



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Training for Success Provision  
in Strabane Training Services  
Ltd

Report of an Inspection  
in March 2013



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

CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE



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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 Strabane Training Services

### Performance Levels

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

| Performance Level |
|-------------------|
| Outstanding       |
| Very Good         |
| Good              |
| Satisfactory      |
| Inadequate        |
| Unsatisfactory    |

### Key Performance Indicators

| Key Performance Indicators and Definitions |  |
|--|--|
| Retention                                  | Proportion of trainees/apprentices who completed their training or are still on their programme.     |
| Achievement                                | Proportion of completers who gained the award. (full framework)                                      |
| Success                                    | Proportion of trainees/apprentices who completed 4 weeks and gained the award. (full framework)      |
| Progression                                | Proportion of successful completers who progress to further/higher education/training or employment. |

### Glossary of terms and abbreviations

|      |   |
|------|---|
| ANI  | ApprenticeshipsNI                                       |
| DEL  | Department for Employment and Learning (The Department) |
| ETI  | Education and Training Inspectorate (The Inspectorate)  |
| GCSE | General Certificate of Secondary Education              |
| ICT  | Information and Communication Technology                |
| ILT  | Information and Learning Technology                     |
| IT   | Information technology                                  |
| NI   | Northern Ireland  |
| PLA  | Programme Led Apprenticeship                            |
| TfS  | Training for Success                                    |
| VLE  | Virtual Learning Environment                            |

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Context

Strabane Training Services is a wholly owned subsidiary of Strabane Training Services (1990) Ltd, a company limited by guarantee and is recognised as a charity by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. The company was founded in 1978 and since then has provided a range of training programmes to young people and adults in the Strabane District Council area. It operates from two premises in Strabane, a training facility in the town centre and workshop facilities in the STS Business Park within the Ballycolman Industrial Estate.

Strabane Training Services is contracted by the Department for Employment and Learning to provide professional and technical training under the Training for Success programme. At the time of the inspection it was providing training in the professional and technical areas of business and administration, barbering, beauty therapy, childcare, construction, employability, health and social care, information technology (IT) users, hairdressing, and retail.

Most of the trainees registered with the organisation live within the Strabane District Council area. In January 2013, this council area had the third highest rate of unemployment (claimant count) in Northern Ireland at 7.6%<sup>1</sup>. Two of the wards in the council area have unemployment rates in excess of 10%. Only 16% of the population in Strabane have a Level 4 qualification or better, the lowest of all the local council areas in Northern Ireland. Approximately 41% of those aged 16 or over have no formal qualifications, over 10% more than the Northern Ireland average.

The majority of the trainees who enter the Training for Success programme have a range of personal, social and emotional problems, as well as having additional learning needs. At the time of the inspection, 51 (55%) of the trainees were availing of specialist support for a range of personal issues from a number of external support providers or agencies.

### 1.2 Current registrations by programme

The majority (70%) of the trainees are registered on the Skills for Your Life or Skills for Work strands of the Training for Success programme. Around 20% of the current cohort came from education other than at school (EOTAS) provision.

| Programme                    | Number of trainees/ apprentices | % of total registrations |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Skills for your Life         | 41                              | 44                       |
| Skills for Work              | 24                              | 26                       |
| Programme-Led Apprenticeship | 28                              | 30                       |
| Overall Total                | 93                              | 100                      |

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<sup>1</sup> Northern Ireland Statistics Research Agency January 2013 Northern Ireland Labour Market Survey

### 1.3 Current registrations by professional and technical area

| Professional and technical area     | Number of trainees | % of total registrations |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Business Administration             | 5                  | 5                        |
| Construction                        | 25                 | 26                       |
| Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy     | 20                 | 22                       |
| Health & Social Care (Childcare)    | 12                 | 13                       |
| IT Users                            | 9                  | 10                       |
| Retail                              | 4                  | 4                        |
| Barbering                           | 8                  | 9                        |
| Skills for Your Life/ Employability | 10                 | 11                       |
| <b>Total</b>                        | <b>93</b>          | 100%                     |

### 1.4 Qualifications of current trainees on entry to their programme

The majority of the trainees enter Strabane Training Services with very low levels of prior educational attainment. A majority (77%) of them had not attained the equivalent of four General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) passes at grades A\*-G; 55% had no formal qualifications at all. Only 2% of the trainees had attained four or more GCSE passes at grades A\*-C including English and mathematics; as a consequence, almost all of the trainees are undertaking essential skills training in literacy and numeracy.

|   | Training for Success |
|---|----------------------|
| % of trainees with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C including English and mathematics | (2) 2%               |
| % of trainees with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C                                   | (1) 1%               |
| % trainees with GCSE English and mathematics or equivalent at Grades A*-C                         | (5) 5%               |
| % of trainees with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-G                                   | (18) 20%             |
| % trainees with no qualifications   | (52) 55%             |
| <b>Overall Total</b>  | <b>(93) 100%</b>     |

Note: All data sourced from Strabane Training Services at the time of the inspection.

### 1.5 Scope and method of the inspection

The inspection of Strabane Training Services focused on achievements and standards, the provision for learning and leadership and management, including the organisation's processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement. The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation in these three aspects of training organisations, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the Inspectorate's publication *Improving Quality: Raising Standards Work-based Learning* at <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/improving-quality-raising-standards/improving-quality-raising-standards-iqrs-work-based-learning.htm>. The evaluation, based on the quality indicators, enabled the Inspectorate to make a judgement on the overall quality of the provision provided by the organisation.

A team of 4 inspectors observed a total of 18 directed training sessions, interviewed 8 employers, and 10 trainees in the workplace. Extended discussions were held with the chair of the board of management, the managing director, the training manager, and tutors. In addition, the inspectors examined samples of the trainees' work, schemes of work and lesson plans, teaching and training resources, minutes of meetings, electronic learning resources and the trainees' personal training plans. The organisation's self-evaluation report and other relevant documentation were also scrutinised.

The inspection also focused on the arrangements for care, guidance and support and the safeguarding of vulnerable groups.

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the trainees to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection.

| <b>Questionnaire</b> | Number issued | Number returned | Percentage returned | Number with comments |
|----------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Trainees             | 53            | 53              | 100%                | 15                   |

The returns show that the trainees' experiences in Strabane Training Services are mostly good. In particular they value the support of the tutors and the opportunities provided for them to progress in their learning.

The Inspectorate has reported the outcomes of the questionnaires and discussions held with the trainees to the management.

## 2. Overall finding of the inspection

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

### 2.2 Summary of key findings

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| <b>Overall performance level</b>          | <b>Very Good</b> |
| <b>Contributory performance levels:</b>   |                  |
| Achievements and Standards                | Very Good        |
| Provision for Learning                    | Good             |
| Leadership and Management                 | Very Good        |
| <b>Area of Learning performance level</b> |                  |
| Essential Skills                          | Very Good        |

### 2.3 What does Strabane Training Services need to do to improve further?

Strabane Training Services needs to revise its annual development plan to take account of the following key priorities for development:

- to continue to develop the range of teaching, training and learning strategies to address the diverse learning needs of the trainees; and
- to better formalise employer involvement in workplace monitoring.

### **3. Achievements and standards**

#### **3.1 The quality of achievement and standards is very good.**

3.2 The tutors are highly committed and have high expectations for the trainees. Relationships between the staff and trainees are outstanding. The trainees report that they feel very well supported by the staff and are making good progress in their learning.

3.3 The quality of most of the trainees' written work is good in their professional and technical areas; their portfolios of evidence are well-organised and presented clearly. The trainees demonstrate good use and understanding of relevant technical language. Most of the trainees are developing good levels of confidence in their communication skills.

3.4 The standards of work achieved by the trainees in the workshop, salons and classrooms are mostly very good. They are working safely to current industry and commercial practices and have developed a good understanding of what is needed in the world of work. The trainees are acquiring good independent working skills and they work well under minimal supervision; most of them are well motivated and are enthusiastic about their training programme.

3.5 The trainees demonstrate very good employability skills. In the workplace, they have appropriate opportunities to develop and apply their vocational skills. The employers report that the trainees are gaining confidence, have good attitudes to work and complete their tasks to a good standard. The minority (17%) of Skills for Work and Programme-Led Apprenticeship trainees who are not in work placement are provided with appropriate additional opportunities to extend their professional and technical skills in the workshops and salons. For example, they are able to acquire and apply good occupational skills through placement in the organisation's commercial salon and appropriate construction projects.

3.6 In the essential skills, the standards of the trainees' speaking and listening skills are mostly good or very good. There is an appropriate emphasis on the development of the trainees' thinking skills and reflective capabilities and they are supported effectively to express their ideas confidently and to formulate their opinions thoughtfully. The standards of the trainees' written work range from satisfactory to good; a minority are satisfactory. More needs to be done by the tutors to enhance the trainees' extended writing skills and to encourage the transferability of these skills to their professional and technical work.

3.7 Over the past four years, the overall retention rate on the Training for Success programme is very good at 87%. The overall achievement and progression rates are outstanding at 98% and 91% respectively.

3.8 The retention and achievement rates on the Skills for Your Life strand are outstanding at 89% and 100% respectively. The progression rate to further training or employment is very good at 88%.

3.9 The retention, achievement, and progression rates on the Skills for Work strand are outstanding at 91%, 100%, and 94% respectively.

3.10 The retention and achievement rates on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand are good at 71% and 85% respectively. The progression rate to further training or employment is very good at 88%.

## Training for Success: Achievements over the last four years (2008-2012)

| Programme/ Strand             | Numbers registered who completed 4 weeks training | Retention rate % | Achievement rate % | Progression rate for those who achieved full award % |
|-------------------------------|---|------------------|--------------------|--|
| Skills for your Life          | 94  | 89               | 100                | 88   |
| Skills for Work               | 75  | 91               | 100                | 94   |
| Programme-Led Apprenticeships | 31  | 71               | 85                 | 88   |
| Overall Totals                | 200   | 87               | 98                 | 91   |

Note: Achievement rates are for the full framework.

### 4. Provision for learning

#### 4.1 The quality of provision for learning is good.

4.2 There is a broad curriculum on offer to the trainees which provides them with good progression opportunities. All trainees are provided with outstanding opportunities to develop further their technical and employability skills through the provision of an extensive range of enhancements, additional courses and qualifications, including basic food hygiene, first aid certificates, Construction Skills Register card and product-specific makeup application. All the trainees engage in accredited employability training at level 1 or 2.

4.3 There is a comprehensive induction programme in place for the trainees which introduces them effectively to the content of their programme, the key elements of their professional and technical units and details of the essential skills. The trainees speak knowledgeably about all aspects of their training programme and are aware of the relevant policies relating to all aspects of their training and work placement.

4.4 The initial assessment process is robust. The trainees undertake an initial assessment in literacy, numeracy and ICT which is supplemented well by diagnostic assessment processes. The outcomes of both are used well to plan for learning and progression.

4.5 The quality of the teaching, training and learning ranges from satisfactory to very good; it is good or better in most (88%) of the 18 directed training sessions observed, with a significant minority (32%) of them being very good. The good or better sessions are characterised by robust planning, effective use of ILT, and the application by the tutors of a wide range of activities which engage the trainees. The rapport between the trainees and the tutors is very good. There is a supportive and inclusive ethos displayed by the tutors in the directed training sessions, which contributes significantly to the development of the trainees' confidence and self-esteem. A key feature of a small number of lessons was the introduction of the trainees to new technologies, which enhance significantly the quality of the learning experiences. In the sessions evaluated as satisfactory, the approaches to differentiation are not well enough developed, and as a result there is insufficient stretch and challenge for the more able trainees. The quality of the marking for improvement in the portfolios of evidence is variable and does not always support sufficiently the development of the trainees' literacy by addressing more rigorously errors in spelling and punctuation.



4.6 The arrangements for work placements are very good; most (89%) of the Programme-Led Apprentices are in suitable work placements which give them opportunities to develop and apply a wide range of occupational competences. The tutors work hard to ensure that the work placements are matched well to the trainees' interests, capabilities and career aspirations.

4.7 The quality of the personal training plans is good. The trainee reviews are progressive and set appropriate targets. The essential skills target levels are informed by effective initial and diagnostic assessments. The interim milestones are used well to set targets and the trainees' progress is tracked effectively. All of the trainees in a work placement are visited and reviewed regularly by the tutors. The employers are well informed about the trainees' progress and about their role in developing further their training and skills. They report that communication with Strabane Training Services is good. However, the review process could be improved by strengthening the recording of the input from the employers.

4.8 The provision of care, guidance and support is very good. Staff are aware of the individual personal, social and learning needs of the trainees, are committed to their care and welfare and provide them with very good levels of pastoral support. The features of this very strong provision include a breakfast facility for the trainees and good support for those who live independently. A range of specialist support is in place for those trainees who need it; clear targets are set for the trainees and regular reviews ensure that their progress is closely monitored. Effective procedures are also in place to track and monitor attendance; an effective attendance strategy and reward system have been implemented and these are monitored regularly to evaluate their effectiveness. All of the trainees interviewed spoke enthusiastically about their training experiences and commented on the high levels of pastoral support and care provided by the staff which is valued highly by them.

4.9 The provision of careers education, information, advice and guidance is good. It is embedded effectively into the trainees' learning programmes by the tutors and is supported well by an effective programme of work-related activities including industrial visits and the use of guest speakers. The trainees benefit from the ongoing information and guidance to enable them to plan effectively for progression to the next level of education or training. Most of the trainees interviewed are aware of the progression routes available to them within Strabane Training Services, but also to other appropriate providers. They also had a good awareness of employment opportunities both locally and further afield.

## **5. Leadership and management**

### **5.1 The quality of leadership and management is very good.**

5.2 Strabane Training Services is led effectively by the managing director who is supported very well by the training manager. The chair of the board of management is highly committed to, and is fully involved in, the work of Strabane Training Services. The roles and responsibilities of staff are clearly defined. There are open channels of communication between staff at all levels, regular meetings and clear evidence of strong and effective teamwork. The management team promotes a strong ethos of trainee-centred pastoral care across the organisation.

5.3 The quality and effectiveness of curriculum planning and development is very good. In the past three years, Strabane Training Services has expanded the range of programmes it offers in order to address the under-representation of females on its programmes and also to improve the employment opportunities for their trainees within the local economy and further afield. The programmes introduced include hairdressing, barbering, beauty therapy, childcare and basic construction skills.

5.4 The staff are well-qualified and experienced in their professional and technical areas. Strabane Training Services has demonstrated a commitment to raising the quality of the teaching, training and learning through the development of the tutors' pedagogic practice and the more effective use of ILT. Through the curriculum development process, the training needs of the staff are identified and a targeted workforce development plan has been implemented. The organisation has, for example, implemented a rolling programme of tutor education with all staff due to complete the University of Ulster Certificate in Teaching by 2015. A good system of peer and external observation is in place which has been used to very good effect to improve the quality of the teaching, training and learning and to create opportunities for professional dialogue and sharing of practices leading to improvement.

5.5 A Technology Enhanced Learning strategy is in place which has an appropriate focus on using technology to enhance the tutors' pedagogic practice and to support the trainees in their learning, and social and personal development. A virtual learning environment is being piloted in two professional and technical areas; it is managed effectively by the ICT vocational tutor, who has provided relevant training to staff. There is a need, however, to improve access for tutors to presentation technologies to enable them to apply and further develop interactive teaching and training approaches.

5.6 The quality of the accommodation and resources is very good. Strabane Training Services has made a significant investment to improve the quality of accommodation and resources across its premises. The workshops and salons are spacious and well-equipped. Most of the trainees have good access to ICT equipment and connectivity to the Internet. Strabane Training Services has also invested in acquiring additional technical support in hairdressing, beauty therapy and construction to support the tutors and help supervise those trainees engaging in local community work experience projects.

5.7 The quality of links and partnerships with employers and external agencies is very good. Strabane Training Services works to good effect with a range of external organisations such as Disability Action, DIVERT, Opportunity Youth, Youth Justice, and the Youth Accommodation Service. In particular, an innovative partnership has been developed with Gable, a Shelter Northern Ireland project to provide relevant work experience placements for construction craft trainees. The projects provide the trainees with a real working environment to enable them to develop and apply technical and employability skills and, for the Programme-Led Apprentices, to acquire the necessary competencies and complete the assessment requirements for the full framework.

5.8 The arrangements for self-evaluation and improvement planning are good. An appropriate quality improvement cycle has been established, involving tutors, managers and the board of management. Management information is collated and analysed regularly, and is used effectively to identify areas for improvement. The process has been strengthened by the recent introduction of individual self-evaluation reports for each of the professional and technical areas and the essential skills. Consideration should be given to extending the process to obtaining regular feedback from employers and the use of more measurable targets in the quality improvement plan.

5.9 The arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable groups comply satisfactorily with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007. Management are updating the safeguarding policy in line with current legislation and are aligning all aspects of their safeguarding policies with best practice arrangements. Appropriate policies on drug and alcohol abuse, bullying and harassment, including cyber-bullying, and a young person's complaints procedure are signposted for all trainees during induction. Information regarding the designated safeguarding personnel is displayed prominently in all premises.

## **Area of learning report**

### **6. Essential skills**

#### **Key findings**

In the essential skills, the quality of training provided by Strabane Training Services is very good.

#### **The quality of the achievements and standards is very good.**

The trainees enter training with very low levels of prior achievements in English and mathematics at GCSE level; a very small number of them hold a GCSE pass at grade A\*-C in English or mathematics. Over the last three years, a minority of trainees have achieved level 2 qualifications in literacy, numeracy and ICT from a low baseline, which demonstrates the good opportunities for achievement and progression within the organisation. The tutors and managers set high expectations for the trainees and succeed largely in motivating them and in developing their awareness of the importance of achievements in literacy and numeracy for future employability. The trainees develop very good talking and listening skills and make good progress across all of the key areas of their literacy and numeracy. The trainees develop good collaborative skills and there is an appropriate focus on the further strengthening of their independent learning skills. Over the past four years, the overall average achievement rate in the essential skills is outstanding at 100%.

#### **The quality of the provision is good.**

The essential skills provision is planned in a clear and coherent manner and is informed by a range of assessment strategies at individual tutor level. The overall quality of the directed training ranges from satisfactory to very good and is good or better in most (83%) of the sessions observed; with a significant minority (33%) being very good. The tutors also use a good range of teaching and training approaches to meet the wide variety of individual learning needs of the trainees and they work hard to provide a strongly supportive ethos in which trainees feel valued and encouraged to raise their aspirations and achievements. The essential skills tutors need to develop further their links with the professional and technical tutors to ensure stronger embedding of the essential skills in the trainees' written work in the professional and technical folders. Tutors also need to develop further their use of ICT to support learning, particularly independent learning.

#### **The quality of the leadership and management is very good.**

The managing director and the training manager demonstrate a high level of commitment to the development and to the quality improvement of the provision. They work hard to develop and sustain a very positive, supportive and inclusive climate for learning. There is very good communication with staff at all levels and staff are well supported in their work by the management team. The management team invest appropriately in the provision of appropriate internal and external staff development for the essential skills tutors. The managing director and the training manager have introduced a range of key initiatives, including peer observations, and observations by an external evaluator, to improve teaching, training and learning, the outcomes of which are used to inform planning for improvement, and to manage change in the organisation. The management of the planning for the overall

development of the essential skills provision is very good; the organisation provides appropriate opportunities for the trainees to achieve the essential skills at more than one level in the course of their training, and to achieve at a level higher than is required by their strand. The essential skills team is recently appointed and it is appropriate that the training manager should continue to monitor and evaluate the development of the team on a regular basis to ensure cohesion.

**Table of Achievements over the last four years.**

|                                    | Numbers registered who completed 4 weeks training and without exemption |          |     | Achievement rate % |          |     |
|------------------------------------|---|----------|-----|--------------------|----------|-----|
|                                    | Literacy  | Numeracy | ICT | Literacy           | Numeracy | ICT |
| <b>Training for Success Strand</b> | 154   | 162      | 156 | 100                | 100      | 100 |

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