

# Training Plus Merseyside Ltd

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**Inspection date**

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**Inspection number**

310558

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## Background information

### Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

#### Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

### Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Hairdressing
- Business, administration and law

Inspectors also examined evidence from programmes in health, public services and care, which were not reported on separately, to support judgements in leadership and management.

## Description of the provider

1. Training Plus Merseyside Ltd (Training Plus), based in the centre of Liverpool, was formed in 2001. Its mission states that it “aims to provide effective, quality training and real employment opportunities for young people”. Training Plus offers training for 244 learners in health, public services and care, hairdressing and business, administration and law. Apprenticeship programmes are funded by the Greater Merseyside LSC. Currently 96% of Training Plus’s business is funded by the LSC. The company has 33 staff who manage, deliver and administer the programmes. Three shareholder directors each have a specific leadership role within the company.
2. Liverpool is undergoing an economic revival. New and existing businesses are bringing new jobs to the city and the Capital of Culture award has played a significant part. The local unemployment rate is falling consistently faster than the national average and was at 3.5% in 2005. However, Liverpool has some of the poorest wards in the county. Ethnicity in Liverpool is currently 4.5% and comprised of Somali, Chinese, Caribbean, Black/African British and Irish communities. Training Plus has 4% representation of minority ethnic communities amongst its learners, and 6.6% representation amongst staff.

## Summary of grades awarded

<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
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<b>Achievement and standards</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
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<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
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<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
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<b>Equality of opportunity</b>	<b>Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2</b>
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## Sector subject area

<b>Hairdressing</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
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<b>Business, administration &amp; law</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
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## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

#### Good: Grade 2

3. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Training Plus's leadership and management are good, as are its arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement. In business administration and in hairdressing, the provision is good.

### Capacity to improve

#### Good: Grade 2

4. Training Plus demonstrates good capacity to improve. Since the previous inspection, the company has taken successful action to address the weaknesses and further improve those aspects of provision which were judged satisfactory or better. For example, the implementation of a retention and achievement strategy to increase success rates, the good use of feedback and evaluations to inform improvement plans, management interventions to replace staff and restructure parts of the business, very positive changes to the arrangements for initial assessment and the provision of very good support for learners. Many of these measures have already had a positive impact on the success rates. Success rates for apprentices are good. Success rates for advanced apprentices are satisfactory and continuing to improve. Most learners are making good progress. Achievement and standards are good for business administration and early years and play work, and continuing to improve in hairdressing. A few initiatives need more time to become established practice and further contribute to the increasing success rates.
5. Quality assurance arrangements are comprehensive and robust. Self-assessment is regarded throughout the company as an important tool for quality improvement. There is strong commitment within Training Plus to continuously improve the quality of provision. All staff are involved in identifying areas for change and introducing improvements. A quality improvement plan successfully drives forward identified improvement actions.

## Key strengths

- Particularly effective management of performance
- Good collaboration with external organisations
- Good initiatives to improve the quality of provision
- Good leadership and promotion of equality and diversity practices
- Very good support for learners
- Well planned and delivered training

## Key areas for improvement

- None identified.

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

#### Good: Grade 2

6. Achievement and standards are good. There have been some significant increases in overall success rates. For current apprentices in business administration and early years and play work, success rates are good and above 70%. For advanced apprentices across all three sector subject areas success rates are currently satisfactory and continuing to improve. Learners are making good progress. In business administration, there is good development of occupational skills. Progression from National Vocation qualification (NVQ) level 2 to NVQ level 3 across all sector subject areas is good.

### Quality of provision

#### Good: Grade 2

7. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good in both hairdressing and business administration. There is good lesson planning, variation and differentiation in teaching methods and activities, integration of key skills and good assessment practices. Progress reviews and target-setting are particularly effective in helping learners to develop and achieve. In early years and play work, staff identified as good teachers are being used as mentors for other staff. The training centre is well resourced.
8. The quality of work placements is good, and the engagement of employers is particularly effective. Staff are highly responsive to employers and other training providers. Training Plus is thorough in their attempts to place learners on the right programme and at the right level to meet the needs of both learners and employers. There are some good enrichment activities such as the certificated training in equality and diversity for learners.
9. Personal, social and vocational support for learners is very good. Learners receive good quality initial advice and guidance. Initial assessment is particularly effective in identifying and meeting additional literacy, numeracy and language needs. Learners receive good support from their employers.

### Leadership and management

#### Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

10. Leadership and management are good. The management of performance is particularly effective. Management information is used well to monitor the progress of learners and the performance of staff. Data is accurate, reliable, and relevant and timely reports are generated for individuals, teams and directors. All staff have access to this web-based resource and management tool. Staff induction, training and development are thorough and staff are well informed about their individual targets. The achievement of targets is effectively reviewed through regular performance meetings.

11. Collaboration with external organisations is good. Staff from Training Plus participate in a range of meetings and regional groups, and contribute effectively to meet the needs of the local and regional community. Good working relationships are in place with other training providers and the learner is at the centre of all initiatives. Learners are able to move easily between training providers and there is portability of information to accompany those learners. Training Plus works collectively with other training providers to share best practice and find solutions to common areas of development such as developing strategies and activities to raise standards and improve success rates. Staff work very effectively with schools to develop diplomas and contribute to the 14-19 agenda. Staff work productively with employers to improve communication and the quality of work placements. Arrangements with agencies that provide specialist support to learners are good.
12. Initiatives to improve the quality of provision are good. Training Plus has introduced a number of good actions to improve overall success rates. A retention and achievement strategy was introduced, the restructuring of some sector subject areas has taken place and more focus has been given to supporting NVQ level 3 programmes. Significant improvements have been made to the initial assessment arrangements. Better identification and diagnosis of additional learning and social needs and the appointment of additional support staff, have contributed to improving support arrangements that are now very good. Outcomes from observations of teaching and learning, assessment and progress reviews, inform action plans for improvement. Feedback from learners and employers is used effectively and positive action is taken to change and improve practices. To further support improvements in learning, Training Plus has invested in improving the learning environment and training resources.
13. Equality and diversity practices are good. Comprehensive up-to-date policies, procedures and practices ensure all learners are well supported to benefit from their experiences and succeed with their goals. Good training for learners takes place at induction, during their course work and through review. Large numbers of learners undertake certificated equality and diversity training each year. Training for staff takes place on a regular basis, and Training Plus delivers training for employers and other training providers. This is valued highly by all involved. Positive imagery is used to challenge stereotypes and promote educational and social inclusion. Equal opportunities data is analytical and trends are monitored thoroughly. The provider has good evidence of engaging learners in activities and learning relevant to staying healthy, keeping safe and contributing to the community. Regular evaluations by the provider demonstrate learners are enjoying and achieving. Achievement is celebrated regularly. All learners benefit from their employed status, and are supported to develop their social skills.
14. Communication is effective. Regular and focused meetings are used well to inform staff of developments and share good practice. Individual staff meetings take place to review action plans, individual targets and performance. Comprehensive arrangements are in place to appraise and develop staff. All staff are appropriately qualified and experienced, and others are undertaking relevant qualifications. Internal verification arrangements are rigorous and comprehensive. Appropriate sampling of assessors' work and observation of assessment takes place regularly. Standardisation meetings are well structured.

15. The self-assessment process is thorough and inclusive. The self-assessment report is critical but overly detailed. Inspection findings confirmed many of the strengths identified in the sector subject areas. In leadership and management, some of the strengths identified by Training Plus were not key strengths, and some were no more than expected practice. Training Plus identified very few areas for improvement, and this corresponds with the findings of the inspectors.
16. Training Plus staff are very active members of the Greater Merseyside Learning Providers Federation. A company director (equal opportunities co-ordinator) was involved in leading work on producing and implementing a form for claiming additional social support funding from the LSC. This has been authenticated by the LSC audit team and is being implemented across the Federation member providers. Internal verification is thorough and meets awarding body standards. The self-assessment report very closely matched the findings of the inspection.

## **What learners like:**

- Everything
- Being treated like adults
- Town centre location of the training centre
- The work placements
- ‘Really good support to help me stay on the programme’
- ‘Flexible arrangements to visit me in the workplace’
- Very friendly and helpful staff

## **What learners think could improve:**

- Time at the training centre – ‘half-a-day in the training centre isn’t enough’

## Sector subject areas

### Hairdressing

#### Good: Grade 2

#### Context

17. Training Plus offers hairdressing apprenticeships in and around Merseyside. Apprentice learners attend off-the-job training at Training Plus for half-a-day each week and advance apprentices for one day every two weeks, or for one evening weekly. The rest of their training is in the workplace. There are a total of 73 learners on hairdressing training programmes. Of these, 51 are on the apprenticeship programme and twenty-two are on the advanced apprenticeship programme. Currently 58 learners are aged 16-18 and 15 are aged over 19. All learners are employed. The apprenticeship programme is planned to last 24 months and the advanced apprenticeship 18 to 24 months. There are four full-time and one part-time staff who teach or assess on the hairdressing programmes.

#### Strengths

- Good teaching of background knowledge and key skills
- Good monitoring of learner progress
- Particularly effective progress reviews
- Good employer engagement
- Very good support for learners
- Good management of programmes

#### Areas for improvement

- None identified

#### Achievement and standards

18. Achievement is satisfactory and improving. Current learners are making good progress and are on target to achieve their planned outcomes. Recent improvements on systems and procedures introduced by Training Plus are starting to have a significant effect. In 2006-07, 65% of apprentices achieved their framework, which is an increase of 22% on the previous year. On the Advanced Apprenticeship programme, the achievement of the framework has improved by 34% compared with the previous year.
19. Learners' practical work is satisfactory. For example, apprenticeship learners demonstrated satisfactory skills when completing semi-permanent colouring and one length hair cuts. Learners' written work and portfolios are satisfactory. The best portfolios are well presented and contain photographic evidence of learners' practical work.

#### Quality of provision

20. The teaching of background knowledge and key skills is good. In the best lessons, tutors use a variety of strategies and activities to motivate learners. Tutors check learners' understanding through verbal and written questioning. The pace of lessons is good. Learners are motivated and tutors are good facilitators. The ratio of tutors to learners is good. Most groups are small and learners benefit from good individual coaching. Additional support tutors work effectively with the vocational tutors to develop learners' numeracy and literacy skills. Lessons are well planned. Flexible training arrangements enable learners to access the programme at a variety of points throughout the year. Training in the workplace is satisfactory. Learners have designated training times and work-based trainers follow the Training Plus training plan. Assessment practice is satisfactory. Assessors from Training Plus attend work-based training sessions to assess and informally sample the quality of training.
21. The monitoring of learner progress is good. Training Plus use a particularly effective system to identify learners who may be behind with their NVQ unit completion. Tutors can easily identify the number of units each learner has completed and this is regularly monitored and updated. Learners are aware of their targets for unit completion and what they need to do to achieve them.
22. Learner progress reviews are thorough and particularly effective. Long and short-term targets are very detailed and clear. Long-term targets are noted in the learners' individual learning plans, and these are updated during the review process. Short-term targets set at reviews are precise, and describe achievable actions required by learners. Equality of opportunity and health and safety are very well promoted during reviews.
23. Employer engagement is good. Employers are well informed and supported. Employers and Training Plus work productively to ensure good co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. Learners are employed in good quality work places in good locations that provide them with a variety of clients for training and assessment purposes. Work placements offer learners extra specialist vocational courses which are not part of their apprenticeship framework. Training Plus stage their own hairdressing competitions and learners benefit from specialist manufacturers' courses.
24. Guidance and support for learners is very good. Learners' literacy, numeracy, language and dyslexia support needs are identified at induction. Learners who have additional learning needs receive very good support both in individual sessions and during their vocational lessons. Extra monitoring visits in learners' work placements and access to tutors by mobile telephone are also available for learners when they need extra help and support. Training Plus arrange evening sessions for learners who find it difficult to attend during the day. Learners value their support classes and understand the relevance of numeracy and literacy in their vocational programme. Learners who have had poor achievement of literacy and numeracy at school have made significant improvements and achieved their key skills qualifications.

### **Leadership and management**

25. Programme management is good. Staff are appraised twice each year and staff development needs are identified. Communication between management and staff is good and staff are well informed. Staff are well qualified and professionally up to date. Management information systems provide staff with good reports. Training rooms at the

training centre are well equipped and have data projectors to enable power-point presentations to be used in learning. Internal verification is satisfactory and standardisation meetings take place. The self-assessment report is accurate, although in parts it was too descriptive.

## Business, administration and law

### Good: Grade 2

#### Context

26. Training Plus provides apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship training in business administration. There are 36 learners, comprising 20 apprentices and 16 advanced apprentices. All learners are employed. Training Plus helps to find employment or work placements for applicants not in full-time employment. Learners receive initial assessment and a skills scan to help determine their suitability for the programme and to identify any additional support needs. Learners attend the training centre for technical certificate and key skills training every two weeks. Assessment is carried out in the workplace at least every three to four weeks and progress reviews take place every six weeks.

#### Strengths

- Good success rates for apprentices
- Good development of learners' skills
- Good planning and co-ordination of training
- Particularly effective assessment
- Very good support, advice and guidance
- Well-managed programmes

#### Areas for improvement

- None identified

#### Achievement and standards

27. Success rates for apprentices are good. Overall success rates for apprentices have improved yearly from 37% in 2004-05 to 78% in 2006-07. In the same period timely success rates for apprentices have improved from 27% to 76%. Overall and timely success rates for advanced apprentices have improved and are satisfactory. Technical certificate test success has been at 100% during the current year which is in line with national averages. Achievement of key skills tests is good. The significant majority of learners are making satisfactory or better progress towards completing their frameworks. Progression from apprentice to advanced apprentice programmes is high at 88%.
28. Learners develop good skills. Many learners are taking on significantly increased responsibility within their workplaces and working on their own initiative. For example, one learner manages a company marketing initiative aimed at increasing the client base, while another manages a resource lending library for a member of the Greater Merseyside Learning Providers Federation. Employers confirm that many learners have benefited from substantially increased confidence and self-esteem while on the programme. Some learners achieved few qualifications while at school but now take pride in the progress they are making. Learners' competence in the use of both common business software applications and bespoke commercial software is high.

## Quality of provision

29. The planning and co-ordination of training is good. A full review of training programmes took place during 2005-06. Learners now benefit from good off-the-job training to develop knowledge for the technical certificate and skills development in application of number and communication. Training sessions are well planned with detailed lesson plans that effectively identify opportunities for key skills development. Activities within sessions are highly interactive and effectively provide learning opportunities for learners of differing abilities. Learners' enjoy off-the-job training sessions. A small minority of learners who are unable to attend off-the-job training are well supported through workbooks and electronic learning materials. On-the-job training provided by employers is carefully recorded and used to inform the planning of training.
30. Assessment is particularly effective. Assessment visits are frequent and matched to the needs of individual learners and the business needs of employers. Assessments are well planned and learners have a good understanding of the assessment process and the evidence requirements for their programmes. A good range of assessment evidence is used including recorded professional discussions, witness testimonies, personal statements and observations. Assessment targets are clear, detailed and well understood by learners. Progress is reviewed frequently and reviews are used effectively to discuss and record progress in the key aspects of the framework. Targets set for the next review period are well understood by learners and clearly relate to assessment plan targets.
31. Support, advice and guidance are very good. The recruitment of learners is well managed by the recruitment team. Initial interview carefully identifies the career aspirations of applicants. Where Training Plus cannot provide appropriate programmes to meet applicants needs, good referral links exist with other local providers. Prospective employers are carefully chosen to ensure that learners benefit from employment that is well matched to their career aspirations. All learners are assessed to identify literacy, numeracy or language support needs including dyslexia. Results are carefully recorded on learning plans together with planned development actions. Support for learners' social and personal needs is very good and is highly effective in helping learners remain on programme who may otherwise leave.
32. Induction is thorough and effectively develops learners' understanding of the apprenticeship programmes and its requirements. Equality and diversity, and health and safety booklets give learners a good understanding of these areas and are systematically used during progress reviews to reinforce their understanding. Learner progress is rigorously monitored and reported on and appropriate interventions are made if slow progress is identified. Where a learner alters their career aspirations or chooses to leave their programme, good links exist with Connexions personal advisers and other local training providers.

## Leadership and management

33. Programmes are well managed. Management strategies have improved the quality of provision and increased learner success rates. Staff are well qualified and experienced and benefit from a broad and well focused staff development programme. Training

rooms are well maintained and appropriately resourced with industry standard computer software. Management information is used very effectively to monitor the progress of learners and to manage the performance of staff. Team meetings are frequent with a strong focus on discussing learner progress and achievement.

## Annex

## Learners' achievements

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/c college NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	03-04	overall	79	46%	48%	28%	31%
		timely	87	41%	30%	21%	19%
	04-05	overall	89	54%	48%	31%	34%
		timely	88	40%	31%	20%	21%
	05-06	overall	96	53%	53%	36%	44%
		timely	85	36%	34%	25%	27%
Apprenticeships	03-04	overall	210	50%	47%	39%	32%
		timely	225	35%	24%	28%	16%
	04-05	overall	211	47%	50%	36%	39%
		timely	205	24%	29%	18%	22%
	05-06	overall	212	58%	58%	55%	52%
		timely	194	46%	38%	45%	34%

\* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

\*\* College and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'