



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Training for Success and
ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in
Paragon Training (NI) Limited

Report of an Inspection
in October 2015

Quantitative terms used by the ETI

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels when reporting on achievement and standards, on provision for learning, on leadership and management, and on the overall quality of professional and technical areas:

Current performance level	Previous performance level ¹
Outstanding	Outstanding
Very good	Very good
Good	Good
Important area(s) for improvement	Satisfactory
Requires significant improvement	Inadequate
Requires urgent improvement	Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the organisation:

Overall effectiveness outcome	Previous performance level
The organisation has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor the organisation's progress in addressing any area(s) for improvement through its annual scrutiny inspection.	Outstanding and very good
The organisation demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor the organisation's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement through its annual scrutiny inspection.	Good
The organisation needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement, which includes the need to produce an improvement plan, which will be the basis for a formal follow-up inspection within 12-18 months.	Satisfactory
The organisation needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement, which includes the need to produce an improvement plan, which will be the basis for a formal follow-up inspection within 12 - 18 months.	Inadequate and unsatisfactory

Key Performance Indicators and Definitions	
Retention	The percentage of enrolments at week 4 of year one who completed their occupational training framework, measured over the full duration of their course.
Achievement	The percentage of trainees/apprentices who completed their occupational training framework and who fully achieved their framework qualification.
Progression	The percentage of successful completers who progressed to further/higher education/training or employment.

¹ The ETI performance levels were revised with effect from the 1 September 2015.

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

A team of seven inspectors and two associate assessors observed a total of 74 apprentices and trainees in 26 directed training sessions. The inspectors visited 18 trainees and apprentices in their workplace and 20 were interviewed in focus groups. The inspectors also held discussions with the director, management team and tutors. In addition, the inspectors examined samples of the trainees' and apprentices' work, tutors' schemes of work and lesson plans, and personal training plans. The organisation's self-evaluation report and other relevant documentation were scrutinised.

The inspectors evaluated the organisation's arrangements for care, guidance and support and for safeguarding young people. The inspection included the opportunity for the trainees and apprentices to express their views on their training and learning experience by completing an online questionnaire prior to the inspection.

The returns show that the apprentices' and trainees' feel safe and secure, and well-supported in Paragon Training (NI) Limited (Paragon). Almost all of the apprentices and trainees who responded to the questionnaire and all who made written comments were positive about the quality of the training and support provided in Paragon.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned (%)	Number with comments
Trainees and apprentices	161	62	39%	6

2. Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the achievements and standards;
- the effectiveness of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes;
- the quality of provision for learning and training; and
- the quality of the leadership and management of the organisation.

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation and which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI's publication *Improving Quality: Raising Standards Work-based Learning* <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/improving-quality-raising-standards/improving-quality-raising-standards-igrs-work-based-learning.htm>.

3. Context

Paragon is a private training company with two training facilities close to Belfast city centre; these are located just off the Lower Falls Road and the Lower Newtownards Road. Consequently, the organisation recruits young people who live in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Northern Ireland². This includes young people who are, for example, disaffected or marginalised due to social, emotional or educational barriers to learning, under-achievement or lack of employment.

² According to the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), the electoral wards in the areas served by Paragon are among the ten most deprived in Northern Ireland for education, training and skills

Paragon is contracted by the Department for Employment and Learning (Department) to provide the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes. At the time of the inspection, there were 94 trainees on Training for Success 2013 and one trainee on the legacy Training for Success 2008 programme. Of those trainees on the 2013 programme: five (5%) were on the Skills for Your Life strand; 56 (60%) on the Skills for Work level 1 strand; and 33 (35%) on the Skills for Work level 2 strand. There were 66 apprentices on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme; the number of apprentices has declined significantly from just over 200 in 2011. On the Training for Success programme, 19 (20%) of the trainees were registered in the professional and technical area of children's care, learning and development; eight (9%) in health and social care; five (5%) in hospitality; six (6%) in information and communication technology (ICT); 18 (19%) in retail; and 39 (41%) in youth work. On the ApprenticeshipsNI programme, one (2%) apprentice was registered in the professional and technical area of business administration; 26 (39%) in children's care, learning and development; 37 (56%) in health and social care; and two (3%) in hospitality.

A minority (42%)³ of the trainees have an assessed and supported disability and/or have additional learning needs. In addition, Paragon reported that the majority (62%) of the trainees have significant barriers to learning; the most prevalent being mental health issues, addictions and involvement with the criminal justice system. While, around 42% of the trainees and 55% of the apprentices entered their programme with four or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, or equivalent, only a minority of the trainees hold at least a GCSE qualification at grade C or equivalent in English (29%) and mathematics (16%). In contrast, the majority of the apprentices hold a GCSE pass grade or equivalent in English (65%) and mathematics (59%).

At the time of the inspection, 75% of the trainees in the second year of their training were in a work-placement. Almost all of those in year 1 of their training were still on induction and not yet ready for a work-placement.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Need to address important areas for improvement
Achievements and standards	Good
Provision for learning	Important areas for improvement
Leadership and management	Important areas for improvement

Professional and technical areas performance levels	
Children's care, learning and development	Very good
Essential skills	Important areas for improvement
Health and social care	Important areas for improvement
Retail	Important areas for improvement
Youth work	Important areas for improvement

Going well

- Paragon's vision and strong commitment to provide a broad range of training programmes and progression pathways for young people living in disadvantaged areas.
- The ongoing development of the training provision in order to better support shared education and promote better cross-community relations across the communities the organisation serves.

³ This percentage is based on the Training for Success 2014/15 intake.

- The recently implemented revised organisational structure, including a newly appointed management team and other specialist staff, to underpin a wider range of learner support services and initiatives.
- The high levels of pastoral support and good quality of the additional learning support provided for the trainees and apprentices to help them achieve and progress.
- The range and quality of the work-experience placements provided for most of the trainees.
- The very good quality of the training provided for the apprentices and trainees in children's care, learning and development.
- The good overall retention (70%) and achievement (87%) rates, over the last three years.

What does Paragon need to do to improve?

- To develop a better shared understanding of highly effective practice in learning, teaching and training in order to improve the quality of planning and pedagogy across the provision.
- To formalise the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes, particularly within health and social care, essential skills, retail and youth work, to inform better improvement planning and continuing professional development.
- To continue to monitor and evaluate more effectively the trainees' and apprentices' progress.
- To enhance further the careers provision, in order to broaden the trainees' and apprentices' awareness of possible work-experience, progression and employment opportunities.

5. Achievements and standards are good.

In the directed training sessions and in the workplace, most of the trainees and apprentices are well-motivated, enthusiastic about their training, and develop a good range of relevant occupational and/or employability skills. Most of them engage positively during their training sessions; they draw effectively on their workplace experiences to make valuable contributions to discussions and offer their views and opinions sensitively and constructively. Importantly, most of the trainees and apprentices are developing their team working skills to a good standard. In youth work, for example, this is a particular strength and a critical employability skill for the trainees in this professional and technical area. A minority of the trainees are reticent communicators and, as a consequence, do not engage actively in their learning. More needs to be done to help them develop personally, socially and emotionally to enable them to participate more readily in the learning and training activities.

Most of the trainees and apprentices display good or better occupational knowledge and skills in their job roles or work-placements. The apprentices are mostly progressing well in achieving the necessary competences for their qualification framework. In children's care, learning and development, for example, a number of the level 3 apprentices are able to progress quickly to supervisory roles on completion of their course. Where appropriate, the trainees and apprentices develop the specialist language skills to work in Irish Medium settings. In health and social care, however, a minority of the apprentices do not acquire a sufficiently wide skills set and knowledge base; there is limited extension of their skills and knowledge through new learning. In retail and youth work, the trainees are increasing their self-confidence and are mostly well-prepared to apply

their occupational skills and knowledge in a work-placement. In youth work, they develop well their communication and inter-personal skills to engage effectively with the young people in their youth centre work-placements. While those retail trainees in a work-placement develop acceptable standards of work, the limited range of placements restricts the opportunities for all of the trainees to develop an appropriate range of occupational skills.

Most of the trainees and apprentices demonstrate good or better spoken communication skills. They are able to communicate confidently and competently with their peers, tutors, and workplace personnel. While the trainees and apprentices recognise the importance of improving their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, their capacity to transfer these skills to other contexts, including their professional and technical work are limited. There are missed opportunities, particularly within health and social care and retail, to embed key literacy and numeracy skills within a vocational context. Importantly, the development of the trainees' and apprentices' essential skills within the professional and technical areas through extended reading, writing and numeracy is an area for improvement, in order to extend their capabilities for more independent learning.

Over the last three years, 2011/12 to 2013/14, based on the information provided by Paragon, the overall retention and achievement rates are good at 70% and 87% respectively.

On the Training for Success programme, the average retention and achievement rates are good at 67% and 77% respectively. Of the total number of trainees who commenced the Training for Success programme in 2013, 67% have been retained and 81% of those who completed their training achieved. Of those trainees who successfully completed their training, the majority (74%) progressed to employment, higher level training or further education.

On the ApprenticeshipsNI programme, the average retention and achievement rates are also good at 71% and 88% respectively. Almost all (93%) of them sustained employment following the completion of their apprenticeship.

Almost all of the trainees and apprentices who complete their training achieve all of the essential skills. While only a minority of them achieve at a level higher than that required by their framework, most are starting from a very low base.

6. The provision for learning has important areas for improvement.

Paragon provides a suitably broad range of training programmes which meet well the needs of most of the trainees and apprentices. The organisation has endeavoured to develop unique programmes that address identified gaps in the local training and employment market, and particularly to meet the needs of young people who are disadvantaged and farthest from the labour market. Key features of its provision include: the determination of the staff to develop supportive and productive relationships with 'hard to reach' trainees; and the vision of the director and management team to establish learning facilities for cross-community shared learning and training.

While Paragon is committed to creating a flexible and suitable curriculum for the professional technical areas of children's care, learning and development and health and social care and youth work, the strategic planning is under-developed for the professional and technical areas of business administration, hospitality and catering, ICT, and retail. Consequently, the number of trainees and apprentices in these areas is low. It is timely that Paragon has recently appointed a number of key staff to develop these areas, particularly the appointment of a part-time work-placement officer and a part-time business development officer.

There is an important need for Paragon to revise the curriculum planning for youth work training. While the organisation is aware of the recent changes in the training requirements for the youth work sector, curriculum planning to incorporate these important changes is not clear enough. More needs to be done to establish quickly a more coherent and cohesive progression pathway for level 1 and level 2 trainees, particularly for level 2 trainees who cannot commence the level 2 qualification until they are 18 years old.

The quality of the learning, teaching and training in the majority of the directed training sessions observed was good; a minority was very good. In these sessions, the tutors plan effectively for a broad range of learning, teaching and training approaches that are matched well to the needs of the trainees and apprentices. In the better sessions, the pace of the sessions is brisk, with skilful use of appropriately challenging questioning and learning tasks to stimulate critical thinking, collaborative enquiry and problem solving. Occasionally, well-planned formative assessment and constructive feedback is used to effectively embed learning and inform further improvement. In the remaining sessions, there were important areas for improvement. While these sessions are well-organised, there was insufficient pace, low challenge and limited differentiation in the learning activities to meet the varied needs of the trainees and apprentices. In the sessions where the trainees are on various levels of the Training for Success programme, the lack of differentiation is a particular concern. A recent investment in upgrading the ICT equipment is a good start to enhancing the quality of the learning experiences through more effective use of information and learning technology (ILT) but it is currently under-exploited. Across all professional and technical areas, marking for improvement is under-developed, particularly to support and promote improvement in the quality of the trainees' and apprentices' written work.

Paragon recently provided training and development for staff in the use of more effective personal training plans for the trainees and apprentices. Appropriately, this was to ensure more standardised plans and also reflect more accurately the individual needs of the trainees. While a good start has been made in developing clear and comprehensive plans for some of the trainees, too many of them lack sufficient detail and consistency, particularly in setting measureable targets that are tracked and evaluated over time. Consequently, Paragon needs to embed a more cohesive, standardised recording, tracking and reviewing system, at all levels, to ensure there is a seamless, accurate flow of key information to trigger appropriate and timely support for the trainees and apprentices.

The quality of the care, guidance and support provided for the trainees and apprentices is good. Paragon has established links and partnerships with a wide range of external support agencies, which are used to good effect to provide tailored support for the trainees with additional learning needs, to address the often complex and interrelated range of learning, physical, personal and social needs of a significant proportion of the trainees. Whilst the tutors are aware of those trainees with specific learning needs, it is timely that Paragon is strengthening the arrangements to provide them with more detailed information on the most suitable methodologies to support these trainees better in their learning. The management information system is used well to record the progress of all the trainees and apprentices, but further development is necessary to ensure that critical information is available to underpin more robust evaluation of the effectiveness of any additional learning support provided.

A well-considered mentoring programme provides individualised, structured, responsive and highly effective pastoral support for all of the trainees. Consequently, almost all of the trainees report that they feel respected and well-supported by the staff; the tutors create very positive working relationships with the trainees and apprentices and work hard to build their confidence and self-esteem. Whilst there is evidence that the mentoring programme is having a positive impact on retention rates, further and more comprehensive evaluation of this programme, to ensure it continues to meet fully the needs of all of the trainees, is necessary.

During a comprehensive induction programme, the trainees are provided with impartial careers advice and guidance to help them make informed choices of their preferred career pathway and of the professional and technical training available within Paragon. The trainees also have access to a taught careers provision which is integrated effectively into their personal and social development programme. The quality of the careers provision for the apprentices is, however, variable and is an important area for improvement. Uniquely in children's care learning and development, the apprentices receive appropriate advice and guidance from their tutors but this good practice is not well enough developed in the other professional and technical areas. While Paragon has established good links with employers, to provide work-placement opportunities for the trainees, these links are not exploited sufficiently to facilitate a wide variety of guest speakers and workplace visits for the trainees and apprentices, to expand their knowledge and understanding of the world of work and career development.

Paragon has made a good start in developing curriculum enrichment activities for the trainees, consisting mainly of arranging charity fund raising activities. Further expansion of the range of enrichment activities and project work, is however, an important area for improvement, especially for the trainees without regular work-placements.

7. Leadership and management have important areas for improvement.

The director and operations manager have considerable experience in leading and managing training programmes; they are supported well by a curriculum co-ordinator, a quality assurance co-ordinator, two mentoring support officers, specialist tutors and administrative staff. In addition, a part-time business development officer and work-placement officer have made a good start in establishing important links with employers, local schools and community organisations. Recent strengthening and reconfiguration of key management and support functions, has enabled the director to realise an important strategic objective of establishing a new training facility in the Lower Newtownards Road. This provision contributes well the ongoing and much needed opportunities for young people to access training programmes in this area. Together with the existing facility in West Belfast, Paragon is now well-placed to provide a cross-community shared learning and training provision; a combined induction programme across the two training facilities has created an inclusive ethos for shared learning and training experiences.

While the new roles of the reconfigured management structure are appropriate, and do much to strengthen leadership and management of the provision, curriculum planning remains too fragmented with missed opportunities for more collaborative working, particularly across the essential skills and professional and technical areas.

Paragon has recently revised its quality assurance arrangements; the recent appointment of a quality assurance co-ordinator and a curriculum co-ordinator with responsibility for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning has strengthened the scrutiny and oversight functions of the director. In addition, the implementation of a bespoke management information system has enhanced the administration and management functions within Paragon.

Within the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes there are important areas for improvement. The quality monitoring lacks sufficient rigour and vision. Importantly, there is too much variability in the quality of the trainees' and apprentices' written work, inconsistency in their personal training plans, and gaps in their reviewing and monitoring. While the current self-evaluation and quality improvement plan matches most of the findings of the inspection, key actions to effect sustained improvement are neither implemented quickly enough nor understood well enough by all members of staff. A more systematic, cohesive and collaborative approach to quality improvement is required, including clearer self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes at professional and technical area level.

The tutors are mostly appropriately qualified and experienced. Most of them have achieved pedagogical qualifications with a few currently completing their Certificate in Teaching. Continuing professional development arrangements have enabled some staff to update their specialist skills; one tutor is undertaking qualifications in youth work to increase the organisation's long-term capacity to deliver related programmes in this area. An important area for improvement is, however, the need for a clearer link between the evaluation of the learning, teaching and training and the planning for relevant continuing professional development which supports more effective pedagogical practice.

Recent key staff appointments have strengthened the organisation's capacity to link better with an increasing range of employers and other stakeholders. Consequently, the current trainee work-placement rate (75%) is high. Continued development of more strategic links and partnerships is necessary, however, to support trainee placements and apprenticeships across all areas, particularly in retail and youth work.

The quality of the accommodation is variable. While it is notable that Paragon has secured a much needed training facility in East Belfast, many of the training rooms are overly cramped and not conducive to effective learning and teaching. In a minority of the professional and technical areas the range of training equipment and specialist resources is limited.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, Paragon has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding young people. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department but the following areas need to be addressed:

- the creation of a safeguarding team to strengthen the annual monitoring and reviewing of the policies and practices; and
- to document more clearly the existing risk assessment arrangements for work-experience placements.

8. Overall effectiveness

Paragon needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the trainees and apprentices. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement, which includes the need to produce an improvement plan, which will be the basis for a formal follow-up inspection within 12-18 months.

9. Professional and technical area reports

9.1 Children's care learning and development (CCLD)

Key findings

In children's care, learning and development, the quality of training provided by Paragon is very good.

Achievements and standards are good.

All of the trainees and apprentices are well-motivated and enthusiastic about their training. They engage readily in class discussions, offer constructively their views and opinions relating to, and drawing on, their learning experiences in the workplace, and work well collaboratively. They are developing a good or better understanding of childcare theory and competent practice. While the quality of their written work is mostly good, a more consistent approach to marking for improvement is needed to support further development in their written communication skills. All of the employers visited reported that the trainees and apprentices are gaining confidence, have good attitudes to work and complete their work to a good or better occupational standard. A number of level 3 apprentices are, for example, making good progress in their readiness to take on supervisory roles on completion of their course. For the last three years, the retention and achievement rates on the Training for Success provision are good at 73% and 86% respectively. The progression rate is outstanding at 100%. On the ApprenticeshipsNI programme, the retention rate is very good at 81% and achievement rate is good at 86%.

The quality of provision is very good.

The curriculum and training provision are well-matched to the needs of the trainees, apprentices and employers. The quality of the directed training sessions observed was good or better; the majority of the sessions were very good. The tutors use an appropriate range of learning, teaching and training strategies that are matched well to the individual learning needs of the trainees and apprentices. The trainees and apprentices are encouraged to reflect critically on their practice in the workplace and to use more effectively their thinking skills to problem solve and plan for work. A key strength of the provision is the flexible, high quality directed training provided for the apprentices on their employer's premises. The training sessions are regular and well-planned; the sessions take full account of each apprentice's prior learning to ensure they develop new knowledge and skills at an appropriate pace and challenge. The tutors work closely together to plan and provide the trainees and apprentices with the appropriate levels of care, guidance and support. Consequently, almost all of the trainees and apprentices have a good understanding about potential progression and career pathways. They feel the course provides them with very good opportunities to develop their occupational skills and knowledge, and to apply their learning effectively in the workplace.

The quality of leadership and management is very good.

The tutors work very effectively as a team to meet the learning and pastoral needs of all the trainees and apprentices. They are reflective practitioners with a thorough understanding of the childcare sector. The self-evaluation and quality improvement planning includes peer observations, regular review of the trainees' and apprentices' portfolios and communication with employers. Through this process the tutors have identified appropriate areas for improvement and are committed to continuous development of the provision. For example, they have revised the curriculum to include a relevant module on Immersion Education⁴ which meets the particular needs of the trainees and

⁴ Immersion Education is a form of bilingual education

apprentices working in Irish Medium settings. There is an important need, however, to formalise the processes of self-evaluation and quality improvement planning, and to record the outcomes of the processes, in order to inform more effectively the ongoing planning for continuing professional development. There are very good links with employers and high quality placements have been sought and used well by Paragon to help the trainees and apprentices develop their occupational and communication skills.

9.2 Essential skills

Key findings

In essential skills, the quality of training provided by Paragon has important areas for improvement.

Achievements and standards have important areas for improvement.

Almost all of the trainees and apprentices who complete their training achieve all of the essential skills. While only a minority of them achieve at a level higher than that required by their framework, most are starting from a very low base. Most of them achieve the essential skills in line with the requirements of their framework, although the pace of progression is slow in a minority of cases, where the essential skills training is not provided in a timely manner, or where the demands of the workplace impact negatively on the time available for the essential skills training. Almost all of the trainees and apprentices recognise the importance of improving their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, and they are motivated and supported well by their essential skills tutors. Whilst most of the trainees and apprentices develop an appropriate range of skills and competencies in their essential skills, their capacity to transfer these skills effectively to their professional and technical work, and other contexts, is underdeveloped. There are missed opportunities, particularly in retail and in health and social care, to exploit and to embed the learning and development in literacy and in numeracy within these vocational contexts. Most of the trainees and apprentices demonstrate good levels of spoken communication. Their skills in written communication and in reading more complex texts are, however, too variable. More needs to be done to support the trainees and apprentices in their development of independent, extended reading and writing. In numeracy too, they need to extend their capabilities for independent learning. In ICT, the trainees develop the skills appropriate to their target levels of achievement but too much time is spent, on occasions, in revisiting skills at the expense of new learning.

The provision for learning has important areas for improvement.

Most of the trainees arrive punctually for their essential skills training sessions but attendance at a minority of sessions is variable. The essential skills tutors work hard to create learning environments which are highly supportive and are fully inclusive. There are appropriate initial and diagnostic assessment processes in place but more needs to be done to use the outcomes of these processes to plan effectively for learning, particularly for the lower of levels. Whilst most of the learning, teaching, training practices were effective, there were important areas for improvement in a minority of the sessions observed. In the better practice, the tutors had planned well to address the wide range of learning needs with which the trainees present. The pace in the better sessions was brisk, there was a good range of strategies used to engage and motivate the trainees. Good links are made to an appropriate range of contexts, including personal, social and employability contexts, wherein the trainees had good opportunities to transfer and apply their new knowledge and understandings. There was also good use of well-sequenced formative work and well-constructed feedback to inform improvement. In the less effective practice, there was too much time accorded to reviewing existing knowledge, low levels of challenge, too few opportunities for

productive group work to stimulate collaborative enquiry and shared learning. Significantly, the range of learning, teaching and training strategies used was narrow at the lower levels of delivery and there were too few opportunities to develop the trainees' extended responses in both oral and written work. It is timely and appropriate that Paragon plan to provide increased small group and one-to-one support for the lower ability trainees who are not progressing sufficiently in their learning.

Leadership and management have important areas for improvement.

Paragon has recently undergone a number of staffing changes in the essential skills and, as a consequence, roles and responsibilities are not yet well embedded, particularly at the levels of management and co-ordination of the provision. The timetabling arrangements for the trainees and apprentices need to be reviewed as a matter of urgency. The current sessions for the trainees are too long, particularly for those trainees who struggle with literacy and numeracy. The timetabling for the apprentices needs to ensure that the essential skills provision supports their work in the professional and technical programmes in a more timely and structured manner. Whilst there are some collaborative activities in place to address the issue of the appropriate contextualisation of the essential skills, more needs to be done to facilitate shared planning for learning across the essential skills, the professional and technical areas of the programme and the workplace learning. The range of continuing professional development opportunities need to be extended to help tutors to refresh and develop their repertoire of learning, teaching and training methodologies to meet the wide variety of learning needs, and the impact of this continuing professional development needs to be monitored more effectively through the quality cycle of tutor observations. Self-evaluation and quality improvement is not well-developed in the essential skills nor is the effective collation and analysis of data to inform these processes, particularly planning related to target setting for improvement.

9.3 Health and social care

Key findings

In health and social care, the quality of training provided by Paragon has important areas for improvement.

Achievements and standards are good.

Almost all of the trainees and most of the apprentices are well-engaged in their training programme and are motivated to develop their occupational skills to a good standard. The attendance and behaviour of the trainees and apprentices is good. They speak highly of the effective support they receive from their tutors. While the occupational standards achieved by apprentices in the workplace are appropriate, they are mainly just confirmation of existing competences with limited extension of their knowledge and skills through new learning. There is insufficient use of marking for improvement or encouragement for the trainees and apprentices to develop their extended writing. For the last three years, the retention and achievement rates for the ApprenticeshipsNI programme are good at 70% and 80% respectively. While there are only a small number (11) of trainees on the Training for Success programme, the rate of retention (55%) is an important area for improvement, although achievement rates are good at 80%. All of the trainees progressed to employment or further training. Most (84%) of the level 2 apprentices sustained employment, with a minority (21%) of them progressing to further education or training. Almost all (91%) of the level 3 apprentices sustained employment on completion of their apprenticeship.

The provision for learning has important areas for improvement.

The directed training sessions are well-organised and in the more effective practice, good use was made of work-based scenarios to review and consolidate the trainees' and apprentices' learning and its application in practice. Too much directed training time is spent reviewing and consolidating existing knowledge and skills and too little time is spent on developing further the trainees' and apprentices' understanding of best practice in health and social care. In addition, there is insufficient planning for differentiation in the learning to meet more effectively the individual needs of trainees, particularly in composite sessions with various levels of trainees. While ILT is commonly used during training, further development and planning is required to ensure it contributes more effectively and positively during sessions. Similarly, the creative use of active learning strategies to better engage the trainees in their learning requires further development. For those trainees not yet on work-placement, there is limited enrichment of their curriculum. Insufficient use is made of guest speakers and external visits to health and social care settings to expand their knowledge and understanding of the world of work, particularly of the broad range of health and social care work roles, settings and progression opportunities. The careers provision for the apprentices does not occur in a timely enough fashion; it needs to be introduced earlier in their programme and revisited at appropriate subsequent intervals.

Leadership and management have important areas for improvement.

The tutors are well-qualified and have a wide range of relevant experience and skills which are current. They are hard working and committed to meeting the trainees' and apprentices' individual learning and development needs. The trainees and apprentices all speak highly of the support they receive from their tutors. The relationships, communication and engagement between the tutors and employers are mostly good. While the employers and apprentices value the flexible model of training provided by Paragon, they are not sufficiently clear regarding what is expected of them while participating in the programme. In particular, there is limited collaborative planning for the systematic delivery of the essential skills, to underpin the apprentices' professional and technical learning. A high level tracking system is in place but needs further development at tutor level to monitor and identify in greater detail the progress made by the trainees and apprentices throughout their training. Although the trainee and apprentice reviews are carried out regularly, the setting and use of specific, individualised, measurable targets to evaluate their progress is inconsistent. The self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes are underdeveloped. Actions to bring about improvement are not sufficiently clear and prioritised, including the role of continuing professional development to improve the quality of the teaching and learning.

9.4 Retail

Key findings

In retail, the quality of the training provided by Paragon has important areas for improvement.

Achievements and standards have important areas for improvement.

Almost all of the trainees engage well in their learning during the directed training sessions, displaying a positive attitude, but a small number of them are overly passive in their learning. Most of the trainees on work-placement achieve acceptable standards of work in line with their ability and stage of learning. They display good customer care skills and handle cash payments effectively. The range of meaningful retail tasks in the workplace is, however, too limited which restricts the opportunities for trainees to gain appropriate occupational skills. The trainees are not sufficiently aware of potential progression opportunities for the next stage in their education, training or employment. A minority of them lack appropriately high aspirations of what they are able to achieve, and evidence from their portfolios and other written work show that they are progressing

too slowly in their learning and achievements. Significantly, opportunities in their professional and technical training to transfer and develop their literacy skills are not fully exploited. Targets are not being set consistently to stretch and challenge the trainees and to encourage them to progress at an appropriate pace. For the last three years, the retention rate on the Training for Success programme is good at 64%. All of the trainees who remain achieve their qualification framework.

The provision for learning has important areas for improvement.

There is evidence of some planning for differentiation in the directed training session plans, however it is inconsistently applied to ensure the training strategies are supporting effectively the diverse range of the trainees' learning needs, particularly in sessions comprising up to three levels. The quality of the learning, teaching and training in a significant minority of the sessions observed was good. In the more effective practice, questioning was used well to assess and inform the trainees' learning, a very good rapport was established between the trainees and their tutor. The trainees engaged well in, and responded enthusiastically to, the learning activities. In the less effective practice, a small number of trainees were unresponsive and not enough was done to motivate and engage the trainees in their learning. Importantly, there were missed opportunities to address weaknesses in the trainees' punctuation and grammar. A good start has been made in the use of ILT to support and enhance learning but requires further development. Assessment of the trainees in the workplace is not carried out in a timely enough manner nor are the trainees provided with sufficient feedback on the quality of their work, including guidance on what they need to do to improve further. Too few opportunities are provided for trainees to engage in careers-related activities including educational visits, guest speakers from industry and other work-related experiences associated with retail.

Leadership and management have important areas for improvement

Paragon works hard to promote a positive and inclusive learning environment for all of the trainees. Appropriately, the retail curriculum has been reviewed recently and adapted accordingly to ensure there is an appropriate progression pathway to meet the needs of all of the trainees. A more suitable level of qualification has been introduced for trainees on the Skills for Your Life strand. Continued development of the curriculum is, however, needed to ensure realistically high standards and expectations are set for all the trainees which are underpinned by equally high standards of learning and teaching support. Strategic and operational links with employers are underdeveloped. More needs to be done to establish relevant partnerships in the retail sector to enhance the range and quality of the work-placement opportunities available to the trainees, particularly to support their development of key employability skills. The quality of the trainees' personal training plans is too variable; appropriate targets are not evident in a minority of the plans to inform accurate reviews of the trainees' progress. The directed training learning environment does not adequately enthuse and inspire the trainees in their training; there is only a limited range of retail-related resources available to enhance and support their learning. Significantly, the self-evaluation and the quality improvement planning processes lack sufficient rigour and are not having enough impact on improving the quality of the learning.

9.5 Youth work

Key findings

In youth work, the quality of the training provided by Paragon has important areas for improvement.

Achievements and standards are good.

Most of the trainees are developing a good range of personal and social skills and in particular their oral communication skills are well-developed. Although many of the trainees have significant personal support needs, they are able to work well together in teams. In particular, they effectively transfer these important personal and social skills to their youth work-placements where they confidently support and build the capacity of a diverse range of other young people to work more collaboratively. A significant minority of the trainees, however, do not fully understand the progression opportunities available to them, in particular the qualification structure and minimum requirements to qualify as a youth support worker. More needs to be done to ensure all of the trainees are fully aware of the available progression pathways and employment opportunities, especially at the commencement of their training programme, and that they are supported to enable them to fulfil their career aspirations. For the last three years, the retention rate on the Training for Success programme is good at 66% and the achievement rate is very good at 82%. The progression rate is good at 71%; it is noteworthy that a small number of the trainees, through additional support from their workplace, progressed to a related level 4 course. While the success rate on the ApprenticeshipsNI is good at 89%, the retention rate is an important area for improvement at 69%.

The provision for learning has important areas for improvement.

The quality of most of the directed training sessions observed was good. They are characterised by appropriate short-term planning, effective use of questioning and the good use of the trainees' personal experiences to help build a positive learning ethos. Through skilful behaviour management strategies and a pervasive ethos of mutual respect, the trainees build important working relationships with their peers and tutors and establish acceptable levels of personal conduct and behaviour. While the tutors are aware of the trainees' wide levels of ability and backgrounds, further planning for a broader range of learning strategies, including differentiation, is necessary. In particular, a greater focus on active learning, paired work and small group work is required, to reflect the experiential learning style of youth work practice. While in the training sessions there is regular use of ILT to emphasise key learning points, it is not used effectively to enhance the learning. The plenary sessions are not used effectively enough to consolidate the good learning that had taken place during the training, particularly to support the trainees in the completion of their assessment portfolios. In light of the recent changes in the qualification framework for youth work, the trainees' personal training plans need to articulate more clearly the trainees' individual training pathway and measure more effectively the progress they are making. In addition, better communication channels are required between the work-placement providers, the young people, their parents, and Paragon, in order to support and guide the trainees more effectively in their learning and development.

Leadership and management have important areas for improvement.

There is an urgent need to review the breadth and relevance of the curriculum offer for youth work. At the time of the inspection, partially due to current changes in the youth work sector, Paragon was just designing suitable progression pathways for the trainees on the Training for Success strands. Significantly, Paragon needs to establish quickly a more coherent and cohesive curriculum that is comprehensive enough to meet fully the employability needs of the level 1 trainees and the requirements for successful progression to higher levels within the youth work sector. Paragon, with training facilities in both East and West Belfast, is well-placed to build effective links that will benefit the range and quality of the youth work provision within and across the communities in these areas. While the links and potential partnerships with employers in the youth work sector are developing, the frequency and the quality of employer-engagement is an important area for improvement. The trainees from East and West Belfast reported positivity about the opportunities during induction to

learn together in a natural and positive environment for shared education but would welcome more extended periods of shared training. Although most of the trainees have good quality work-placements, a more collaborative approach with workplace supervisors is required, to ensure workplace training experiences and assessments are well-planned. The permanent tutor is suitably qualified and experienced to deliver the training at Level 1 but not yet fully qualified to deliver the new level 2 qualification. Paragon has suitable contingency arrangements in place to deliver level 2 training. While self-evaluation and quality improvements planning processes are in place, they lack sufficient rigour and clarity, especially to ensure that Paragon has sufficient capacity to meet the challenges of providing a coherent, high quality provision for youth work.

Current registrations by programme

Programme	Numbers of registrations	% of total registrations
ApprenticeshipsNI	66	41%
Training for Success (2008)	1	1%
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Your Life	5	3%
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Work (strand 1)	56	35%
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Work (strand 2)	33	20%

Current registrations by professional and technical area

Professional and technical area	Number of trainees	% of total registrations
Children's care, learning and development	19	20%
Health and social care	8	8%
Hospitality	5	5%
Information and communication technology	6	6%
Retail	18	19%
Youth work	39	41%
Professional and technical area	Number of apprentices	% of total registrations
Business administration	1	2%
Children's care, learning and development	26	39%
Health and social care	37	56%
Hospitality	2	3%

Qualifications of current trainees/apprentices on entry to their programme

Programme	Training for Success (%)	ApprenticeshipsNI (%)
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C including English and mathematics	4%	36%
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C	42%	55%
(%) of learners with GCSE English or equivalent at Grades A*-C	26%	65%
(%) of learners with GCSE mathematics or equivalent at Grades A*-C	16%	59%
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-G	42%	55%
(%) of learners with no prior level 1 or level 2 qualifications	55%	45%

Note: All data was sourced from Paragon Training (NI) Limited at the time of the inspection.

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