

EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE

WORK-BASED LEARNING INSPECTION

Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI
Provision in Bryson Energy (formerly Bryson
FutureSkills)

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in May 2022



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Department of Education
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Follow-up inspection to Bryson Energy (formerly Bryson Futureskills)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an inspection of Bryson Energy (formerly Bryson FutureSkills) in December 2018¹ when the quality of provision for the professional and technical areas of Construction and Retail were evaluated as having important areas for improvement.

Construction

The key areas for improvement in the quality of the construction provision were the need to:

- review the timetabling of the construction provision to ensure there is sufficient resource and planning in place and to improve the learning environment in the sub-contractor's premises to ensure the trainees have access to suitably high quality provision;
- improve the quality of the learning, teaching, and training, including sufficient stretch and challenge, higher expectations and more effective management of the behaviour of the trainees;
- fully and rigorously implement, as a matter of urgency, holistic tracking across all of the programmes to ensure consistent and effective monitoring of the progress made by the trainees; and
- implement a robust action plan to address the key issues identified and to support ongoing quality improvement, particularly in the standards achieved and the progression rate to higher level programmes or employment.

Retail

The key areas for improvement in the quality of the retail provision were the need to:

- improve the quality of the learning, teaching and training, including the use of more meaningful information and learning technology to extend the overly narrow range of learning strategies and curriculum resources used, and to provide more opportunities for the trainees to better consolidate and apply knowledge and skills across a broader range of retail contexts;
- improve the engagement with employers to address the overly low work-experience placement rate (33%) and provide a broader and more appropriate range of retail work-experience opportunities for the trainees, particularly the level 2 trainees, in order to further develop their occupational and employability skills in a more timely manner; and

¹[Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in Bryson FutureSkills \(etini.gov.uk\)](https://www.etini.gov.uk/Training-for-Success-and-ApprenticeshipsNI-Provision-in-Bryson-FutureSkills)

- improve the quality improvement planning process to identify more clearly the specific actions to bring about improvement, particularly in relation to the quality of the learning, teaching and training.

The ETI carried out interim follow-up inspection visits in November 2019 and February 2022 and a follow-up inspection in May 2022.

In the interval since the original inspection, the following key actions or changes which affect the overall work of the organisation have taken place:

- Bryson FutureSkills has been re-constituted as Bryson Energy, including contract novation in December 2021.
- The Play Resource Warehouse and Play Resource Trading were acquired by Bryson Energy in May 2021.
- A new Director and two Assistant Directors were appointed in April 2019 and additional staff have been recruited to a range of important supporting roles and responsibilities. These include: apprenticeships and employment engagement, emotional health and wellbeing, community engagement, placement support, an additional employability and personal development tutor, and a caretaker/minibus driver.
- The organisation has played a key role in a range of stakeholder fora including the DfE Advisory and Oversight Group, DfE Apprenticeships and Youth Training Strategic Advisory Forum, DfE Design Team for Entry Level, Skills Belfast, Belfast City Council Employability and Skills Stakeholder forum.
- Key support roles have been identified with a view to extending the links and partnerships with a wider range of employers in order to increase the work placement rates for all of the trainees and the low recruitment across the ApprenticeshipsNI programmes.
- Bryson Energy is investing in providing support to enable all trainees to secure long-term, steady placements, which are flexible enough to accommodate the additional social, emotional and health needs of the trainees.
- The processes for tracking and monitoring the progress made by all of the trainees and apprentices has been systematically embedded across all aspects of their programme.

Views of trainees, apprentices and staff

- The trainees who responded to the questionnaires (49%) and the trainees and apprentices who were spoken to in a focus group, in directed training and in the workplace reported that they find their training programme both interesting and challenging. Almost all feel well supported in the organisation, and report that they can talk to their tutors and contribute to class discussions. They also reported that they are well informed about how to stay, and feel safe and secure in the organisation and the workplace.

- All of the staff who responded to the questionnaire (50%) reported that the organisation supports them well to deliver face-to-face learning and that they know who to go to if they have a problem or concern. They all reported that there are good channels of communication and that overall they are happy with their experiences of working in the organisation.

Key Findings

The quality of provision in construction is now good.

- The organisation has appropriately reviewed the timetabling arrangements and reorganised the class groups to provide a more appropriate balance of class sizes and levels.
- The sub-contractor has relocated to new premises which provide an improved learning environment to support the delivery of the programmes. Investment has been made to purchase additional construction tools, materials and equipment along with equipment to facilitate technology enhanced learning.
- In the directed training sessions, an enhanced range of teaching strategies are deployed well to engage the trainees and apprentices to promote effective learning, with the quality of the learning, teaching and training now being effective.
- The sub-contractor continues to have challenges retaining and recruiting tutors. A new bricklaying tutor was recruited and, more recently, a substitute tutor has been promptly put in place due to the very recent departure of the joinery tutor. To support the new tutors, an external mentor has been appointed to provide pedagogic support.
- A tracking system has been implemented to monitor the progress the trainees and apprentices which is regularly updated and shared. Improved arrangements have been introduced for sharing of information with the sub-contractor on the trainees' barriers to learning. As a result, the number of trainees who progressed to the ApprenticeshipsNI programme has increased significantly.
- An action plan has been implemented and is updated to address the areas for improvement. The plan needs to be strengthened further to capture the impact of the actions taken and to include targets for improvement in order to ensure that the progress made to date is sustained.

The quality of provision in retail is now good.

- The quality of the learning, teaching and training sessions observed during the two interim visits and follow-up visit were effective. These were characterised by high levels of pastoral care and learner engagement; the use of effective questioning and active learning strategies, including good use of information and learning technology which is used well to develop trainees' knowledge and skills. Almost all of the trainees remained on task for the full duration of the lessons and contributed well to group work and discussions.

- Effective planning and improved resources have been developed and introduced into the curriculum resulting in enhanced quality of the learning for trainees. Additionally, a timetable of industry visits and guest speakers has provided a wider range of opportunities for the trainees to better consolidate and apply their knowledge and skills across a broader range of retail contexts.
- The organisation has increased employer engagement with the addition of new placement officer posts since the inspection, with a view to increase work placements. In addition, there is a collaborative arrangement with a disability support provider who appoint employment officers to support the trainees who are coded with a disability to progress to a work-placement experience. Progress in providing work placements has been impeded by COVID, but has improved from the original inspection, to 66% overall for the level 1 trainees² which includes those who are currently on placement or have been on placement previously. It is noteworthy that work placements for these learners, most of whom have high level and significant complex needs, is challenging and often leads to multiple placements for some learners.
- Bryson Energy has been proactive in developing and improving the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning process for retail to identify more clearly the specific actions to bring about improvement with improved use of data and relevant information. However, the quality improvement plan needs to demonstrate more clearly how key areas are improving, such as teaching and learning and progress in relation to work placements.

Conclusion

The provision in the professional and technical areas of construction and retail is now good.

To continue to sustain and improve further the provision in these professional and technical areas, Bryson Energy needs to:

- continue to provide continuity of training in construction to ensure that the trainees and apprentices successfully complete and achieve their qualifications within the set timeframes; and
- support the trainees in retail to develop their employability skills and continue to engage with employers to ensure appropriate work placement opportunities are available and sustained by the trainees; and
- strengthen further the quality improvement planning process to include specific and measurable targets for improvement and to capture the impact of the actions taken, in order to ensure that the progress made to date is sustained and the provision continues to improve.

The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.

² There are no longer any level 2 retail trainees.

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