



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in Seven Towers Training

Report of an Inspection
in January 2011

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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 the statistics in this report have been supplied and verified by Seven Towers Training.

Grading System

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 Seven Towers Training (Seven Towers) is a privately owned supplier organisation operating from four premises in Ballymena and one in Larne. It was established in 1981 as a charitable organisation limited by guarantee and became a private training organisation in 1996. Seven Towers is governed by a board of five directors, with a full-time manager and 18 full-time and part-time staff.

1.2 Seven Towers has been contracted by the Department for Employment and Learning (the Department) to deliver Jobskills training since 1981, the Training for Success programme since September 2007, and the ApprenticeshipsNI programme since September 2008. Seven Towers has entered into sub-contracting arrangements with two other supplier organisations. Since 2007, The Wrightbus Group have been sub-contracted to deliver the professional and technical qualifications in the level 2 and level 3 ApprenticeshipsNI frameworks; the organisation also provides work placements for trainees on the Training for Success programme in the professional and technical areas of business and administration, distribution and warehousing, and engineering. Since 2009, Larne Skills Development have been sub-contracted to deliver an ApprenticeshipsNI programme in mechanical manufacturing engineering at level 3 along with the Training for Success programme, also in engineering.

1.3 Most of the trainees and apprentices on the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes are recruited from Ballymena town and the wider Ballymena Borough Council area. Through the sub-contracting arrangements with Larne Skills Development, a minority (17%) of the trainees and apprentices are also recruited from Larne and the surrounding area.

1.4 The latest statistics (December 2010) published by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Industry (DETI) show that the Ballymena Borough and Larne District Council areas have percentages of the available workforce registered as claiming a specific unemployment related benefit at 3.6% and 3.8% respectively. These claimant count percentages are below the overall Northern Ireland average of 4.9%.

2. PROVISION

2.1 At the time of the inspection, 117 trainees were registered on the Training for Success programme; of these, five (4%) were registered on the Skills for your Life strand, 42 (36%) on the Skills for Work strand, 69 (59%) on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand, and one (1%) on the residual pre-apprenticeship strand. All of the trainees on the Training for Success programmes are undertaking training in a range of professional and technical areas at level 2 or below. Of the 117 Training for Success trainees, two were registered on a business and administration programme, 30 on construction programmes, 23 on an engineering programme, 54 on a hairdressing programme, one on a hospitality and catering programme, and seven were registered on retail and distribution and warehousing programmes. Eleven of the 117 trainees were on an engineering programme sub-contracted to The Wrightbus Group and twelve on an engineering programme sub-contracted to Larne Skills Development. At the time of the inspection, over one-half (51%) of the trainees did not have a work placement, or had previously left their work placement. The remainder (49%) of the trainees all have a work placement and attend according to the guidelines of their programme.

2.2 One hundred and seventy-three apprentices were registered on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme; of these, two were registered on a business and administration programme, 13 on construction programmes, 120 on an engineering programme, eight on a hairdressing programme, 22 on a hospitality and catering programme, and eight were on retail and distribution and warehousing programmes. Seven Towers is contracted to offer beauty therapy, business and administration, hairdressing, retail and distribution and warehousing programmes at level 2 only, and construction crafts, furniture production, hospitality and catering, and mechanical manufacturing engineering programmes at levels 2 and 3.

2.3 Two hundred and twenty-five trainees and apprentices (78%) were undertaking training in the essential skills of literacy (87), numeracy (81), and information and communication technology (57).

2.4 The provision for the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes in business and administration, hairdressing, and the construction craft of painting and decorating is delivered in Seven Towers' main training facility in Ballymena town centre. The hairdressing provision is delivered both within the main training facility and also in a newly refurbished hairdressing salon close by. The practical skills training for the construction craft of wood occupations is delivered by Seven Towers in workshop accommodation in Ballymena owned by Larne Skills Development, with the directed training delivered in Seven Towers' main training facility. With the exception of the Skills for Work strand, all training in hospitality and catering is delivered in the workplace. Most of the provision in retail and distribution and warehousing is delivered in Seven Towers' main training facility, although three of the apprentices receive their training in the workplace. The provision for the essential skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) is offered across all of the five centres in Ballymena and Larne.

2.5 At the time of the inspection, 143 (49%) of the trainees and apprentices registered with Seven Towers received the bulk of their training through other sub-contracted employers or training providers. The provision for mechanical and manufacturing engineering is sub-contracted and delivered by two organisations: The Wrightbus Group a major local manufacturing engineering company which delivers level 2 and level 3 mechanical manufacturing engineering in their premises on the outskirts of Ballymena, and Larne Skills Development another supplier organisation which delivers level 3 mechanical manufacturing engineering in their premises in Larne and Ballymena. Larne Skills Development is also sub-contracted by Seven Towers to deliver the Training for Success programme in their Ballymena and Larne premises.

2.6 For all of the level 2, and 35 of the level 3, mechanical and manufacturing apprentices employed by The Wrightbus Group, all of their professional and technical training and assessment is provided by The Wrightbus Group's own tutors; the directed training and assessment for their essential skills is provided by tutors from Seven Towers. For the remaining 37 level 3 mechanical and manufacturing apprentices employed by other local engineering companies, Larne Skills Development provides the training and assessment for all aspects of their apprenticeship framework. Larne Skills Development also provides the professional and technical directed training for all trainees on the Skills for Work and Programme-Led Apprenticeship strands of the Training for Success programme in engineering. For trainees on the Skills for Work strand in Larne, this organisation also provides the directed training for the essential skills and sources and monitors work placements for these trainees.

2.7 Larne Skills Development also provides an electrical engineering maintenance pathway at level 3, including six electrical units, for a significant minority (30%) of the engineering apprentices, which they undertake in addition to the level 3 mechanical manufacturing apprenticeship. It is a significant concern that this provision is not part of the ApprenticeshipsNI contract which was awarded by the Department to Seven Towers, and does not form part of the sub-contract agreement between Seven Towers and Larne Skills Development.

2.8 Due to the small numbers of trainees and apprentices enrolled, the quality of the provision for business and administration was not inspected.

3. THE INSPECTION

3.1 The Education and Training Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) carried out an inspection of the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes in Seven Towers in January 2011. A team of eight inspectors, and an associate assessor deployed in hospitality and catering, observed a total of 209 trainees and apprentices in 47 directed training sessions, during workplace training and when carrying out their duties in the workplace. Discussions were held with the manager, employment liaison officers, co-ordinators, tutors, trainees and apprentices, workplace supervisors and employers. In addition, discussions were held with the directors, management and training staff from sub-contracted training providers. The inspection team also examined samples of trainees' and apprentices' work, portfolios of evidence, the trainees' personal training plans, the organisation's self-evaluation report, service level agreements with sub-contractors, and other relevant documentation.

3.2 The inspection of the arrangements for pastoral care and the safeguarding of vulnerable groups included the opportunity for the trainees and apprentices to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meeting with members of the inspection team. One hundred and sixty questionnaires were issued to trainees, 71 (44%) of which were returned to the Inspectorate and 43 contained additional written comments. The returns show that nearly all of the trainees and apprentices value their training at Seven Towers and feel supported in their learning. The Inspectorate has reported the outcomes of the questionnaires and the discussions held with trainees and apprentices to the manager.

4. MAIN FINDINGS

4.1 Overall, the quality of training provided by Seven Towers is inadequate; the areas for improvement outweigh the strengths in the provision. The inspection has identified significant areas for improvement, mainly in the leadership and management of the organisation, but also in key aspects of achievements and standards and training and learning. Overall, these need to be addressed urgently if Seven Towers is to meet effectively the needs of all of the trainees and apprentices.

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

4.2 The main strengths are the:

- very good quality of the provision for hospitality and catering, and for the engineering provision in The Wrightbus Group;
- good standards of work demonstrated by most of the trainees and apprentices;

- good quality of most of the work placements; and
- excellent success rates (at 100%) across nearly all of the professional and technical areas and in the essential skills, and the excellent progression rate (at 90%) to further training, education or relevant employment for trainees on the Training for Success programme.

4.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- unsatisfactory quality of the provision for engineering in Larne Skills Development;
- inadequate leadership and management of the engineering provision by Seven Towers, particularly the arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of the sub-contracted training;
- shortcomings in the quality of the training and learning in a significant minority of the directed training sessions observed across the professional and technical areas inspected;
- lack of appropriate work placements for a majority of the trainees on the Training for Success programme; and
- modest overall retention rate (at 69%) across the professional and technical areas inspected.

Table of Performance Levels

Overall performance level	Inadequate
Contributory performance levels	
Leadership and Management	Inadequate
Achievements and Standards	Satisfactory
Quality of Provision for Learning	Satisfactory
Area of Learning	
Construction	Satisfactory
Engineering	Unsatisfactory
Essential Skills	Satisfactory
Hairdressing	Good
Hospitality and Catering	Very Good
Retail and Distribution and Warehousing	Good

PART TWO - OVERALL QUALITY OF PROVISION

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.1 The manager of Seven Towers is responsible for all aspects of the leadership and management of the organisation, and regular meetings take place between management and staff. The staff within Seven Towers have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and the curricular leadership across the professional and technical areas and the essential skills is mostly effective. A good working relationship has been built up with the management and training staff in The Wrightbus Group, with effective channels of communication between the two organisations. In contrast, there are unsatisfactory lines of communication between Seven Towers and Larne Skills Development, in particular around the precise range and scope of the engineering apprenticeship frameworks being provided by them.

5.2 Appropriate tracking and monitoring procedures are in place to record the progress of most of the trainees and apprentices in their professional and technical programmes, and the use of data to monitor key performance indicators within the organisation is generally well developed. While the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning process provides an overview of the provision and the performance of the organisation, it lacks a sufficiently detailed analysis of each professional and technical area, including effective input from employers, and it is inappropriate that an in-depth evaluation of the performance of those organisations to which it sub-contracts training is not included. As a result, the overall quality assurance and improvement planning procedures are not sufficiently robust and have not identified key weaknesses, including the serious health and safety issues, in the engineering provision in Larne Skills Development. The monitoring by Seven Towers of sub-contracted provision is unsatisfactory. No rigorous quality assurance meetings have been held between the organisations and it is inadequate that the manager of Seven Towers has not visited Larne Skills Development to evaluate the quality of the training which is sub-contracted to this organisation. These are significant weaknesses, and as a consequence, the leadership and management by Seven Towers of the engineering provision in Larne Skills Development has been evaluated as inadequate.

5.3 The range of training provision is mostly good. The professional and technical areas offered meet the needs of most of the trainees and apprentices. They have good opportunities to progress in their learning, enhance existing skills and acquire new competences. The training provides most of the trainees on the Training for Success programme with good access to a range of social and personal development and enhancement programmes, including opportunities to obtain level 1 Open College Network (OCN) qualifications such as Personal Career Planning and Preparation for Work. Management need to continue to monitor the provision, however, to ensure that it remains relevant and meets the needs of the local labour market and the trainees and apprentices. At present, the range of appropriate work placements and progression opportunities for trainees on construction and hairdressing programmes is limited, and the number of trainees and apprentices recruited in business administration, construction, and retail and distribution and warehousing is low. In addition, a significant minority of the apprentices on the mechanical manufacturing engineering apprenticeship in Larne Skills Development also undertake an electrical engineering maintenance pathway at level 3, leading to a dilution of standards across the provision.

5.4 The staff in Seven Towers are appropriately qualified and deployed effectively, with good opportunities provided for them to undertake appropriate continuous professional development. A system of peer observation is in place, including observations by staff across different professional and technical areas, which is used well by the manager to review the progress and performance of staff. While the process highlights good practice and areas for further development for staff, it is not used effectively enough by management to formally share good practice across the organisation.

5.5 Staff in The Wrightbus Group are also suitably qualified and experienced in the delivery of the engineering provision. However, the staffing of the electrical engineering maintenance pathway, which is delivered by Larne Skills Development in addition to the level 3 mechanical manufacturing engineering provision, is unsatisfactory. Significantly, it is unsatisfactory that no competent electrically qualified person is employed, by either Seven Towers or Larne Skills Development, to assess the work-based element of the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in electrical engineering maintenance. No staff members from either Larne Skills Development or Seven Towers has had suitable recent experience of working on mains voltage electrical systems nor any recent continuous professional development on current electrical wiring regulations. This is unsatisfactory as the apprentices are trained and assessed as competent in safety critical areas such as, “modifying or rewiring electrical circuits” and “testing electrical equipment and circuits”.

5.6 Seven Towers’ main training facilities in Ballymena are well resourced and equipped, with appropriate workshops and directed training facilities. The training accommodation and resources in the The Wrightbus Group are also very good. The physical resources to support the delivery of the engineering provision in Larne Skills Development, however, are unsatisfactory and do not meet relevant industry standards. The teaching and training resources in their workshop in Ballymena are also inadequate; the classroom is cramped and the workshop is dull and dirty, with poor lighting. In addition, the equipment being used has been in operation for a long period of time and has not been subject to portable appliance testing, furthermore; it is a serious concern that trainees and apprentices were using equipment with missing safety guards and no emergency stop switches. A full risk assessment has not been carried out by Seven Towers, as the lead contract holder, to identify unsafe practices and remove unsafe equipment.

5.7 Management in Seven Towers have invested significantly in up-to-date computing and information and learning technology (ILT) equipment, including personal computers with flat screen monitors, laptops, data projectors and e-beam technology, to support tutors in the delivery of directed training sessions in their main training facilities in Ballymena. While the quality of the learning resources for the professional and technical areas and the essential skills provision are generally good, they are mostly paper-based. Further investment in an appropriate on-line learning system and electronic resources would enhance the provision and provide tutors, trainees, and apprentices with flexible access to a range of good up-to-date on-line training materials and support.

5.8 Seven Towers has established good links and partnerships with a range of external organisations including employers, community organisations, specialist support organisations and other external agencies. It has been actively involved in community development through its participation in a number of projects including the Citizenship and Enterprise Cross Community programme, The Travelling Women’s group, and the Harryville Partnership.

6. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

6.1 Most of the trainees and apprentices, across the professional and technical areas, demonstrate good standards of work and are making good progress in their training and learning. In wood occupations, the standards of the trainees' and apprentices' work are very good. A number of the apprentices participated recently, with good success, in a Skillbuild campus competition, with one apprentice being selected to progress to the regional finals. In the construction crafts, however, there is a lack of marking for improvement in the trainees' and apprentices' files, including the necessary correction of spelling and grammatical errors to support the work of the essential skills tutors. In hairdressing, most of the trainees demonstrate a good standard of occupational skills and despite their extremely low levels of prior achievement on entry to their programmes, there is good evidence to show that the progress made by most of the trainees is good, and they are making steady progress towards achieving their targeted qualifications. They demonstrate good standards of occupational skills in shampooing, and in their cutting, colouring and setting skills.

6.2 In hospitality and catering, staff set high expectations for the trainees and place a strong emphasis on developing their work-readiness. As a result, the standards achieved by almost all of the trainees are high. Almost all of the level 2 apprentices are able to undertake basic kitchen and dining room procedures to a very high standard, and the level 3 apprentices demonstrate competence in creatively cooking and presenting dishes using a variety of skills. The standards of their spoken communication skills are also very good, particularly the application of their underpinning knowledge to support and demonstrate their understanding of the practical skills. On the level 2 programme, for example, the apprentices are able to discuss health and safety legislation and basic cooking techniques, and those on the level 3 programme are able to discuss the current trends in food service and contemporary menus.

6.3 In mechanical and manufacturing engineering, the range of skills and competences developed by the apprentices in The Wrightbus Group is very good. The standards of work demonstrated by most of them in the workplace range from good to very good and they receive good specialist support and guidance on the job. The apprentices are able to fabricate, weld, and assemble engineering components to industry standard. They also benefit from the very good development of their team-working and problem-solving skills by their tutors and supervisors, and the apprentices understand well their role in the manufacturing process within the company's manufacturing system. The quality of the work in their portfolios of evidence is very good or excellent; there is a good range of work, including good levels of challenge in the use of modern technology.

6.4 In Larne Skills Development, the standard of the apprentice's engineering technical knowledge is not good enough. A minority of the apprentices demonstrate only minimum standards of knowledge about engineering practices in their written work. In electrical engineering maintenance, the apprentices are not working to appropriately high standards for a level 3 programme and are on occasions engaging in practices which are unsafe. They are not sufficiently aware or competent, for example, at carrying out electrical tests to ensure electrical systems are safe. The apprentices also have only limited awareness of other important electrical safety tests such as insulation resistance, safe isolation, and portable appliance testing. There are only limited opportunities for the apprentices to develop their skills and knowledge in current automation and control systems which they are likely to encounter in the workplace. In addition, there is only limited opportunity for them to develop skills in important new technologies such as energy management systems and energy

saving technologies, industrial communication networks or data cabling, and no opportunities to acquire skills in electrical computer-aided design or simulation systems. Attendance by the apprentices in Larne Skills Development is poor, with the organisation reporting that employers frequently request that apprentices miss directed training sessions when the employing organisation is busy; more needs to be done by Larne Skills Development to address this issue.

6.5 In the essential skills, most of the apprentices are making good progress in their learning. The standards of their literacy and numeracy are mostly good, particularly in the hospitality and catering programmes. On the Training for Success programme, the standards of the trainees' literacy skills are varied, particularly their written work, and there is only limited evidence of any formative assessment or marking for improvement in a minority of the trainees' folders. In addition, in a minority of cases, trainees are not developing sufficient organisational or independent study skills in the presentation of their work.

6.6 Seven Towers have implemented a number of measures to improve retention rates on both the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes. These include greater parental involvement, the development of a more user-friendly induction process, the increased involvement of appropriate external support agencies, the use of an 'at risk' system for early intervention and the development of a new attendance analysis system. The evidence indicates that these measures are having a significant impact, with an increase of at least 20% in overall retention rates for the current trainees and apprentices, across the programmes.

6.7 Over the past three years, the retention rate for those trainees on the Training for Success programme is poor at 59%. The success rate is excellent at 100%. The progression rate to further training, education or relevant employment is also excellent, at 90%.

6.8 Over the same period, the retention rate for apprentices on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme is satisfactory at 76%. The success rate is excellent at 100%.

6.9 The success rates in the essential skills of literacy, numeracy and information communication technology are excellent at 100%. All of the trainees and apprentices who completed their training achieved an essential skills qualification at a level in line with, or above, their target qualification or framework requirement. This is particularly significant given that a high percentage of them start from a low baseline, with low levels of prior achievement.

7. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

7.1 In a majority (53%) of the directed training sessions observed, the quality of the training and learning was good or better; it was mostly good. In these sessions, the tutors prepare the work well and provide good support and encouragement for the trainees and apprentices. In hairdressing, the training sessions are appropriately planned and provide the apprentices with sufficient opportunities to develop their practical skills, and their knowledge and understanding of the hairdressing industry. In hospitality and catering, the tutors use a range of suitable training strategies, including clear exposition, effective questioning, helpful recapping and well-organised demonstrations. They provide the apprentices with good quality information packs, including website addresses and downloads from the interactive boards. In construction, there were good instances of an effective range of activities used to

allow trainees and apprentices to develop and apply their understanding of a number of concepts including for example, safe working practices and using scale drawings. In engineering, the quality of the training provision in The Wrightbus Group is very good. The lessons are well planned, the pace of work is good, and there are some good examples of the use of effective questioning. There is also good ongoing development and use of ILT to support training, learning and assessment.

7.2 It is a concern that in a significant minority (47%) of the directed training sessions observed, the quality of the training and learning was satisfactory or below; in a minority of them, it was inadequate or unsatisfactory. A narrow range of training strategies were deployed by the tutors in these sessions, which failed to stimulate and motivate the trainees; too much emphasis was placed on direct exposition by the tutors and there was an over dependence on worksheets. The training sessions, which sometimes last for two hours, can be long for the trainees and this is compounded by the lack of active learning approaches to challenge and engage them in their learning. The use of interactive and differentiated learning resources, which meet the needs of all the trainees and consolidate and affirm that learning has indeed taken place, is much too limited. In addition, strategies need to be developed across Seven Towers, to facilitate the sharing of the existing good practice among the tutors.

7.3 In a small number of the sessions observed, the tutors make effective use of e-beam technology to support the training and learning. In the main, however, the effective use of ILT to support training and learning, across the professional and technical areas, is under-developed.

7.4 The quality of the training provision within Larne Skills Development is unsatisfactory. The design of the apprenticeship programmes offered is poor, the workplace assessment arrangements are unsatisfactory, and the quality of the directed training sessions, and the learning facilities and equipment is inadequate. The physical resources used to support the delivery of the electrical training are unsatisfactory and do not meet relevant industry standards. In addition, some of the activities carried out by the apprentices, including the live testing of three phase circuits, are unsafe. There are unacceptably high levels of risk to the apprentices' and trainees' health and safety when they are using practical training equipment.

7.5 The quality of most of the work placements, across the professional and technical areas, is good. Good opportunities exist within the work placements to consolidate and extend the trainees' and apprentices' occupational skills. In The Wrightbus Group, excellent workplace training arrangements are provided for trainees and apprentices in both engineering and distribution and stores; the experiences of the trainees and apprentices are good and the ongoing monitoring and assessment is rigorous. Larne Skills Development have also established good links with employers and the quality of most of the workplace training for their apprentices is also very good. The apprentices are working for engineering employers where there are very good opportunities to enhance their practical skills.

7.6 In hospitality and catering, the work placements inspected provide the trainees with very good opportunities to develop a broad range of occupational skills and competences that are appropriate to their roles in the workplace, as well as developing their personal and transferable skills such as working effectively as a member of a team. A small number of trainees reported that the programme had facilitated them to take on promoted posts or additional responsibilities in the workplace. In construction, the quality of the work placements is good and there are good opportunities for the apprentices to develop high standards in their occupational skills, as well as gain experience and skills in a range of different work settings. In retail and distribution and warehousing, most of the trainees and apprentices display good standards of work. The work placements for the stores and

warehousing apprentices are good and provide regular opportunities for them to access and manage stock for a large manufacturing company. One apprentice, for example, is proficient in the company computerised stock control system. Another is the key link stores person between the manufacturing line and the stores and warehouse. The retail trainees perform effectively a range of key functions, including deliveries, stock rotation, display, merchandising and cash and credit payment systems. For those retail apprentices who are trained in the workplace, however, the pace of assessment and accreditation is slow, and in hairdressing, a small number of the work placements are inappropriate and do not provide the trainees with an appropriate range of workplace learning experiences.

7.7 The quality of the training provision for the essential skills is satisfactory. The manager of Seven Towers tracks effectively the outcomes of the provision and works hard to facilitate appropriate professional development for the staff delivering the essential skills, in order to improve continuously the quality of training and learning. At the time of the inspection, a new co-ordinator had recently been appointed. The role of the co-ordinator needs to be further developed and embedded in order to ensure that the self-evaluation process is more comprehensive and that there is a more effective inclusion of the sub-contracted organisations in this process, in order to strengthen the quality of the provision.

7.8 Within almost all of the essential skills provision in the Training for Success programmes, the outcomes of the initial and diagnostic assessment are not used adequately to plan for effective learning and most of the trainees follow the same programme, at the same pace, as their peers. In addition, there is only minimal collaboration between the professional and technical tutors and the essential skills tutors. With the exception of hairdressing, where there is good evidence that the trainees engage well with their essential skill in literacy, and a few of them achieve beyond the minimum requirement of their programme, there are too few examples of the effective contextualisation and integration of the essential skills. Overall, on the Training for Success programme, the range of training and learning strategies used in literacy, numeracy and ICT is narrow and there is too little use of active learning methodologies or technology enhanced learning to improve the experiences of the trainees. In addition, the use of the review process to set appropriate, measurable targets is inconsistent across the provision, and is poor in a minority of instances.

7.9 The workplace provision for the essential skills for the apprentices is good and a minority of apprentices are given the opportunity to achieve beyond the minimum requirements of their programme in both literacy and numeracy, and they succeed in doing so. The apprentices in the workplace who undertake the essential skills are offered good one-to-one support by their tutors.

7.10 The quality of the personal training plans is generally good. The plans are detailed and include appropriate information such as barriers to learning and support arrangements, the results of initial assessments, and targets for achievement and progress. They are also updated with the ongoing achievements of the trainees and apprentices. The monitoring and review of the trainees' and apprentices' progress in both directed training and the workplace is also good, it is carried out regularly and tracks and records progress made against the set targets. In hairdressing, however, there is a lack of adequate employer involvement and the setting of short-term targets in the review process is inadequate. The quality of the personal training plans in Larne Skills Development is inadequate, they are not personalised and the reviews, though regular, are overly descriptive and do not include appropriate short-term targets or qualitative feedback on the apprentices' performance.

7.11 The arrangements for supporting most of the trainees and apprentices are good. Seven Towers provides appropriate additional learning support for those trainees identified with particular barriers to learning and progress. These trainees have good access to an appropriate range of personal and social services including support from Disability Action, Include Youth, Contact Youth, the Hope Centre, and a range of other voluntary, community and public sector agencies.

7.12 The arrangements for the care, guidance and support of most of the trainees and apprentices are good. Staff are committed to the trainees' and apprentices' welfare and personal development, and appropriate procedures have been developed to involve parents in decisions relating to the trainees' training programmes, progress and specific support needs. Although Seven Towers aspire to provide a safe and secure environment for the trainees and apprentices, the arrangements for their care, guidance and support in Larne Skills Development need to be urgently reviewed, and addressed, to ensure the trainees and apprentices are not engaged in dangerous working practices and are placed in a safe working environment.

7.13 While the arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable groups comply satisfactorily with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007, Seven Towers need to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place in those organisations to which they sub-contract training.

7.14 The provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance forms an integral element of the Training for Success programme and is focused on the individual needs of the trainees. Whilst it is effective for the majority of the trainees and apprentices, it is inadequate that a significant number of trainees on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship do not have work placements and their work-related learning experiences and career aspirations are limited. In addition, a minority of the apprentices, across the professional and technical areas inspected, are not well enough aware of what progression routes and career options are available to them.

PART THREE - PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL AREA REPORTS

8. CONSTRUCTION

8.1 In construction, the quality of training provided by Seven Towers Training is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in learning and teaching and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the trainees and apprentices are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on Seven Towers Training's progress in addressing the areas for improvement, over a 12-18 month period.

8.2 The main strengths are the:

- very good standard of the apprentices' and trainees' work in wood occupations;
- good opportunities for the apprentices in decorative and wood occupations to achieve additional qualifications beyond the minimum requirements of the framework;
- inclusion of qualifications in career planning and personal development for the Skills for your Life, and Skills for Work programmes to enhance the personal development skills of the trainees; and
- good support from voluntary, community and public sector agencies to address the trainees' barriers to education and training.

8.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- narrow range of training strategies and limited use of ILT in directed training sessions;
- lack of appropriate work placements for the majority (68%) of the decorative occupations trainees and for most (80%) of the wood occupations trainees; and
- more formalised involvement of employers in the planning of on-the-job training.

Performance Level	Total No of Trainees and Apprentices
Satisfactory	43

9. ENGINEERING

9.1 In engineering, the quality of training provided by Seven Towers Training is unsatisfactory; the areas for improvement significantly outweigh the strengths in the provision. The inspection has identified major areas for improvement in leadership and management, standards and achievements, and training and learning which need to be addressed urgently if the organisation is to meet effectively the needs of all of its trainees and apprentices. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the Seven Towers Training's progress in addressing the areas for improvement, over a 12-18 month period.

9.2 The main strengths are the:

- very good quality of the ApprenticeshipsNI provision in The Wrightbus Group, which includes very good care, guidance and support to ensure the apprentices make good progress in their training;
- good quality of the directed training for the apprentices in The Wrightbus Group;
- very good to excellent quality of most of the training provided in the workplace, for the apprentices with The Wrightbus Group and with Larne Skills Development; and
- very good standards of work achieved by most of the apprentices in The Wrightbus Group, as exemplified by the excellent success rate of 100%.

9.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- inadequate leadership and management of the engineering provision by the contract holder, Seven Towers Training;
- unsatisfactory quality of the training provision within Larne Skills Development, particularly the poor design of the apprenticeship programmes, the unsatisfactory workplace assessment arrangements, and the inadequate quality of the directed training and learning facilities; and
- unacceptably high levels of risk to the apprentices' and trainees' health and safety while they are using practical training equipment in Larne Skills Development.

Performance Level	Total No of Trainees and Apprentices
Unsatisfactory	143

10. **ESSENTIAL SKILLS**

10.1 In essential skills, the quality of training provided by Seven Towers Training is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in achievements and standards, learning and teaching, and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the trainees and apprentices are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on Seven Towers Training's progress in addressing the areas for improvement, over a 12-18 month period.

10.2 The main strengths are the:

- good quality of the workplace training in the essential skills for the apprentices, including the opportunities provided to achieve at a level beyond the minimum requirement of their programmes;
- highly supportive ethos and the good quality of the behaviour management strategies employed by Seven Towers, including the effective one-to-one support provided in almost all of the Training for Success sessions inspected;

- opportunities for professional development afforded to staff in order to improve continuously the training and learning process; and
- excellent outcomes at 100% in the essential skills.

10.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- insufficient use of the outcomes of the initial and diagnostic assessments to plan for differentiated learning, and the limited collaboration between the essential skills tutors and the professional and technical tutors to facilitate contextualisation and integration in the Training for Success provision;
- limited range of training and learning strategies used in the majority of Training for Success sessions inspected, and the poor organisation by a minority of the trainees of the work in their essential skills folders;
- generic nature of a minority of review documents, which lack appropriate detail and focused, incremental targets; and
- inadequate quality of the management and co-ordination of the essential skills across the providers.

Performance Level	Total Number of Trainees and Apprentices	
	Literacy	87
	Numeracy	81
	ICT	57

11. HAIRDRESSING

11.1 In hairdressing, the quality of training provided by Seven Towers Training is good. The organisation has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the organisation has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor Seven Towers Training's progress on the areas for improvement.

11.2 The main strengths are the:

- appropriate curriculum which meets the needs of the trainees and apprentices;
- good standards of occupational skills demonstrated by most of the trainees and apprentices;
- good distance travelled by most of the trainees and apprentices in their learning;
- good opportunities for the trainees and apprentices to develop their knowledge and understanding of hairdressing principles; and
- excellent success rates at 100% across the hairdressing provision, over the past three years.

11.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- use of more active learning approaches which will further challenge and engage the trainees and apprentices in their learning;
- greater involvement of employers in the review of trainees' and apprentices' progress and in setting short-term training targets to support skill development and progress towards achieving the target qualification; and
- strengthening of the quality assurance processes to ensure that weaknesses in provision are identified and addressed effectively.

Performance Level	Total No of Trainees and Apprentices
Good	62

12. HOSPITALITY AND CATERING

12.1 In hospitality and catering, the quality of training provided by Seven Towers Training is very good. The organisation is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the trainees and apprentices; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

12.2 The main strengths are the:

- very good occupational skills demonstrated by almost all of the apprentices;
- very good quality of opportunities provided in workplace training;
- good or better quality of most of the directed training sessions observed;
- effective quality assurance procedures;
- high level of care, guidance and support provided for all trainees and apprentices; and
- excellent retention, success and progression rates, at 100%, over the past three years on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme.

12.3 The main area for improvement is the:

- lack of communication and engagement with employers in the Skills for Work strand.

Performance Level	Total No of Trainees and Apprentices
Very Good	23

13. RETAIL AND DISTRIBUTION AND WAREHOUSING

13.1 In retail and distribution and warehousing, the quality of training provided by Seven Towers Training is good. The organisation has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the organisation has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the Seven Towers Training's progress on the areas for improvement.

13.2 The main strengths are the:

- good quality of the workplace training for most of the trainees and apprentices; it is particularly good for those apprentices in distribution and warehousing;
- good standards of work displayed by most of the trainees and apprentices;
- good outcomes on the Skills for Work strand of the Training for Success and the ApprenticeshipsNI programmes; and
- good level of pastoral care and support for the trainees and apprentices, particularly those with additional learning needs.

13.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- need to develop a wider range of interactive learning techniques in the directed training sessions that engage the trainees and apprentices more actively in their own learning;
- need to improve the pace of assessment and accreditation for those retail apprentices who are trained in the workplace; and
- poor outcomes on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship programme.

Performance Level	Total No of Trainees and Apprentices
Good	15

PART FOUR – CONCLUSION AND KEY PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

14. CONCLUSION

14.1 Overall, the quality of training provided by Seven Towers is inadequate; the areas for improvement outweigh the strengths in the provision. The inspection has identified significant areas for improvement, mainly in the leadership and management of the organisation, but also in key aspects of achievements and standards and training and learning. Overall, these need to be addressed urgently if Seven Towers is to meet effectively the needs of all of the trainees and apprentices.

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

15. KEY PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

15.1 Seven Towers needs to revise its annual improvement plan to take account of the following key priorities:

- the unsatisfactory quality of the provision for engineering in Larne Skills Development;
- the inadequate leadership and management of the engineering provision in Larne Skills Development by Seven Towers, including the arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of the sub-contracted training;
- the shortcomings in the quality of the training and learning in a significant minority of the lessons observed, including the use of ILT to support training and learning; and
- the lack of appropriate work placements in a number of the professional and technical areas.

APPENDIX

OVERALL SUMMARY TABLE – 2007- 2010

Programme	Started (completed 4 weeks)	Retention Rate %	Success Rate %	Progressed to FE/other training	Progressed to relevant employment
Personal Development/Skills for Your Life	20	30	100	6	0
Skills for Work	86	71	100	51	0
Pre-Apprenticeship/ Programme Led Apprenticeship	83	53	100	15	0
Employability	0	0	0	0	0
Level 2 Apprenticeship	224	73	100	57	75
Level 3 Apprenticeship	67	85	100	0	18
Overall totals		69	100	129	93

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