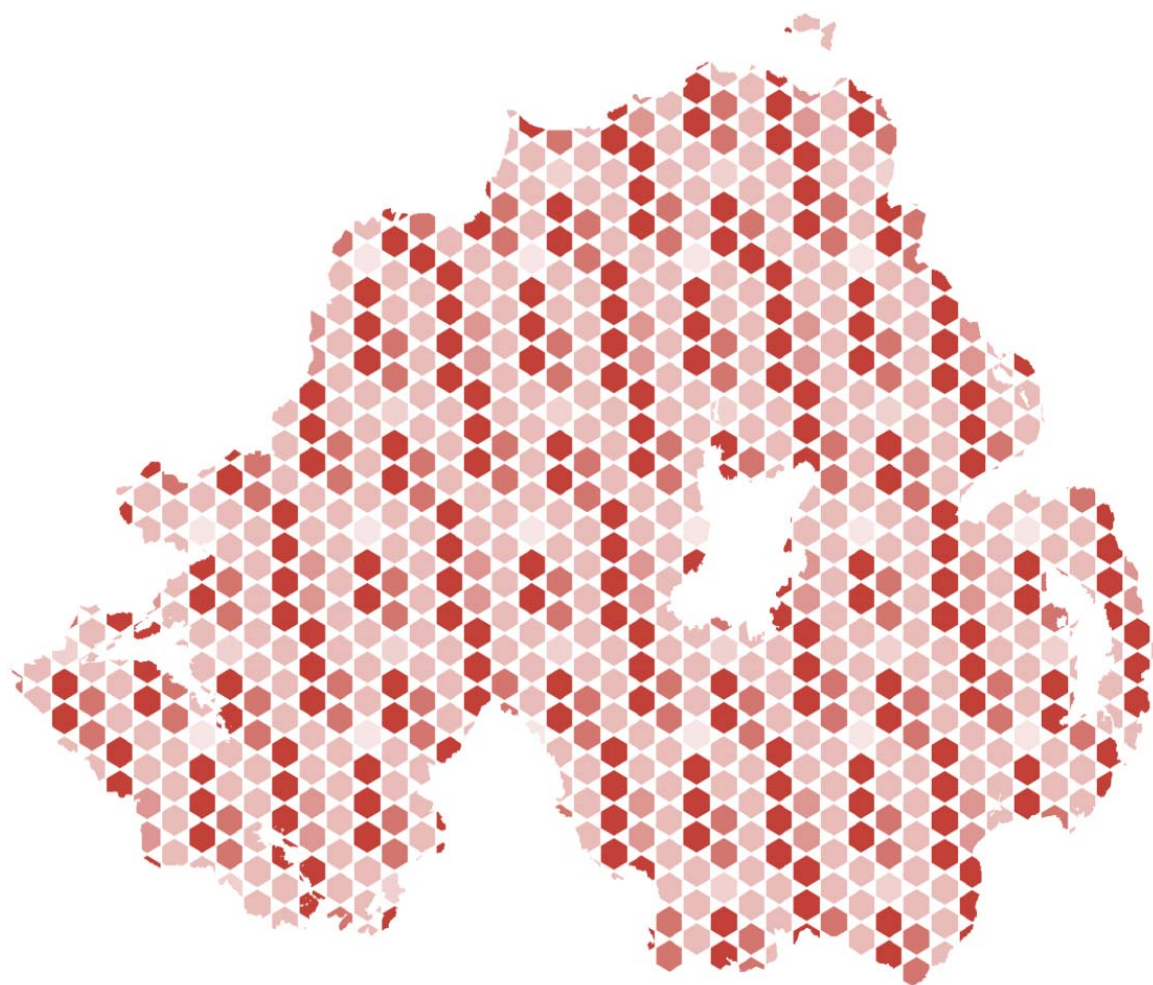


TRAINING INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Workforce Training Services
Limited

Report of an Inspection
in May 2010

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

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

All the statistics in this report have been supplied and verified by Workforce.

Note: In this report the word 'trainee' is used as an inclusive term to refer to: young people on the Training For Success Programme, known as participants in the Operational Guidelines; those on Programme-Led Apprenticeships; and employees in training on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme.

Grading System

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

Performance Level	Grade	Descriptor
Outstanding	1	Outstanding characterised by excellence
Very Good	2	Consistently good; major strengths
Good	3	Important strengths in most of the provision. Areas for improvement which organisation has the capacity to address
Satisfactory	4	Overall sound/satisfactory but with areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed
Inadequate	5	A few strengths; significant areas for improvement which require prompt action
Unsatisfactory	6	Poor; major shortcomings which require urgent action

PART ONE

SUMMARY

1. CONTEXT

1.1 Workforce Training Services Limited (Workforce) is a registered charity which promotes the social inclusion of young people and adults mainly from the West Belfast area and helps them gain employment. It was established in 1978 as Clowney Youth Training Programme, to meet the needs of young people from the West Belfast area who were disaffected or marginalised through social or emotional difficulties, poor educational achievement or lack of employment.

1.2 Workforce has been contracted by the Department for Employment and Learning (the Department) to supply training under both Training for Success and the ApprenticeshipsNI programme at level 2. The organisation's main office is on the Springfield Road in Belfast. It has recently opened another office on the Falls Road to provide training specifically for trainees on the Skills for Your Life programme. A third office, which specialises in childcare provision, is located on the Antrim Road in North Belfast.

1.3 The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure [NIMDM] identifies West Belfast as the most deprived parliamentary constituency area within Northern Ireland. Most of the catchment wards served by Workforce fall within the top five per cent areas of multiple deprivation, as measured by the NIMDM. Each of these areas has high levels of unemployment and low levels of educational attainment.

1.4 A significant minority of the trainees recruited to the programmes have personal, motivational or behavioural problems. They often have multiple barriers to education, training or employment, including: alcohol, solvent or drug-related abuse or dependencies; health related problems; homelessness; family problems or involvement in anti-social criminal activities. A small number (8%) of the trainees come to Workforce from Alternative Education Provision. Most of the trainees have essential skills needs. Workforce reports that a significant minority of the trainees are vulnerable young people with complex education and training needs.

2. PROVISION

2.1 At the time of the inspection, Workforce was providing training for 348 trainees. They are undertaking a range of professional and technical qualifications in business administration, childcare, hospitality and catering, motor vehicle, multi media, painting and decorating, and both trowel and wood occupations.

2.2 Of the trainees currently in training, 101 (29%) are on programmes in motor vehicle; 62 (18%) in wood occupations; 45 (13%) in painting and decorating; 32 (9%) in business administration; 31 (9%) in childcare; 26 (7%) are working towards qualifications in hospitality and catering; 20 (6%) in trowel occupations, and 10 (3%) in multi media. A group of 21 (6%) trainees are on the Skills for Your Life Programme; 101 (29%) on the Skills for Work programme; 163 (47%) on Programme-Led Apprenticeships; 48 (14%) on Pre-Apprenticeships, and 15 (4%) on ApprenticeshipsNI programmes.

2.3 The majority of the trainees enter the training programmes with poor levels of prior academic achievement. Of the 348 trainees currently in training, 57% had no formal qualifications on entry, 3% of them had four General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) qualifications or equivalent at grades A*-C, and a further 21% had achieved GCSE qualifications or equivalent at grades D-G.

2.4 Around 92% (321) of the current trainees are undertaking an essential skills qualification in literacy and 93% (323) are undertaking numeracy; 322 of them are undertaking both essential skills. The remainder of the trainees are exempt from the essential skills.

2.5 Overall leadership and contract management is the responsibility of the General Manager, who is supported by a Deputy Manager and an Operations Manager. Currently 35 staff are employed by Workforce. Of these, 13 are professional and technical tutors, six are essential skills tutors and one is a recently appointed full-time careers and employment tutor.

3. THE INSPECTION

3.1 On the basis of information available to the Department, including recent Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) reports, Workforce was identified as a supplier organisation with a good track record for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning and the capacity for sustained self-improvement, and was chosen as a pilot organisation for a new, proportionate model of inspection.

3.2 In May 2010, the Inspectorate carried out a proportionate inspection of the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes in Workforce. The purpose of the inspection was to assess the accuracy and reliability of Workforce's self-evaluation and improvement planning processes and to determine whether their evaluations of the quality of the provision matched those of the Inspectorate. A team of four inspectors and one associate assessor observed a total of 15 training sessions and interviewed 131 trainees in both directed and workplace training. Extended discussions were held with senior managers, tutors and trainees. In addition, 11 employers were interviewed by the inspection team. The team also examined samples of the trainees' work, portfolios of evidence, personal training plans (PTPs) and reviews. The organisation's self-evaluation report, development plan and other relevant documentation were also scrutinised.

3.3 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and the safeguarding of vulnerable groups included the opportunity for trainees from across the professional and technical programmes to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meet with the inspection team. One hundred and fifty questionnaires were issued to trainees, 149 (99%) of which were returned to the Inspectorate. The returns show that the trainees' experiences in Workforce are very good. In particular, they appreciate the high levels of support they receive from staff, the respect both staff and trainees show towards each other, and the good quality and cleanliness of the accommodation. The Inspectorate has reported the outcomes of the questionnaires and the discussions held with trainees to the senior managers.

4. MAIN FINDINGS

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

4.2 The main strengths are the:

- excellent ethos, care, support and guidance which permeates all aspects of the work of the organisation;

- well-developed and effective arrangements for the identification and addressing of the trainees' barriers to learning and employment;
- outstanding quality of the leadership and management, which is trainee-centred and inclusive;
- rigorous and robust processes for quality assurance, critical self-evaluation and continuous improvement planning, which are underpinned by an effective use of reliable data;
- good or very good quality of almost all of the training and learning;
- effective working links and partnerships with key support agencies and employers to meet the individual needs of the trainees;
- high expectations of management and staff, which lead to good attendance, behaviour, outcomes and occupational standards;
- well-planned opportunities for the trainees to develop and apply good personal, social and work-related skills; and
- overall success rates, which are excellent at almost 100%.

4.3 The main area for improvement is a:

- review of the curriculum planning and provision.

Table of Performance Levels (Grades)

Overall performance level (grade)	Very good (2)
Contributory performance levels (grades)	
Leadership and Management	Outstanding (1)
Achievements and Standards	Very Good (2)
Quality of Provision for Learning	Very Good (2)

PART TWO

OVERALL QUALITY OF PROVISION

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.1 The leadership and management of Workforce is outstanding. The senior managers provide strong strategic direction. There is a clear, trainee-centred vision. The mission, vision and values of the organisation have been identified and articulated clearly through an inclusive process which involved trainees, staff at all levels, members of the Governing Body and other key stakeholders.

5.2 The values of the organisation are articulated and understood clearly by both trainees and staff and permeate and underpin all of the organisation's policies, activities and operations. At a strategic level, standardised and rigorous processes for the planning, monitoring and review of training and assessment have been developed and implemented across the training programmes to support the organisation's mission. The procedures for engagement with employers and the review and monitoring of trainee progress are also systematic and well-developed, and effective in ensuring that trainees are fully informed about their progress.

5.3 Effective strategies are in place to promote quality improvement. Innovative approaches are used to meet new and emerging challenges and maximise the training and learning opportunities available to trainees. In light of the difficulties, for example, that some small employers are facing with insurance arrangements for trainees. Workforce successfully negotiated with their own insurer to provide cover for around 20% of them while on work placements. As a result, 67% of the trainees are now on placement.

5.4 The senior managers provide outstanding and proactive leadership which is effective in promoting high standards, and very good working relationships, characterised by mutual respect. There are open channels of communication and managers and staff display a strong commitment to their work. They have high expectations of the trainees and provide them with very good levels of support.

5.5 The appropriately qualified and inter-disciplinary staff team work together closely and share a strong commitment to Workforce's strategic objectives. There are good opportunities for staff to engage in continuous professional development. Currently, five members of staff are completing the Certificate in Teaching at the University of Ulster, which is impacting positively on the learning experiences of the trainees across the wider organisation.

5.6 There is an appropriate range and quantity of good quality learning resources and materials, with an increasing range of materials becoming available online. The accommodation is also of good quality and is maintained to a high standard.

5.7 The arrangements for self-evaluation are rigorous and robust and there is a well-developed culture of planning for continuous improvement. There are systematic processes for obtaining regular feedback from trainees, staff and employers, and the outcomes of these evaluations are used effectively to inform planning for improvement. Management information data is collated and analysed regularly, and used effectively to identify areas in which development is required. An appropriate quality improvement cycle has evolved to allow management and staff to regularly monitor, review and take action to improve the provision. The inspection confirms that the organisation's own evaluation of its provision matches very closely that of the Inspectorate.

5.8 The senior managers represent Workforce on a range of key strategic groups across the sector. They use these opportunities effectively to gather relevant labour market intelligence and develop an informed perspective on trends and developments within and across the various professional and technical areas. Good relationships have been developed with a wide range of employers and organisations from the statutory and voluntary sectors and these links are highly effective in providing appropriate levels of specialised support for trainees.

6. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

6.1 Most of the trainees are well-motivated to progress in their learning, and achieve their target qualifications. They are well-supported and strongly encouraged to develop and apply good work readiness skills. The tutors and senior managers set high expectations with regard to the trainees' attendance, behaviour, achievement and progression. Attendance at directed training and in the workplace is mostly good.

6.2 The trainees develop and apply good occupational skills across the professional and technical areas. Most of the trainees visited in their work placements are provided with good opportunities to further develop their practical and wider employability skills. There is a clear focus by senior managers and the tutors on appropriate target-setting and regular, effective monitoring of the trainees' progress. As a result, over the past three years, for the period 2007-10, the average retention rate for the trainees across all of the provision is satisfactory at 73%; this represents a significant achievement given the many impediments to learning experienced by considerable numbers of them as they commence their training programmes. Over the same period, the success rate for those trainees who completed their programmes is excellent at almost 100%. Almost all of the trainees improve significantly their essential skills of literacy and numeracy with success rates of almost 100%. Of these, it is noteworthy that over 10% of the trainees are working towards an essential skills level above that required by their training programme.

6.3 Progression to ApprenticeshipsNI from the Pre-Apprenticeship programme is poor. Workforce has recognised the need to strengthen progression pathways to employment, further education and training as a key priority within its development plan and appropriate strategies have been developed to promote the achievement of this objective.

6.4 Almost all of the trainees benefit from the opportunity to achieve appropriate additional qualifications including, for example, food hygiene, paediatric first aid and Construction Skills Register certification.

7. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

7.1 The quality of teaching, training and learning is very good. In nearly all of the training sessions observed, the quality was good or better; approximately one-half of the sessions were very good. Nearly all of the sessions were well planned with a good blend of training and learning approaches. As a result, most of the trainees were well engaged in their learning. Workforce makes very good use of visiting speakers to encourage and motivate the current trainees, including former trainees who have progressed to management roles in local companies.

7.2 Marking for improvement is used well in the majority of professional and technical areas and there is clear evidence of development of the trainees' work and skills as they progress through their training programmes. Similarly, feedback from assessment is used effectively through the review process to inform trainees of their progress.

7.3 In the essential skills, all of the action-based activities are related well to the trainees' professional and technical areas. There are very good examples of occupational and essential skill tutors planning effectively to integrate the learning. In a minority of the professional and technical areas, however, the delivery of the essential skills does not exploit the occupational context sufficiently and there are missed opportunities for trainees to develop and apply more appropriate literacy and numeracy skills.

7.4 It is noteworthy that a very good range of extra-curricular activities are on offer to trainees. These include fishing, photography, sessions in driving test theory, driving lessons, and a very successful formal social function. Trainees have good opportunities to take part in action days and residentials which are used to good effect to develop their personal and social skills.

7.5 The quality of the PTPs is very good. Workforce has established an effective process for devising, monitoring and reviewing the plans, involving staff, the trainees and employers. Good use is made of the outcomes from initial assessments with appropriate account being taken of the trainees' preferred learning styles and additional needs. The PTP provides a sound framework upon which the staff provide appropriate training and support. The target qualifications are well set out with clear, measurable milestones for achievement and progress, which are well monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis with appropriate input from employers. The PTPs are well understood and used appropriately by the trainees to review their learning.

7.6 Workforce provides a good range of training programmes for the trainees. The Skills for Your Life programme is well tailored to meet the diverse but challenging needs of this particular group. The differentiated planning and overall quality of this provision is good, with a sound focus on the development of a range of literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology, employability and personal skills.

7.7 The trainees on the Skills for Work and Programme-Led Apprenticeship programmes are provided with a good range of occupationally-relevant and varied training experiences. Almost all of the trainees benefit from the opportunities to achieve additional qualifications, and to participate in a good range of appropriate enrichment activities. The organisation is undertaking a review of the current curriculum provision for the Skills for Work trainees, where occupational studies qualifications dominate the provision, but are not appropriate for all of the trainees. The senior managers have also identified the need to reconsider the curriculum models for the delivery of the essential skills in order to better structure and balance the provision across the week in order to ensure higher levels of engagement by the trainees.

7.8 The organisation has invested significant funds to improve the Information and Learning Technology (ILT) resources and is working very hard to further embed the use of ILT across the range of professional and technical areas. Almost all of the teaching spaces and workshops are equipped with computers and interactive whiteboards. A good start has been made to develop a company-wide virtual learning environment. The effective use of ILT to enhance and enrich the learning experiences of the trainees is evolving gradually and the senior managers have identified this as an area for further development.

7.9 The care, support and guidance provided by the organisation are outstanding. A strong culture of mutual respect characterises all aspects of the work of the organisation. The managers and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the overall pastoral care of the trainees and have developed appropriate policies and procedures to support them. The staff have high expectations of the trainees in all aspects of their programmes. The newly formed training and support team monitors attendance closely, but more importantly, works to identify and address the reasons for poor attendance and time-keeping.

7.10 The majority of the trainees present with poor academic qualifications and often multiple barriers to training and employment, which Workforce has identified and met effectively. Appropriate assessment methods are used to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the various interventions.

7.11 Very good links exist with an appropriate range of relevant external agencies. Trainees whose personal barriers limit progress towards completion of their qualifications are provided with good levels of support, including signposting to relevant agencies or personnel. Appropriate links have been developed with a range of external social agencies and key workers to support trainees with personal and social problems that affect performance in their training programme. The dedicated services of a company doctor provide a useful reference point for referral to the local primary health care team.

7.12 The provision for careers information, advice and guidance is very good. A full-time tutor has been appointed to undertake this role and all trainees have access to a fourteen week externally accredited programme. An effective reward structure has been implemented to celebrate and reward success and to motivate trainees in their training. This well-structured programme includes residentials, activity days and awards for participant of the month, and is very effective in the development and promotion of personal, social and work-related skills.

7.13 Workforce promotes effectively the safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults. The arrangements for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults comply satisfactorily with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007. Additional training in this area has been organised for the new Chair of the Governing Body.

PART THREE

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 In the professional and technical area inspected, the quality of the training provided by Workforce is very good. The organisation is meeting very effectively the training and pastoral needs of the trainees; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

9. KEY PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

9.1 Workforce needs to revise its annual quality improvement plan to take account of the following key priority and further improve the quality of the training provision:

- To continue to work collaboratively with local providers of education and training to improve the opportunities for progression to further education, training or employment, across all programmes.

APPENDIX

* OVERALL SUMMARY TABLE – 2007-2010

Programme	Started (completed 4 weeks)	Retention Rate %	Success Rate %	Progressed to FE/other training	Progressed to relevant employment
Training for Success 2007-2008	166	66	100	97	3
Training for Success/ApprenticeshipsNI 2008-2009	308	71	100	138	1
Training for Success/ApprenticeshipsNI 2009-2010	340	81	100	2	1
Overall totals	814	73	100	237	5

* Data provided by Workforce

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