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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

Report of an Inspection

Network Personnel Magherafelt

Inspected: May 2007

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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

The statistics in this report have been supplied by the Department for Employment and Learning.

ETI is piloting a new 6-point grading scale to replace the original 4-point scale as set out below. Where grades are recorded in this report, the grade is given on both the old and the revised scales

ORIGINAL GRADE	REVISED GRADE	DESCRIPTOR
1	1	Outstanding characterised by excellence.
1	2	Consistently good; major strengths.
2	3	Important strengths in most of provision. Areas for improvement which organisation has the capacity to address.
2	4	Overall sound/satisfactory but with areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed.
3	5	A few strengths; significant areas for improvement which require prompt action.
4	6	Poor; major shortcomings which require urgent action.

PART ONE

SUMMARY

1. CONTEXT

1.1 Network Personnel is contracted by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) to provide training under the New Deal 18 to 24 and 25+ programmes in the Magherafelt Area Partnerships. Network Personnel is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Workspace Group of Companies. This organisation was established in 1985 and has a voluntary Board of Directors drawn from the local businesses, local council and community sectors. The overall Group employs 51 members of staff of which 12 are employed within Network Personnel. Network Personnel has been the Lead Partner for the New Deal consortia from the introduction of the New Deal initiative in 1998. There are presently five other members of the consortium: Magherafelt District Council, Magherafelt and Cookstown Volunteer Bureau, Draperstown After Schools Club, Ballinascreen Early Years Group, and Indicators International, although none of the five are currently active in the consortium.

1.2 The Company Training Manager is responsible for the management of all the New Deal programmes and is well supported by the New Deal Co-ordinator and the Centre Co-ordinator.

1.3 Over the last three years, figures supplied by DEL indicate that the number of leavers has increased, on the 18-24 year old option, from 15 across the period April 2003 to March 2004, to 25 in the period April 2005 to March 2006. The number of leavers on the Preparation for Employment Programme (PEP) 25+ option has remained fairly constant over the period April 2003 to March 2006, at an average of eleven.

1.4 The claimant count figures published by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) indicate that the claimant count rate in Magherafelt is 1% which is below the Northern Ireland average of 3%.

1.5 A majority of participants (50%) have no qualifications on entry to the programme. A minority (20%) of participants have achieved English and mathematics at level 2 and a small minority (10%) of participants have achieved at least four General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSEs) on entry to the programme. A minority (20%) have achieved a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 1 and a small minority have achieved a NVQ at level 2.

2. PROVISION

2.1 At the time of the inspection, there were ten participants registered with the consortium. Six participants were registered on the 18 to 24 options: four on Full-Time Education and Training (FTET), one on the Voluntary Sector option (VS) and one on the Environmental Task Force option (ETF). The remaining four participants were registered on the PEP for 25+.

2.2 The majority of participants are registered with Network Personnel. At the time of the inspection, two participants were registered with Joblink for NVQ level 2 Children's Care Learning and Development (CCLD).

2.3 Two participants on the FTET option are working towards a full NVQ at level 2 in CCLD. The remaining two participants on the FTET programme are working towards the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) and the key skill of Improving Own Learning and Performance. There are no participants registered on the Essential Skills (EST) options. Most of the participants are placed with local employers.

3. THE INSPECTION

3.1 This report is based on an inspection of the participants' practical work and written work, where appropriate.

3.2 During the inspection, a team of two inspectors visited ten participants in the workplace and one Jobsearch session was observed. No directed training sessions took place during the time of inspection.

3.3 During the inspection, approximately 90% of the participants completed a questionnaire, which provided them with the opportunity to comment on the quality of the training experiences. All respondents were happy with the provision.

4. MAIN FINDINGS

4.1 In the areas inspected, the organisation has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified minor areas for improvement which the organisation has the capacity to address.

The organisation's progress on the areas for improvement will be followed up by the District Inspector.

4.2 MAIN STRENGTHS

The main strengths are the:

- good quality of most of the work placements;
- good quality of the induction and support for the participants;
- percentage of participants moving into sustained employment at 16% and 29% on the 25+ and 18-24 options respectively, both of which are above the Northern Ireland (NI) average;
- good quality of the leadership and management;
- good standards of work in the vocational portfolios inspected; and
- good jobsearch activities which are regularly carried out.

4.3 AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The main areas for improvement are the:

- need to develop a wider range of transferable skills for a small number of participants across the range of provision;
- limited uptake of additional qualifications and the need to promote the uptake of essential skills at an appropriate level; and
- need to further embed a systematic approach to Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG).

Table of Grades

Grades	Revised Grading System	Original Grading System
Overall Grade	3	2
Contributory grades:		
Standards and Outcomes	3	2
Training and Learning	3	2
Leadership and Management	3	2

PART TWO

OVERALL QUALITY OF PROVISION

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.1 The lead partner has effective operational and administrative arrangements in place. There are regular administration meetings and the tracking and monitoring of participants' progress are good. Management consortium meetings are held on a six monthly basis to review and plan the operation of the consortium although none of the five consortium partners are currently operational.

5.2 There are good working relationships between consortium members and the consortium has good links with a range of voluntary organisations, business and industry.

5.3 There are some opportunities for participants to achieve additional qualifications including qualifications in Basic Mental Health Awareness, Manual Handling, the MIDAS driving test, Basic First Aid, Health and Safety and food hygiene certificates. However, while the lead partner is pro-active in its sourcing of additional qualifications, when requested by participants, however, the uptake is limited.

5.4 The participants are visited regularly in the workplace to review their progress. Employers are effectively involved in the setting of targets and the majority of employers comment positively on the contribution of the participants in the workplace.

5.5 The management facilitate a highly supportive, caring ethos that provides a friendly environment which encourages participants to make good progress towards their identified targets.

5.6 The CEIAG process is underdeveloped within the consortium and needs to be further embedded in a more systematic fashion across the provision.

5.7 The self-evaluation and development planning process has been mostly carried out rigorously and effectively. There is a satisfactory match between the self-evaluation report and the findings of the Education and Training Inspectorate.

6. STANDARDS AND OUTCOMES

6.1 All of the participants on the New Deal programmes are well motivated and their attendance and timekeeping are good.

6.2 The standards of all the participants' motivation and work readiness are very good across all the options. Five of the participants (50%) will progress to sustained employment.

6.3 Almost all participants were carrying out a variety of tasks in the workplace to a good standard and all have good opportunities to develop their employability skills in the workplace.

6.4 Standards of work in the CCLD vocational portfolios range from satisfactory to good. All participants had a sound understanding of the content of their training programmes and are making good progress towards the achievement of their target qualifications.

6.5 At the time of inspection, there were no participants recruited to the EST option.

6.6 During the period April 2003-September 2006, the figures provided by DEL show 37 leavers from the New Deal 25+ option with progression to sustained employment at 16%. This is slightly above the NI average of 13% across all consortia.

6.7 During the period April 2003-September 2006, the figures provided by DEL show 62 leavers from the 18-24 New Deal options with progression to sustained employment at 29%. This is slightly above the NI average of 26% across all consortia.

7. QUALITY OF TRAINING AND LEARNING

7.1 The analysis of the participants' questionnaires, completed prior to the inspection indicates that all respondents (90%) are satisfied with their training experiences.

7.2 The organisation has a strong supportive and caring ethos that provides a welcoming and helpful environment which supports all participants in their progress towards their identified targets.

7.3 Almost all the individual learning and development plans (ILDP) are tailored to the individual needs of the participants and the organisation takes appropriate action to address these needs.

7.4 There were no directed training sessions during the time of the inspection. However, one Jobsearch session was observed. The session was well planned and the quality of the learning experience was good.

7.5 The quality of the workplace training is very good or excellent for almost all of the participants and is matched effectively to their abilities, aptitudes and career goals.

PART THREE

KEY PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Network Personnel needs to revise its annual development plan to take account of the following key priorities for development:

- the promotion and support of a wider range of additional qualifications, including the uptake of the EST option, where appropriate; and
- the implementation of a formal and consistent CEIAG process within the consortium.

APPENDIX

Statistics supplied by the DEL for Network Personnel New Deal Consortium, Magherafelt.

Table 1 – 18-24

Period	Number of Leavers	Progressed to sustained employment
April 2003-September 2006	62	29%

Table 2 – 25+

Period	Number of Leavers	Progressed to sustained employment
April 2003-September 2006	37	16%

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