



Northern Ireland Audit Office

# MEDIA RELEASE

## Contracted Training Programmes

Report to the Northern Ireland Assembly by the Comptroller and Auditor General  
28 June 2016

Mr Kieran Donnelly, the Comptroller and Auditor General, today published his report on Training for Success and Apprenticeships NI, two training programmes operated by the former Department of Employment and Learning.

Mr Donnelly said ***“These programmes have provided training in essential and key skills to a large number of trainees and apprenticeships. Over 90 per cent of training provision inspected by the Education and Training Inspectorate is considered satisfactory or above, and large numbers have left the programmes having achieved their targeted qualifications. However in the absence of adequate reporting against key targets, it is difficult to conclude whether the programmes have operated effectively and delivered value for money.”***

Mr Donnelly also noted ***“Many trainees enter these programmes with low levels of educational attainment and often with significant barriers to obtaining qualifications and employment. Around a third of Training for Success participants leave without obtaining a qualification and two thirds do not progress to further education, training or employment immediately on leaving the programme. Furthermore, one in three leavers from Apprenticeships NI does not gain all the qualifications outlined in the apprenticeship framework. I would therefore encourage the Department to be more ambitious in focusing on outcomes and driving improvement in these areas of performance.”***

### Background

Training for Success was introduced in September 2007 as the primary vocational training provision for young people. The programme offers a training guarantee to unemployed 16 to 17 year old school leavers. It aims to enable participants to progress to higher level training, further education or employment by providing training in an occupational area and in essential skills; and addressing personal and social development needs.

Apprenticeships NI provides training for employed apprentices up to completion of an industry-approved Apprenticeship Framework.

### Main Findings

- The total cost of Training for Success and Apprenticeships NI over the period 2007 to 2015 was £469 million.

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- 97,000 participants started the programmes during this period (44,000 on Training for Success and 53,000 on Apprenticeships NI).
- Around two thirds of Training for Success leavers achieved a qualification. Almost a quarter progressed to employment, education or other training.
- Just over 60 per cent of Apprenticeships NI leavers achieved a full apprenticeship framework and 67 per cent achieved a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ).
- The Department has monitored performance of individual training providers against targets as part of contract monitoring and it also publicly reports key information in statistical bulletins. However due to historical management information system issues which have now been resolved, there has been a lack of formal performance reporting against some targets at overall programme level. This makes it difficult to determine if the Department is meeting its programme objectives and delivering value for money.
- Due to the fixed price nature of the contracts, the operation of the Training for Success and Apprenticeships NI programmes do not calculate unit costs and, as a consequence, it is difficult to assess the efficiency of these training programmes.
- The Department has in place an extensive quality assurance regime. In addition, training provision is subject to independent inspection by the Education and Training Inspectorate which grades training provision on a six point scale. Approximately 71 per cent of training provision inspected was graded as good or better (Grade 3 and above); 21 per cent as satisfactory (Grade 4); and 9 per cent as inadequate (Grade 5). No training provider was given an unsatisfactory grading (Grade 6).
- The Department undertakes a significant amount of validation and checking of payments to training providers. These show a low level of errors and the department makes recoveries where overpayments are identified.

### Notes for Editors

1. The Comptroller and Auditor General is Head of the Northern Ireland Audit Office (the Audit Office). He and the NIAO are totally independent of Government. He certifies the accounts of Government Departments and a range of other public sector bodies. He has statutory authority to report to the Assembly on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which departments and public bodies use their resources. His reports are published as Assembly papers.
2. This report is available on the Audit Office website at [www.niauditoffice.gov.uk](http://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk). The report is embargoed until 00.01 hrs on 28 June 2016.
3. Background briefing can be obtained from the Audit Office by contacting Eddie Bradley (028 9025 1011) or David Murdie (028 9025 1135).