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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

Fermanagh University Partnership Board
New Deal Consortia

Inspected: May 2007

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

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

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

Grading System

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

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

PART ONE

SUMMARY

1. CONTEXT

1.1 Fermanagh University Partnership Board is contracted by the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) to provide New Deal 18 to 24 and 25+ programmes in the Fermanagh District Council area. Fermanagh College (FC) has been the Lead Partner for the New Deal consortia since June 2006. Previously the consortium was led by Fermanagh Training Limited and FC from the introduction of the New Deal initiative in 1998. There are presently five other members of the consortium: the Conservation Volunteers Northern Ireland (CVNI), Fermanagh Rural Community Initiative (FRCI), Pobal Fermanagh (PF), Rutledge Joblink Enniskillen (RJE) and the Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT). Rutledge Joblink Enniskillen joined the consortium this year however, the size of the consortium has reduced over the past three years as a result of the closure of Enterprise Ulster, Fermanagh Training Limited and Community Training Research Services. Pobal Fermanagh have no participants registered and have not signed the current contract extension.

1.2 The Training and Business Development Manager is responsible for the management of all New Deal programmes and is well supported by the Administration Manager and the New Deal administrator. The College's Quality Co-ordinator is providing support on self-evaluation to the consortia.

1.3 Over the last three years, figures supplied by DEL indicate the number of leavers has decreased from 188 across the period April 2003 to March 2004, to 159 in the period April 2005 to March 2006.

1.4 The claimant count figures published by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) indicate that the claimant count rate in Fermanagh is 2.4% which is slightly below the Northern Ireland average of 3.0%

1.5 A majority (63%) of participants have no qualifications on entry to the programme. A minority (12%) of participants have achieved at least four General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) on entry to the programme. The remaining 25% have fewer than four GCSEs.

2. PROVISION

2.1 At the time of the inspection, there were 35 participants registered with the consortium. Ten participants were registered on the 18 to 24 options: four on Full-Time Education and Training (FTET), four on the Voluntary Sector option (VS) and two on Essential Skills Training (EST). Seventeen participants were registered on the 25+ options: five on the Education and Training option (ETO), two on EST, and ten on the Preparation for Employment Programme (PEP). The remaining eight participants were registered on the PEP for 50+.

2.2 The majority of the participants are registered with FRCI. At the time of the inspection FRCI had 27 participants, FC had three participants, RJE had two participants, WHCST had two participants and CVNI had one participant registered.

2.3 Participants on the FTET and the ETO option are working towards a range of qualifications and National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) units at both level 2 and level 3. The qualifications being targeted include the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL), New Clait and essential skills. The other participants are working towards NVQs in Children's Care Learning and Development (CCLD), Wood Occupations and Health and Social Care. The majority of the participants are targeting the full NVQ qualification, the remaining are targeting three units of the qualification. The participants on the EST option are targeting appropriate essential skills qualifications in literacy. Most of the participants on the PEP are placed with local employers.

3. THE INSPECTION

3.1 This report is based on an inspection of the participants' practical and written work, and of their directed and work-based training across all the options for 18-24 year olds and for those aged 25 and over.

3.2 During the inspection, a team of two inspectors observed six participants in directed training and visited 15 participants in the workplace.

3.3 Prior to the inspection approximately 50% of the participants completed a questionnaire, which provided them with the opportunity to comment on the quality of the training experiences.

4. MAIN FINDINGS

4.1 In the areas inspected, the organisation has strengths in key aspects of its educational and training provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in important aspects of provision, which need to be addressed to meet effectively the needs of all the learners, and the needs of the community and the economy. The Inspectorate will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing these areas for improvement.

4.2 The main strengths are the:

- lead partner's effective operational and administrative arrangements;
- thorough monitoring and tracking of participants' progress through the monthly consortium meetings;
- good relationships between consortium members;
- quality of links with voluntary groups, business and industry;
- good timekeeping and attendance of the majority of participants;
- standards of almost all the participants' motivation and work readiness are very good on the FTET, VS and the ETO options;

- good standards of work which is demonstrated by most participants in the workplace;
- average progression rates to sustained employment for participants on the New Deal for 18 to 24 year olds at 27% which is above the Northern Ireland average for all consortia of 18%;
- strong ethos which assist participants to progress towards their identified targets;
- high levels of support provided for individual participants by consortium members; and
- good quality of the workplace training for most participants inspected, including those on the PEP option.

4.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- provision of a fuller range of additional accredited short courses for participants;
- need to involve employers more fully in the setting of short term targets for the participants;
- the consortium procedures to ensure the well being of participants who have personal and social problems;
- careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEAIG) process which is underdeveloped within the consortium, and needs to be addressed in a more consistent and coherent fashion;
- small numbers on Essential Skills training;
- low success rates on the ETO option;
- improvement of the initial assessment process for participants;
- need to ensure the individual learning and development plans reflect the full range of participants' social and training needs and identify appropriate methodologies to address these needs;
- insufficient challenge for the more able participants on the FTET programme and participants on the NVQ level 3 CCLD programme; and
- insufficient emphasis on differentiated training and learning in a small number of directed training sessions.

Table of Grades

Grades	Revised Grading System	Original Grading System
Overall Grade	4	2
Contributory grades:		
Standards and Outcomes	4	2
Training and Learning	4	2
Leadership and Management	4	2

PART TWO

OVERALL QUALITY OF PROVISION

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.1 The lead partner has effective operational and administrative arrangements in place. There are monthly administration meetings where participants' progress is monitored and tracked. Regular quarterly management meetings are held to review and plan the operation of the consortium. All meetings are well attended by most consortium members with the New Deal team leader attending the quarterly meetings.

5.2 There are good working relationships between consortium members however these relationships need to be developed to identify and share good practice across the consortium. The consortium has good links with a wide range of voluntary organisations, business and industry.

5.3 There are some opportunities for participants to achieve additional qualifications including First Aid, Health and Safety and food hygiene certificates. However, there is a need to provide additional accredited short courses to meet the needs of participants on the PEP option.

5.4 The participants are visited regularly in the workplace to review their progress however employers need to be involved more fully in the setting of short term targets.

5.5 The CEAIG process is underdeveloped within the consortium and needs to be addressed in a more consistent and coherent fashion.

5.6 All the consortium members are committed to the participants; however, there are a small number of participants who have personal and social problems and the practices and procedures to ensure their well being vary between the consortium members.

5.7 The self-evaluation and development planning process has mostly been carried out rigorously and effectively. There is a satisfactory match between the self evaluation report and the findings of the Inspectorate. The Colleges Quality co-ordinator is presently compiling the self-evaluation and development plan for the consortium.

6. STANDARDS AND OUTCOMES

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

6.2 The standards of almost all of the participants' motivation and work readiness are very good on the FTET, VS option and the ETO options. A small number, however, have multiple barriers to employment including personal and social problems, this is reflected in their attitude towards the programme.

6.3 Most participants were carrying out a variety of tasks in the workplace to a good standard and have good opportunities to develop their employability skills in the workplace. They have established good working relationships with their colleagues and work effectively as team members. For PEP participants, the tasks included cleaning cars, van deliveries, store work, shop work and horticulture operations.

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

6.5 The numbers recruited to the EST option are small with only 33 participants being recruited over the past four years representing approximately 6% of the total number of participants. Only one participant on the EST option progressed to sustained employment during this period.

6.6 The success rate for participants on the ETO option is very low with only 8% achieving their target qualifications over the last four years.

6.7 During the period April 2003 to September 2006, the figures provided by the DEL show 193 leavers from the 18-24 New Deal options with progression to sustained employment at 27%. This compares favourably with the Northern Ireland (NI) average of 18% across all consortia.

6.8 Across the same period, the figures provided by the DEL show 357 leavers from the 25+ New Deal options with progression to sustained employment at 12%. This is slightly above the NI average of 10% across all consortia.

7. QUALITY OF TRAINING AND LEARNING

7.1 The analysis of the trainee questionnaires, completed prior to the inspection indicates that most of the participants (87%) are satisfied with their training experiences.

7.2 All the consortium members have a strong caring and supportive ethos that provides a friendly and helpful environment which encourages participants to progress towards their identified targets. Good relationships exist between almost all the participants, staff members and employers, across all of the New Deal options.

7.3 The individual learning and development plans (ILDLP) tend to be generic and do not reflect the full range of participants' social and training needs. The screening, initial assessment and diagnostic assessment processes vary across the consortium members. An agreed process needs to be applied consistently across the consortium to identify the participants' personal and training needs to inform the ILDPs and to put in place appropriate methodologies to address these needs.

7.4 The quality of the directed training sessions ranges from satisfactory to good across the options inspected. The tutors are well prepared however, there is insufficient emphasis on differentiated training and learning and consequently, in some cases, there is an insufficient degree of challenge for the more able participants, particularly for those participants who are on the FTET option and the participants working towards the NVQ level 3 CCLD.

7.5 The quality of the workplace training is good or excellent for most of the participants and is matched well to their aptitudes, abilities and career aspirations. The majority of participants on the PEP option have good opportunities and are sufficiently challenged by their workplace experiences.

PART THREE

KEY PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Fermanagh University Partnership Board needs to revise its annual development plan to take account of the following key priorities for development:

- the improvement of the initial assessment process to ensure the individual learning and development plans reflect the full range of participants' social and training needs with appropriate methodologies to address these needs;
- the implementation of a consistent and coherent CEIAG process within the consortium;
- the provision of further additional accredited short courses for participants; and
- standardise the consortium procedures to ensure the well being of participants who have personal and social problems to reflect best practice.

APPENDIX

Statistics supplied by the DEL for Fermanagh University Partnership Board New Deal Consortium

Table 1 – 18-24

Period	Number of Leavers	Progressed to sustained employment
April 2003- September 2006	193	27%

Table 2 – 25+

Period	Number of Leavers	Progressed to sustained employment
April 2003- September 2006	357	12%

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