



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Training for Success and
ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in
DFPF Limited (trading as People 1st)

Report of an Inspection
in January 2018



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

DFPF Limited, trading as People 1st, is a private company, and is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes¹. The organisation has offices located in Belfast, Lisburn, Lurgan, Newry and Portadown. At the time of the inspection, 212 trainees and 207 apprentices were registered across the professional and technical areas of: beauty therapy; business administration; catering; children's care, learning and development; construction; customer service; distribution; hairdressing and barbering; health and social care; IT and telecom professional; management; providing financial services; retail; active leisure; team leading; and transportation operations and maintenance. The construction and transportation operations and maintenance provision is delivered through a partnership arrangement with a sub-contractor.

A significant minority (32%) of the trainees and apprentices have been identified as having a disability and/or additional learning support needs. A further 27% of them have social and emotional barriers to learning. A small number (1%) of the trainees and a minority (16%) of the apprentices entered their programme with four or more GSCE passes at grades A* to C or equivalent, including English and mathematics. A majority (71%) of the trainees are in a suitable work-experience placement.

2. Views of trainees and apprentices

As part of the evaluation of People 1st's arrangements for care, guidance and support and for safeguarding young people, the trainees and apprentices completed an online questionnaire prior to the inspection. The return rate was high and shows that almost all (95%) of the trainees and apprentices who responded reported a positive learning experience and felt safe, well cared for and supported in the organisation.

In addition, inspectors met 20 trainees in three focus groups. The trainees reported that care and welfare is a high priority in the organisation and commented that they valued greatly the support and guidance provided by the staff. Through additional discussions with inspectors during session observations and workplace visits, a further 130 trainees and apprentices reported positively on the quality of the care and support they receive.

3. Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on the:

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

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

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Outcomes for learners	Good
Quality of provision	Good
Leadership and management	Very good

Overall quality of learning and training programmes		
Training for Success	51%	Good
ApprenticeshipsNI	49%	Good

Overall quality of the professional and technical areas inspected ² and the essential skills provision	
Barbering, beauty therapy and hairdressing	Very good
Business administration	Good
Catering	Important areas for improvement
Child care, learning & development	Very good
Construction	Good
Health & social care	Good
IT and telecoms professional	Important areas for improvement
Transportation operations and maintenance	Requires significant improvement
Essential skills	Good

KEY FINDINGS

Strengths

- The good or better standards of occupational skills and technical knowledge attained by most of the trainees and apprentices, enabling them to function with increasing competence and confidence in the workplace.
- The outstanding achievement rates on the ApprenticeshipsNI and Training for Success programmes for those trainees and apprentices who complete their training; the retention rate on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme is good at 75%.
- The high level of employer engagement that is used well to inform and support effective curriculum planning which reflects well the training and development needs of industry and local employers, and of the trainees and apprentices.
- The expertise and dedication of the staff, at all levels, particularly their commitment to: addressing the trainees' barriers to learning; building the trainees' and apprentices' confidence and self-esteem; and to developing and improving their employability skills and progression opportunities.

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

- The extensive and well-targeted care and welfare arrangements evident across all aspects of the provision, particularly the pivotal role of the student support officers, are highly effective in meeting the diverse and often challenging pastoral and additional learning needs of the trainees and apprentices.
- The good or better quality of most of the assessment, learning, training and teaching.
- The very good leadership and management of the provision, including a well-articulated and shared organisational vision and clear strategic planning, that are aligned well to Government priorities and social development needs.
- The strong commitment and well-developed processes to further embed self-evaluation and quality improvement planning across the work of the organisation, which are used to good effect by most teams in order to promote and sustain further improvement.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to monitor and review closely the impact of the current strategies to ensure that the low retention (55%) and progression (41%) rates on the Training for Success programme improve.
- Improve the quality of the provision for catering, IT and telecoms professional and transportation operations and maintenance.
- Implement more targeted action planning, that is monitored and evaluated robustly, to ensure further improvement is realised and sustained across the professional and technical areas of: construction, health and social care and IT and telecoms professional.

5. Outcomes for learners

Across the professional and technical areas inspected, most of the trainees and apprentices demonstrate a sound understanding of the key principles and values which underpin their occupational practice, enabling them to function with increasing competence and confidence in professional and technical roles in the workplace. In directed training, they develop well relevant practical competences in using industry-standard equipment and techniques to a good standard. In construction, for example, most of the trainees and apprentices are able to: set out, measure and construct simple brick walls; set out, measure, cut and form basic timber joints; and fix a variety of roofing materials to complex roof structures. In IT and professional telecoms, the standards of work are good for most of the trainees; they can set up and configure computer systems, identify and address hardware and software issues and install anti-virus and other systems software. In health and social care, the apprentices make good progress in developing and applying competently new skills and are becoming more aware of the key legislative aspects of care policies and effective industry practice. In barbering and hairdressing, most of the trainees and apprentices are developing effective commercial skills and competencies. The standards of practical work for the majority of the trainees in catering are, however, more variable, ranging from good to important areas for improvement. In transportation operations and maintenance, the standards of the trainees' occupational skills and knowledge are not good enough. The progress they are making in the development of their understanding of the occupational skills and knowledge relating to the maintenance and repair of light vehicles is too slow.

Most of the trainees and apprentices demonstrate good standards in the development of their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) essential skills. In the workplace, most demonstrate good talking and listening skills and they are able to communicate confidently with their workplace supervisors and customers. In the directed training, a minority of the trainees are overly reticent to engage in their learning activities, including group work, particularly in catering. As a result, the interpersonal skills of these trainees are underdeveloped. In construction, over the duration of the training, the written work in the portfolios does not demonstrate sufficient progress in the development of the trainees' and apprentices' skills to write extended responses. Across the provision, most of the trainees and apprentices are developing good numeracy skills which they can apply successfully in their directed training and in the workplace to complete appropriate occupational tasks.

Most of the trainees and apprentices develop positive dispositions to learning; the majority are developing in self-confidence through engagement in their learning and training. They are well-supported and strongly encouraged by all the staff to address any significant barriers to learning and employment and to develop and apply good work-related skills. The tutors appropriately reinforce health and safety practices and encourage trainees and apprentices to display positive attitudes to working safety and tidily. The trainees and apprentices work well independently but also with others. Most of the apprentices are able to organise and self-manage their work, to think flexibly and solve problems as required. In the workplace, supervisors report that the trainees demonstrate increasing levels of independent working, adaptability and the capability to solve problems. While the attendance rate of the trainees and apprentices is good across most areas, it is an area for improvement in the essential skills.

Overall, almost all of the trainees and apprentices who complete their training achieve their targeted qualifications. Over the last three years, the achievement rate is outstanding on both the ApprenticeshipsNI programme at 99% and on the Training for Success programme at 98%. Across most of the areas inspected, the trainees and apprentices are progressing well in their learning and training and they are completing their qualifications at an appropriate pace. Those with additional learning needs benefit from well-targeted support that enables them to overcome effectively their often significant barriers to learning and to achieve to their potential.

Most of the trainees and apprentices progress well in the achievement of their essential skills qualifications. The essential skill achievement rate over the last three years is high at 96% and one-third of the trainees and apprentices progress across more than one level in the development of their literacy and numeracy skills. The trainees and apprentices are also provided with opportunities to engage in essential skill enhancement activities, including the study of English literature to support further their progress in learning.

Across the majority of the areas inspected, the apprentices are progressing well in their learning and technical skills development and application; they are completing their qualifications at an appropriate pace. Across the Training for Success provision, however, progression is an important area for improvement. Overall, the proportion of the trainees completing their training successfully and progressing to higher training or employment is too low. The retention rate, at 55%, on the Training for Success programme, over the last three years, is an important area for improvement. In addition, the progression rate to further training or employment, for those who complete successfully their training, is also low at 41%. The organisation has identified this as an issue within their improvement planning process, a number of retention strategies have been introduced but are at an early stage. The retention rate, over the same period, on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme is good at 74% and progression to employment or further training is outstanding at 100%.

6. Quality of provision

People 1st has established a well-planned provision that includes a broad curriculum of work-based learning programmes to provide young people with training and apprenticeship opportunities. The curriculum offer reflects appropriately the social development needs across the sector, is aligned well to Government priorities and the training and development needs of industry and local employers across the areas the organisation serves.

Across almost all of the professional and technical areas inspected, the curriculum planning process is coherent and matched appropriately to the learning needs of the trainees and apprentices. They are provided with a broad range of training and learning experiences to enable them to develop both their occupational and technical knowledge and their practical skills. Most of the trainees and apprentices can apply and consolidate their learning to good effect in a workplace setting. In the IT and telecoms professional provision, however, the curriculum is an important area for improvement; there is a need to review the curriculum offer, particularly to ensure that a relevant level 1 provision is in place for the trainees.

At the time of the inspection, a majority (71%) of the trainees had access to a relevant work-experience placement where they develop well their work-readiness and employability skills. For those trainees who have not yet progressed to a work-placement, the organisation has enhanced the curriculum to provide increased support and opportunities for these trainees to further develop and refine their employability skills in a timely manner, to enable them to progress at an appropriate pace and be more able to sustain a work-experience placement. The organisation plans well to develop the trainees' employability skills through the delivery of a relevant employability and personal development curriculum. The quality of the employability skills and personal development provision is mostly good or better. A majority of the taught personal development and employability sessions observed were characterised by good levels of planning and very good rapport with the trainees. In the more effective sessions, active learning strategies such as role-play were used effectively to build the trainees' confidence and enhance their speaking and listening skills. A suitable curriculum provision is in place to develop the trainees' and apprentices' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills up to and including level 2.

The curriculum offer across the various professional and technical areas includes a good programme of enrichment, including added-value qualifications, industry speakers, employer visits and access to job fairs; this aspect of the curriculum contributes much to the trainees' and apprentices' knowledge of their occupational area and extends their careers awareness. In catering, for example, the apprentices are provided with opportunities to engage in cookery master classes to further develop their culinary skills and in barbering and hairdressing the curriculum enrichment includes a range of activities, access to external industry experts, photo shoots and competitions to further engage and motivate the trainees in their learning and training experiences. In transportation operations and maintenance, curriculum planning is an important area for improvement; there is a need to ensure that the selection of units and sequencing of their delivery is more cohesive and matched better to the trainees' abilities and potential progression opportunities.

The careers education, information, advice and guidance provision is of a good quality, well-co-ordinated and linked appropriately to the trainees' and apprentices' progression opportunities within their professional and technical area. The assessment arrangements are mostly effective. Initial assessment arrangements are well-planned to support the trainees and apprentices in targeting appropriate qualifications. In the workplace, the assessment activities are also well-planned and the trainees and apprentices are provided with detailed, informative feedback to help them improve their occupational and technical skills. In construction, however, the apprentices would benefit from a more formalised programme of careers education to better inform them of the wider range of progression pathways available

and how they can be accessed. The induction processes are coherent, well-co-ordinated and effective, including appropriate pre-entry advice and guidance for the trainees and apprentices. Across the professional and technical areas, this has been strengthened to include extended taster and sampling arrangements to support further the trainees' and apprentices' progression and career decisions. In addition, effective partnerships have been established with a number of schools; mentors work closely with the local schools to ensure that training options are fully explained and matched to school leavers' aspirations.

For trainees with identified additional learning support needs, there are effective links with an extensive range of external specialist support providers which are used effectively to support their personal development and underpin their learning and progress. This is particularly evident in relation to additional learning support for the essential skills provision.

Overall, the quality of the trainees' and apprentices' personal training plans is good. The review process for almost all of the trainees' and apprentices' is regular and supportive and used well to inform the monitoring and tracking of progress against clearly-defined targets.

The quality of the learning, teaching and training is mostly good or better; most (76%) of the sessions observed were good or better with a significant minority (33%) very good or better. Across the professional and technical areas inspected, most of the practical training sessions are planned effectively and provide a good range of appropriate learning and training activities to develop the trainees' and apprentices' occupational and practical skills. In the best practice, there is effective use of active learning strategies and differentiated activities to engage the trainees and support them in their acquisition and application of practical knowledge and skills development. In contrast, in the less effective practice, in around one-quarter of the sessions observed, there is limited differentiation in the learning and training and too few opportunities for the trainees and apprentices to engage in independent learning.

In the essential skills, the quality of learning, teaching and training is mostly good or better, with one-third of the sessions observed being very good or outstanding. In the best practice: the levels of engagement by the trainees and apprentices is excellent, including highly effective questioning; a creative, holistic approach to the teaching of reading skills is taken; the trainees' analytical skills are developed very well; and there is a very high level of both support and challenge to engage and motivate all of the trainees and apprentices. In the less effective practice, there is an over-reliance on worksheets, a need for improved questioning techniques to involve the trainees and apprentices more and sharper lesson planning to engage them better.

The care and welfare impacts positively on the learning, teaching and outcomes for the trainees and apprentices. Across the offices, the staff at all levels work hard, and to good effect, to provide a safe, caring and supportive learning environment. All of the trainees and apprentices interviewed reported that the staff were approachable, encouraging and proactive in supporting them achieve to their potential. A particular strength of the provision is the impactful work of the student support officers who provide holistic, sensitive and well-targeted support to ensure each of the trainees overcome their personal barriers to learning and where possible remain on their training programme. While attendance and punctuality is variable for a minority of the trainees, the organisation is working diligently to improve their employability skills, including a resilience to cope with the demands of the training programme, integrating to the world of work and to strive for higher personal goals.

7. Leadership and management

The strategic leadership of the organisation is very good. The organisation has well-defined strategic priorities and a clear vision linked to the needs of industry, local employers and schools. The organisation is led well by the managing director who is supported by a team of highly motivated directors, senior managers, middle managers, tutors and support staff to deliver a largely effective provision. The management and staff have well-established and collaborative working relationships with an extensive range of employers and external agencies that are used well to inform curriculum development and to support the trainees and apprentices in the development of their professional, technical and employability skills. In addition, to expand further the training and apprenticeship provision, the organisation has developed partnerships with a number of sub-contractors. To support these partnership arrangements evolve, a new post has been recently created and filled in order to manage and grow these partnership arrangements further, which is appropriate.

The quality of the middle management tier of the organisation is also very good. There are clearly defined roles and a broad complement of key staff with relevant expertise and responsibilities that reflect well the diverse training needs of the trainees and apprentices within each of the organisation's offices. The centre managers and the curriculum leads demonstrate a strong pastoral ethos and a collaborative team approach to support consistently and sensitively the learning and support needs of the trainees and the apprentices. Feedback is sought through the student forum and used well to inform the regular report back meetings with senior management. There is a joint business planning approach that involves the middle and senior management and is used to good effect to support and improve the quality of the learning, teaching and training across the provision.

The organisation's social responsibility is reflected in the drive of the senior managers to grow the provision across areas of social and economic deprivation, while balancing this with proactively addressing a widely recognised need to expand training and apprenticeships across a broader employer base. The organisation has more recently grown its provision in other sectors, including barbering, beauty therapy and hairdressing, business administration, catering, IT and telecoms professional, and transportation operations and maintenance. Some initial planning issues remain in a few of these newer areas of provision which senior managers are aware of and working to address.

People 1st has worked strategically and effectively to establish and integrate a wide employer base to support their curriculum offer and delivery. The tutors and student support officers engage effectively with a wide range of local and regional employers, developing successful links and building a positive reputation with local business which is used provide positive progression opportunities for apprentices and mostly high quality work-experience placements for trainees. The organisation involves employers in the delivery of workshops to trainees and apprentices to raise their awareness of the needs and expectations of the world of work. Employers also participate in mock interview panels for the trainees to support their development of more effective interview skills.

Traditionally, the organisation has delivered and sustained relevant training and apprenticeship programmes which are valued by employers, particularly in the children's care learning and development and health and social care sectors. Notably, the organisation is currently addressing specifically the training needs identified by employers in the financial services sector, through delivery of the providing financial services apprenticeship across a well-considered range of pathways.

A key strength of the provision is the expertise and dedication of the staff, at all levels, particularly their ability and commitment to: addressing the trainees' barriers to learning; building the trainees' and apprentices' confidence, resilience and self-esteem; and to developing and improving their employability skills, careers awareness and progression opportunities. Across the organisation, the quality of the learning resources is mostly good; the classrooms are generally well-maintained and in barbering, beauty therapy and hairdressing and construction the trainees and apprentices have good access to an appropriate range of specialist training equipment. In transportation operations and maintenance, the range of specialist equipment is insufficient an important area for improvement; there is a need to enhance significantly the range of training vehicles and rigs to provide more varied learning opportunities for the trainees in order to develop and consolidate their occupational competence. The organisation has invested significantly to upgrade and refurbish the various offices, provide a new kitchen facility for the catering provision, install new information technology suites and equipment, including laptops, projectors and wireless connectivity. Further significant investment has been supported by senior management to develop a custom-made management information system (MAYTAS) to provide real-time access to bespoke and timely data, including reports on retention, progression and achievement. The management information system provides the staff with accurate, robust and tailored reports and collated statistics to support the monitoring and tracking of trainees' and apprentices' progress, achievement and outcomes across the provision. The introduction of this new system has provided all staff with an increased understanding of the entry profile of the trainees and apprentices and has significant potential to inform actions to support ongoing improvement across course teams.

The processes of self-evaluation and quality improvement planning are well-established, effective and embedded across the work of the organisation. They are used to good effect by most of the professional and technical teams to promote and sustain further improvement. The organisation has an established performance management and monitoring processes to improve the quality across the provision. A 'live self-assessment model' including an exceptions log process is used effectively by staff to identify, monitor and act on any issues and to share best practice to further promote improvement across the organisation. Recently, the organisation has undertaken a series of 'mini inspections' across each office to further evaluate using first-hand evidence the quality of the learning, teaching and training. Standardisation meetings are used well by staff to share external and internal quality assurance feedback and to identify and promote best practice. In a significant minority of the professional and technical areas, namely construction, health and social care and IT and telecoms professional there is a need for more targeted action planning, which is monitored and evaluated more robustly to bring about further improvement across the provision.

8. Safeguarding

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding learners reflects the guidance issued by the Department. The learners report that they feel safe in the organisation and that they are aware what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare.

9. Overall effectiveness

People 1st demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the trainees and apprentices. There are areas for improvement that the organisation has demonstrated the capacity to address. 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	78	18.6%
ApprenticeshipsNI Level 3	129	30.8%
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Your Life	4	0.95%
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Work (strand 1)	57	13.6%
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Work (strand 2)	41	9.8%
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Work (strand 3)	0	0%
Training for Success (2017) Skills for Your Life	4	0.95%
Training for Success (2017) Skills for Work (strand 1)	58	13.8%
Training for Success (2017) Skills for Work (strand 2)	48	11.5%

Table 2 - Current registrations by professional and technical area

Professional and technical area	Number of trainees	% of total registrations
Barbering and hairdressing	17	4.06%
Beauty therapy	27	6.44%
Business administration	8	1.91%
Construction (Brickwork)	13	3.10%
Construction (Joinery)	11	2.63%
Transportation operations and maintenance	18	4.30%
Catering	15	3.58%
Children's care, learning and development	37	8.83%
IT user	2	0.48%
IT telecoms professional	14	3.34%
Retail	31	7.40%
Sport and recreation	19	4.53%

Professional and technical area	Number of apprentices		% of total registrations
	L2	L3	
Barbering & hairdressing	1	4	1.19%
Business administration	6	5	2.63%
Construction (Brickwork)	2	0	0.48%
Construction (Roofing)	8	0	1.91%
Construction	2	0	0.48%
Catering	0	4	0.95%
Children's care, learning and development	5	45	11.93%
Customer care	5	2	1.67%
Food and drink team leading	12	0	2.86%
Providing financial services	12	13	5.97%
Health and social care	15	44	14.08%
IT user	0	1	0.24%
IT telecoms professional	3	0	0.72%
Playwork	0	8	1.91%
Retail	4	1	1.19%
Sport and recreation	1	2	0.72%
Team leading	1	0	0.24%
Warehousing	1	0	0.24%

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	1%	16%
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C	4%	18%
(%) of learners with GCSE English or equivalent at Grades A*-C	5%	22%
(%) of learners with GCSE mathematics or equivalent at Grades A*-C	4%	21%
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-G	22%	21.8%
(%) of learners with no prior level 1 or level 2 qualifications	38%	20%

Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website <https://www.eti.gov.uk/publications/inspection-and-self-evaluation-framework-isef-effective-practice-and-self-evaluation-4>.

Fourteen ETI inspectors and five associate assessors observed 568 trainees and apprentices in 72 directed training sessions; visited 20 trainees and apprentices in their workplace; and interviewed 140 in focus group meetings. Discussions were held with 33 employers. Samples of the trainees' and apprentices' work and personal training plans, and tutors' schemes of work and lesson plans were examined; and the organisation's self-evaluation report and other relevant documentation were scrutinised.

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 participants. 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 participants. 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 participants. 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 participants. 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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