



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Training for Success and
ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in
Strabane Training Services

Report of an Inspection
in October 2019



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. Context

Strabane Training Services (STS) is a private training organisation with charitable status. It operates from three sites in Strabane. The organisation is managed by a senior management team which is comprised of the board chairman, the general manager, the human resource and finance manager and four other members of staff who are involved in the delivery of the programmes.

STS is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes across Derry and Strabane, Fermanagh, Omagh and mid-Ulster.

At the time of the inspection, 54 (34%) trainees and 107 (66%) apprentices were registered across the professional and technical areas of: active leisure, learning and wellbeing; business administration and information and communication technology (ICT); barbering, beauty and hairdressing; children's care, learning and development (CCLD); construction; customer service and retail; warehousing; and team leading and management.

A majority of the trainees have recognised additional social, emotional barriers to learning and progression, and a small number have a diagnosed learning support need. A significant minority (33%) of them entered the programme with no previous educational attainment. In contrast, most of the apprentices have good levels of prior attainment and no significant barriers to learning and progression.

At the time of the inspection, most (75%) of the second year trainees were in a relevant work-experience placement where they develop well their work-readiness and employability skills; almost all (92%) of them have been in placement at some stage during their training.

2. Views of trainees and apprentices

As part of the evaluation of the organisation's arrangements for care, guidance and support and for safeguarding young people and adults, a minority of the trainees and apprentices took the opportunity to complete a confidential online questionnaire prior to the inspection; none of them provided additional written comments. The returns show that almost all of the trainees and apprentices who responded are positive about their induction to the organisation. They report that the training programme meets their needs, they find it interesting and challenging and they are given good feedback on how to improve. Almost all of the respondents report that they feel safe and secure in the organisation or workplace and that the staff in care about their progress.

In addition, inspectors met and spoke to 91 of the trainees and apprentices across the provision. They report that they enjoy their courses and that the staff are encouraging and approachable in supporting them to achieve to their full potential.

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	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Outcomes for learners	Very good
Quality of Provision	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good

Overall quality of learning and training programmes		
Training for Success	34%	Very good
ApprenticeshipsNI	66%	Very good
Occupational area/essential skills overall performance levels		
Active leisure, learning and well-being		Good
Construction		Very Good
Barbering, beauty and hairdressing		Outstanding
Warehousing		Very Good
Essential skills		Good

KEY FINDINGS

Strengths

- The very good strategic leadership of the work-based learning provision, which is underpinned by a clear vision for its ongoing development and improvement to meet the needs of the trainees and apprentices.
- The effective links and partnerships developed with a range of employers across the region to support an increase in recruitment to the ApprenticeshipsNI programmes.
- The commitment of the staff to addressing the trainees' barriers to learning in order to improve their employability skills, progression opportunities and life chances, and to raise aspirations and build their confidence and self-esteem.
- The high level of investment in equipment, resources and accommodation to support the delivery of the curriculum.
- The good or better standards of work demonstrated by almost all of the trainees and apprentices across the professional and technical and essential skills provision, and in the workplace.
- The effective initial assessment and induction processes which provide the trainees with good opportunities to develop their teamwork and communication skills, and prepare them for their learning and training and work-experience placements.
- The good or better quality of all of the learning, teaching and training observed, almost two-fifths of which was very good or better.

- The very good overall retention (84%) and outstanding achievement (100%) and progression rates (95%) attained by the trainees and apprentices.
- The very good development of the trainees' and apprentices' wider skills and dispositions, including their motivation and attitudes to learning, high standards of behaviour and good communication skills which enable them to contribute better to team working.
- The provision of high quality care and welfare for the trainees and apprentices which impacts positively on the learning, teaching and training and the outcomes they attain.
- The outstanding provision in barbering, beauty and hairdressing, the very good provision in construction and warehousing, and the good provision in active leisure, learning and well-being and the essential skills.

Areas for improvement

- To continue to develop the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes in order to sustain the progress made to date.
- To strengthen further the process used for tracking and monitoring the progress of the trainees and apprentices.

5. Outcomes for learners

The standards of work, technical skills and underpinning knowledge attained and demonstrated by the trainees and apprentices in their professional and technical training, essential skills and in the workplace are good or better; they are mostly very good. In directed training and in the workplace, they carry out a range of tasks to a high standard and most of them make very good progress in the development of industry-standard skills and competences which they are able to apply well.

In active leisure, learning and well-being, the standard of practical skills developed and applied by the trainees and apprentices is good overall. Most of the trainees are able to identify the most appropriate gym exercises to benefit specific muscles in the body. Most of the level 2 apprentices are developing to good effect the skills and knowledge required to plan and prepare an effective gym-based exercise programme with a range of individuals and groups. A majority of the level 3 apprentices are developing well the skills, knowledge and competence required to work unsupervised as a personal trainer in order to provide one-to-one training for clients.

The trainees and apprentices in barbering, beauty and hairdressing achieve very good standards of written and practical work, including the development of a wide range of skills and knowledge in line with current industry practice, in directed training and within the commercial salon. In business administration and ICT, the trainees are at an early stage in their programmes. To date they are mostly achieving good standards of work.

In construction, the standards of work achieved by the trainees and apprentices in joinery are very good, and in painting and decorating they are good. The decorative occupations trainees are able to apply paste, hang and match patterned wallpaper in line with the manufacturer's specification. The apprentices in industrial painting are able to strip down a spray pump and to clean and carry out regular maintenance. In trowel occupations, the first

year trainees are making good progress in using hand tools and in laying bricks in stretcher bond to line and level. The wood occupations apprentices are developing their hand skills and wood working techniques to a very good standard and are able use a computer-aided-design (CAD) system to design and construct a range of high quality bespoke joinery items.

In warehousing, the apprentices achieve very good standards of practical work. They are able to make up orders based on emailed instructions, prepare shipments, apply labels and deal well with shipping agents. Employers can identify a range of apprentice competencies which have been developed as a result of the directed training. These include an increased awareness of personal safety and the safety of others in the working environment, improved standard of record-keeping and more effective team working. A significant minority of the apprentices have progressed sufficiently to be given responsibility for the management of a number of aisles within a large warehouse.

In the essential skills, most of the trainees and apprentices demonstrate good standards of work and make good progress in their learning. In literacy, the first year trainees can draft formal letters to a good standard while in numeracy they can solve relevant vocationally-related problems. In ICT, they are able to edit and format images in text documents.

The outcomes attained by the trainees and apprentices are a particular strength of the provision. The average retention rate across the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes, over the past three years, is very good at 84%. Overall, all of the trainees and apprentices who are retained complete their training programmes and achieve their targeted qualifications.

On the Training for Success programme, the progression rate to employment or further education or training is outstanding at 92%.

Over the past three years, the outcomes attained by the trainees and apprentices in the essential skills are high, with all the trainees and apprentices achieving their targeted essential skills qualifications. It is noteworthy that, over the same period, over four-fifths of them achieved more than one level in literacy and over one-half achieved more than one level in numeracy. To date, all of the trainees and apprentices who have completed their training have achieved the essential skills.

Across the provision, the focus, with success, on the development of the trainees' and apprentices' wider skills and personal capabilities is also a strength. Most of the trainees and apprentices are well-motivated, demonstrate very good standards of behaviour, are developing well their self-confidence and show a positive disposition for learning. In the workplace, the employers report positively on the trainees' and apprentices' ability to work with others in order to complete tasks, and often to high standards, and they demonstrate increasing levels of responsibility in their work roles. At the time of the inspection, the attendance rate of the trainees and apprentices was very good (91%) across the professional and technical areas and the essential skills.

6. Quality of provision

It is timely that, over the past three years, the ApprenticeshipsNI provision has grown significantly, by just over one-third (35%). During the current academic year, there has been an increase in the number of trainees, with an additional 40 recruited to the Training for Success programme. Across the professional and technical areas inspected, the curriculum is well-planned and matched appropriately to the needs of the region and to potential employment opportunities, as well as the learning needs of the trainees and apprentices.

While an appropriate curriculum offer is in place in business administration, CCLD and ICT, offering clear progression pathways from level 2 to level 3, the number of trainees and apprentices recruited to these areas is too low. There is an urgent need to widen the employer base and increase recruitment in these professional and technical areas to ensure their longer term viability and sustainability.

A key strength of the provision is the flexible delivery of the apprenticeship training programmes, which supports very well the needs of the apprentices and the employers. Almost all of the training sessions are delivered regularly and in a timely manner, including timetabling arrangements which are flexibly managed to suit the apprentices' work shift patterns. The trainees and apprentices are provided with a broad range of learning and training experiences which enable them to develop well their occupational and practical skills along with sound technical knowledge. A varied programme of enrichment activities, including access to industry speakers and attendance at job fairs, is also enhancing to good effect the trainees' wider knowledge of their occupational area.

Appropriate initial assessment and induction processes are in place for the trainees and apprentices. A range of activities are organised for the trainees to become acquainted with each other and with staff members, and to allow them to form good working relationships with their peers. They are also provided with good opportunities to develop and apply their team working and communication skills in preparation for their training and work-experience placements. The induction process for apprentices is mostly carried out on an individual basis and is matched well to their individual needs and circumstances. Good links have been established with a range of external agencies to support the provision for personal and social skills development, with a focus currently on mental health issues. A number of organisations are also deployed to support those trainees with physical and learning support needs, including targeted support to enable them to undertake a work-experience placement.

The quality of the learning, teaching and training observed was good or better, with two-fifths of the sessions observed being very good or better. The main features of the very good sessions include: a well-planned range of practical learning and training activities with clear learning intentions; very good use of technology enhanced learning which enhances engagement: the promotion of dynamic and active learning; the use of a range of learning and teaching strategies to challenge the trainees and apprentices appropriately to achieve high standards; effective questioning to develop problem-solving and wider skills; application of the tutors' extensive industrial knowledge and occupational skills to inspire and motivate the trainees and the apprentices in their learning; and the effective rapport between the tutors and trainees and apprentices resulting in high levels of engagement by them. In the essential skills, the quality of the learning, training and teaching observed was good. The tutors have developed good relationships with the trainees and use effectively an appropriate range of strategies including relevant contexts to motivate and engage them in their learning.

An appropriate personal training planning (PTP) process is in place. The plans are individualised and are used well to record the trainees' and apprentices' prior achievements, outcomes of initial assessments, preferred learning styles and any additional learning support needs. The review process for almost all of the trainees and apprentices is regular and supportive and used well to monitor and track progress. Subsequently, any supportive interventions with the trainees and apprentices are timely and well-informed to support them. There are some inconsistencies in the tracking and monitoring of the overall progress of the trainees and apprentices across the professional and technical areas and the essential skills.

There is effective, coherent and streamlined practice in the areas of barbering, beauty and hairdressing and in construction. In the essential skills, while comprehensive tracking is in place to monitor the progress that the trainees and apprentices are making, the systems need further refinement to reduce the number of data sources used and to make the process more efficient and coherent.

Overall, the assessment arrangements are effective, including appropriate levels of additional support where required. The workplace assessment activities are mostly timely and supportive. The trainees and apprentices are provided with appropriate feedback to support them in their development and application of occupational and technical skills; they are also provided with regular and constructive feedback on their overall progress and on how to further improve.

The provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) for the trainees is delivered through the planned programme of employability and personal and social skills development. The apprentices are mainly provided with careers information by their professional and technical tutors. The CEIAG provision is supplemented by external industry and site visits, guest speakers and career clinics to support the trainees' and apprentices' progression. The organisation has developed good working relationships with a number of local post-primary schools and staff attend open days as well as delivering support such as curriculum vitae writing and interview skills training. The staff also regularly attend a range of events and careers fairs to support on-going recruitment and good links have also been developed with the Department's careers service advisors. Consequently, most of the trainees and apprentices interviewed are aware of the possible progression pathways available to them, although apprentices should be provided with more information on the range of progression opportunities available to them beyond level 3.

The provision for care and welfare impacts positively on the learning, teaching and outcomes for trainees and apprentices. An ethos of care and welfare is embedded across the work of the organisation; the staff work hard to provide a safe, caring and supportive learning environment. The relationships across the organisation are positive, the trainees and apprentices are respectful, the staff are well aware of their individual needs and work hard to provide good, well-planned support and guidance for them. The organisation is working hard to engage more of the trainees in voluntary and charitable work which impacts positively on their understanding of mental wellbeing and the local community. There is also an effective personal development curriculum which aims to inform and support the development of the trainees' personal resilience and capabilities. Signposting to an appropriate range of external support agencies for individual trainees where additional support is necessary. All of the trainees and apprentices interviewed reported that the staff were approachable, encouraging and proactive in supporting them. In the directed training sessions observed, most of the trainees and apprentices develop positive and productive working relationships with their tutors.

7. Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the organisation is very good; the senior and middle leaders have implemented and communicated a clear strategic vision for the ongoing development and improvement of the provision to meet the needs of the trainees and apprentices. The key objectives of the organisation are reviewed annually and are focused appropriately on growing employer links and increasing recruitment, but also on the continuous improvement of the quality of the provision. The senior management team meets regularly and has a sound oversight of the provision. The chairperson plays an active strategic role, attends the organisation on a weekly basis for a range of formal monitoring and review tasks, and provides good support around recruitment levels and finance and staffing matters.

The senior management team demonstrate high levels of commitment to ongoing improvement work and have established effective collaborative working relationships with an increasingly broad range of employers and external agencies. These relationships are used to good effect to deliver learner-centred provision which meets well the learning and training needs of trainees and apprentices and helps remove or address their barriers to engagement and progression. The organisation has appointed a dedicated business development officer with a remit for stakeholder links and enhanced recruitment. There is also a stronger focus on the use of social media with a consultant working with the organisation to market and promote further their services.

Employer links are mostly used well to support learning and training, to inform an appropriate curriculum offer and to provide high quality work-experience placements for most of the trainees. The employers report that the organisation works flexibly to facilitate the delivery of the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes. In construction, employer engagement is a strong feature of the provision. The organisation has engaged with a wider range of employers from across the region and developed specialist academies in joinery. As a result, the recruitment to the apprenticeship programmes has significantly increased in the last two years. In warehousing, the course content is discussed with employers and individualised pathways are selected to suit specific job roles within the organisation. In active leisure and wellbeing, however, employer involvement and input is inconsistent. There is insufficient evidence of STS keeping employers informed of the progress made by trainees and apprentices and as a result too many of the employers are not clear enough as to their role in supporting the training programme.

The overall quality of the accommodation is very good. The premises are well-maintained and the classrooms are well-equipped to support and promote effective learning, teaching and training. The organisation operates an industry-standard commercial hair salon, which has recently been refurbished and supports well the training and learning needs of the barbering, beauty and hairdressing trainees and apprentices. The organisation has also invested in a well-equipped gym to support training in active leisure and wellbeing, and a day care centre which is aligned to the CCLD provision.

The staff are all well-experienced, appropriately qualified and their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. The organisation supports well the continuing professional development of staff to ensure that they have the appropriate knowledge and skills to work well with and meet the varying and often complex needs of the trainees and apprentices. The organisation needs to secure a qualified literacy tutor as soon as possible and provide appropriate support to the other recently appointed essential skills tutors.

The processes used for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning are well-understood and embedded across the organisation. As a result, they are mostly well used by senior leaders to identify the key strengths and areas for improvement across the provision. The analysis and use of data by senior management is also effective. By contrast, at the middle leadership level, more work needs to be done in almost all of the professional and technical areas, and the essential skills, to support tutors to more clearly identify key findings, make more effective use of performance data to identify trends, and ensure that the key actions needed to support ongoing improvement contain specific targets against which progress can be measured.

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:

- appoint and train an Adult Safeguarding Champion, and provide adult safeguarding training for the designated safeguarding officer; and
- develop further the safeguarding policy to ensure that there is an appropriate balance between child protection and adult safeguarding.

All of the trainees and apprentices interviewed during the inspection reported that they feel safe and secure in the organisation.

9. Overall effectiveness

Strabane Training Services demonstrates a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interests of all the trainees and apprentices.

The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.

Programme registrations

Table 1 - Current registrations by programme

Programme	Numbers of registrations	% of total registrations
ApprenticeshipsNI L2	77	73%
ApprenticeshipsNI L3	29	27%
Training for Success (2017) Skills for Work (strand 1)	29	54%
Training for Success (2017) Skills for Work (strand 2)	25	46%

Table 2 - Current registrations by professional and technical area

Professional and technical area	Number of trainees		% of total registrations
Active leisure, learning and well-being	14		26%
Business administration & ICT	*		7%
Barbering, beauty, hairdressing	17		33%
Childcare	7		13%
Construction	12		21%
Professional and technical area	Number of apprentices		% of total registrations
	Level 2	Level 3	
Active leisure, learning and well-being	14	7	19%
Business administration & ICT	*	*	7%
Barbering, beauty, hairdressing	11	13	26%
Construction	20	-	18%
Customer service & retail	5	-	5%
Warehousing	23	*	23%
Team leading/management	-	*	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	9%	40%
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C	4%	48%
(%) of learners with GCSE English or equivalent at Grades A*-C	19%	54%
(%) of learners with GCSE mathematics or equivalent at Grades A*-C	13%	49%
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-G	9%	89%
(%) of learners with no prior level 1 or level 2 qualifications	33%	11%

B. Inspection methodology and evidence base

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

Seven ETI inspectors and two associate assessors observed 91 apprentices and trainees in 18 directed training sessions. They visited 31 trainees and apprentices in their workplaces and interviewed 52 of them in focus group meetings and training sessions. Discussions were held with 36 employers/supervisors in the workplace. 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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