning; the pace of the learning and training is matched well to their ability and prior achievements. They are encouraged and enabled to complete their qualification, particularly at level 2, at an appropriately brisk pace. Most of the apprentices develop a range of new occupational skills and knowledge which underpin well their professional practice in the workplace. They also increase their self-confidence and motivation to progress to higher level education and training programmes.

The average retention rate across the ApprenticeshipsNI programmes, over the last three years, is good at 76%. Over this period, it is noteworthy that the average retention rate has improved steadily from 63% to 81%. For 2017/18, it is consistently high at just over 90%. While all of the apprentices retain their employment on completion of their apprenticeship, progression from level 2 to level 3 is too low at 41%. Importantly, Global recognises that this needs to be increased and is proactively monitoring and promoting, where possible, opportunities for progression to level 3.

In the workplace the apprentices are improving and applying well their wider skills and personal capabilities. They are able to work effectively in teams, take initiative to problem-solve and are able to self-manage their learning and development. Most of the apprentices demonstrate a positive disposition to learning, an increased self-confidence to progress in their professional development and to take on increased and more complex work roles.

6. Quality of provision

While Global offers a broad range of apprenticeship programmes across a number of professional and technical areas, including in priority skills areas, at the time of the inspection over 90% of the recruitment was in just two areas. The organisation reports that ongoing marketing and planning is in place to increase recruitment to the other areas; it will be important that this work continues to be taken forward with some urgency. The apprenticeship training programmes are largely designed in close collaboration with employers in order to ensure that the programme content and delivery are matched well to the employers' workforce development needs and priorities, and to the job roles of the apprentices. In addition, key industry-relevant enhancements are incorporated into the programmes in order to tailor more closely the training outcomes with the needs of the industry. This includes, for example, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) for food and drink apprentices and the Chartered Insurance Institute (CII) qualification in providing financial services.

A key strength of the provision is the flexible delivery of the training programmes which is adapted well to the apprentices' and employers' work flow priorities. In the best practice, mostly in the larger employers, the training is delivered in well-resourced training rooms and, as often as possible, in a group setting to facilitate and stimulate discursive learning opportunities. On a few occasions, however, the quality of the learning space provided by the employer is not good enough; more care is needed to ensure that adequate accommodation is available in order to facilitate better learning. Most of the training sessions are delivered regularly and in a timely manner; this includes timetabling to suit the apprentices' various work shift patterns, including evenings and early mornings. Communication regarding the dates and times of sessions is, however, not consistent enough; a small number of the apprentices report that they are not fully aware of the make-up of their training schedule.

The apprentices' personal training plans and progress reviews are mostly of a very good quality. The plans are comprehensive; they set out clear milestones against which progression is systematically monitored and reviewed. In particular, the progress reviews capture key data along with well-structured apprentice and employer feedback, which is collated and analysed rigorously to inform planning and ongoing quality improvement. Robust quarterly case-conference reviews identify and address any emerging quality issues across the provision. Consequently, any supportive interventions with the apprentices are timely and well-informed. In contrast, for a small number of the apprentices, the reviews are not tailored sufficiently; in these instances, the reviews are too generic and lack distinctive evaluations in regard to the progress of the individual apprentices.

Most (89%) of the learning, teaching and training is either good or very good, with 78% of the sessions observed being evaluated as very good. In the vocational sessions, the learning is well-paced and characterised by: good levels of learner engagement; effective use of digital resources; well-targeted content that is linked closely to job roles; and effective use of questioning. In the essential skills sessions, the quality of the learning, teaching and training is consistently very good. The sessions are well planned and matched closely to the individual needs of the apprentices; a good range of strategies are used to engage the apprentices well in their learning, including the effective use of information and learning technology (ILT) to enhance learning and development. Notably, the learning and development of the apprentices' literacy and numeracy skills are linked meaningfully to relevant workplace and professional and technical area contexts.

While the apprentices are provided with regular feedback on their overall progress, marking for improvement is underdeveloped across the provision. There is a need for a more structured, consistent approach to formative assessment in order to inform future learning and to address, for example, recurring spelling and grammatical errors in the apprentices' written work. Assessment opportunities for framework qualifications are well planned, including good levels of additional support where required; in providing financial services, a useful smart phone application supports well examination preparation for many of the apprentices and is valued by them.

An effective programme of careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) provides the apprentices with access to useful information and advice at key stages in their training. This includes information on curriculum vitae building and the progression pathways available within their current employment and beyond. Most of them are aware of the progression route to a level 3 apprenticeship programme and of the necessary workplace experiences to enable them to complete successfully the level 3 framework. An online resource, including links to relevant websites, also provides the apprentices with self-directed opportunities to avail of relevant careers information. While most of the apprentices are aware of immediate progression routes, more needs to be done to broaden their awareness of a wider range of potential career opportunities, and in particular any progression opportunities to level 4/5 provision in further education.

The arrangements for the care and welfare impacts positively on the apprentices' learning, development and outcomes achieved. The managers and tutors demonstrate a strong commitment to meeting the needs of the apprentices and links have been established with an appropriate range of external agencies to support their care and welfare. Where necessary, Global signposts the apprentices to appropriate specialised external support agencies, including for example, counselling and bereavement support. A small number of the apprentices are provided with additional one-to-one support to improve their access to the training and learning. Notably, the tutors are sensitive to the apprentices' individual needs and work hard, in partnership with employers, to overcome any barriers to effective learning, including the anxiety that often comes when returning to education and training as an adult learner.

While the tutors are proactive and diligent in providing one-to-one support for the small number of apprentices with additional learning support needs, the support is not always matched well enough to the apprentices' particular needs. Going forward, the organisation should consider the provision of continuous professional development, as appropriate, for staff to develop further their knowledge of the learning approaches and strategies in order to meet better any specific additional learning support needs of apprentices.

7. Leadership and management

The organisation has a clear vision for what it does along with a strong commitment to providing flexible, tailored and high quality apprenticeship programmes that increase the apprentices' access to learning and development that is aligned well to their work roles, and to the workforce development needs of employers. A well-considered team of managers and support officers, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, work hard and to good effect to construct and implement management functions and systems that are supporting well a quality provision and the ongoing development of the apprenticeship programmes.

Appropriately, Global has invested in a business development team to build trusted and valued training arrangements with employers in order to provide bespoke apprenticeships. As a result, well-designed apprenticeships have been established with a good range of employers across NI; these include large employers that make a significant contribution to the regional economy. The team work collaboratively with employers, and with due diligence, to design training programmes with content and delivery arrangements that meet well both the workforce development priorities of employers and the learning needs of the apprentices; this also ensures the delivery of the essential skills to complement the vocational training.

A broad staffing complement of tutors with relevant industry expertise and experience support well the delivery of the apprenticeship programme. The pool of part-time associate tutors with specific occupational skills and knowledge ensures that the training is matched well to the various specialist pathways within the apprenticeship programmes inspected. Most of the tutors deployed at the time of the inspection held pedagogical qualifications relevant to this phase; two are currently completing the Ulster University Certificate in Training. While specialist lead tutors manage the development of the curriculum to ensure learning resources and assessment outcomes are to an appropriately high standard, there is a need to strengthen the arrangements for the continuing professional development to ensure that all of the tutors maintain their industry expertise.

A team of managers works effectively to establish and maintain systems and procedures to underpin effective management and administration of the apprenticeship programme. The recently upgraded management information system (MIS) is well-structured, robust and accessible by all staff; it is used well to record, track and inform the operational management of the apprenticeships programmes. Key data and information is collated and monitored regularly to inform the management functions and the decision-making process. In particular, well-focused quarterly team meetings, involving all training staff, make effective use of the MIS to evaluate the progress of each apprentice and inform any remedial interventions. This approach ensures that the apprentice progress reviews are holistic with well-targeted actions that take full account of their progress across all aspects of the apprenticeship, importantly, including the essential skills.

The organisation demonstrates a high level of commitment to building steadily its capacity to self-evaluate and to plan for quality improvement. While a regular cycle of peer observations is used to promote improvement in the quality of the learning, teaching and training, a more focused approach is necessary in order to underpin a more consistent use of a broader range of learning and teaching approaches. The regular progress reviews involving in-depth

feedback from both the apprentices and their employers, tracked through a matrix of performance indicators and ragged for risk, also supports well the quality improvement process. Key performance data is used to good effect to monitor and inform action planning to bring about improvements in the apprentices' learning outcomes, particularly the rates of retention. Overall, the quality improvement planning is robust enough to bring about sustained improvement, although further refinement is needed at course-team level. In particular, course teams need to identify more clearly the strengths and areas for improvement relating directly to their professional and technical area, including the associated actions required for sustained improvement.

8. Safeguarding

On the basis of the evidence provided during the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding young people and adults at risk reflect broadly current legislation and practice. However, the organisation needs to:

- review, rationalise and contemporise its policies and procedures for safeguarding young people and adults who may be at risk to reflect the local context; and
- as a matter of urgency, appoint and provide appropriate training for an Adult Safeguarding Champion.

9. Overall effectiveness

Global Horizon Skills Limited demonstrates a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interests of all the apprentices. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.

Programme registrations

Table 1 - Current registrations by programme

Programme	Numbers of registrations	% of total registrations
ApprenticeshipsNI	138	100%

Table 2 - Current registrations by professional and technical area

Professional and technical area	Number of apprentices	% of total registrations
Customer service	*	*
Hospitality	8	6%
Food and drink industry skills	102	74%
Providing financial services	26	19%

*less than five registrations

Table 3 - Qualifications of current trainees/apprentices on entry to their programme

Programme	ApprenticeshipsNI (%)
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C including English and mathematics	50%
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C	56%
(%) of learners with GCSE English or equivalent at Grades A*-C	70%
(%) of learners with GCSE mathematics or equivalent at Grades A*-C	60%
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-G	55%
(%) of learners with no prior level 1 or level 2 qualifications	42%

B. Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website www.etini.gov.uk.

A team of ETI inspectors observed 28 apprentices in eight directed training sessions, visited 32 apprentices in their workplace and interviewed 36 in focus group meetings. Discussions were held with 15 employers. Samples of the apprentices' work and personal training plans, and tutors' schemes of work and lesson plans were examined. The organisation's self-evaluation report and other relevant documentation were also scrutinised.

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%

Performance levels

The ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on outcomes for learners, quality of provision and on leadership and management.

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

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 areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

Key Performance Indicators and Definitions	
Retention	The percentage of enrolments measured over the full duration of their programme.
Achievement	The percentage of participants who completed their targeted individual outcomes.
Progression	The percentage of successful completers who achieved positive progression.

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