



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Training for Success and
ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in
Customized Training Services

Report of an Inspection
in December 2019



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

CUSTOMER
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1. Context

Customized Training Services (CTS) was established in 1990 and is a private company limited by guarantee. It is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes¹. The current provision is concentrated in the Derry and Strabane areas, with some apprenticeship provision in the greater Belfast area. Within the past number of months, many of the job roles, along with management roles and responsibilities, were subject to analysis and review; as a result, a comprehensive streamlining restructure was undertaken in order to reduce costs.

Since November 2019, the work-based learning provision in CTS has been managed by an operations manager, a training manager and an apprenticeship co-ordinator. A small board of directors oversees and has responsibility for the work of the organisation. The senior and middle leaders are supported by a human resource (HR) Manager who reports to the board of directors. The training is delivered by six full-time tutors and three part-time tutors. The organisation also has a long-standing arrangement to purchase training services from two self-employed tutors who contribute to the retail and customer service apprenticeship training programme.

At the time of the inspection, 29 trainees and 131 apprentices were registered across the professional and technical areas of business administration, children's care, learning and development (CCLD), customer service, food industry, health and social care, hospitality, information technology (IT), meat and poultry, professional cookery, retail, sports and leisure, stores and team leading (food). In the Training for Success programme, the trainees are spread across eight professional and technical areas, with small numbers in six of the areas.

While the number of enrolments to the Training for Success programme increased slightly this year, the trend has been downwards for the previous four years. Over the same period, the enrolment of apprentices has increased substantially, although there has been a dip in apprenticeship registrations this year. A majority (70%) of the apprentices are registered in the two areas of food industry skills and meat and poultry (food and drink framework). Most (85%) of the apprenticeship registrations are at level 2.

The organisation reports that a majority (59%) of the trainees have been identified with significant barriers to learning and in need of additional support, much of which is provided by a range of external agencies. Very few (10%) of the trainees and 29% of the apprentices entered their programme with four or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C or equivalent, including English and mathematics. Just under 40% of the apprentices entered training with no prior qualifications. Just over one-quarter (26%) of the trainees were in a work-experience placement.

2. Views of trainees and apprentices

As part of the evaluation of the arrangements for care, guidance and support and for safeguarding young people and adults at risk, a minority of the trainees and apprentices took the opportunity to complete a confidential online questionnaire prior to the inspection; a few of them provided additional written comments. The returns show that the trainees and apprentices are content in the organisation and they report that the tutors are friendly and approachable. Almost all of them also report that they are well supported and all of them that they feel safe and secure.

¹ Programme registration data provided by the organisation at the time of the inspection is included in the Appendix of this report.

In addition, inspectors met with small groups of trainees and apprentices across the provision. The trainees report that they are supported well to achieve and the apprentices state that the staff maintain good links with them and their employers.

3. Focus of the inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all learners, the inspection linked internal and external approaches to evaluate the:

- outcomes for learners;
- quality of provision; and
- effectiveness of the leadership and management.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Address urgently the significant areas for improvement
Outcomes for learners	Important areas for improvement
Quality of provision	Important areas for improvement
Leadership and management	Requires significant improvement

Overall quality of the programmes inspected		
Programme	Proportion of registrations	Performance level
Training for Success	18%	Requires significant improvement
ApprenticeshipsNI	82%	Important areas for improvement

Overall quality of the professional and technical areas inspected ² and the essential skills provision	
Food and drink	Important areas for improvement
Retail/customer service	Good
Training for Success	Requires significant improvement
Essential skills	Important areas for improvement

KEY FINDINGS

Strengths

- The mostly good standards of work and occupational skills attained by a majority of the trainees and most of the apprentices who are retained.
- The curriculum tailoring in the apprenticeship programme that ensures a good alignment between job roles and the training units covered.

² A representative sample of professional and technical areas, agreed with the organisation, was selected for inspection.

- The good levels of achievement (85%) over the past three years for those trainees and apprentices who are retained.
- The good progression rate (71%) on the Training for Success programme for those trainees who complete their targeted qualifications.
- The good overall quality of the learning, teaching and training across the ApprenticeshipsNI provision.
- The high levels of care and welfare provided by the staff to meet the often complex individual support needs of the trainees on the Training for Success programme.

Areas for improvement

- Develop appropriate strategies to address urgently the low rates of retention.
- Continue to improve the strategic leadership and management of the work-based learning provision in order to better meet the needs of the trainees and apprentices, and the outcomes they attain.
- Build the capacity of the middle leaders, and provide them with more coherent support and guidance, in order to enhance their skillset to undertake their roles and responsibilities to best effect.
- Improve the quality and consistency of the learning, teaching and training, particularly on the Training for Success programme.
- Improve the consistency, methodology and impact of the monitoring and tracking of the progress being made by the trainees and apprentices, including the further development and refinement of a fit-for-purpose management information system.

5. Outcomes for learners

Across the professional and technical areas inspected, the standards of work and skills levels attained and demonstrated by the trainees and apprentices in their professional and technical training are mostly good. For the most part, the apprenticeship training aligns well with job roles and the employers spoken to report good levels of upskilling.

In food and drink, the apprentices apply consistently good skill levels and technical knowledge; they are able to apply the theory of effective waste management, quality control and critical control points in food manufacturing. They also demonstrate a good understanding of managing conflict within a team. The apprentices demonstrate and report higher levels of confidence and self-belief. Some of the larger food employers report clearly enhanced wider skills and that the training prepares the apprentices well for progression to promoted posts within the business.

In retail and customer service, the apprentices have good opportunities to apply their learning in the workplace. They are able to use competently the full range of equipment and payment systems. The apprentices communicate effectively with customers and work colleagues and are able to contribute well to in-store product promotion activities. Overall, they have a sound understanding of current industry practices.

A majority of the trainees on the Training for Success programme demonstrate good standards of work during directed training and in their written work. Across the provision, however, a significant minority of the trainees need to develop further their wider skills and capabilities and need more guidance and support in order to raise expectations and to ensure they have a better understanding of the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behaviours.

The inspection identified a number of matters impacting adversely on the overall standards being attained by the trainees, including general attitudinal issues, the regular use of poor language, the inability of some to listen to and respond to instructions, along with attendance and punctuality issues. Too few of the trainees are in a work-experience placement; consequently, they do not have the opportunity to develop and apply their skills in the workplace. Overall, the level and breath of the skills being developed by the trainees on the Training for Success programme is too variable and requires improvement.

The standard of the trainees' and apprentices' written work is good. They are provided with good opportunities, with the associated support, to undertake extended writing in their professional and technical work. In the essential skills, appropriate examples were noted of effective marking for improvement by the tutors to support the trainees and apprentices, which has contributed well to the quality of the written work.

In the essential skills, the standards of most of the trainees and apprentices work is good. They engage well in the lessons, their oral responses are good and are most of them are confident when answering questions. Most of the trainees and apprentices are able to complete, to a good standard, free writing tasks that are aligned to their interests. In numeracy, the trainees and apprentices use competently a range of appropriate numerical operations and calculations in the workplace and in training. In ICT, the trainees make good progress and are able to use well the appropriate functions in spreadsheet software for a range of business applications.

Too few trainees and apprentices are retained overall. Over the past three years, the retention rate for the Training for Success programme is just 37%, which requires urgent improvement. Over the same period, the rate of retention is an important area for improvement on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme at 63%. However, the retention rate across the apprenticeship programmes has been on a downward trend and is therefore a concern. There is a need for CTS to address urgently the rates of retention across its provision.

Over the past three years, the levels of attainment are good for those trainees and apprentices who are retained; most (85%) of them achieve their targeted qualification or framework. On the Training for Success programme, the progression rate to employment, further education or training is also good (71%). By contrast, the rate of progression by apprentices from level 2 to level 3 apprenticeship training is much too low at 26% over the same period.

Over the last three years, the average overall achievement rates in the essential skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are high; all those who completed successfully achieved their targeted essential skills qualifications. It is a concern, however, that too many of the trainees and apprentices who enter training have a grade D in their GCSE English and mathematics are not targeting level 2 in their essential skills, which needs to be addressed.

6. Quality of provision

Almost all of the trainees enter training with low or no prior qualifications. CTS offers a broad choice of curriculum areas to the trainees on the Training for Success programme. The number of registrations, however, in many of the areas offered is much too low, as is the work placement rate, which impacts adversely on the quality and dynamic of the vocational learning and development experiences for the trainees. There is a need to review the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the curriculum offer for the Training for Success programme, to ensure it is best meeting the learning and progression needs of the trainees.

The apprenticeship curriculum is also impacted by low registrations in many of the areas offered, with a majority of the apprentices concentrated in three professional and technical areas. In food and drink, it is noteworthy that CTS flexibly meets the training needs of local employers and apprentices through the provision of pathways, often tailored to individual job roles, in areas such as team leading (food), food manufacture, meat and poultry and lairage. In retail and customer service, the units are tailored well to the job roles of the apprentices. Across the ApprenticeshipsNI provision, the feedback from employers is largely positive, in particular the efforts by CTS tutors to align the training closely with the apprentices' job roles.

The organisation has appointed recently two members of staff with the remit to expand recruitment to the ApprenticeshipsNI programme, including across a broader number of areas and a wider geographic area. It will be important that staffing and workload levels, including for the essential skills, are balanced and keep pace with the planned recruitment of apprentices.

The quality of the learning, teaching and training observed varied considerably; it was good in a majority (70%) of the sessions observed but less than good in the remainder. The better practice is characterised by: productive, trustful relationships; effective planning to engage and challenge all of the trainees and apprentices; learning set in appropriate and meaningful contexts; and good variety in the strategies for learning and teaching, including technology enhanced learning.

The less effective practice, in just under one-third (30%) of the sessions observed, was characterised by: ineffective planning with a lack of differentiation to meet the needs of the trainees and apprentices; overly complex tasks; weak classroom and behaviour management strategies which mitigated against the trainees focusing on their work and training; and a lack of context for much of the learning. In these sessions, the levels of engagement were sporadic and the rhythm of learning was often interrupted.

While CTS has an appropriate managing behaviour policy in place, it needs to be applied more consistently by tutors. The organisation needs to plan more effectively on an individual basis to manage the behaviour of a small number of trainees who demonstrate complex, challenging behaviours. There is also a need for the professional development of staff to enhance their understanding and use of a wider range of classroom management techniques.

The quality of most of the learning and teaching observed in the essential skills was good overall. The more effective practice is characterised by sound planning, a supportive environment, good structure to the lessons and the deployment by tutors of a varied range of learning and teaching strategies that engages and promotes effective learning.

The quality of the personal training planning (PTP) process varies in quality and impact across the professional and technical areas; it is mostly good overall but is better for the trainees than the apprentices. For the trainees, the plans are key working documents; the support needs and progress being made are identified clearly and reviewed regularly, with appropriate targets

for improvement set. For the apprentices, while the plans meet the requirements of the programme, they are overly generic and often contain gaps in the information recorded; the progress reviews are not sufficiently robust or informative nor do they contain enough meaningful input from employers.

CTS provides a welcoming and supportive environment for a challenging group of young trainees who register on the Training for Success programme. These trainees present with a wide range of social, emotional and other complex barriers to learning and progression. While the outcomes are not as good as they need to be, the staff work hard to support, mentor and develop their work-readiness, vocational skills, wider skills and contact with the workplace. They also ensure that the trainees have access to appropriate levels of support from a relevant range of external agencies. Overall, the care and welfare impacts positively on the learning, teaching and training for the trainees and apprentices.

The levels of knowledge and understanding by the trainees and apprentices about career and progression pathways vary considerably. Overall, there is a lack of coherent planning and structure for the provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG). For the apprentices, for example, they are provided with careers information by their professional and technical tutors in an ad-hoc manner. The trainees in particular would benefit from more opportunities to undertake industry visits and have access to talks by employers and other relevant guest speakers. They also need to participate in a more organised programme of work-related activities that prepares them better to cope with work-experience placements.

7. Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the organisation, which encompasses a wide range of other provision and programmes, is just now beginning to stabilise after a period of significant streamlining and upheaval over the past few months. During this period, there has been a substantial turnover in staff at all levels and the current senior and middle leaders are all relatively, or very new, to their job roles. These staff are just beginning to settle into their new roles and adapt to their responsibilities.

Much remains to be done, however, to ensure that the improvement that is needed takes place; as a result, the leadership and management of the work-based learning provision requires significant improvement. Nevertheless, the senior leaders have worked hard to bring clarity to job roles, responsibilities and lines of communication and accountability. Policies and procedures have been reviewed and improved. Further work is necessary, however, to further clarify some of the middle leadership roles and responsibilities, and how these overlap. Members of the board of directors need to ensure appropriate and ongoing attention is paid to the quality of the programmes on offer. They also need to ensure that senior leaders are developed and have the capacity to address the significant areas for improvement across the provision, and that the needs of the trainees and apprentices they recruit are consistently well met.

The senior and middle leaders continue to face a wide range of challenges, including issues around the persistently low rates of retention, falling enrolment trends, gaps in staffing, the lack of an operational management information system to inform short-term and longer-term decision-making and the variability in the quality of learning, teaching and training.

More work is required to communicate a strategic vision for the organisation going forward, improve staff morale and strengthen the impact of the strategic leadership of the provision to ensure the ongoing, persistent shortcomings are addressed with urgency. The recently appointed middle leaders are learner-centred, enthusiastic and trying hard to lead the

operational side of the provision and to meet the needs of the trainees and apprentices as best they can. There is a need for the senior leaders to build the capacity of the middle leaders and provide them with more coherent support and guidance. They would also benefit from access to effective professional leadership development opportunities, in order to enhance their skillsets to undertake their roles and responsibilities to best effect.

The evidence shows clear gaps in the oversight of the provision. The monitoring and tracking of the progress being made by the trainees and apprentices is inconsistent, inefficient and largely ineffective across the professional and technical areas and the essential skills. In the essential skills, too many of the apprentices have either not started or are making overly slow progress in the essential skills aspect of their training framework. There is a need for the tutors' caseloads to be monitored and balanced and for the backlog of apprentices waiting for essential skills provision to be addressed.

While some progress is being made in the development of a tailored management information system, this is not yet operational and much of the legacy data has been lost. Senior and middle leaders do not have access to longer-term trends or indeed easy access everyday data in order to monitor key performance indicators such as attendance, retention and progress by learners in their professional and technical units and the essential skills. Consequently, those trainees and apprentices at risk of not achieving or who need intervention support or essential skills provision are not identified in a timely enough manner, which is contributing to the lower outcomes being attained. Overall, and in the context of the recent significant changes in leadership and management, the arrangements for self-reflection, storage, collation and use of accurate data and quality assurance remain at an early stage.

Good progress has been recently made in the establishment of a process of peer observation within the Training for Success provision; while it is early days, it is identifying to good effect the variation in the quality of learning, teaching and training. With some further refinements, the feedback part of this process has the potential to improve the overall quality of the learning and teaching.

The existing self-evaluation process and associated quality improvement plan identifies accurately most of the strengths and key areas for improvement in the provision, although it lacks adequate detail on the required quality improvement planning actions at the level of the professional and technical areas. The quality improvement plan, however, no longer reflects the changed context of the organisation and needs to be revisited by the senior leaders.

The quality of the accommodation, resources and equipment is largely good. Most of the classrooms and suites are bright, well-equipped, spacious and conducive to learning. The availability of classroom space, and the associated quality of a few of the learning environments, has been impacted upon adversely by ongoing issues with the roof in the main Strabane office.

Most staff are appropriately qualified and experienced; a majority of them have undertaken a relevant teaching qualification.

8. Safeguarding

On the basis of the evidence provided during the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding young people and adults at risk reflect broadly current legislation and practice.

However, the organisation needs to:

- review the access to the Derry office along with the arrangements for the supervision of the trainees; and
- ensure there is consistent cover for safeguarding oversight in the Derry office.

9. Overall effectiveness

Customized Training Services needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the trainees and apprentices.

The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

Programme registrations

Table 1 - Current registrations by programme

Programme	Numbers of registrations	% of total registrations
ApprenticeshipsNI Level 2	111	85%
ApprenticeshipsNI Level 3	20	15%
Training for Success (2017) Skills for Work (strand 1)	13	45%
Training for Success (2017) Skills for Work (strand 2)	16	55%

* less than 5

Table 2 - Current registrations by professional and technical area

Professional and technical area	Number of trainees		% of total registrations
Childcare	10		34%
Health and social care	7		24%
Retail	*		14%
Customer service	*		7%
Sports and leisure	*		6%
Business administration	*		3%
IT users	*		7%
Hospitality	*		3%
Professional and technical area	Number of apprentices		% of total registrations
	Level 2	Level 3	
Proficiency in food industry skills	48	11	45%
Meat and poultry skills	34	0	26%
Customer service	9	6	11%
Retail	8	0	6%
Stores and warehousing	*	0	1%
Team leading (Food industry)	5	0	4%
Hospitality services	*	0	2%
Business administration	*	0	2%
Professional cookery	*	0	1%
Management in food industry	0	*	1%
Management	0	*	2%

* less than 5

Table 3 - Qualifications of current trainees/apprentices on entry to their programme

Programme	Training for Success (%)	ApprenticeshipsNI (%)
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*-C including English and mathematics	10%	29%
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*-C	17%	54%
(%) of learners with GCSE English or equivalent at grades A*-C	34%	50%
(%) of learners with GCSE mathematics or equivalent at grades A*-C	14%	47%
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*-G	31%	84%
(%) of learners with no prior level 1 or level 2 qualifications	31%	37%

B. Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website www.etini.gov.uk.

Six ETI inspectors observed 53 apprentices and trainees in 20 directed training sessions. They visited 36 trainees and apprentices in their workplace. Inspectors spoke with 22 trainees and apprentices in small focus group meetings and training sessions. Discussions were held with 25 employers/supervisors in the workplace and six were contacted by telephone. Samples of the trainees' and apprentices' work and personal training plans, and tutors' schemes of work and lesson plans were examined. The organisation's quality improvement plan and other relevant documentation were also scrutinised.

C. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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%

Performance levels

The ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on outcomes for learners, quality of provision and on leadership and management.

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the organisation:

The organisation has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.
The organisation demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.
The organisation needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The organisation needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

Key Performance Indicators and Definitions	
Retention	The percentage of enrolments measured over the full duration of their programme.
Achievement	The percentage of participants who completed their targeted individual outcomes.
Progression	The percentage of successful completers who achieved positive progression.

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