



*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**

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-Up Inspection Visit

following a

Longitudinal Inspection of Training for Success and Apprenticeships Northern Ireland

A4e Ltd

May 2010

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF A4e LTD, BELFAST, BT15 3HN

The inspection in February 2009 highlighted strengths in: the commitment and dedication of the staff; the links to a good range of local, regional and national employers; the high level of motivation and enthusiasm demonstrated by almost all of the learners and apprentices on the Training for Success (TfS) and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes; and the excellent success rates for those learners and apprentices who complete their programme.

The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- the inadequate work placement opportunities for those on the TfS programme;
- the provision of a more coherent and standardised provision for the TfS programme across all centres;
- the inadequate provision for essential skills for those apprentices on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme; and
- the narrow range of training and learning approaches on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme.

In the interval since the inspection, the following actions which affect the work of A4e have taken place:

- the restructuring of the management team which included the appointment of a new Head of Operations, a Regional Quality Verifier specific to Northern Ireland and a Training Manager to support the development of training and learning;
- the appointment of additional professional and technical tutor assessors to provide an appropriate staffing complement;
- the appointment of ten essential skills tutors, including an Essential Skills Co-ordinator to provide curriculum support and to quality assure the provision; and
- a complete withdrawal from the provision of the TfS programme.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) carried out two interim follow-up visits, and a follow-up inspection in May 2010.

The original improvement plan produced by the organisation in response to the inspection findings was of an inadequate quality and was adjusted appropriately in light of the feedback given by the Inspectorate.

The organisation's development plan has been adjusted in light of the inspection findings. The development plan meets the statutory requirements as set out by the Department for Employment and Learning.

The following are the most important improvements since the longitudinal inspection:

- the outstanding leadership and management to effect significant improvement in the quality of the ApprenticeshipsNI provision;
- the very good quality of the essential skills provision including the much improved achievement rates across all three essential skills;

- the very good provision for training and learning which includes the effective use of Information and Learning Technologies and group training sessions;
- the provision of a very good range of training and learning resources;
- the very good pastoral support and careers information advice and guidance for the apprentices; and
- the very good quality assurance arrangements across all aspects of the provision.

The area that requires further development is:

- the planning for opportunities for staff to share and further embed good practice.

CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the quality of training provided by A4e is now very good. The organisation is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the apprentices; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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