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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

Training for Success

Opportunity Youth

Inspected: April and October 2008

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

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

All the statistics in this report have been supplied and verified by Opportunity Youth

Grading System

During the 2007/2008 academic year ETI piloted a new 6-point grading scale to replace the original 4-point scale. From September 2008 the grade descriptors have been amended and are as set out below.

GRADE	DESCRIPTOR
1	Outstanding and the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding
2	Very good; major strengths.
3	Good; important strengths in most of provision. The organisation has the capacity to address the areas for improvement identified.
4	Satisfactory but with areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed.
5	Inadequate with significant areas for improvement which require prompt action.
6	Unsatisfactory with major shortcomings which require urgent action.

PART ONE

SUMMARY

1. CONTEXT

1.1 Opportunity Youth (OY) is a charitable organisation, limited by guarantee. Since September 2007, OY has been approved by the Department for Employment and Learning (Department) to provide training through the Training for Success (TfS) programme in ten areas across Northern Ireland (NI).

1.2 Opportunity Youth was established in 1993 with the specific purpose of providing support services, through a peer education and youth work model, for disadvantaged and marginalised young people. The organisation has provided support to meet the needs of young people lacking in confidence, motivation or self-esteem, and those who have additional needs because of attitudinal, behavioural or social problems, to help them to maximise their potential. Since 1991, the organisation has achieved three National Training Awards for the peer education, positive steps and mentoring programmes.

1.3 Opportunity Youth is presently delivering training under the TfS programme, in five of the ten contract areas. These are: Antrim, Belfast, Londonderry, Newry and Rathcoole. Statistics available through the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency at the time of the inspection indicate that three of these district council areas are above the NI average claimant count rate of 2.8%, as well as being classified as areas of high social and economic deprivation. To date, there have been no referrals in the remaining contract areas of Castlereagh, Limavady, Lisburn, Omagh and Strabane.

1.4 Whilst the organisation has been successful in recruiting from both sections of the community, the majority of participants (67%) come from maintained post-primary schools in the contract areas. The majority (53%) of the participants are male. All participants on the programme present with a wide range of issues, including, family dysfunction, mental health, substance abuse, anti-social behaviour, criminal activity and homelessness.

1.5 The TfS programme is designed to enable participants to progress to higher level training, further education, or employment by providing training to address personal and social development needs, develop occupational skills and employability skills and, where necessary improve essential skills. In OY, the programme is delivered through three components. Skills for Your Life (SfYL) (formerly Personal Development), aimed at addressing the personal and development needs of young people who have disengaged from learning and/or have significant obstacles. Skills for Work (SfW), aimed at helping young people gain skills and a vocationally related qualification (VRQ) at level 1 to be able to gain employment, to progress to pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship provision, or to further education. The Pre-Apprenticeship (PA) programme, aimed at those who have been assessed as being capable of achieving a VRQ at level 2, but who have not yet secured employment, and prepares these young people for future progression.

1.6 The Chief Executive (CE) has responsibility for the day-to-day management of OY and has provided dedicated leadership to the organisation for the past 15 years. The CE reports directly on a monthly basis to a Board of Management, drawn mainly from the community, voluntary and statutory sectors. The Board of Management and the CE are committed to the personal and social development of all the participants, and work hard to promote training which assists them to proceed positively into early adulthood.

1.7 The overall academic profile of the participants on entry to the programme is poor. At the time of the inspection, nearly half of the participants had no formal qualifications and a significant minority (38%) had achieved General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) qualifications, or equivalent, at grades D to G. The remaining minority, (13%), held at least four GCSE qualifications at grades A* to C. Only a small number, 6% and 7% respectively held GCSE English and GCSE mathematics, at grade C or above.

2. PROVISION

2.1 The number of participants recruited to TfS programmes in OY has decreased during the two phases of the inspection from 80 to 69. Of these participants, 18 were registered on the SfYL programme, 21 on the SfW and four on the PA programme. The remaining 26 participants are recently recruited and are within their 12 week assessment period. Twenty participants have been recruited in Belfast, 18 in Newry, 17 in Londonderry, nine in Antrim and five in Rathcoole.

2.2 A standardised programme which focuses strongly on the development of personal and health education is delivered in a range of premises across the five locations. The majority of the participants attend OY for five days each week, while the remaining participants attend for four days. Only a minority (10%) presently spend one or two days each week on work placement. A significant number of participants have never experienced the world of work.

3. THE INSPECTION

3.1 An extended inspection was carried out in two phases during 2008: phase one was carried out in April 2008 and interim findings were shared with the organisation; and phase two was carried out in October 2008. The inspection focused on the quality of the training provided on the TfS programme across the organisation.

3.2 During the inspection, a team of four inspectors from the Education and Training Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) observed a total of 47 participants in directed training sessions and visited two participants in the workplace. Discussions were held with the CE, the programme co-ordinator and area managers responsible for training. In addition, interviews were held with OY peer educators/tutors, the essential skills tutor, employers and participants. The inspectors examined samples of participants' work, essential skills portfolios, minutes of management and team meetings, and other relevant documentation.

3.3 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for young people to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as interviews with groups of learners across the contract areas. All participants were issued with questionnaires; 82% were returned to the Inspectorate and 26 contained additional written comments, indicating that the majority of the participants enjoy being at

OY. A minority highlighted the lack of access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and the need for a range of more challenging activities to be provided. In their interviews, most participants talked enthusiastically about the support provided by the tutors, and from the discussions it is clear that they are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their care and well-being.

4. MAIN FINDINGS

4.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of training provided in this organisation is inadequate; the areas for improvement outweigh the strengths in the provision. The inspection has identified significant areas for improvement in standards, learning and training, and leadership and management, which need to be addressed urgently if the organisation is to meet effectively the needs of all the learners.

The Inspectorate will monitor and report regularly on the organisation's progress in addressing these areas for improvement, over a 12 – 18 month period.

4.2 The main strength is the:

- commitment of the staff to the emotional well-being of the participants.

4.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- overall strategic leadership and management of the TfS provision;
- planning at strategic and operational levels to ensure that all participants make sufficient progress in their training and learning, particularly the development of their employability and technical skills; and
- poor retention and success rates.

Table of Grades

Overall Grade	5
Contributory Grades:	
Leadership and Management	5
Achievements and Standards	5
Quality of Provision for Learning	5

Key for Grades:

Grade 1: Outstanding

Grade 2: Very Good

Grade 3: Good

Grade 4: Satisfactory

Grade 5: Inadequate

Grade 6: Unsatisfactory

PART TWO

OVERALL QUALITY OF PROVISION

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.1 The quality of the leadership and management of the TfS provision has significant shortcomings. Traditionally the organisation has been a youth work organisation which does not have a track record in the provision of formal training or an understanding of the key leadership and management functions to support the design, delivery and review of the curriculum. Subsequently, there is insufficient planning, reviewing and monitoring at both strategic and operational levels to ensure that all participants make sufficient progress in their training and learning, particularly in relation to the development of their employability and technical skills.

5.2 The current organisational structure inhibits effective internal communication and free flow of information to ensure clarity of understanding between OY and all the relevant stakeholders, including the staff, participants and employers. Respective roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined or understood by all participants.

5.3 There is limited understanding, at both a strategic and operational level, of the development planning process, including self-evaluation, action planning and quality assurance and improvement planning processes. The current quality assurance procedures do not sufficiently identify weaknesses in achievements and standards, or training and learning, nor do they involve sufficiently, the small number of employers with whom they work. Consequently, the quality assurance procedures are not effective in informing improvement planning. There is a poor match between the grades allocated by the management team and the Inspectorate. In the self-evaluation report provided prior to the inspection, the management team had allocated grades above those given by the inspection team.

5.4 At both strategic and operational level, insufficient emphasis is placed on the analysis and use of data relating to key performance indicators, including retention, success and progression rates. Furthermore, the present procedures for the collation of data within OY do not provide the management team with the accurate and timely information they require to make effective judgements on overall performance, and, as a result, do not contribute effectively to the development planning process.

5.5 Opportunity Youth is an Investors in People accredited organisation. All the staff are appropriately qualified in youth and community work. While continuous professional development is well supported by management, an increased focus is required to support the staff in developing appropriate pedagogical skills which would enable them to use a broader range of training and learning strategies.

5.6 The leadership and management of OY are committed to the pastoral care of all participants and they work hard to develop and maintain a strong ethos of care and support for all participants. The organisation has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department. The Inspectorate has reported to the CE the main issues emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions held with learners.

6. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

6.1 Almost all of the participants in OY commence their training with significant barriers to training and employment, and poor records of prior achievement. Across the contract areas, all participants are provided with strong pastoral support and, consequently, they report increased confidence and self-esteem due to participation in the programme. However, the timekeeping and attendance of the majority of participants at directed training are poor.

6.2 The standards of work achieved by most of the participants are poor because they are not provided with appropriate opportunities to become work ready. They require greater support from tutors to help them develop the occupational and personal skills required for the workplace. In contrast, the remaining minority of participants achieve good standards of work in the workplace and are able to perform a range of tasks and duties commensurate with level of ability.

6.3 Most participants demonstrate satisfactory oral communication skills and are able to engage effectively with tutors. In contrast, the standard of written communication is poor. There is little evidence of written work in participant portfolios, and where it is present, most display weaknesses in their spelling and grammar that are not addressed adequately.

6.4 Overall, the retention rate on the TfS programme is poor, at just above 50%. It is poor on the SfW and PA programmes at 34% and 56% respectively, and satisfactory at 70% on the SfYL.

6.5 The success rates for participants across TfS programmes are poor. Due to difficulties with OY becoming an accredited centre for the delivery of essential skills, no participant has yet achieved the essential skills component of the training programme.

6.6 Overall the average progression rate to further education, training and employment is satisfactory at 72%. Progression to further education and training is modest at 65%, whilst the rate to employment is poor at 7%.

7. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

7.1 The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the organisation is very good. There are good relationships between the tutors/peer mentors and the participants. The tutors work hard to support the welfare and emotional well-being of all the participants, many of whom have a diverse, and often challenging range of training and learning needs. The analysis of the participant questionnaires completed prior to the inspection indicates that most participants enjoy being at OY. They highlight in particular, the support and encouragement they receive from their tutors.

7.2 Although the induction procedures ensure participants are well informed about the administrative aspects of TfS, and the support services provided, there is insufficient focus on employability and technical skills, and their application to the world of work to enable participants to make sufficient progress in these areas.

7.3 Initial assessment is used to identify the literacy and numeracy levels, and personal and social skills of the participants. The organisation places considerable emphasis on promoting participants' personal and social development and various approaches are used to enable participants to identify their personal strengths and areas which require development. However, inadequate use is made of the information gained from initial assessment to meet the specific training and learning needs of individual participants. For example, in a small number of instances, no consideration has been taken of the achievement of participants who have attained GCSE in English and mathematics, at grade C or above.

7.4 There are significant areas for improvement in the quality of training and learning across the provision. In almost all the sessions inspected, the tutors use a narrow range of training and learning approaches to motivate participants, the pace of work is slow and presents insufficient challenge, and there is a lack of emphasis on differentiated learning tasks and planning for progression. Directed training to date has focused mainly on lifeskills, health education and essential skills. Opportunity Youth needs to place greater emphasis on preparing participants for work by providing them with opportunities to sample a broad range of vocational activities. In training sessions, there has been no opportunity to date for the young people on the SfW and PA programmes to undertake a technical certificate or a vocationally related qualification.

7.5 The quality of the workplace training is good for the minority of participants who are on work-placement. These placements provide good opportunities to develop the vocational skills needed for employment. Employers, however, are not aware of the content of the training programme, nor involved in the setting of short term training targets against which progress can be monitored. In addition, the training organisation needs to establish links with employers who are sympathetic towards young people with personal and social problems to extend the range of work placements available.

7.6 The management of the essential skills is poor across the TfS programme. The provision lacks coherence and is ineffective in supporting participants in the development of their literacy, numeracy and information technology skills.

7.7 The quality of the personal training plans is poor. They are not tailored to meet the personal, social or work related development needs of individuals as they do not contain clearly defined targets and outcomes which will help prepare participants for progression to higher level training, further education or employment.

7.8 The provision for careers education information advice and guidance is inadequate to ensure that all participants are fully equipped to make informed and realistic decisions about their education, training and employment options. There is an over reliance on the Careers Service for guidance.

7.9 The quality of the training accommodation is variable. While the majority of the training rooms are spacious and well maintained, there is a need to review and improve the quality of the training accommodation on the Antrim and Rathcoole sites, to ensure they provide an appropriate learning environment, including better ICT resources to support the training and learning needs of all the participants.

PART THREE

KEY PRIORITY FOR DEVELOPMENT

Opportunity Youth needs to revise its annual development plan to take account of the following key priority:

- a shift from a youth work/peer education focus to a structured training culture.

OVERALL SUMMARY TABLE – 2007/2008

Programme	Started (completed 4 weeks)	Retention Rate %	Success Rate %	Progressed to FE/other training	Progressed to relevant employment
Personal Development/Skills for Your Life	63	70%	0	4	3
Skills for Work	46	34%	0	9	
Pre-Apprenticeship	16	56%	0	4	1
Average		51%	0	65%	7%

All the figures included in the table were supplied by Opportunity Youth.

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