



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in Belfast Central Training

Report of an Inspection
in April 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

Belfast Central Training Limited (Belfast Central Training) was established in 1978 to provide training for people who were unemployed or entering the labour market for the first time. The organisation is led by an operational manager and a finance manager, supported by an assistant manager who is responsible for quality assurance, two full-time programme co-ordinators and thirteen trainers. There is a small voluntary management committee of trustees who provide expertise, advice and support to the organisation.

Belfast Central Training provides professional and technical training under the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes¹ on behalf of the Department for the Economy (Department). At the time of the inspection, 47 trainees and 155 apprentices were registered across the professional and technical areas of hairdressing, hospitality and catering, and retail. Training is delivered from the organisation's premises in Belfast, where it also operates a commercial hairdressing training salon. The hospitality and catering professional and technical training is delivered at the employers' premises across Northern Ireland, including through supportive delivery in an appropriate industry setting for the trainees.

A minority (13%) of the trainees and a significant minority (38%) of the apprentices entered their programme with four or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C or equivalent, including English and mathematics. A significant minority (34%) of the trainees and apprentices have been identified as having a disability and/or additional learning support needs. The organisation reports that all of the trainees and a majority (60%) of the apprentices present with barriers to learning and/or a complex range of personal and social issues.

At the time of the inspection, almost all (91%) of the trainees were in a relevant work-experience placement where they develop well their work-readiness and employability skills, with all of them having 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 at risk, most (77%) of the trainees and apprentices took the opportunity to complete a confidential online questionnaire prior to the inspection; a small number of them provided additional written comments.

The returns show that almost all of the trainees and apprentices who responded are positive about their learning experiences that their 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 the organisation care about their progress.

In addition, inspectors met with 19 trainees and 30 apprentices across the provision. The trainees and apprentices report that they enjoy their courses and that the staff are encouraging and approachable in supporting them to achieve to their full potential. All of the trainees and apprentices interviewed reported that they feel safe and that their care and welfare is a high priority in the organisation.

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

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 summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness	A high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners.
Outcomes for learners	Very good
Quality of provision	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good

Overall quality of the programmes inspected		
Training for Success	23%	Very good
ApprenticeshipsNI	77%	Very good

Overall quality of the professional and technical areas inspected and the essential skills provision	
Hairdressing	Good
Hospitality and catering	Very good
Essential skills	Very good

KEY FINDINGS

Strengths

- The good or better standard of occupational skills and knowledge attained by the trainees and apprentices in their professional and technical and essential skills work, and in the workplace.
- The good retention (79%) on both the ApprenticeshipsNI and Training for Success programmes.
- The outstanding achievement and progression rate (100%) on the ApprenticeshipsNI programmes for those apprentices who complete their targeted programme.

- The outstanding achievement rate (100%) and good progression rate (78%) on the Training for Success programmes for those trainees who complete their targeted programme.
- The high work-experience placement rate (91%) for the trainees, providing almost all of them with relevant workplace learning opportunities.
- The dedication of the staff, particularly their commitment to addressing the trainees' barriers to learning in order to raise their aspirations and to provide them with high quality support that enables almost all of them to be successful in their programme and to sustain a work-experience placement.
- The provision of well-targeted, high quality care and welfare, including effective mentoring, to support the personal, social and learning needs of the trainees and apprentices which is reinforced by positive supportive working relationships.
- The good or better quality of all of the learning, teaching and training observed.
- The effective initial assessment and induction processes, providing the trainees with very good opportunities to develop their team-working and communication skills in preparation for their learning and training and work-experience placements.
- The well-planned investment in good quality accommodation and learning resources that support well the delivery of an appropriate curriculum and the development of the trainees' and apprentices' occupational competences and employability skills.
- The well-developed range of highly effective links and partnerships with employers which provide very good experiences for the trainees and apprentices.
- The very good strategic and operational leadership of the provision, which is underpinned by a clear strategic vision to provide high quality training programmes to support young people to engage in education and training.
- The very good quality of the provision in the essential skills and in hospitality and catering, and the good quality of the provision in hairdressing.

Areas for improvement

- Improve the tracking and monitoring processes to identify more clearly the trainees' and apprentices' progression through the professional and technical qualifications and the essential skills and to inform any interventions necessary.
- Refine further the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes at course-team level to identify more clearly the actions to underpin and sustain improvement.

5. Outcomes for learners

Across the professional and technical areas inspected, the standards of work and technical skills and knowledge attained and demonstrated by the trainees and apprentices in their professional and technical training, and in the essential skills, are good or better; they are mostly very good. In the 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 hospitality and catering, the overall standards of work demonstrated by most of the trainees and apprentices observed are very good. The level 2 apprentices are developing well the basic skills to support the running of successful kitchens and restaurant environments; in some instances, they can effectively manage breakfast service and bar service unsupervised. The level 3 apprentices contribute constructively and creatively to restaurant menus and are developing the skills to deliver complex dishes in fine dining environments. Most of the hospitality and catering apprentices are also developing a high capacity to mentor other staff within their workplace and are able to engage confidently with their supervisors and customers.

In hairdressing, the trainees and apprentices are making good or better progress in developing and applying their occupational skills, knowledge and understanding. In the directed training sessions and in the workplace most of them demonstrate good or better standards of work. They make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of effective customer service and safe working practices in professional salons. They are also improving their understanding of barbering techniques and creative hair styling. In the workplace, the majority of the trainees demonstrate good skill levels in blow-drying and colouring techniques. Almost all of the apprentices acquire and apply sound occupational skills in consulting with clients and when cutting and blow-drying at the standard required by their employers. All of the trainees and apprentices are increasing their confidence and self-esteem and most of the trainees are developing well their wider employability skills including good timekeeping and attendance, independent working and proactivity.

In the essential skills, the trainees and apprentices demonstrate good or better standards of work; they make very good progress in the development and application of their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) essential skills. The trainees and apprentices engage positively in these classes and attendance rates are high. In literacy, the trainees and apprentices communicate effectively with the customers and in hairdressing they apply their numeracy skills to mix colours to good effect using the correct ratios. In ICT, the trainees and apprentices are able to use formulae well in spreadsheets to carry out relevant calculations. The standards of work in the apprentices' portfolios is presented well with a varied range of work completed to an appropriate and consistently high standard.

The outcomes achieved by the trainees and apprentices are a strength of the provision. Overall, all of the trainees and apprentices who are retained complete their training programmes and achieve their targeted qualifications. The average retention rate across the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes, over the past three years, is good at 79% on both programmes. Over the same period, the achievement rate on the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes is outstanding at 100% on both programmes.

On the Training for Success programme, the progression rate to employment or further education or training is good at 78% and for the apprentices it is outstanding at 98%. Across the provision, the progression rate from level 2 to level 3 apprenticeship programmes is too low, with a only a minority (22%) of the apprentices progressing to level 3 programmes, although almost all of the remainder progress to employment. Importantly, the organisation recognises that this needs to be increased and is working proactively with employers to promote, where possible, opportunities for progression to level 3.

The outcomes attained by the trainees and apprentices in the essential skills are high over the past three years with all the trainees and apprentices achieving their essential skills. Over the same period, just over one-third of them progressed from level 1 to level 2 in both literacy and numeracy. To date, all of the trainees and apprentices who have completed their training have achieved the essential skills under the revised assessment arrangements.

Across the provision, 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 and are developing well their self-confidence and disposition for learning. 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.

In the workplace, the employers report positively on the trainees' and apprentices' ability to work with others in order to complete tasks to required and often high standards. The trainees and apprentices are progressively developing their wider personal, social and employability skills and they demonstrate increasing levels of responsibility in their work roles. In the hairdressing and hospitality and catering workplacements, the trainees are provided with a dedicated workplace mentor to support further their learning and training experience, which works well. At the time of the inspection, 91% of the trainees were in a suitable work-experience placement, with all of them having been in placement at some stage, where they develop well their occupational competencies and employability skills.

6. Quality of provision

Belfast Central Training offers apprenticeship programmes across a number of professional and technical areas; at the time of the inspection, however, 95% of the recruitment was in just two areas. While the organisation has sustained growth in recruitment to the hospitality and catering ApprenticeshipsNI programme at levels 2 and 3, recruitment to retail remains too low and further strategies need to be taken forward to recruit trainees and apprentices to this area. The organisation continues to work hard to develop further their links with feeder post-primary schools and regularly participates in careers fairs to promote their programmes.

Across the professional and technical areas inspected, the curriculum is well-planned and matched appropriately to the learning needs of the trainees and apprentices, and to potential employment opportunities. A key strength of the provision is the flexible delivery of the apprenticeship training programmes, which support very well the needs of the apprentices and the employers. Most of the training sessions are delivered regularly and in a timely manner, including timetabling to suit the apprentices' work shift patterns. The trainees and apprentices are provided with a broad range of learning and training experiences to enable them to develop their occupational and technical knowledge and practical skills. A varied programme of enrichment activities, including access to industry speakers and attendance at job fairs, is developing well the trainees' knowledge of their occupational area.

The induction processes are well-co-ordinated and effective, including appropriate pre-entry advice and guidance for the trainees and apprentices, and sampling across the vocational programmes offered to provide the trainees with early and timely insights with regard to their career choices. The well-structured induction programme ensures that from an early stage the trainees have good opportunities to begin to develop and apply team-working and communication skills, and build their self-confidence in preparation for their training and work-experience placements.

The quality of the learning, teaching and training observed was good or better, with a majority of the sessions observed being very good. The main features of the very good sessions include: a well-planned range of practical learning and training activities; the use of learning and teaching strategies to challenge the trainees and apprentices appropriately to achieve high standards, often beyond the level they are completing; 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 a range of online resources which are used to good effect to support the learning. The essential skills tutors have appropriately high expectations for the trainees and apprentices, have established excellent relationships with them and provide tailored support. The planning for the essential skills provision is effective and an appropriate range of delivery strategies is used well to engage and progress the learners.

The programme of careers education, information, advice and guidance is mostly effective but with some important areas to be developed further. The trainees benefit from a broad and varied programme of employability and personal development which incorporates important aspects of careers education, information, advice and guidance. The taught programme is well-planned, providing the trainees with good quality learning experiences that support their personal development and career planning. A pertinent range of external speakers and workplace visits underpin effectively the trainees' self-reflection and decision-making processes and increases their levels of motivation. While most of the trainees and apprentices are aware of the apprenticeship progression opportunities up to level 3, their knowledge of other progression pathways and further education alternatives are less well understood. Consequently, more needs to be done to broaden their awareness of a wider range of potential career opportunities, and to improve further the quality and consistency of the advice and guidance provided for the apprentices in order to support more effectively their career planning and progression opportunities, particularly in hospitality and catering.

The arrangements for care and welfare impacts positively on the trainees' and apprentices' learning, teaching and outcomes achieved. A strong ethos of care and welfare is embedded firmly across the work of the organisation; the staff at all levels work hard to provide a safe, caring and supportive learning environment. There is a clear emphasis on meeting the care and welfare needs of the trainees and apprentices through the provision of tailored and often one-to-one support. 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. There are effective links with an extensive range of external organisations which are used very well to support the personal, social and emotional development of the trainees and apprentices.

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 occupational and technical skills development; they are also provided with regular and constructive feedback on their overall progress and on how to further improve.

Overall, the quality of the trainees' and apprentices' personal training plans and progress reviews are good. The personal training plans are used well to record the trainees' and apprentices' prior achievements, outcomes of initial assessments 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. In contrast, for a minority of the trainees, the reviews lack short-term target-setting to better support the development of their wider employability skills. While the organisation has tracking and monitoring processes in place, there is a need to improve these processes to identify more clearly the trainees' and apprentices' progression through the professional and technical qualifications and the essential skills, and to inform any interventions necessary.

7. Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the organisation is very good overall, underpinned by a clear strategic vision to provide high quality training programmes to support young people to engage in education and training and to enhance their professional and technical skills and wider capabilities. The senior and middle leaders have a sound oversight of the provision and demonstrate high levels of commitment to providing training that meets well the needs of the trainees and apprentices, and employers, in the hairdressing and hospitality and catering sectors. The management and staff have well-established and collaborative working relationships with a broad range of employers and external agencies that are used to good effect to deliver provision which meets well the learning and training needs of trainees and apprentices and helps remove their barriers to engagement and progression. The organisation recognises the need to increase its provision and reports that the recruitment of a marketing specialist is planned to promote the organisation's services and to increase recruitment.

The senior managers have worked hard to build capacity at middle management level across the organisation. They have broad experience in the work-based training sector which is used effectively to ensure the provision is flexible and matched well to the needs of the trainees and apprentices, and the employers. 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 trainees' and apprentices' learning and training needs. There is effective co-ordination across the professional and technical provision and the essential skills.

Belfast Central Training has a well-established range of highly effective links and partnerships with employers and other key stakeholders which provide very good experiences for the trainees and apprentices. These links are used well to support the training, to inform an appropriate curriculum content and provide high quality work-experience placements for almost all of the trainees. The employers report that the organisation works flexibly to facilitate the delivery of the apprenticeship programme which brings tangible benefits to their business environment.

The quality of the accommodation is very good. The premises are well-maintained and the classrooms are well-equipped to support learning, teaching and training in order to provide a very good learning environment. The organisation operates an industry-standard commercial hairdressing salon, which has recently been refurbished and supports well the training and learning needs of the hairdressing trainees and apprentices. The organisation is planning to further invest in hospitality and catering facilities and equipment for the trainees this year. Currently, the hospitality and catering trainees are very well supported to develop industry-relevant skills; they are all in high quality work-experience placements, are very well supported by their employers, are trained regularly in small groups, or through one to one sessions, and their skills are appropriately assessed in the workplace to enable them to achieve their targeted qualifications.

The organisation has well-developed self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes, which are used to good effect to bring about improvements in the quality of the learning experiences for the trainees and apprentices. A peer observation process is in place which works well to support the tutors to promote and share effective practice. While the overall whole-organisation self-evaluation and quality improvement planning is mostly effective, and clearly identifies appropriate and measurable targets for improvement, the organisation should refine further the quality improvement planning processes at course-team level to identify more clearly the actions to underpin and sustain improvement.

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:

- ensure that its safeguarding policies, procedures and training reflect more fully the legislation and practice relating to adults who may be at risk of harm or in need of protection; and
- appoint and train an adult safeguarding champion.

9. Overall effectiveness

Belfast Central Training demonstrates a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest 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 Level 2	76	37
ApprenticeshipsNI Level 3	81	40
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Work (strand 1)	*	*
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Work (strand 2)	*	*
Training for Success (2017) Skills for Your Life	*	*
Training for Success (2017) Skills for Work (strand 1)	11	6
Training for Success (2017) Skills for Work (strand 2)	29	14

* less than 5

Table 2 - Current registrations by professional and technical area

Professional and technical area	Number of trainees		% of total registrations
Catering and hospitality	11		24
Hairdressing	33		70
Retail	*		6
Professional and technical area	Number of apprentices		% of total registrations
	Level 2	Level 3	
Catering and hospitality	70	60	84
Hairdressing	3	15	12
Retail	*	5	*

* less than 5

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

Programme	Training for Success (%)	Apprenticeships NI (%)
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C including English and mathematics	13	38
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C	17	50
(%) of learners with GCSE English or equivalent at Grades A*-C	30	62
(%) of learners with GCSE mathematics or equivalent at Grades A*-C	21	54
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-G	30	62
(%) of learners with no prior level 1 or level 2 qualifications	19	10

B. Inspection methodology and evidence base

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

Eight ETI inspectors observed 51 apprentices and trainees in 20 directed training sessions. They visited 30 trainees and apprentices in their workplace and interviewed 49 of them in focus group meetings and training sessions. Discussions were held with 25 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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