



Education and Training
Inspectorate

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

Report of an Inspection
in January 2012



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



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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%

All of the statistics in this report have been supplied and verified by Paragon Training.

Performance Levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate use the following performance levels in reports:

Performance Level
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

PART ONE: SUMMARY

1. CONTEXT

1.1 Paragon Training (NI) Limited (Paragon Training) was established in 1987, under the name of St Patrick's Community Enterprise, to provide training for young people in North and West Belfast. In 2000, the organisation changed its name to Paragon Services (NI) Limited and again in 2004 to Paragon Training (NI) Limited.

1.2 Paragon Training provides training for 251 apprentices and 19 trainees; it works with over 85 employers. The organisation has two offices, both are located in Belfast; the main office is in Northumberland Street, near the Falls Road and a second office has recently been opened on the Holywood Road in East Belfast. The organisation employs 29 staff.

1.3 Paragon Training is contracted by the Department for Employment and Learning (the Department) to supply training for the Training for Success and the ApprenticeshipsNI programmes. The organisation is contracted to offer, at level 2, business and administration, children's care, learning and development, customer service, health and social care, hospitality and catering, information technology (IT users), retail, warehousing and distribution and youthwork. Paragon Training is also contracted to offer health and social care and youthwork at level 3.

1.4 At the time of the inspection, 22 (9%) of the 251 apprentices had achieved at least four General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) passes at grades A*-C or equivalent on entry to their programme; 47 (19%) of them had achieved GCSE grades below this and 182 (73%) of them had no qualifications. A minority (18%) of the apprentices had achieved a GCSE at grade C or better in English and 33 (13%) of them had achieved a Grade C or better in mathematics; a minority (11%) of the apprentices had achieved a grade C or better in both English and mathematics.

1.5 Of the 19 trainees currently on the Training for Success programme, only one had achieved four or more passes at GCSE grades A*-C or equivalent on entry to their programme; 15 (79%) of them had achieved GCSE grades below this and three (16%) of them had no qualifications. One of the trainees had achieved a GCSE at grade C or better in English but none of the trainees had achieved a GCSE grade C or better in mathematics.

2. PROVISION

2.1 At the time of the inspection, Paragon Training was providing training for 251 apprentices, aged between 16 and 64 years. Of these, 3 (1%) were following level 2 apprenticeships in business and administration, 19 (8%) in children's care, learning and development, 55 (22%) in customer service, 69 (27%) in health and social care, 67 (27%) in hospitality and catering, and one in youthwork. There are currently no apprentices registered in information technology (IT users), retail or warehousing and distribution. Thirty-seven apprentices were following level 3 apprenticeships; of these, 30 (81%) were in health and social care and seven (19%) in youthwork. The majority (72%) of the apprentices are female.

2.2 Paragon Training was also providing training for 19 trainees registered on the Training for Success programme; 14 (74%) of them were on the Programme-Led apprenticeship strand and five (26%) on the Skills for Work strand. There were no trainees registered on the Skills for Your Life strand.

2.3 Following a period of relatively steady recruitment to the apprenticeship programmes, there has been a significant decrease in the number of enrolments. From 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011, a total of 318 apprentices were registered with Paragon Training, which has fallen to a total of 148 apprentices registered between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2012. Over the same period, the numbers registered on the Training for Success programme dropped from 34 to 19 trainees.

2.4 Almost all of the apprentices are existing employees who are employed in a variety of settings in small and medium-sized enterprises.

2.5 In the essential skills, 223 of the trainees and apprentices are undertaking essential skills training in communication, and 237 are undertaking numeracy; the remainder are exempt as a result of prior achievements. Seventeen of the Training for Success trainees are also undertaking essential skills training in information and communication technology (ICT).

2.6 Paragon Training is led by a managing director and general manager who are supported by five team leaders. The general manager is responsible for quality assurance. The team leaders are responsible for the co-ordination of their specific professional and technical areas.

2.7 Paragon Training operates a model of work-based training for apprentices where most aspects of training and assessment are provided by the professional and technical tutors, and the essential skills tutors, on the employers' premises. Occasionally the apprentices are brought together for group sessions on Paragon Training's premises.

3. THE INSPECTION

3.1 In January 2012, the Education and Training Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) carried out an inspection of the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes in Paragon Training. A team of seven inspectors, supported by two associate assessors, observed a total of 27 directed training sessions and a small number of workplace assessments. In addition, 76 apprentices and trainees were interviewed during on-the-job training. Extended discussions were held with the managing director, team leaders, professional and technical tutors, assessors and essential skills tutors. In addition, 40 employers were interviewed by the inspectors. The inspection team also examined samples of the trainees' and apprentices' work, portfolios of evidence and personal training plans (PTPs). The organisation's self-evaluation report and other relevant documentation were also scrutinised.

3.2 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and the safeguarding of vulnerable adults included the opportunity for the trainees and apprentices to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. One hundred and fifty questionnaires were issued to the trainees and apprentices, 102 (68%) of which were returned to the Inspectorate; 40 (39%) of these contained additional written comments. The inspection team also met with small groups of trainees and apprentices across the professional and technical areas. The returns to the questionnaires and the comments from the trainees and apprentices during discussions show clearly that almost all of them are very positive about their experiences in Paragon Training. In particular, they appreciate the caring attitude of the staff and the good support they receive within their training programmes. The Inspectorate has reported to the managing director the outcomes of the questionnaires and the discussions held with the trainees and apprentices.

4. MAIN FINDINGS

4.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of training provided by Paragon Training is good. The organisation has important strengths in most of its training and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which Paragon Training has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Inspectorate will monitor Paragon Training's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

4.2 The main strengths are the:

- effective partnerships with a wide range of employers, which provide very good opportunities for the apprentices to develop their technical knowledge and skills;
- good quality, well-planned and flexibly-delivered apprenticeship programmes;
- very good match between the qualifications undertaken by the apprentices and their job roles;
- good or better quality of the directed training in all of the sessions observed;
- very good quality of the pastoral care provided to the trainees and apprentices;
- effective upskilling of the apprentices, which results in increased levels of competence and confidence; and
- outstanding achievement and progression rates for those apprentices who complete their programmes.

4.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- further development of the quality assurance arrangements, in particular to strengthen the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes;
- development of the use of information and learning technology (ILT) and on-line resources to support the apprentices in their learning; and
- average rate of retention across the apprenticeship programmes and the rate of progression on the Programme-Led apprenticeships.

4.4 Table of Performance Levels

Overall performance level	Good
Contributory performance levels	
Leadership and Management	Good
Achievements and Standards	Good
Quality of Provision for Learning	Good
Area of Learning performance levels	
Children's Care, and Learning Development	Very good
Customer Services	Good
Essential Skills	Very good
Health and Social Care	Good
Hospitality and Catering	Good

PART TWO: OVERALL QUALITY OF PROVISION

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.1 The quality of the leadership and management of Paragon Training's ApprenticeshipsNI and Training for Success provision, at both strategic and operational levels, is good. The senior managers and the staff have established and developed effective partnerships with a large number of employers and have marketed the ApprenticeshipsNI provision to good effect to a wide range of large, medium and small organisations and businesses.

5.2 The managing director has overall responsibility for the strategic management of the organisation and she is ably assisted by the general manager who has primary responsibility at an operational level. Paragon Training has recently restructured its management arrangements and has appointed team leaders for each of the areas and for the essential skills; the roles and responsibilities of the managers and tutors are clearly defined. The team leaders are responsible for co-ordination of their professional and technical areas; they meet regularly with their team members and both individually and collectively with the general manager. There are open channels of communication between staff at all levels and clear evidence of strong and effective teamwork.

5.3 The organisation provides ApprenticeshipsNI training in a wide range of areas in customer service and hospitality and catering to businesses including: bars; restaurants; hotels; dental surgeries; and residential and nursing homes. They also provide apprenticeships in children's care, learning and development in private day care settings and, in health and social care, in both domiciliary and residential care settings. Almost all of the employers report that their employees benefit significantly from their training.

5.4 The planning of the provision in Paragon Training is good and ensures that most of the apprentices have appropriate opportunities to develop their professional and technical skills. The provision is characterised by its flexibility; the tutors work closely with the employers to match the content, time and location of training to the business needs of the organisation. Consequently, there is appropriate variation in the frequency and location of the training and the provision is matched well to the needs of the employers. In children's care, learning and development and health and social care, good progress has been made in the development and implementation of the qualifications linked to the Qualifications and Credit Framework. As a result of a recent review of provision across the organisation, the essential skills are now delivered at an early stage in the trainees' and apprentices' training and are integrated well into most of the training programmes. Whilst the number of trainees on the Training for Success programmes is small, all are in appropriate work placements.

5.5 The self-evaluation process in Paragon Training is satisfactory. While the staff are committed to, and engage well in the improvement process, the self-evaluation reports are not sufficiently evaluative and do not highlight well enough the strengths and areas for improvement within the individual professional and technical areas and in the essential skills. In particular, the use of data on retention is not analysed sufficiently in order to inform improvement planning and the impact of the strategies for improvement. There is a need for further staff development to ensure that members of staff across the organisation have a clear understanding of self-evaluation and how the analysis and use of key performance indicators can inform action for improvement.

5.6 Most of the apprentices are visited regularly in the workplace to plan and assess their learning, review their progress and observe their performance. There are very good relationships with most of the employers and in the majority of the professional and technical areas they are involved effectively in the monitoring and review of the apprentices' progress.

Most of the employers receive clear information about all aspects of the training at the commencement of the training programme, which promotes good integration of on-the-job and off-the-job training. The organisation wide procedures for monitoring and tracking the apprentices' progress towards the achievement of their qualification frameworks are underdeveloped and this is an issue that requires attention by management.

5.7 Over the last few years, Paragon Training has made a significant investment in the appointment of an appropriate number of well-qualified full-time staff, including a dedicated counsellor, to meet the growth in the provision and to address effectively the individual needs of the apprentices. The records of staff training demonstrate clearly the organisation's commitment to the continuous professional development of their staff. The arrangements for the induction of newly appointed tutors, and opportunities for almost all of the staff who have been in post for some time to update their qualifications and industrial experiences, are good. However, a small number of staff in hospitality and catering who have not had recent industrial experience would benefit from the opportunity to update their knowledge and understanding of contemporary industry practice.

5.8 The quality of the training accommodation and equipment provided for most of the trainees and apprentices in Paragon Training is generally of a good standard and is well-maintained. The organisation has recently acquired modern new premises in East Belfast which align well with the organisation's plans to expand its ApprenticeshipsNI and Training for Success provision in this area. Most of the apprenticeship training takes place on the employers' premises and most of the apprentices have access to an appropriate range of resources. There is a need, however, to increase the provision of information and learning technologies (ILT), for example, electronic whiteboards, mobile technologies and a virtual learning environment to provide further support for the tutors and apprentices in their teaching, training and learning across most of the professional and technical areas.

6. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

6.1 Overall, the quality of the provision for learning in Paragon Training is good. The relationships between the tutors and the trainees and apprentices are strong and are firmly based on mutual respect. Most of the tutors are experienced and deliver well-planned directed training which is characterised by an appropriate level of challenge. In all of the directed training sessions observed, the quality of the training and learning was good or better, and in the majority (60%) of the sessions observed it was very good.

6.2 The qualifications undertaken by the apprentices match their job roles well. Most of the directed training is delivered in the workplace and in these sessions, which are mostly one-to-one, the tutors use an appropriate range of training methods including wide-ranging discussions and probing questioning to identify and further develop the apprentices' knowledge and understanding of their professional and technical area. In health and social care, the tutors have developed effective group learning sessions which enable apprentices to learn from each other, and there is a need for this practice to be extended to the other professional and technical areas to increase the opportunities for peer and group learning.

6.3 Most of the trainees and apprentices report that they found their induction to be useful, and it is clear they have a good understanding of the structure of their training programme including, where appropriate, the requirement for essential skills.

6.4 Over the past year, Paragon Training has brought forward, to good effect, the delivery of the trainees' and apprentices' essential skills to an earlier point in their training programme. In addition, during the initial assessment process, the essential skills tutors work with the apprentices and trainees to ascertain their perceptions of how the essential skills may act as a barrier to their learning, and to implement strategies to overcome any

concerns. As a result, the trainees and apprentices view the essential skills as an integral part of their training and are encouraged to complete their full framework. In essential skills, the tutors carry out robust initial assessments to identify the trainees' and apprentices' strengths and weaknesses in literacy, numeracy and ICT. The quality of most the directed training observed in essential skills is very good. The use of group learning plans, however, is underdeveloped; they are not used sufficiently to capture fully the results of initial and diagnostic assessments and inform planning, monitor case loads and track the progress being made. The tutors have high expectations of the trainees and apprentices and it is noteworthy that approximately one-third of the trainees and apprentices are working at an essential skills level above the requirements of their framework.

6.5 Information and learning technology (ILT) and on-line resources are used well in children's care, learning and development and in health and social care to research relevant web-sites and access good quality learning materials. In hospitality and catering and customer service, the use of ILT is underdeveloped and there are missed opportunities for the trainees and apprentices to consolidate their learning and to work independently by accessing appropriate learning materials posted by the tutors and to communicate and stay in regular contact with them.

6.6 Assessment arrangements are mostly good. The trainees' and apprentices' portfolios are well organised and internal verification procedures are rigorous in most of the professional and technical areas. In contrast, the principle of marking for improvement is not applied consistently across the provision. In essential skills, the tutors regularly correct the trainees' and apprentices' work. In most of the professional and technical areas, however, the tutors do not have a consistent approach to marking and, as a result the trainees and apprentices are not always made aware of spelling and grammatical errors in their writing.

6.7 The quality of the personal training plans for the majority of the trainees and apprentices is good and the employers contribute effectively to the review and monitoring process. The plans are well-structured and updated regularly to reflect the trainees' and apprentices' progress in their acquisition and application of their occupational skills, framework qualifications, and recording additional qualifications gained in the workplace. In contrast, for a minority of trainees and apprentices, the information held within the personal training plans is insufficient and does not reflect accurately the qualifications held by them. In addition, these plans do not involve the employers sufficiently, nor do they set clear enough training and progress targets for the trainees and apprentices.

6.8 The tutors provide very good support and guidance to the trainees and apprentices, in particular those apprentices who are returning to education and training after a considerable time. For example, one apprentice with dyslexia was provided with outstanding additional support and as a result of successfully completing his qualification was promoted from kitchen assistant to chef in a residential home. Paragon Training has employed a counsellor who provides very good support for individual trainees and apprentices; the counsellor sensitively provides support and guidance and directs trainees and apprentices who require further help to an appropriate range of personal and social services.

6.9 The quality of the careers education, information, advice and guidance is satisfactory. Whilst most of the trainees and apprentices are provided with appropriate guidance on the completion of a career planning portfolio, a minority of them are not sufficiently aware of the career progression pathways available to them within their professional and technical area.

6.10 Paragon Training promotes effectively the safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults. The arrangements for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults comply satisfactorily with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007.

7. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

7.1 The achievements and standards in Paragon Training range from good to very good and are mostly good. In children's care, learning and development and the essential skills, most of the trainees and apprentices demonstrate very good standards of work.

7.2 The delivery of the apprenticeship programmes in Paragon Training is particularly effective in upskilling mature apprentices who are returning to training after a significant period away from formal education. These apprentices are provided with good opportunities to consolidate their existing competences, attain new qualifications and update their occupational and essential skills. As a result, they become more knowledgeable and self-confident and develop an interest in pursuing further their learning.

7.3 Most of the trainees and apprentices are well-motivated and enthusiastic; they enjoy their training and learning and make appropriate progress, at a pace and level in line with their prior achievement.

7.4 During the last two years, Paragon Training has appropriately identified the need to improve the rates of retention across the provision and has worked hard to reduce the numbers of trainees and apprentices leaving their programmes prior to completion. There is clear evidence to show that the strategy which was implemented, in particular the introduction of the essential skills provision earlier in the programme, has improved the apprentices' progress in their professional and technical training and has resulted in improvements in their confidence levels, writing skills and mathematical skills. The retention rates for the ApprenticeshipsNI programmes have improved considerably, from 54% during the 2007/08 year to 72% in 2010/11.

7.5 During the period 2007/08 to 2010/11, the overall retention rate on the ApprenticeshipsNI programmes is satisfactory at 65% and the achievement rate is outstanding at 100% for those who are retained; progression to further education or training is also outstanding at 96%. Over the same period, the overall retention rate on the Training for Success programmes is good at 64% and the achievement rate is outstanding at 100%; progression, however, is inadequate at 57%.

7.6 For those apprentices and trainees who have completed their essential skills programmes, overall achievements in both literacy and numeracy for the period 2007/08 to 2010/11 are outstanding at 100%. As approximately one-third of the trainees and apprentices are working at a level beyond that required in their framework, this is a considerable achievement.

7.7 Paragon Training has worked closely with other local training providers, who hold Level 3 contracts, to develop appropriate progression routes for the trainees and apprentices. Whilst these arrangements have proved successful in the ApprenticeshipsNI programmes, the progression routes for the Skills for Work trainees and the Programme-Led apprentices are under-developed and this is an issue which needs to be addressed by the senior managers.

PART THREE: PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL AREA REPORTS

8. CHILDREN'S CARE, LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

MAIN FINDINGS

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

8.2 Recruitment to the children's care, learning and development programme is steady; approximately ten trainees or apprentices are recruited each year. At the time of the inspection, there were 19 apprentices on the level 2 ApprenticeshipsNI programme, and three trainees on each of the Programme-Led apprenticeship and Skills for Work strands of Training for Success.

8.3 The quality of the leadership and management is very good. There are well-managed links and strong partnerships with a good range of employers. The employers value highly the opportunity to participate in the apprentices' training and contribute well to the review and monitoring of their progress.

8.4 The quality of the curriculum planning is very good. The tutors have made very good progress in implementing the Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) qualifications at Level 2. There are very good working relationships between the trainees and apprentices and the tutors. The tutors encourage the trainees and apprentices to become reflective practitioners through appropriate use of reflective accounts and the rigorous marking of their assignments with constructive feedback.

8.5 The quality of the trainees' and apprentices' provision for learning is very good. Most are provided with regular and well-planned directed training, which is tailored appropriately to their work roles and routines. In the sessions observed, the quality of the directed training ranged from good to outstanding. Through well-structured tutor presentations, online research, effective questioning and independent completion of workbooks, the trainees and apprentices make very good progress in developing their knowledge of the key principles of children's care, learning and development.

8.6 Assessment arrangements are very good. The QCF assessments are well-planned and make effective use of a wide range of evidence. The apprentices are provided with comprehensive verbal and written feedback and where marking for improvement is included it is very good. To develop the provision further, all tutors should develop a policy for marking for improvement in order to develop a more consistent approach to marking.

8.7 The standards achieved by all of the trainees and apprentices range from very good to outstanding. The trainees and apprentices develop a good understanding of the principles of good practice in childcare and of children's learning and development, which they are able to apply appropriately and demonstrate effectively in their workplaces.

8.8 Over the last four years, the retention rate for the level 2 apprenticeship is very good at 88%, and the achievement and progression rates are both outstanding at 100%. In contrast, the progression rate for Skills for Work is inadequate at 54%.

Table of Achievements over the last four years.

Programme/Strand	Numbers registered who completed 4 weeks training	Retention rate %	Achievement rate %	Progression rate for those who achieved full award %
Skills For Work	32	78	100	54
Programme-Led apprenticeship	7	57	100	0
Apprenticeships NI Level 2	33	88	100	100

9. CUSTOMER SERVICE

MAIN FINDINGS

9.1 In customer service, the quality of training provided by Paragon Training is good.

9.2 Annual recruitment to the ApprenticeshipsNI programme has increased significantly over the last two years. Currently, there are 55 apprentices on the level 2 ApprenticeshipsNI programme but no trainees on the Training for Success strands.

9.3 The quality of the leadership and management is good. There is a coherent and flexible training programme that meets well most of the apprentices', and their employers', training and business needs. A small number of the apprentices hold existing vocational qualifications in this area and are inappropriately registered on the programme. There are well-managed links and partnerships with a range of employers, including national franchised businesses, to support workforce development. The tutors' vocational qualifications are satisfactory; it is appropriate that a staff development programme is being implemented to enhance both their customer service and their teaching qualifications.

9.4 The self-evaluation and development planning is satisfactory. The evaluation report is overly descriptive and fails to identify clearly areas for development.

9.5 The quality of the apprentices' provision for learning is good. Most are provided with regular and well-planned directed training, which is tailored appropriately to their work roles and routines. The absence of a robust planning and tracking system has, however, led to irregular scheduling of directed training and progress monitoring for a minority of the apprentices. The apprentices' directed training is good. Through well-structured tutor presentations, effective questioning and independent completion of workbooks, they make good progress in developing their knowledge of the key principles of effective customer service. Assessment arrangements are good. The National Vocational Qualification assessments are well-planned and make effective use of a wide range of evidence. Although apprentices are provided with comprehensive verbal feedback, written feedback and marking for improvement of their written work is inconsistent.

9.6 The standards achieved by most of the apprentices are good or better. They develop a good understanding of effective customer service techniques, which they are able to apply and demonstrate in their workplace. In particular, they consolidate their existing strengths and improve their self-confidence to address any weaknesses identified during training. Over the last four years, the retention rate is good at 74%, achievement and progression rates are both outstanding at 100%.

Table of Achievements over the last four years.

Programme/ Strand	Numbers registered who completed 4 weeks training	Retention rate %	Achievement rate %	Progression rate for those who achieved full award %
ApprenticeshipsNI Level 2	62	74	100	100

10. ESSENTIAL SKILLS

MAIN FINDINGS

10.1 In the essential skills, the quality of training provided by Paragon Training is very good.

10.2 Paragon Training deliver the essential skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) to over 230 trainees and apprentices.

10.3 The quality of the leadership and management of the essential skills provision is good. The essential skills tutors are led effectively. Each professional and technical area is assigned an essential skills tutor who works closely with the professional and technical tutors. As a result, good contextualised materials have been developed to deliver and assess the essential skills in appropriate contexts. Nearly all of the trainees receive regular essential skills training, although better tracking is required to identify and take action on the small number trainees who are not receiving training regularly enough. At present, one-half of the essential skills tutors deliver more than one essential skill and a further two tutors are completing qualifications to allow them to deliver a second essential skill. This provides for good flexibility and allows for tutors who have already developed relationships with the trainees to deliver another essential skill area.

10.4 The quality of provision for learning is very good. All of the directed training observed is good or better, most being very good. The sessions are characterised by very good relationships. The trainees and apprentices are supported very well and the tutors have high expectations of them. Most tutors deploy a very good range of activities to engage the trainees and apprentices including discussions, questioning, and brain-storming and vocational and personal contexts are used well to develop and extend their skills. During induction, trainees and apprentices are encouraged to identify and discuss their fears and concerns about English and mathematics which enables the tutor to address their doubts at an early stage.

10.5 Achievements and standards are very good. The quality of the trainees' and apprentices' work is good or better with clear evidence of marking for improvement by the essential skills tutors. However, the marking for improvement in vocational work is variable, although most is good. The success rate in the essential skills is outstanding at 100% across all vocational areas, with approximately one-third of the trainees and apprentices working at a level beyond that which is required in their framework.

11. HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

MAIN FINDINGS

11.1 In health and social care, the quality of training provided by Paragon Training is good.

11.2 Paragon Training introduced the ApprenticeshipsNI programme in health and social care in 2007. Since that time, 358 apprentices have been recruited to the programme, from a wide range of local health and social care organisations.

11.3 The quality of the leadership and management of the ApprenticeshipsNI programme in health and social care is good. The detailed planning, good levels of support provided by professional and technical and essential skills tutors, and the high levels of employer engagement, combine to create a strong provision in this professional and technical area. The health and social care tutors work well as a team and are developing and sharing resources to support the delivery of the new level 2 and 3 qualifications.

11.4 The quality of the provision for learning is very good. The tutors are very well-qualified, highly experienced and committed to the development of good practice in health and social care. The programme is delivered in the workplace and effective working relationships have been developed with almost all employers, who are actively involved in reviewing the progress made by the trainees and apprentices. Recently, work has been undertaken by the health and social care team in conjunction with the essential skills tutors to integrate the essential skills into the provision from a very early stage of delivery, in order to improve retention rates. The high expectations of the trainees and apprentices, which underpin the entire training programme, are reflected in the fact that a minority (24%) of them achieve levels in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology above those required by their training framework.

11.5 The health and social care tutors provide good levels of support for trainees and apprentices and ensure that they develop a clear understanding of the principles of good practice in their work with clients. The standards of work in the trainees' and apprentices' portfolios are mostly good and reflect their understanding of the need for sensitive approaches and person-centred practices. While essential skills tutors make appropriate corrections to the apprentices' written work, there is a need for professional and technical tutors to also implement a marking for improvement policy to further improve the trainees' and apprentices' spelling and grammar.

11.6 There are good levels of engagement with the employers and they contribute effectively to the establishment of training targets and the review and monitoring of the progress of the trainees and apprentices. The majority of the trainees and apprentices have opportunities to gain relevant additional qualifications, including lifting and moving, basic food hygiene and first aid. Almost all trainees, apprentices and employers report improved levels of skills, knowledge and understanding as a result of engaging in the programme.

11.7 Over the last four years, the average retention rate is satisfactory 68% for level 2 apprentices and good at 73% for level 3 apprentices. Retention rates are, however, improving to good at 76% and very good at 88% for level 2 and 3 apprentices respectively. The achievement and progression rates are outstanding across all strands of the provision.

Table of Achievements over the last four years.

Strand	Numbers Registered Who Completed 4 Weeks Training	Retention Rate %	Achievement Rate %	Progression Rate for those Who Achieved Full Award %
Skills for Work	2	50	100	0
Programme-Led apprenticeship	2	50	100	100
ApprenticeshipsNI level 2	281	68	100	97
ApprenticeshipsNI level 3	77	73	100	100

12. HOSPITALITY AND CATERING

MAIN FINDINGS

12.1 In hospitality and catering, the quality of training provided by Paragon Training is good.

12.2 The recruitment to the ApprenticeshipsNI programme has more than doubled, from 38 apprentices in 2007/08 to 86 apprentices in 2010/11. Currently there are 67 apprentices registered on the level 2 ApprenticeshipsNI programme and 1 Programme-Led apprentice.

12.3 The quality of leadership and management is good. The tutors have good opportunities to develop their professional understanding of the assessment requirements for the revised occupational standards during regular team meetings and through external training. Whilst the tutors are suitably qualified, there is a need for them to have the opportunity to undertake appropriate industrial placements in relevant settings to update their knowledge and understanding of the latest developments in contemporary hospitality and catering. Effective partnerships have been developed with a wide range of employers who provide good opportunities for the apprentices to develop their knowledge of the industry and improve their occupational skills. The frequency, regularity and quality of engagement with employers are very good.

12.4 The quality of the provision for learning is good. The ApprenticeshipsNI provision is well matched to the work roles of the apprentices, many of whom are in promoted posts as a result of their engagement in the programme. The quality of the directed training is good or better; it is characterised by appropriate planning, effective use of questioning and the use of a broad range of training and learning approaches. The use of ILT to enhance the quality of training and learning is, however, underdeveloped across the provision. Assessment is well-planned.

12.5 The quality of the learning experiences for the apprentices is mostly good. The apprentices report high levels of satisfaction with the flexible training sessions that are provided in the workplace and with the very good support and positive encouragement provided by the staff in Paragon Training. The tutors are working hard to embed the essential skills provision into the professional and technical training for the apprentices. The quality of the personal training plans is satisfactory; they lack consistency and the reviews do not include specific short-term training targets against which apprentices' progress can be measured.

12.6 Most of the apprentices demonstrate good standards of occupational competence in the workplace and are sufficiently confident to discuss relevant legislation, food and safety requirements and their health and safety duty by law. The retention rate over the last four years rate on the apprenticeship programme is inadequate at 57%, but has improved to satisfactory at 64% during 2010-2011. The achievement and progression rates are outstanding at 100% and 94% respectively.

Table of Achievements over the last four years.

Programme/Stand	Numbers registered who completed 4 weeks training	Retention rate %	Achievement rate %	Progression rate for those who achieved full award %
Skills for Work	4	0	0	0
Apprenticeships NI Level 2	235	57	100	94

PART FOUR: CONCLUSION AND KEY PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

13. CONCLUSION

13.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of training provided by Paragon Training is good. The organisation has important strengths in most of its training and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which Paragon Training has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Inspectorate will monitor Paragon Training's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

14. KEY PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

14.1 There is a need for Paragon Training to revise its annual quality improvement plan to take account of the following key priorities for development:

- the development of improved procedures for the self-evaluation of the individual professional and technical areas, the essential skills and the overall provision;
- the further embedding of strategies to further improve retention across all the programmes; and
- the development of the use of ILT, and on-line resources to further support the apprentices in their learning.

APPENDIX

Table 1: Training for Success: Averages over the last four years (2007-2011)

Programme/Strand	Numbers registered who completed 4 weeks training	Retention Rate %	Achievement Rate %	Progression Rate for those who achieved full award %
Skills for Work	86	64	100	60
Programme-Led apprenticeships	19	63	100	36
Overall Totals		64	100	57

Table 2: ApprenticeshipsNI: Averages over the last four years (2007-2011)

Programme/Strand	Numbers registered who completed 4 weeks training	Retention Rate %	Achievement Rate %	Progression Rate for those who achieved full award %
ApprenticeshipsNI level 2	694	64	100	96
ApprenticeshipsNI level 3	89	71	100	100
Overall Totals		65	100	96

Note: 1. All data sourced from Paragon Training at the time of the inspection.
2. Achievement rates are for the full framework.

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