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*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



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Inspection of Apprenticeships NI

Westcare Business Services

Inspected: November 2008

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A number of quantitative terms are used in the report. In percentages, the terms correspond as follows:

More than 90%	-	almost/nearly all
75%-90%	-	most
50%-74%	-	a majority
30%-49%	-	a significant minority
10%-29%	-	a minority
Less than 10%	-	very few/a small minority

Grading System

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) has a 6-point grading scale to as set out below.

GRADE	DESCRIPTOR
1	Outstanding
2	Very good
3	Good. Areas for improvement which organisation has the capacity to address.
4	Satisfactory but with areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed.
5	Inadequate
6	Unsatisfactory

1. **CONTEXT**

1.1 Westcare Business Services (Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSTC)) has been contracted by the Department for Employment and Learning to supply training under ApprenticeshipsNI for level 2 apprentices in health and social care and administration in the geographical area covered by the Trust. Westcare Business Services is the Training and Development unit which provided shared services to the three Trusts in the Western Board.

1.2 Following the Review of Public Administration [RPA] the Altnagelvin, Foyle and Sperrin Lakeland Trusts were merged together on 1 April 2007, into the new Western Health and Social Care Trust. The Trust is one of the largest employers in Northern Ireland and is the main provider of health and social care in the Derry, Fermanagh, Limavady, Omagh and Strabane District Council areas. The Trust employs around 12,500 people in the delivery of health and social care to a population of 290,000 people.

2. **PROVISION**

2.1 Western Health and Social Care Trust provides training for 18 apprentices, aged between 23-50. In view of the structural changes the Trust has undergone in recent years through RPA, ApprenticeshipsNI is being introduced gradually. Currently, no apprentices are recruited in administration. Almost all of the health and social care apprentices are employees of the WHSTC. One is employed by a specialist mental health organisation from the voluntary sector. The apprentices work in a variety of hospital-based, domiciliary, day-care and residential settings across the geographical area covered by the Trust. They work with a range of client-groups, adults with mental health and long-term psychiatric problems, elderly people, looked-after children and young people, and adults with learning disabilities. Their job-roles include: care assistants, nursing assistants, domiciliary care workers, and support workers. Three of the apprentices had achieved at least three General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) passes at grades A*-C on entry to the programme, the majority of the remainder hold no formal qualifications. Only three of the trainees have a grade C in English and mathematics.

2.2 The framework for the level 2 apprenticeship in health and social care requires apprentices to achieve the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 2 in health and social care, a relevant technical certificate, and the essential skills of communication, application of number (AON) and information and communications technology (ICT), at level 1.

2.3 The apprentices spend one day a fortnight in directed training, at either the Gransha Hospital in Derry or the Tyrone County Hospital in Omagh, depending on their geographical location. Directed training and assessment are provided by one of the 12 NVQ tutor / assessors from the Learning and Development Unit of WHSTC. The Learning and Development Unit is approved by a range of awarding bodies to deliver professional and technical qualifications from level 1 to post-graduate level. The unit is managed by the Director of Human Resources, and the ApprenticeshipsNI programme is managed by the Vocational Training Manager. Staff from the unit provide a range of management development and other training programmes, including NVQ training at level 3 and recently, level 4, in health and social care, for the Trust's own employees.

2.4 The taught provision for the essential skills of communication and AON for the ApprenticeshipsNI programme is supplied for Westcare by staff from Global Horizon Skills Limited. The provision for the essential skill of ICT is supplied by the Trust's own trainers.

2.5 Prior to the inspection, all of the apprentices completed a questionnaire, which provided them with the opportunity to comment on the arrangements for pastoral care and on the quality of their training experiences. The outcomes of the questionnaire demonstrated that the apprentices were very satisfied with their training and valued in particular the support provided by their assessor / tutors. The Vocational Training Manager also completed a questionnaire on pastoral care arrangements and policies and procedures for the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

3. THE INSPECTION

3.1 The inspection focused on the quality of training and standards achieved by the participants on the ApprenticeshipNI programme. Discussions were held with senior managers from the Trust, the vocational training manager, workplace supervisors, tutors, assessors and internal verifiers and apprentices. The majority of the apprentices were inspected in directed training and were also visited in the workplace. Samples of the apprentices' written work, including vocational portfolios, were also examined.

4. MAIN FINDINGS

In the area inspected, the quality of the education / training provided by this organisation is outstanding: the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The organisation has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self- improvement.

4.1 The main strengths are the:

- excellent leadership and management, and the commitment of staff at all levels to the promotion of continuous improvement;
- high levels of motivation and enthusiasm for their training displayed by the apprentices, and their developing levels of self-confidence;
- very good occupational standards achieved by the apprentices;
- excellent quality of the directed and workplace training;
- very good planning to meet the essential skills needs of all of the apprentices; and
- excellent careers advice and guidance, and opportunities for apprentices to progress to further technical or professional education and training.

4.2 GRADES

	Grade
Overall Grade	1
Contributory grades:	
Leadership and Management	1
Achievements and Standards	1
Provision for Learning	2

PART TWO

OVERALL QUALITY OF PROVISION

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.1 The leadership and management of the ApprenticeshipsNI programme is excellent at all levels of the organisation. The Vocational Training Manager provides strong strategic direction for administrative staff, tutors and assessors. The programme is well resourced, with a good complement of highly qualified staff. All of the staff display a strong commitment to their work and there is a well developed culture of self-evaluation. The quality assurance procedures include direct observation of teaching, training and learning. They are effective in implementing rigorous quality improvement arrangements across the ApprenticeshipsNI programme.

5.2 Excellent relationships, characterised by mutual respect, have been established between and among staff, apprentices, workplace mentors, clients and patients. There are effective channels of communication between staff at all levels within the organisation. Very good relationships have been established with a wide range of professionals both within the Trust, and from a wide range of relevant external agencies, and the training programme benefits significantly from access to this breadth and wealth of professional and technical expertise.

6. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

6.1 Almost all of the apprentices achieve very good standards in their work with clients and patients. They are highly motivated and report that their confidence has increased significantly as a result of their training. All of the apprentices are developing a good understanding of the value base that underpins good practice in social care; they have an increased awareness of the individualised needs and preferences of their clients and patients. As a result of excellent training on equality and diversity issues, the apprentices are beginning to explore and challenge their own prejudices and assumptions and examine their working practices more critically.

6.2 The apprentices are developing a good understanding of relevant policies, procedures and legislation and can identify the relevant codes of practice or standards which apply in their own workplaces. Whilst the majority of the apprentices had only limited experience in the use of information and communications technology prior to commencing training, they are developing well both their confidence and competence in this area. The majority can generate and save documents, send e-mails and search the internet for information to inform their assignments.

6.3 The procedures for initial assessment are rigorous and robust. Apprentices strengths and areas for development, including their individual learning styles, are clearly defined. The outcomes of assessments are used effectively to plan individualised learning and development programmes, identify appropriate optional units matched well to their job-roles, and provide appropriate support to address additional learning needs.

7. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

7.1 The planning for the design, delivery, and evaluation of teaching, training and learning and for the provision of care, support and guidance is excellent, and is effective in promoting coherent training experiences across the Apprenticeship programme. Planning for each of the training sessions is thorough and detailed, and an excellent range of training and learning approaches, including appropriate use of information and learning technology, is deployed by tutors.

7.2 Western Health and Social Care Trust has developed a clear and coherent programme for all of the apprentices, which integrates fully the technical certificate, NVQs and the relevant essential skills. In addition, the training programme has been designed to take full account of the induction standards for social care workers produced by the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) and the National Health Service's Knowledge and Skills Framework for staff working at this level. The apprentices are following an appropriate and challenging programme which has been designed effectively to enable them to grow in confidence and develop their occupational skills. The well-structured training programme has been designed with precision, to optimise the integration of directed and work place training.

7.3 All of the tutor/assessors are professionally qualified nurses or social workers, on secondment from the Trust. They have an excellent understanding of contemporary practice in health and social care, and have very good opportunities to engage in continuous professional development. All of the tutor / assessors are currently undertaking training in the essential skill of numeracy at level 2. Planning for the delivery of the essential skills of literacy and numeracy is well developed and the taught provision is due to commence soon. Excellent use is made of a wide range of guest speakers from WHSCT and from external organisations to complement the considerable expertise of the tutor / assessors.

7.4 There are excellent relationships with the apprentices' employers and work based mentors, who are often their line-managers. They have been provided with a succinct overview of the programme for the year and are fully involved in the establishment of training targets across the training periods. The apprentices are visited regularly by the assessors in the workplace to review their progress and observe their performance. Some of the mentors have been trained by the Trust as work-based assessors; a minority of them have recently been trained as expert witnesses. The procedures for tracking, monitoring and evaluating apprentices' progress are systematic and very rigorous. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place in relation to the protection of Young People and Vulnerable Adults are in place.

7.5 The quality of the careers advice and guidance is excellent and impartial and informed advice, guidance and support are an integral part of the provision for all apprentices. There are excellent opportunities for apprentices to progress to further technical or professional education and training, including nurse training.

8. CONCLUSION

In the area inspected, the quality of the education / training provided by this organisation is outstanding: the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The organisation has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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