



Education and Training
Inspectorate

ApprenticeshipsNI and Training for Success Provision in Transport Training Services Limited

Report of an Inspection
in April 2011

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Quantitative Terms

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 the statistics in this report have been supplied and verified by Transport Training Services Limited

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 Transport Training Services Limited (Transport Training Services), which was established in 2009, is a private limited company. Prior to 2009, Transport Training Services was a subsidiary company of the Transport Training Board for Northern Ireland, a registered charitable organisation. In 2009, four of the management staff purchased Transport Training Services through a management buy out, to form the private limited company. It is contracted by the Department for Employment and Learning (the Department) to supply training for the Department's Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes at level 2 in the professional and technical areas of transportation and maintenance and warehousing and distribution, across all of Northern Ireland. In addition, Transport Training Services delivers level 3 ApprenticeshipsNI programmes in vehicle body repair and refinishing across all of Northern Ireland, and in light and heavy vehicle maintenance and repair in the Downpatrick council area.

1.2 Transport Training Services is located at Nutts Corner, approximately three miles from Belfast International Airport, County Antrim. The four management staff who took ownership of Transport Training Services are currently executive directors, with responsibilities for strategic management, finance, administration, business development, and technical training. They are supported by a non-executive chairman, four full-time tutors, two part-time tutors, and two administrative staff. Transport Training Services has sub-contract arrangements in place with two regional colleges, a private training organisation, and with two vehicle manufacturers' specialist training providers located in England.

1.3 At the time of the inspection, Transport Training Services was providing training for a total of 108 apprentices and trainees. Of these, 103 (98%) apprentices were on ApprenticeshipsNI programmes, and five (2%) trainees were on the Training for Success Programme-led Apprenticeship programme. All of the apprentices and trainees are male. On entry to their programme, just over one-half (55%) of the apprentices had achieved at least a General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) pass at grade C or above in English, and approximately two-thirds (65%) of them had achieved a GCSE pass at grade C or above in mathematics.

2. PROVISION

2.1 At the time of the inspection, there were 85 apprentices on level 2 programmes; 35 (41%) were registered on an ApprenticeshipsNI programme in light vehicle maintenance and repair, 12 (14%) in heavy vehicle maintenance and repair, 19 (22%) in vehicle body repair and refinishing, four (5%) in passenger carrying vehicle driving, and 15 (18%) in warehousing and distribution. There were 18 apprentices registered on level 3 ApprenticeshipsNI programmes; 17 (95%) in vehicle body repair and refinishing, and one (5%) in light vehicle maintenance and repair. There were also five non-employed trainees registered on the Training for Success Programme-led Apprenticeship programme in light vehicle maintenance and repair.

2.2 All of the level 3 apprenticeship training in vehicle body repair and refinishing is sub-contracted to a private training organisation, Riverpark Training based at Mallusk. This sub-contract arrangement is to facilitate the progression of apprentices who were previously registered with a different provider, who no longer operates in Northern Ireland. Currently, Riverpark Training provides the professional and technical directed training, the essential skills training, and the national vocational qualification (NVQ) assessment in the workplace for the 17 apprentices.

2.3 All of the level 2 apprenticeship training for warehousing and distribution is sub-contracted to A4e, located in Belfast. A4e provides the professional and technical directed training, the essential skills training, and the NVQ assessment in the workplace for the 15 apprentices.

2.4 For the 12 apprentices in heavy vehicle maintenance and repair, their professional and technical directed training is provided by the manufacturer's specialist training providers in England. Transport Training Services provides the workplace assessment for their NVQ, and also the directed training and assessment for their essential skills.

2.5 The professional and technical directed training, the NVQ assessment and the essential skills training and assessment for all of the vehicle body repair and refinishing level 2 apprentices and a small number of the level 3 apprentices, and for all level 2 and 3 apprentices in light vehicle maintenance and repair is provided by Transport Training Services staff.

2.6 The professional and technical directed training for all of the apprenticeship programmes in transportation and maintenance is delivered in 12 one-week blocks, spread across two years. For the remainder of the time on their programme, the apprentices are provided with training and assessment in their employer's workplace. Those requiring essential skills training also attend one additional day each week, for up to 17 weeks, to complete their essential training during year one of their programme. Trainees on the Programme-led Apprenticeships attend directed training one week in every three over two years, and are in unpaid workplace training and assessment for the remainder of the time.

2.7 The directed training for the apprenticeship programme in warehousing and distribution is provided in the workplace on a one-to-one basis. Each apprentice receives approximately two half days of training and assessment each month; one half day for their professional and technical training and one half day for essential skills training.

3. THE INSPECTION

3.1 In April 2011, the Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) carried out an inspection of the training provision by Transport Training Services for the ApprenticeshipsNI and Training for Success programmes. A team of four inspectors observed two directed training sessions, and visited 33 apprentices undertaking their workplace training. Discussions were held with the training director, business development director, finance and administration director, sub-contractors, tutors, apprentices, trainees, and workplace supervisors. The inspection team examined samples of the apprentices' and trainees' work, Personal Training Plans (PTPs), assessment portfolios, the organisation's self-evaluation report, and other relevant documentation.

3.2 The arrangements for the inspection of care, guidance and support and the safeguarding of vulnerable groups includes the opportunity for the apprentices and trainees to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as interviews with a selection of the apprentices and trainees. One hundred questionnaires were issued, 29 (29%) of which were returned to the Inspectorate. The returns show that the apprentices' and trainees' levels of satisfaction about their training experiences are very good; 96% of the responses were positive or very positive. The Inspectorate has reported the outcomes of the questionnaires and discussions held with the apprentices and trainees to the directors.

4. MAIN FINDINGS

4.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of training provided by Transport Training Services is very good. The organisation is meeting very effectively the training and pastoral needs of the apprentices and trainees; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

4.2 The main strengths are the:

- very good specialist training equipment and materials provided for the apprentices and trainees, particularly for those in vehicle body repair and refinishing;
- very good monitoring and review processes used to inform the apprentices and trainees, and their employers, of their progress and of future training and assessment needs;
- very good standards of work demonstrated by most of the apprentices and trainees, in the workplace and in their assessment portfolios;
- very good quality of almost all of the apprentices' and trainees' workplace training;
- good or better progress made by most of the apprentices and trainees in completing their workplace assessments; and
- excellent success rate and the good retention and progression rates.

4.3 The main areas for improvement are:

- the low number of apprentices in vehicle body repair and refinishing; and
- to update the care, guidance and support policies and procedures.

Table of Performance Levels

OVERALL	Performance Level
	Very good
Contributory Areas:	
Leadership and Management	Very good
Achievements and Standards	Very good
Quality of Provision for Learning	Very good
Areas of Learning	
Essential Skills	Very good
Transportation and Maintenance	Very good
Warehousing and Distribution	Very good

PART TWO: OVERALL QUALITY OF PROVISION

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.1 The overall quality of the leadership and management of Transport Training Services is very good. The directors provide strong leadership and are committed to providing high quality training for the transportation sector through their commercial training programmes and through the Department's ApprenticeshipsNI and Training for Success programmes. This is demonstrated through the organisation's involvement in securing new purpose-built premises, a significant investment in industry standard training equipment, effective links and partnerships with employers and sub-contractors, and its focus on workforce development both internally and externally. Transport Training Services has, through its strong links with the relevant sector skills council and employers, developed a clear understanding of the industry's training requirements for the vehicle maintenance and repair sector across Northern Ireland, and how best to raise standards.

5.2 The quality assurance process for reviewing and monitoring the training provision is good. There are mostly effective procedures in place for collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative data. Through regular meetings with tutors, feedback from apprentices and employers, lesson observations, involvement of sub-contractors, and reviewing of key performance indicators, the directors have a good understanding of the training provision's key strengths and areas for development. The organisation's self-evaluation report is aligned well to the Inspectorate's quality framework, Improving Quality: Raising Standards (IQ:RS). While there is a good match between the findings of the self-evaluation report and the findings of the inspection, the evaluative language within the report is just satisfactory; there is a need for more concise and precise evaluations. Key actions to address areas for improvement are prioritised appropriately in the organisation's improvement plan and are reviewed regularly by the directors. An important feature of the quality improvement planning processes is the involvement of the sub-contractors in the production of short self-evaluation reports and action plans for their provision, which are quality assured by the Managing Director's regular visits to sub-contractors' directed and workplace training.

5.4 The staffing complement is very good. There is a very good range of suitably qualified and experienced full-time tutors, including staff with high levels of expertise in the specialist areas. The management team and the tutors have well-defined roles and responsibilities and work very hard to meet the individual pastoral and training needs of the apprentices and trainees. There is regular staff development to ensure that tutors keep up to date their specialist expertise to meet the continuing technological changes, particularly for transportation and maintenance. There is, for example, regular update training provided for one tutor by Ford at their specialist training centre to enable Transport Training Services to deliver the Ford approved technician training within the ApprenticeshipsNI programme. In addition, one of the tutors is currently completing the University of Ulster Certificate in Teaching programme, which will be rolled out to the remaining staff in line with the business development plan.

5.5 The quality and range of the accommodation varies from satisfactory to outstanding, and is mainly good. At the time of the inspection, new purpose-built premises adjoining Transport Training Services existing premises were almost complete. The new premises will replace the existing dull and cramped classrooms with modern training rooms and computer suites, and will integrate effectively with the existing workshops for body repair and refinishing, and for light vehicle maintenance and repair. The quality of the workshops, the

specialist equipment and training vehicles is very good to outstanding. The outstanding workshops in Transport Training Services and in Riverpark Training for vehicle body repair and refinishing include: industry standard car alignment jigs; fully-ventilated sanding equipment; inverter welders; computer-assisted paint mixing stations; and modern training paint spray booths and ovens.

5.6 There are excellent links and partnerships with employers, schools, other training organisations, manufacturers' specialist training providers, and the relevant sector skills council. The good links with a range of post-primary schools enable Transport Training Services to provide career advice to pupils on, and to promote, apprenticeships in vehicle repair and maintenance. The business development director has developed effective partnerships with a wide range of local employers to facilitate the joint marketing and recruitment of maintenance and repair apprentices to meet their annual requirements. For one major car retailer, Transport Training Services provide an apprenticeship programme that is integrated with the manufacturer's training requirements. As a result, the apprentices are able to achieve the full manufacturer's technician status by the end of their ApprenticeshipsNI programme. In addition, Transport Training Services has developed partnerships with heavy vehicle manufacturers' training providers in England, to ensure the apprentices receive the most appropriate specialist professional and technical training. Partnerships with sub-contracted training providers are managed well through robust service level agreements, to ensure that apprentices receive good quality training and assessment. There is a need, however, to develop further the links and partnerships with the vehicle body repair and refinishing employers, in order to improve the low uptake of apprenticeships in this area.

6. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

6.1 Almost all of the apprentices and trainees achieve very good standards of work. In the workplace, they develop a very good range of occupational skills; they are able to carry out an appropriate range of tasks effectively and efficiently with minimal supervision. In vehicle body repair and refinishing, for example, apprentices were observed carrying out manufacturers' warranty repairs to industry standard, using modern techniques and equipment. In vehicle maintenance and repair, the apprentices and trainees are able to carry out the full range of routine services, fit and replace major components, and diagnose and rectify both simple and complex faults in the mechanical and electrical systems. In warehousing and distribution, the apprentices, as existing employees, develop increased confidence and efficiency in their work roles, and develop the new skills to extend their roles and responsibilities, including the opportunity for progression to higher training or new job roles.

6.2 The standard of almost all of the apprentices' and trainees' technical knowledge is very good. In their assessment portfolios, they demonstrate a very good understanding of the key principles of modern technology and of industry standard work practices. In the workplace, the apprentices are able to use and apply effectively their understanding of these principles and technology to solve problems. In vehicle maintenance and repair, for example, apprentices are able to ascertain if components are no longer fit for purpose and carry out the necessary adjustment or replacement. The apprentices, particularly those at level 3, also use competently computer-based equipment and tools to diagnose and repair complex faults, and to select and mix paint.

6.3 The standards of the apprentices' and trainees' essential skills are very good. Their verbal communication skills are well-developed; they are able to maintain coherent discussions with colleagues and mentors using an appropriate range of vocabulary including industry specific terms, and speak confidently with supervisors and customers. Most of the apprentices' and trainees' written communication skills are also well-developed; their written

accounts and job cards in their assessment portfolios are clear, concise and are mostly free from spelling and punctuation errors. The apprentices' and trainees' numeracy skills are also very good; they are able to make basic arithmetic calculations, measure quantities, and interpret and record readings correctly. The apprentices and trainees have well-developed information and communication technology (ICT) skills; they are able to make effective use of the internet and of commercial software to retrieve technical information, and to use commercial software for data analysis and presentation of work. This is a particularly noticeable for warehousing and distribution apprentices, where all of their assessment evidence is word-processed to a very good standard.

6.4 Most of the apprentices and trainees have very good patterns of attendance and timekeeping, in directed training and the workplace. They also develop very good employability skills; they are reliable, well-motivated and able to maintain effective working relationships in directed training and in the workplace. For a few apprentices, due to work-related demands, their attendance at directed training is erratic, which impedes progress in their learning.

6.5 The apprentices and trainees make very good progress in completing all aspects of their ApprenticeshipsNI or Programme-led Apprenticeship frameworks. Their assessment portfolios are up-to-date and they are meeting the targets outlined and monitored in their personal training plans. In particular, the trainees on the Programme-led Apprenticeship are completing workplace assessments for their NVQ portfolios at a pace similar to that of their peers on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme.

6.6 Over the past three years, the success rate was excellent at 97%; of the 192 apprentices and trainees who started either ApprenticeshipsNI or Training for Success programmes during this period, 64 completed their programme and 62 gained the full award. Of the remaining apprentices, 68 of them were still in training at the time of the inspection, representing a modest average retention rate of 69%. It is noteworthy that the retention rate is improving, for example, in 2009/10 it was 80%. The overall progression rate to further education and/or training is excellent at 100%.

7. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

7.1 The curriculum provision across the professional and technical areas inspected is very good. There is a coherent programme of directed training that is matched well to the apprentices' and trainees' workplace training. Almost all of the apprentices are released regularly by their employers to attend directed training for their technical certificate and essentials skills. Although a minority of the apprentices sometimes miss scheduled directed training sessions due to employment demands, Transport Training Services and their sub-contractors work hard to reduce the impact of these missed training sessions through additional catch up sessions.

7.2 The enhancement of the curriculum provision for the apprentices in transportation and maintenance is very good. In light vehicle maintenance and repair, for example, apprentices employed in Ford franchised retailers follow a Ford approved training scheme, which enables the apprentices to make excellent progress in developing the critical knowledge and skills relevant to their specific workplace and manufacturer. A similar provision is in place for the heavy vehicle apprentices who attend specialist manufacturers' training in England.

7.3 The quality of the apprentices' and trainees Personal Training Plans is very good. The planning, tracking and reviewing of the apprentices' and trainees' progress and achievements for their technical certificate and NVQ is outstanding. Apprentices and trainees, including their employers, are regularly and clearly informed of their progress and

achievement against the key milestones within their plan. Short individual targets for professional and technical training and assessment are clearly articulated to each apprentice and trainee, and their employers, through regular review reports. Although the tracking of the apprentices' and trainees' progress and achievements in their essential skills is managed well by the essential skills tutors, it is not incorporated sufficiently within the professional and technical review reports for apprentices. In addition, the monitoring and tracking by Transport Training Services of the progress and achievements in the essential skills by those apprentices placed with sub-contractors, is too infrequent.

7.4 The quality of the apprentices' and trainees' directed training is very good to good, and is mostly very good. Training sessions are well-planned to ensure there is an appropriate balance between theory and practical skills training. There is a good range of resources to support the directed training including relevant information and learning technology (ILT) resources, computer suites, industry standard workshops, training vehicles, and specialist tools and equipment, and all of which are deployed effectively to develop the apprentices' and trainees' professional and technical skills and knowledge. The quality of the tutors planning is very good; the planning for directed training blocks and sessions are thoroughly documented, with a clear focus on providing a range of training approaches and learning experiences to achieve the required training outcomes. The tutors use to good effect the apprentices' and trainees' experiences in the workplace to contextualise and consolidate their learning.

7.5 The quality of almost all of the apprentices' and trainees' workplace training is very good, and on occasions outstanding. They are provided with very good opportunities to use and develop their occupational skills to industry standards. The apprentices and trainees are supported well by their workplace supervisors and mentors, who provide very good on-the-job training and guidance to enable them to complete their tasks successfully.

7.6 The quality of the apprentices' and trainees' essential skills training is also very good. They are afforded the opportunity, where appropriate, to achieve level 2 qualifications in literacy and numeracy, which is a level above the minimum required for the framework. The initial assessment information is used effectively to determine the most appropriate learning programme for each individual apprentice or trainee. The learning is contextualised well with the apprentices' and trainees' interests and their workplace experiences. Transportation maintenance apprentices, for example, develop appropriately their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills through planning and costing the creation of an independent vehicle repair business.

7.7 The assessment arrangements are very good, across all of the provision. The apprentices and trainees are assessed regularly and thoroughly, and are provided with detailed, constructive feedback on how to improve their work. Occupational achievements in the workplace are recorded and tracked rigorously; the apprentices and trainees, including their employers, are provided with regular reports on their progress, across the units, of their NVQ and technical certificate.

7.8 While the arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable groups comply satisfactory with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007, the following areas need to be addressed: an update of the current child protection and vulnerable adult policies and procedures to reflect the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Order (NI) Order 2007; the provision of suitable information for apprentices, trainees and their parents; and updated training for tutors, designated safeguarding officer, and directors.

7.9 The quality of the care, support and guidance is good. The apprentices and trainees are provided with high levels of support from their workplace supervisors and mentors, and by their tutors. Through regular one-to-one reviews with their tutor, the apprentices and trainees are provided with comprehensive personal guidance on how to improve the quality of their work and their achievements. The apprentices reported through the confidential questionnaires and interviews with the inspectors that they felt safe and secure and well supported in their training. The careers education, information advice and guidance (CEIAG) provision is satisfactory. While the apprentices and trainees are provided with good quality informal careers guidance and information, which provides them with at least a sound understanding of potential career pathways and professional development opportunities, there is a need, however, for the directors to formalise these arrangements to ensure all apprentices and trainees plan more effectively their individual career pathways.

PART THREE: PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL AREA REPORTS

8. ESSENTIAL SKILLS

8.1 In essential skills, the quality of training provided by Transport Training Services is very good. The organisation is meeting very effectively the educational needs of the learners; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

8.2 The main strengths are the:

- good or better success rates across all of the essential skills;
- number of level 2 apprentices who achieve an essential skill at a level above the requirement of the framework;
- very good standards of work demonstrated by the apprentices in their assessment portfolios and in the workplace;
- positive impact on the confidence and self-esteem of the adult apprentices as a result of successfully completing their essential skills; and
- very good planning to integrate the delivery and assessment of the essential skills within the apprentices' and trainees' professional and technical contexts.

8.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- regular monitoring by Transport Training Services of the progress and achievements of the apprentices placed with the sub-contractors; and
- better integration of tracking and monitoring of the apprentices' progress in their essential skills within the professional and technical review reports.

9. TRANSPORTATION MAINTENANCE

9.1 In transportation maintenance, the quality of training provided by the Transport Training Services is very good. The organisation is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

9.2 The main strengths are the:

- very good specialist training equipment and materials provided for the apprentices and trainees, particularly for those in vehicle body repair and refinishing;
- very good monitoring and review processes used to inform the apprentices and trainees, and their employers, of their progress and of future training and assessment needs;
- very good standards of work demonstrated by most of the apprentices and trainees in the workplace and in their assessment portfolios;

- very good quality of almost all of the apprentices' and trainees' workplace training, including the rigorous assessment of their practical skills and related knowledge, with clear feedback on how to improve;
- very good provision for the Programme-led Apprentices; and
- excellent average success rate over the last three years.

9.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- low numbers of enrolments on the vehicle body repair and refinishing programmes; and
- satisfactory retention rate on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme.

10. **WAREHOUSING AND DISTRIBUTION**

10.1 In warehousing and distribution, the quality of training provided by Transport Training Services is very good. The organisation is meeting very effectively the educational needs of the learners and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

10.2 The main strengths are the:

- excellent retention and success rates;
- well-motivated adult apprentices who are keen to achieve their qualifications;
- good use of short-term training targets in the apprentices' monitoring and review process;
- effective on-the-job training and assessment provided for the apprentices;
- very good relationships between the tutors and the apprentices; and
- good pastoral support provided by tutors for the apprentices.

10.3 The main area for improvement is the:

- further involvement of employers in the planning and scheduling of on-the-job training.

PART FOUR: CONCLUSION AND KEY PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of training provided by Transport Training Services is very good. The organisation is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

12. KEY PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

12.1 Transport Training Services has a good development plan, which addresses most of the areas of development identified by the inspection. There is, however, a need for the organisation to revise its development plan to take account of the following key priorities for development:

- the development of strategies to improve recruitment to vehicle body repair and refinishing; and
- the updating of the organisation's policy and procedures for safeguarding vulnerable groups, and for careers education, information, advice and guidance.

APPENDIX

OVERALL SUMMARY TABLE – 2007-2010

Year	Started (completed four weeks)	Retention Rate	Success Rate	Progression rate
2007 -2008	54	61%	100%	100%
2008-2009	43	56%	91%	100%
2009-2010	95	80%	100%	100%
Overall totals		69%	97%	100%

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