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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of an Inspection

**Wade Training Limited
Armagh and Craigavon New Deal
Consortia**

Inspected: October 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

PART ONE

SUMMARY

1. CONTEXT

1.1 Wade Training Limited (Wade) has been the Lead Partner for the New Deal consortia in both the Armagh and Craigavon District Council areas since the introduction of the New Deal initiative in 1998. The consortia are contracted by the Department for Employment and Learning (the Department) to provide training under the New Deal 18-24 and 25+ programmes in both the Armagh and Craigavon District Council areas.

1.2 Initially, there were eleven partners in the Armagh consortium but membership has now been reduced to three. The composition of the consortium is currently the lead partner, Wade, and two other members, the Armagh Unemployed Group and the former Armagh College of Further Education (now the Southern Area College). However, at the time of the inspection, the lead partner was the only provider with registered participants. The Craigavon consortium consisted initially of 21 partners but current membership has been reduced to three, Wade, Saint Vincent de Paul and Haven Employment and Training Limited.

1.3 Wade Training Limited has its main premises in Castle Street, Portadown, with another office in Armagh and two in Lurgan. The Programmes Director of Wade is responsible for the management of the New Deal programme in both consortia. She is supported by five development officers who oversee the operational aspects of the programme.

1.4 Figures supplied by the Department show that over the period April 2004 to March 2007, the number of New Deal leavers each year in the Armagh consortium remained virtually unchanged at 49. Over the same period, the numbers of New Deal leavers in the Craigavon consortium, increased from 74 to 114.

1.5 In both consortia, the majority (75%) of participants have little or no qualifications on entry to their programme. The minority (25%) have achieved at least four General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) qualifications at grade C or above.

1.6 The latest figures (September 2007) published by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) indicate that the claimant count rate in the Armagh area is 2.2%, which is equal to the Northern Ireland (NI) average figure. The claimant count rate in the Craigavon area is slightly higher at 2.4%.

2. PROVISION

2.1 At the time of the inspection there were 52 participants registered across both consortia, 14 in Armagh and 38 in Craigavon. Twenty participants were on the programme for 18-24 year olds, including eleven on Full-time Education and Training, three on Essential Skills Training, five on the Voluntary option and one on the Environmental Task Force Option. Thirty-two participants were registered on the programme for adults aged 25 and over, 24 on the Preparation for Employment Programme, six on Education and Training Opportunities and two on Essential Skills Training.

2.2 The majority of participants are registered with the lead partner. At the time of the inspection, Wade had 44 registered participants, 18 on the Preparation for Employment Programme, eleven on Full-time Education and Training, six on Education and Training Opportunities, three on the Voluntary Option, three on Essential Skills Training for 18-24 year olds, two on Essential Skills Training for 25+ and one on the Environmental Task Force Option.

2.3 The remaining eight participants were registered with Saint Vincent De Paul in Craigavon, six on the Preparation for Employment Programme and two on the Voluntary option.

2.4 Five of the participants on Full-time Education and Training and four of those on the Education and Training Opportunities are working towards a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in children's care, learning and development (CCLD), (seven at level 2 and two at level 3), and five participants on Full-time Education and Training are working towards NVQ level 2 units in retail operations. One participant is working towards the NVQ level 2 in administration. The five participants registered on Essential Skills Training (three on the option for 18-24 year olds and two on the 25+), are targeting appropriate essential skills qualifications in literacy and numeracy. A minority of participants on the Preparation for Employment Programme are working for local transport companies and targeting an appropriate Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) licence. The remainder are either placed in retail environments, mostly in the voluntary sector, or as general operatives in a variety of contexts.

2.5 This report is based on an inspection of the Full time Education and Training and the Essential Skills Training consortium options for 18-24 year olds and all of the options for adults aged 25 and over.

2.6 The lead partner, in collaboration with the consortium partners, produced a self-evaluation report and development plan on behalf of the consortium.

3. THE INSPECTION

3.1 During the inspection, 37 participants were visited in the workplace and 30 were observed in directed training. Discussions were held with the Programmes Director, the development officers, the managers of consortium members including partners who did not have any registered participants, tutors, employers and participants. In addition, inspectors examined samples of the participants' work where appropriate, and other relevant documentation. A sample of participants completed a questionnaire prior to the inspection, which provided them with the opportunity to comment on the quality of their training and learning experiences.

4. MAIN FINDINGS

4.1 In the areas inspected, the organisation has important strengths in most of its educational 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 monitoring visits, conducted by the District Inspector.

4.2 The main strengths are the:

- leadership and management of the consortia;
- progression rates to employment which are well above the NI average of 22%, for participants on the 18-24 programme, at 37% in Armagh and 31% in Craigavon;
- excellent success rates on the Full Time Education and Training and the Education and Training Opportunities options (Armagh 100% for both, Craigavon 92% and 100% respectively); and
- good quality directed training across most options inspected.

4.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- progression rate to employment for participants aged 25 and over in the Craigavon consortium (11%);
- need to strengthen the quality of the Jobsearch provision to ensure a greater focus on individual need; and
- quality of the workplace experiences for a minority of participants on the Preparation for Employment Programme and on Essential Skills Training.

Table 1

Overall Grade	3
Contributory Grades	Grade
Leadership and Management	2
Achievements and Outcomes	3
Quality of Training and Learning	3

Key for Grades:

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

PART TWO

OVERALL QUALITY OF PROVISION

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.1 The leadership and management in the Armagh and Craigavon consortia are good at all levels. The Programmes Director of Wade provides strong leadership and is well supported by experienced development officers, professional and technical tutors and New Deal administrative staff. All staff provide high levels of support for participants, they have a strong commitment to, and extensive experience of, working with unemployed people, and use a variety of appropriate and challenging strategies to develop the work-readiness and employability of the participants.

5.2 Consortium meetings are held monthly and include appropriate representation of staff from the local Jobs and Benefits offices. The members work well together to review progress of individual clients and to plan the future operation of the consortium. The lead partner is currently working with Saint Vincent De Paul to support them in progressing clients onto more challenging work placements in the private sector. In addition to the consortium meetings, Wade hold monthly programme team meetings where individual progress is monitored and evaluated.

5.3 The lead partner also works well with employers to support participants in developing their skills and confidence. The development officers provide timely responses to issues raised by employers and additional case conferencing meetings are held with New Deal personal advisors to help overcome participants' barriers to employment.

5.4 The lead partner works hard to analyse skills shortages in the local area and provide appropriate training opportunities to address these needs. For example, in 2006, Wade identified a skills shortage for HGV drivers. Having successfully secured additional funding, the lead partner worked with local transport companies to devise a training programme to enable New Deal participants to work towards obtaining a relevant licence and appropriate work experience to enable them to progress to sustained employment. In the first year of this programme, 15 New Deal participants undertook the programme and 50% achieved employment on completion. Similarly, in 2004, the lead partner commenced work with Craigavon Watersports Centre to develop a relevant training programme for participants on Full time Education and Training and Education and Training Opportunities. The participants completed NVQ units in Sport and Recreation and 65% of the initial cohort were successful in progressing to sustained employment. This figure increased to 90% for the final cohort who completed their training in March 2006. The lead partner is currently working with Craigavon Watersports Centre to secure funding to deliver another programme.

5.5 Staff are well supported through good staff development opportunities. They participate in relevant events provided by the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) and also by the Educational Guidance Service for Adults. In addition, management provide good mentoring support for new members of staff.

5.6 Good quality assurance procedures are in place to monitor the quality and performance of the consortia. The lead partner works hard to ensure that self-evaluation and development planning procedures are implemented rigorously and effectively across all

relevant areas. There is a good match between the self-evaluation report and the findings of the Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate). For example, the lead partner had identified through a review of Jobsearch the need to strengthen the quality of this provision to include a menu of personal development initiatives. As a consequence, the lead partner is currently entering into a pilot with a local community organisation to provide a programme aimed at helping those participants aged 18-24 with multiple barriers to learning. This pilot not only includes personal development training but also one to one coaching and life skills initiatives. The pilot will be evaluated and extended to those participants aged 25 and over, if successful.

5.7 Good arrangements are in place for the care and welfare of the participants.

6. ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTCOMES

6.1 Across all of the New Deal options inspected, attendance and time-keeping are good for the majority of participants. On the Full time Education and Training, Education and Training Opportunities and Essential Skills Training options, the majority are well motivated and keen to progress in their learning. On the Preparation for Employment Programme, the majority of participants are well motivated and keen to progress to sustained employment. However, the minority choose work placements which offer little challenge or real opportunity to gain permanent employment. Across all the options, a minority of participants have poor time-keeping and attendance.

6.2 A significant minority of the participants have multiple barriers to employment including personal and social problems and have been on the New Deal programme on at least one previous occasion.

6.3 Most of the participants on the Full-time Education and Training and the Education and Training Opportunities options demonstrate good occupational skills in the workplace. They can carry out a range of suitable tasks at the standard required by their employers. The lead partner provides good support for the small number of participants on these options who have barriers to employment. For example, they work hard with them to address issues relating to attendance and time-keeping and liaise well with employers who have concerns about their standard of work. On the Essential Skills Training options, most participants are demonstrating improving standards in the workplace and are able to complete a narrow range of duties under supervision. On the Preparation for Employment Programme, a minority of participants, employed by transport companies and undertaking relevant HGV training are developing confidence, new skills and excellent attitudes to work which are increasing their employment opportunities significantly. The remainder achieve satisfactory standards in the workplace.

6.4 Standards of work in the professional and technical and essential skills portfolios of work are mostly good. Most participants on the Full-time Education and Training and the Education and Training Opportunities are making good progress towards achievement of their qualifications and demonstrate good standards of written communication skills. Almost all of the participants on Essential Skills Training are making progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills and demonstrate improved confidence in their essential skills classes. These participants also apply their information and communication technology (ICT) skills well to enhance the quality of the work in their numeracy portfolios.

6.5 During the period April 2004 to March 2007, the figures provided by the Department show 65 leavers from the 18-24 New Deal options in the Armagh consortium, and 141 from the same options for the Craigavon consortium. Progression to sustained employment for the Armagh consortium, at 37% and for Craigavon at 31% is well above the NI average of 22%, for 18- 24 options across all consortia.

6.6 Across the same period, the figures provided by the Department show 80 and 133 leavers from the 25+ programme in the Armagh and Craigavon consortia respectively. The figures provided by the Department indicate that the average figure for progression to sustained employment from the 25+ programme, for the Armagh consortium is 18% which is above the NI average for all consortia of 11% and for Craigavon, the progression rate of 11% is in line with the NI average.

6.7 The lead partner works hard to encourage participants with literacy and numeracy problems to address their needs. Over the last three years, according to statistics provided by the lead partner, approximately one quarter of all participants aged 18-24 in both consortia, were recruited to the Essential Skills Training option and of these 57% were successful in gaining their qualification in Armagh and 30% in Craigavon. None of the participants aged 25 and over were registered on Essential Skills Training in the Armagh consortium during this period and in Craigavon, Essential Skills Training accounted for just 6% of registrations.

6.8 Over the last three years, success rates on the Full-time Education and Training and the Education and Training Opportunities options are excellent in both consortia. In Armagh all of the participants on both these options gained their targeted qualification. In Craigavon, success rates on the Full-time Education and Training and the Education and Training Opportunities were 92% and 100% respectively.

7. QUALITY OF TRAINING AND LEARNING

7.1 The analysis of the participant questionnaires, completed prior to the inspection, indicate that over 90% of respondents enjoy their experiences in the Armagh and Craigavon New Deal Consortia. The key features highlighted by the participants include the good quality workplace training and the high levels of support provided by the staff.

7.2 Across all of the New Deal options, there are good relations between almost all of the participants, staff members and employers. Most participants undergo appropriate initial assessment on entry to the programme which aims to identify barriers to employment and inform planning for the development of employability skills. Initial assessment for Essential Skills Training is particularly effective in identifying the literacy and numeracy skills of the participants. In numeracy, diagnostic assessments are used well to plan individual programmes of learning.

7.3 The provision of directed training for participants on Full time Education and Training, Education and Training Opportunities and Essential Skills Training is good. Many participants in the occupational area of CCLD, have good opportunities to undertake additional qualifications including a Certificate in Paediatric First Aid and a Workers Education Association (WEA) Certificate in Assertiveness. One participant is included in all the in-house staff development offered in the workplace, including child protection training. Participants on Essential Skills Training who achieve their targeted qualification are encouraged to work towards the next level. Participants on the Preparation for Employment

Programme, undertaking relevant HGV training, also have good opportunities to gain additional qualifications, including certificates for Health and Safety at Work, Manual Handling, Emergency First Aid and E-Citizenship.

7.4 The quality of directed training is good across most of the options inspected. On the Full time Education and Training and the Education and Training Opportunities options, tutors plan well to ensure participants have good opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills required for achievement of their qualification. In Essential Skills Training, the quality of directed training ranges from satisfactory to good. In both literacy and numeracy, tutors provide appropriate differentiated learning activities to cater for the varying levels of ability in groups. Directed training is good in numeracy where there is good use of ICT to enhance the quality of training and learning. In literacy and on the Full-time Education and Training and the Education and Training Opportunities options, the use of information and learning technology (ILT) to enhance the quality of training and learning is underdeveloped. Training is good for those participants on the Preparation for Employment Programme who are undertaking the HGV programme. They are provided with clear guidance on how to achieve the relevant skills and qualifications.

7.5 The quality of the workplace training is mostly good for participants on Full-time Education and Training and Education and Training Opportunities. All of those targeting qualifications in CCLD have good opportunities to achieve the skills and competences required for their NVQ. The quality of the workplace training is good also for participants in retail and administration. The development officers work hard to ensure they have a range of relevant experiences in the workplace. On Essential Skills Training and the Preparation for Employment Programme, the quality of the workplace training is variable. The majority of participants are placed with private sector employers and have a good range of workplace experiences. The lead partner works hard to encourage the minority of these participants who wish to be placed in more sheltered environments to move to more challenging work placements and make progress in their learning. For example, one participant who has been several times on the New Deal programme and who has worked in a variety of charity shops is spending two days each week in a busy town centre retail outlet and the remainder in a voluntary organisation. There remains, however, a minority who have repeated experiences in charity shops. This offers them limited opportunity to extend their range of skills or competences.

7.6 Although participants attend regular Jobsearch sessions throughout their programme, the content of these sessions is not sufficiently focused on individual needs. Provision focuses on the generic issues relating to Jobsearch rather than individual barriers to securing sustained employment. Participants who undertake their Jobsearch training in Saint Vincent De Paul do not have sufficient access to ICT resources and have therefore limited access to web based job advertisements or Job Centre online.

7.7 All participants have their progress monitored at regular intervals. However, those participants on Full time Education and Training and Education and Training Opportunities targeting a qualification in CCLD, do not have sufficient short term training targets set and agreed with employers, against which their progress can be reviewed effectively.

7.8 All participants receive high levels of support from the providers. Staff are highly committed to supporting individual participants in making progress in their learning. This includes organising transport for participants experiencing difficulties in travelling to directed

training, attending job interviews with participants and working closely with employers to ensure that participants are comfortable and secure in their workplace. On many occasions, the good support for participants continues beyond the period of their New Deal programme.

7.9 Assessment arrangements are good for participants on Full time Education and Training, Education and Training Opportunities and Essential Skills Training. Participants are well informed of the assessment requirements and provided with good feedback to effect improvement in their work.

PART THREE

NEW DEAL OPTION REPORTS

8. FULL-TIME EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND EDUCATION AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Programmes Inspected: **NVQ Level 2 Children’s Care, Learning and Development (Full-Time Education and Training Opportunities)**
 NVQ Level 3 Children’s Care, Learning and Development (Education and Training Opportunities)
 NVQ Level 2 Retail Operations (Full-Time Education and Training Opportunities and Education and Training Opportunities)
 NVQ Level 2 Administration (Education and Training Opportunities)

8.1 In the areas inspected, the organisation has major strengths in its educational and training provision. The needs of the participants are being well met, along with the needs of the community and the economy. The community can have confidence in the organisation’s capacity for sustained self-improvement.

8.2 The main strengths are the:

- positive progression rates to employment or further education or training, which are significantly higher than the NI average, for participants successfully completing the Full-time Education and Training Opportunities programme in both Craigavon and Armagh at 42% and 63% respectively and for the participants completing the Education and Training Opportunities programme in Armagh at 25%;
- excellent success rates for participants who complete their programme in both consortia; and
- good quality of directed and workplace training across the occupational areas inspected.

8.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- setting of short term training targets with employers against which progress can be measured; and
- development of a structured programme of careers education information advice and guidance to enhance the employability of all of the participants.

Grade	Number of participants
2	17

9. PREPARATION FOR EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME

9.1 In the areas inspected, the organisation has important strengths in most of its educational 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 monitoring visits, conducted by the District Inspector.

9.2 The main strengths are the:

- steadily improving progression rates to sustained employment for participants registered with the lead partner, from 11% in 2004/05 to 18% in 2006/07;
- excellent work placements and a well-structured training programme for participants in HGV driving; and
- support provided for all participants, particularly for those with significant barriers to employment.

9.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- number of participants choosing voluntary sector work placements, which provide a limited range of experiences to prepare them for employment;
- access to computers for a minority of participants to enable them to develop basic ICT skills and carry out online job searches; and
- overall progression rate to employment, for both consortia, of 14%, which is just above the NI average of 11%.

Number registered	Grade
24	3

10. ESSENTIAL SKILLS TRAINING 18-24 AND 25+

10.1 The main strengths are the:

- good progress by the majority of trainees in their learning both in directed training and in the workplace;
- good level of achievement on the 25+ option at 86%; and
- good quality of directed training in numeracy and the high level of support provided for participants in both directed and workplace training.

10.2 The main areas for improvement are the:

- progression to employment rates for participants on these options;
- insufficient challenge in the workplace for a minority of participants; and
- greater use of ICT to support participants in their learning, particularly in literacy.

Ungraded due to low numbers

PART FOUR

KEY PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

The Armagh and Craigavon Consortia need to revise the annual development plan to take account of the following key priorities for development:

- improved progression to employment for participants aged 25 and over in the Craigavon consortium;
- more challenging work placements for a minority of participants; and
- greater individual focus within the Jobsearch provision.

APPENDIX

Statistics supplied by the Department for Employment and Learning for the Armagh and Craigavon consortia

Armagh Consortium: Table 1 - 18-24

Period	Number of Leavers	Progressed to sustained employment %
April 2004-March 2007	65	37%

Table 2 – 25+

Year	Number of Leavers	% of leavers who progressed to sustained employment
April 2004-March 2007	80	18%

Craigavon Consortium: Table 1 - 18-24

Period	Number of Leavers	Progressed to sustained employment %
April 2004-March 2007	141	31%

Table 2 – 25+

Year	Number of Leavers	% of leavers who progressed to sustained employment
April 2004-March 2007	133	11%

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