

**An evaluation of the Training for Success  
(2017) programme to support and help  
inform the design and continuous  
improvement of future youth training  
provision in Northern Ireland**

August 2018

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ETI: Promoting Improvement in the Interest of all Learners



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
and other commissioning Departments



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## 1. Introduction

1.1 The Department for the Economy (Department) requested the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) to carry out an evaluation of the Training for Success (2017) programme to support and inform the design and continuous improvement of future youth training provision in Northern Ireland<sup>1</sup>.

## 2. Context

2.1 The evaluation was included as part of the ongoing ETI work-based learning<sup>2</sup> inspections, carried out between September 2017 and March 2018, in supplier organisations contracted by the Department to deliver the Training for Success (2017) programme. In addition, visits were carried out by ETI to a further sample of twelve supplier organisations in January 2018. Beyond this, discussions were also held with representatives from a small number of supplier and other stakeholder organisations, between October 2017 and February 2018, to inform the evaluation<sup>3</sup>. Where the evaluation was included as part of the inspection process, the organisations and representatives from the Department received feedback at the end of the inspection and the findings from the evaluation were included in the organisation's inspection report. The twelve organisations visited in January 2018 were given oral feedback and issued with a written summary of key findings.

2.2 At the time of the evaluation, a majority (66%) of the trainees on the Training for Success (2017) programme were registered at level 2, a minority (29%) at level 1, and only a small number (5%) of trainees were registered on the Skills for Life strand. The largest number of trainees, particularly at level 2, are attending the six further education colleges. A majority of the trainees are male (70%) while most of the female trainees are concentrated in a small number of professional and technical areas.

2.3 A majority of the organisations report that the number of trainees recruited to the Training for Success (2017) programme has decreased and, in some cases by a considerable proportion. They further report that this is due to a number of factors, including: some impact of demographic changes; a lack of sufficient access by supplier organisations to pupils in local post-primary schools at key decision points to help young people make impartial and informed decisions; the lack of knowledge and information, and at times poor perception about the Training for Success programme, among parents and young people; and more young people staying on to continue their education, mostly in level 2 bridging programmes, in post-primary schools at post-16.

2.4 Geographically there are indications that the fall in recruitment to the programme is impacting on its viability and sustainability in a minority of supplier organisations and in some catchment areas, particularly the north-coast area. This in turn affects the range of programmes that can be offered or delivered when there are smaller numbers of trainees, the increased resourcing required to support the needs of the trainees recruited, including the additional staff expertise needed to meet their more complex needs and the adverse impact on staff morale of uncertainty overall about the programme. There is evidence, however, in some organisations that positive action is being taken to try and address recruitment issues. In one organisation, for example, a more effective recruitment strategy, including improved engagement with schools, the careers service, and employers to promote the provision, and the production of innovative careers planning booklets for pupils in feeder schools, has resulted in the number of trainees being recruited increasing by almost 50% from the previous year.

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<sup>1</sup> Generating our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy for Youth Training June 2015

<sup>2</sup> Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes Inspections; this included full work-based learning inspections, follow-up inspections, interim follow-up visits, and baseline inspection visits

<sup>3</sup> Appendix three contains the full list of organisations visited or inspected as part of the evaluation

### **3. Executive Summary**

3.1 The Training for Success programme has become the pathway of choice for many of those young people who leave school or other provision with low or no formal qualifications. A majority of these young trainees present with significant and often complex barriers to learning and employment and require considerable support and guidance throughout the duration of the programme, but particularly in the early stages. Consequently, it is no longer meeting fully the needs of all of the trainees, particularly those at level 1 and below.

3.2 The number of trainees recruited to the programme has declined with the largest number, attending the six further education colleges, particularly on level 2 provision. A majority of the trainees are male (70%), while most of the female trainees are concentrated in a small number of professional and technical areas. There are indications that the fall in recruitment is impacting on the viability and sustainability of the Training for Success programme in a minority of supplier organisations and this is leading to gaps in provision in some geographic areas.

3.3 The supplier organisations are mostly well-informed by labour market intelligence and engage effectively with key stakeholders, which is reflected well in their planning for learning and development. This is more evident in the larger work-based learning supplier organisations and the further education colleges. The evidence shows that it is becoming increasingly difficult for those organisations with lower levels of recruitment to provide an appropriately wide and balanced curriculum offer for the trainees.

3.4 The arrangements for the care and welfare and support for the trainees are highly developed and a key strength of the work of the supplier organisations; the skills profile of staff involved in the delivery of the programme has changed considerably in order to meet the varying needs of the trainees.

3.5 The processes used for the initial assessment of the trainees on entry are mostly robust, although the personal training planning and associated monitoring and review processes, across the majority of the organisations, could be improved further.

3.6 The provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance is mostly effective across the organisations. Young people, however, and particularly females, should be encouraged more to consider career progression opportunities in professional and technical areas with identified skills shortages and good career and earnings potential.

3.7 There is inconsistency in the role and impact of the careers service in allocating training credits. There is a need to ensure that all young people receive good quality, impartial careers advice and guidance to allow them to register on the most appropriate level of programme to meet their level of readiness for training and their learning and progression needs.

3.8 The quality of the learning, teaching and training, including the development of project-based learning, is mostly good to very good, and the opportunities for trainees to undertake good quality work-experience placement opportunities has increased. There is a need, however, to improve outcomes under the revised assessment arrangements for the essential skills.

3.9 There is a need to review the key overall performance targets, in line with the changing profile of the trainees on entry, and improve the availability of key performance data, particularly at the level of professional and technical areas, to support organisations in benchmarking their outcomes and to inform self-evaluation and quality improvement planning.

3.10 Consideration needs to be given to a re-branding and more effective marketing of the Training for Success programme to ensure that it is an attractive and appealing progression pathway for more-able school leavers, and that its objectives are more fully understood by all key stakeholders, including young people, their parents/carers and a wider range of staff in post-primary schools.

#### **4. Summary of overall main findings**

The following is a written summary of the overall main findings from the evaluation.

##### **4.1 Outcomes for Learners**

4.1.1 A majority of the trainees registered on the Training for Success (2017) programme present with significant and often complex barriers to learning and employment, including a wide range of physical, social and emotional issues. There is also evidence, in some organisations, that at least a significant minority of them have been assessed as having an identified disability or learning support need. As a consequence, many of the trainees are developing their skills and competences from a low base. While they make progress in their learning and in the development of their wider skills and dispositions, many of these young people require considerable support and guidance throughout the duration of their vocational training programme, in order to ensure their readiness to participate, potentially succeed and to progress to further education, higher level training, or to secure employment.

4.1.2 Due to the range of issues that the majority of the trainees present with, management and staff report that the programme is becoming increasingly challenging to deliver. They state that, for many of the trainees, particularly those at level 1 and below, the primary focus has changed from training and skills development to mainly care and welfare, and personal support. As a consequence, a majority of organisations indicate that the programme is currently not structured or resourced sufficiently to meet the more challenging needs of these young people and has the potential to cause longer-term viability problems for the organisations. In effect, the Training for Success programme has become the programme of choice for many of those who leave school or other provision with low or no formal qualifications.

4.1.3 Of the more able trainees, particularly those undertaking training at level 2, most engage well in their learning and demonstrate good or better standards of work. In addition to their vocational and employability skills, they are developing well their wider skills and competences, along with their confidence, self-esteem and self-worth. Good opportunities exist for them to progress in their professional and technical and essential skills training, and to access relevant pathways, in particular apprenticeship training.

4.1.4 Across most of the organisations, the outcomes attained by the trainees in the essential skills of communication and application of number at levels 1 and 2 have declined, particularly application of number, in comparison to outcomes under the previous assessment arrangements. While the organisations have begun to put processes in place to address this, including alternative learning and teaching strategies, they need to ensure trainees are not disadvantaged in their learning and progression, particularly the opportunity

to progress through the levels and to achieve the essential skills to at least level 2. A significant minority of the organisations have expressed concern about the possible length of time needed by trainees to complete one level of the essential skills under the new assessment arrangements, which has the potential to impact on their progression across levels, which in turn could hinder progression by some to apprenticeship training.

4.1.5 While it is still early in the programme, most of the trainees enrolled, across the organisations, have been retained. The evidence shows that the organisations work hard to provide high levels of initial support and guidance and to match trainees to the most appropriate vocational pathways.

4.1.6 The evidence is clear that the entry profile of the trainees registering on the Training for Success programme, in terms of prior attainment and the levels of support necessary, has changed significantly. There is a need for the Department to monitor and review outcomes across the organisations, but also to review the key performance targets being set, in any new programme going forward, to ensure they align with the changing profile of the trainees and result in higher overall outcomes; on the previous Training for Success (2013) programme, for example, just 44% of the trainees, who registered between 2013/14 and 2015/16, achieved all of their targeted qualifications against a target of 65%<sup>4</sup>.

## 4.2 Quality of Provision

4.2.1 Across the organisations, management and staff are experienced in delivering this level and type of provision and it is generally well-planned. However, the provision of the four key elements of the Training for Success (2017) programme<sup>5</sup>, across the organisations, remains largely traditional with each element being delivered discretely in compliance with the published requirements. While most of the organisations are positive about the removal of the 72 credit attainment requirement, the change has not yet been exploited fully nor has it had a discernible impact on curriculum planning across the organisations. For the benefits of the revised programme to be realised, organisations need to consider alternative and more innovative, flexible methods of curriculum delivery.

4.2.2 There is evidence to demonstrate that the organisations are beginning to undertake reviews of how they deliver their curriculum to best meet the needs of the trainees, including: the provision of an extended personal development curriculum in the early stages of training; the introduction of a range of extra-curricular enhancements to help engage and motivate them; the provision of a more appropriate range of units, at different levels, to support less able trainees to make progress in their learning and development; the better integration of the essential skills within the professional and technical training; and the provision of additional professional and technical units, particularly at level 2, with a view to supporting progression opportunities.

In an organisation in the Larne area, the trainees across all strands of the Training for Success (2017) programme are provided with a broad and balanced curriculum of relevant technical qualifications, industry-standard enhancements and well-targeted, integrated personal development, which equips them well to work in the engineering sector and enables them to progress seamlessly to an apprenticeship programme.

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4 Department for the Economy Statistical Bulletin Training for Success 2013 (Quarterly statistics from July 2013 to April 2017)

5 Professional and technical training, personal development, employability, and essential skills

4.2.3 Many of the trainees report that too much of the content of the personal development and employability provision is a repeat of work already covered while at school. They further state that it was not what they expected, it is often demotivating and that they want more practical and active, vocationally-focused learning and training. A majority of the organisations report that they no longer see the benefit in the provision of accredited personal development and employability programmes and that these elements could be delivered to better effect when integrated within the trainees' professional and technical and essential skills training.

In a supplier organisation in the Southern area, a key feature of the provision is the front-loading of the employability and personal and social development elements to help prepare and support the trainees, to ensure they are ready to source and maintain a relevant work-experience placement and to make progress in their professional and technical training.

4.2.4 Relevant enrichment and mentoring support programmes, including external visits and guest speakers, are in place across most of the organisations, to help engage and motivate the trainees and further support their learning and development. In some cases, trainees benefit from a tailored programme of training and well-integrated support that helps them to overcome their significant barriers to learning, progression and employment.

4.2.5 Outside of the further education colleges only a few of the supplier organisations have considered offering progression for some trainees to GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics<sup>6</sup>. However, they report considerable barriers to this including: lack of staff expertise and experience; low numbers of trainees capable of attaining at this level; timetabling issues; and resource implications.

4.2.6 The trainees are benefiting from increased availability of work-experience placement opportunities. For the sample of organisations visited for this evaluation, the work-experience placement rate for the trainees was high at approximately 70%. The quality of the work-experience placements are mostly good and in the best practice: are matched well to the trainees' interests and career aspirations; aligned to employment or potential future apprenticeship opportunities; work-place mentors are in place who understood the programme; a good match is evident between the work being undertaken and the trainees' professional and technical training; the trainees are completing relevant and meaningful tasks with good on-the-job guidance and support; and an effective, detailed training plan is in place which includes employer buy-in and feedback.

4.2.7 Most of the employers interviewed are positive about the work of the organisations; they highlighted the establishment of effective mutually beneficial working relationships and the good progress being made by most of the trainees during their work-experience placements.

4.2.8 There is sound evidence that organisations have put in place well-thought out, and at times, innovative alternative work-experience placement opportunities for those trainees who are furthest from the workplace and whose employability skills are in need of significant ongoing refresh and development. This includes appropriate community-based projects and social enterprise organisations.

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<sup>6</sup> GCSE provision is not a requirement of the Training for Success programme but is sometimes offered by a small number of supplier organisations to support progression opportunities for trainees.

In an organisation, the induction process in place for work-experience placement providers is effective and includes a health and safety audit and a comprehensive information pack that provides information to the employer about the programme. The roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders are clearly set out, including the workplace mentor, and a training plan for the trainee's professional and technical area is included. Employer links are further enhanced through regular communication and visits by tutors to the trainees while they are undertaking their placements, and the opportunity for them to be involved in the review process. In another, a new work-sampling programme has been developed to better inform the trainees about different professional and technical areas and potential work-experience placements; as a result, more of them have retained their placement.

4.2.9 Across the organisations, the processes used for the initial assessment of the trainees on entry are mostly robust. In the most effective practice, a comprehensive initial and diagnostic assessment process is in place, involves all key staff and is used well to inform the trainees' personal training plans (PTP). The assessment processes are used well to detail the trainees' individual learning and support needs, their barriers to employment, the strategies needed to support them to progress in their learning and personal development, and ensure that most of them undertake all elements of their training programme at the most appropriate level.

The initial assessment process in an organisation is used very effectively to identify the individual learning and progression needs of the trainees against their previous learning experiences and attainments, and assess and support their personal development using key personal and lifestyle indicators; the information collated is used well to inform each trainee's PTP. In another, the arrangements for the trainees' induction and initial assessment incorporate meaningful involvement with the Department's careers officer and the trainees' parents, and inform well the development of their individual training programme and additional support needs. A further education college has developed and put in place a very effective electronic Personal Training Planning system.

4.2.10 While examples of good practice exist, the PTPs and associated monitoring and review processes, across the majority of the organisations, could be improved further. The characteristics of the less effective PTPs include: they are not always effective working documents; not all key stakeholders, such as support agencies and employers, are involved in recording and charting the progress the trainees are making in their learning and training; there is not enough buy-in from the trainees as they do not understand fully enough what the PTP and monitoring and review processes are and why they exist; and, at times, the PTPs and review documents do not reflect sufficiently all of the good work that the organisations are undertaking with the trainees. In addition, where e-portfolios are used the PTPs tend to sit in isolation and do not give an accurate picture of the holistic progress the trainees are making. The outcomes from the personal training planning and monitoring and review processes are not used sufficiently to inform the ongoing self-evaluation and quality improvement planning work.

4.2.11 In best practice, in a minority of the organisations, the PTP clearly indicates the outcomes of initial assessment and the curriculum targets and levels for the trainee. It provides the trainee with a well-documented learning and development programme that is mapped clearly to key performance and progression targets. Similarly, the progress reviews involve all staff who engage with the trainees, the reviews are regular, detailed, and clearly identify the progress they are making in all elements of their learning and training, and they also outline the actions needed to improve and progress further. The actions for improvement are well understood by the trainees, the reviews include focus group and one-to-one meetings with trainees, and effective input from employers.

4.2.12 The arrangements for the care and welfare and support for the trainees are highly developed across the organisations and a key strength of their work; the trainees are very well supported by management and staff. The strong focus on the provision for the care and welfare needs of the trainees includes, in many instances, regular engagement with their parents or carers and early intervention and targeted support for those trainees identified with physical or other learning support needs and/or barriers to learning. Across the organisations, effective collaborative links and working relationships have been established with a wide range of external support agencies, and good examples exist of effective collaborative working between organisations to support trainees. Most of the trainees interviewed are positive about their experiences on their programmes and, in particular, they report positively on the high levels of support they receive from management and staff.

4.2.13 The quality of the learning, teaching and training observed was mostly good to very good. Planning for learning is effective in meeting the varying needs of the trainees. In the best practice, there is effective use of active learning strategies, appropriate use of technology enhanced learning, the good use of visual aids, effective contextualisation of the essential skills, and evidence that the learning and teaching impacts positively on developing the trainees' confidence and self-esteem. The trainees mostly engage well and mutually respectful relationships exist between them and their tutors.

4.2.14 In a small proportion of the sessions observed, while structured support is in place for the trainees, the sessions are overly tutor-led with only limited opportunities for developing the trainees' independent learning. In addition, the planning does not identify sufficient strategies for differentiation to meet the varying learning needs of the trainees and the essential skills are not well enough integrated within the professional and technical training to allow them to apply and consolidate their learning in meaningful situations. The oral communication skills demonstrated by a small number of the trainees are weak and there are instances of disengagement and challenging behaviour which need to be addressed.

Through its commitment to continuous quality improvement, a further education college has in place dedicated learning and teaching advisors to support its work-based learning provision. Another college deploys pedagogy mentors effectively to support staff and raise further the quality of learning and teaching across the college. In another organisation, project-based learning was used well in the professional and technical area of joinery, in an appropriate context, to allow the trainees to focus on recording all their working out for the calculations being used, and to help prepare them well for the revised essential skills assessment process.

4.2.15 The provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance is mostly effective across the organisations. The better programmes focus on further developing the trainees' employability skills and exploring appropriate career and progression pathway options, that complement well the professional and technical, personal development and employability provision. In a small number of organisations, however, there is a need to develop the provision further, including more bespoke information on career pathways, to support progression to higher level training or employment. Initial assessment needs to be strengthened in these organisations to better identify and support learners with barriers to learning and there is a need to ensure that learners are placed on the most appropriate level of their chosen course or training programme.

4.2.16 There is evidence across the organisations that significantly more males than females are on the Training for Success (2017) programme. The evidence also suggests that the trainees are being recruited to very gender-oriented pathways; most of the female trainees, for example, are registered in a small and narrow range of professional and technical areas, including hairdressing, beauty and childcare. It is concerning that the employment opportunities in some of these areas are limited, largely part-time and often low paid. There is a need to increase the number of female trainees entering STEM<sup>7</sup>-related areas where employment opportunities are better, as are associated earnings.

In one organisation, there is a strong focus on raising the trainees' awareness of careers and progression opportunities within the engineering sector; a careers focus week, careers interviews and relevant work-experience tasters and placements, together provide the trainees with good opportunities to enhance their understanding of the industry and the possible progression pathways. In another organisation, the careers, education, information, advice and guidance programme is effective in informing the trainees of the potential progression pathways, including very good opportunities for them to participate in a wide range of competitions and international work-experience placements.

4.2.17 Across the organisations and the geographical regions visited, there is variability in the role and impact of the Department's careers service in allocating training credits. Examples of good practice exist, including: the establishment of good working relationships between organisations and careers advisors to ensure that the process for allocating training credits is as coherent as possible in identifying the most appropriate training programme and level for the trainees; the development of processes whereby the organisations meet potential trainees to discuss possible career options before they meet their careers advisors; and the development of procedures that allow the young people to receive their training credit in a timely manner that better facilitates organisations in their planning for curriculum, timetabling and support arrangements.

4.2.18 The evidence shows, however, that the process of training credit allocation is not consistent enough across organisations, geographical areas or careers advisors; the quality of the service provided to trainees varies considerably and depends very much on local circumstances. There is a lack of detail and clarity, across the organisations, in terms of the exact mechanisms that are used to allocate a training credit or disability code, and a concern that, in some instances, the training credit is not being matched well enough to the young people's needs, capabilities and future employment prospects. Inspectors noted a few examples of trainees being allocated training credits at a level above which they were currently capable of attaining; the necessity to revise the level of the training credit can be confusing to the trainees and their parents/carers and it is important that these are allocated accurately and in a consistent manner across the region at the outset.

### **4.3 Leadership and Management**

4.3.1 Across the organisations, management have a good working knowledge and clear understanding of the social and economic context within which they recruit and operate, the barriers to learning and employment and the personal and social issues that face their trainees along with their learning and support needs. They use this information well to ensure that the trainees are effectively guided and supported.

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<sup>7</sup> Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

4.3.2 The organisations are mostly well informed by labour market intelligence and engagement with key stakeholders, which is reflected well in the planning for learning and development across the programmes they offer<sup>8</sup>; this is particularly so in the larger work-based learning supplier organisations and the further education colleges. There is evidence, in these larger organisations, of effective strategic planning, good employer links and a commitment to the provision of inclusive learning programmes that enable trainees to develop the skills, attitudes and competences needed to progress to further training or employment, especially those that are operating in the most highly disadvantaged areas of Northern Ireland. In addition, these organisations understand the importance of matching the curriculum offer closely to the career and progression opportunities available to the trainees, and ensuring they are not registered on programmes in professional and technical areas that are already over-subscribed or have limited career progression pathways. It is becoming increasingly difficult, however, for those organisations with lower levels of recruitment to the Training for Success (2017) programme to provide an appropriately wide and balanced curriculum offer, that is economically aligned and leads to clear and relevant progression pathways to further training or employment for the trainees.

A further education college's clear strategic vision for overcoming social exclusion is supported well by the lead role it has taken in developing the Further Education Progression Pathways (FEPP) pilot, in collaboration with the other five regional colleges. The pilot programme will offer a pre-traineeship provision that enables participants to address their social, emotional and essential skills needs in order to enable them to progress to, and successfully achieve, on the Training for Success (2017) programme, and progress to apprenticeships or to other provision in the college.

4.3.3 In order to support the delivery of the Training for Success (2017) programme, almost all of the organisations have established relevant links and partnerships with a wide range of employers and other key stakeholders, to help address the trainees' learning and development needs, inform curriculum planning, and provide work-experiences and employment opportunities for the trainees. Through effective employer engagement, for example, a training supplier organisation extended appropriately the range of professional and technical areas it offered on the Training for Success (2017) programme to include the delivery of animal care programmes.

4.3.4 Across the organisations, the skills profile of staff involved in the delivery of the Training for Success (2017) programme has changed considerably. Management report an increasing need to employ staff with a range of skills sets and invest in resources and continuing professional development in order to meet the varying needs of the trainees. For example, organisations are increasingly recruiting staff, both full-time and part-time, from a youth work or specialist support background to deliver personal development, employability, and other specialised support provision to address issues such as mental health, contact with the criminal justice system and substance abuse.

4.3.5 Examples of good practice in the innovative deployment of staff were noted. For example, in a number of organisations delivering a range of programmes, the broad skills set of staff is used well to support and address the increasingly challenging personal and social development needs of the trainees.

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<sup>8</sup> In most cases this includes multiple contracts with the Department, for example, Training for Success, ApprenticeshipsNI, European Social Fund Projects, Steps to Success, as well as other externally funded programmes

4.3.6 There is evidence that some of the good practice developed by the further education colleges as part of the youth training pilot programmes has been included to good effect in their Training for Success (2017) provision; for example, the effective use of project based-learning to support integrated learning opportunities for trainees across a number of professional and technical areas was noted.

4.3.7 A small number of organisations report that while they welcome the changes that have been made to the administration of the Training for Success (2017) programme, for example, the reduction in the suspension time for trainees who exceed 15 days of unauthorised absences, the administration processes remain overly bureaucratic. Any efforts to streamline them, for example through more use of modern technologies, should be sought by the Department.

4.3.8 All of the organisations visited expressed disappointment that the training allowance for trainees has not been increased for a considerable period of time. They report that the training allowance is no longer a significant incentivising factor in encouraging young people to undertake the Training for Success (2017) programme, as alternative programmes may financially be more beneficial for them.

## **5. Going Forward**

In order to improve the quality and impact of the provision on the Training for Success (2017) programme further:

The Department needs to:

- review the content of the programme to ensure it continues to fully meet the needs of all of the trainees. Consideration should be given to the development of a more flexible programme at level 1 and below, possibly de-coupled from the level 2 programme, to allow organisations to address issues with employability and personal development, and better prepare trainees for employment and progression to level 2 and beyond;
- consider the development of a separate and re-named vocational programme at level 2, designed as an alternative provision to GCSEs with clear progression routes to apprenticeships and further education at level 3, to better support the learning and progression needs of more-able and better qualified young people;
- review key performance targets, and monitor and review outcomes across the organisations to ensure they align with the changing profile of the trainees and result in high overall outcomes;
- review the need for the provision of accredited personal development and employability programmes;
- improve the quality of careers education, information, advice and guidance available to young people, particularly females, to make them more aware of career progression opportunities in professional and technical areas with identified skills shortages and good career and earnings potential;

- ensure the processes used for allocating training credits and disability codes are clearly defined and applied consistently by careers service staff across Northern Ireland, and that all young people receive good quality impartial careers advice and guidance that allows them to register on the most appropriate level of programme to meet their learning and progression needs;
- re-brand and market the programme to ensure that is more attractive and appealing as a progression pathway for more-able school leavers, and that its objectives are more fully understood by all key stakeholders, including young people and their parents/carers;
- review and increase recruitment to the programme, particularly in those geographical areas with clearly identified shortfalls;
- engage further with the Department of Education to review the extent, impact and quality of the level 2 curriculum being delivered by schools particularly at post-16;
- share more widely the aspects of good practice that were developed on the youth training pilot programmes by the further education colleges; and
- improve the availability of key performance data, particularly at the level of professional and technical areas, to support organisations in benchmarking their outcomes and to inform self-evaluation and quality improvement planning.

Supplier organisations need to:

- ensure effective strategic planning is in place to provide a wide and balanced curriculum, offering programmes that are economically relevant, inclusive, and enable trainees to develop the skills, attitudes and competences needed to progress to higher level training or employment;
- ensure more consistent good quality pre-entry advice and guidance is provided and work to better promote a gender balance in the recruitment to many of the professional and technical areas;
- ensure that the PTPs focus less on compliance and more on being effective working documents that clearly record the progress the trainees are making in their learning, training and personal development through the involvement of all key stakeholders, and ensure they are used effectively to support on-going improvement in the quality of the provision;
- continue to improve outcomes in the essential skills of communication and application of number under the new assessment arrangements, including the need to develop more effective learning and teaching and assessment strategies, to ensure that all trainees achieve and progress in line with their recognised ability; and
- build on the good practice that was developed, particularly in relation to project-based learning, on the youth training pilot programmes in the further education colleges.

## Summary of the key elements of the Training for Success (2017) programme

Training for Success (2017) is designed to support the objectives of the Programme for Government by providing training to improve the skills profile of the population, enabling participants to develop relevant occupational and employability skills while addressing any essential skills barriers, and addressing personal and social development needs.

Training for Success (2017) aims to:

- contribute to a rise in the population holding qualifications at levels one and two;
- prepare participants for progression to levels three and four (i.e.) apprenticeships, higher level training or continued further education;
- provide advice and guidance on progression pathways;
- provide participants with access to regulated qualifications which are based on revised national occupational standards and reflect the skills that are required to operate effectively in today's workplace; and
- address individual barriers to learning where appropriate and relevant.

The key elements of the Training for Success (2017) programme are:

- the four strands
  - Skills for Your Life;
  - Skills for Work Level 1;
  - Skills for Work Level 2; and
  - Skills for Work Level 3;
- the provision of individual learning programmes to address each participant's barriers to learning and employment;
- a common curriculum of personal and social development, employability, professional and technical skills, and essential skills, leading to regulated qualifications, at a level aligned to each participant's previous attainment;
- a personal Training Credit that is discussed and agreed between each participant and the Careers Service detailing the choice of occupational area and level of training;
- a Personal Training Plan (PTP) that is discussed and agreed between each participant and the Contractor based on the personal Training Credit detailing the targeted outcomes, progression routes, and associated milestones;
- work placement with a host employer; and
- non-means tested weekly Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) payable to the participant.

**Organisations inspected or visited to inform the evaluation findings**

Babcock Training Limited  
Ballycastle Community Workshop  
Belfast Central Training Limited  
Bryson Future Skills  
Coalisland Training Services Limited  
Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)  
CRAFT Training  
Customised Training Services  
Impact Training (NI) Ltd  
Larne Skills Development  
Loughview Training Services  
Northern Regional College  
North West Regional College  
Springvale Training Limited  
Seven Towers Training and Education Services  
South Eastern Regional College  
Southern Regional College  
South West College  
Strabane Training Services Limited  
The Link Works  
Ulster Supported Employment Limited  
Workforce Training Services

**Relevant Department for the Economy (Department) and Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) publications**

**Department**

[Generating our Success: The Northern Strategy for Youth Training - June 2015](#)

[Securing our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships - June 2014](#)

[Further Education Means Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy for Further Education - January 2016](#)

**ETI**

[A longitudinal evaluation of the Youth Training pilot programmes at level 2 provided by the six colleges of further education in Northern Ireland – June 2016](#)

[An evaluation of the Youth Training pilot programmes at level 2 and the ApprenticeshipsNI pilot programmes at level 3 provided by the six colleges of further education in Northern Ireland – June 2017](#)

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An evaluation of the Training for  
Success (2017) programme to support  
and help inform the design and  
continuous improvement of future youth  
training provision in Northern Ireland

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