

Report of the Trustees for the Year Ending 31 March 2024

(Incorporating the Chairperson's Report)

Chairperson's Report

It gives me great pleasure to introduce Workforce Training Services Limited's Annual Report for 2023-24.

This year, the charity has continued to make strong progress delivering its core contracts which include the Department for the Economy's Skills for Life & Work and ApprenticeshipsNI Programmes, the Education Authority's School Partnership Programme, local council led Employment Academies as part of the Labour Market Partnership initiative and the Step Up Programme in partnership with Belfast Metropolitan College.

In a dynamic and ever-changing world, where job requirements are continuously evolving, the significance of committed training and enhancement of skills is undeniable. At Workforce, our enduring goal has always been to equip our students with the vital skills and insights needed to excel in their professional lives and to make significant contributions to their local communities. The achievements of all individuals participating in our programmes bear witness to the incredible impact of education and training, coupled with the determination, dedication, and tenacity of our trainees, apprentices and all our course participants.

In spite of the challenging economic climate, the company has delivered strong financial results over the last 12 months which has allowed us to refurbish, renew and update our facilities where necessary. It is vital that we continue to provide the most up to date training and learning facilities for our course participants to enable them to achieve their best possible outcomes. Also, we are committed to investing in the development of our people and the continuous improvement of the delivery of our programmes and services. As a company, we are very proud to have achieved recognised quality marks/standards including the Investors in People Gold accreditation and ISO9001:2015. Moreover, winning the Aisling Education Award was one of the great highlights of 2023-24.

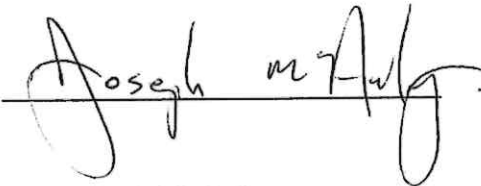
The past year has been a very difficult time for the whole Workforce community with the passing of our dear friend and colleague Angie McFall. There is no doubt that this tragic event has deeply impacted the entire Workforce family, shaking us to our very core. As a result, it was appropriate and in tribute to Angie, that we initiated the McFall Cup, to be awarded to the trainee who showcased exceptional dedication throughout their training at our 2024 Celebration of Success occasion.

Despite the hurdles that each year inevitably brings, our dedicated management team and staff consistently strive to enhance the lives of our course participants. Their tireless efforts aim not only to boost employment prospects and skills, but to fundamentally improve life chances and facilitate positive outcomes. For their unyielding dedication, I extend my deepest appreciation and heartfelt thanks.

I also wish to express my gratitude for the unwavering commitment, dedication, and support of my fellow board members. Their generous contribution of time, combined with their specialised knowledge and experience, has been instrumental in the smooth operation of the charity. In an ever-evolving landscape, the importance of competent leadership and robust governance is critical for any charitable organisation and guarantees that Workforce remains dedicated to serving our beneficiaries.

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to all our delivery partners, funders and other stakeholders for their continuous assistance and support over the past year.

Chairperson's signature

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Mr Joseph McAuley

Date

29/11/24

Skills for Life and Work

Workforce's Skills for Life and Work programme, funded by the Department for the Economy, has made a significant impact in enhancing the employability prospects of young individuals, especially those aged between 16-17, or those with a disability or from an in-care background. This programme offers a comprehensive curriculum encompassing personal development, employability training, and vocational skills, in addition to essential literacy, numeracy, and ICT qualifications.

Workforce, one of the largest work based learning providers in N.Ireland, has an impressive track record of engaging with substantial numbers of young people on its Skills For Life and Work programme. Last year alone, the programme saw an 8% increase in participants, recruiting 182 young people from a wide variety of post primary schools throughout Belfast. The programme's success lies in its ability to secure apprenticeships or further training for its participants, thereby setting them on a path towards promising futures.

Some of the key achievements and outcomes from the programme over the last 12 months include:

- 92 young people gained employment and progressed on to the ApprenticeshipNI programme;
- 243 participants achieved a vocational qualification this year;
- 402 Essential Skills qualifications in literacy, numeracy and ICT were achieved;
- 331 personal development and employability qualifications were achieved; and
- 1335 hours of one-to-one mentoring support sessions were delivered to participants on this programme.

ApprenticeshipsNI

The ApprenticeshipsNI programme's goal is to offer participants the chance to engage in a Level 2/Level 3 Apprenticeship, where from the first day, the apprentice is in paid employment and works towards securing an industry-approved Level 2/3 Apprenticeship Framework.

At Workforce, our ability to effectively interact with employers is key to our success in identifying excellent job opportunities for our participants. We maintain close relations with employers to ensure that our services meet the needs of the employer, the business, and the apprentice. Over the last year, Workforce has successfully partnered with 254 employers, arranging work placements and job opportunities for our young people.

In the 2023-24 period, there were 160 apprentices engaged on the ApprenticeshipNI programme. In the past few years, we have made great efforts to boost the availability of apprenticeships and support all of our young people, a significant

number of whom come from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, to access the ApprenticeshipNI pathway.

In June 2023, the Education and Training Inspectorate carried out a very successful Prototype inspection of Workforce's Skills for Life and Work and ApprenticeshipNI training provision. In its report, the Inspectorate commended Workforce's professional and technical and essential skills training provision noting their impact on young people's self-esteem and the quality of their learning experiences. Moreover, the inspection team were particularly impressed by the comprehensive care and support provided alongside the training, which addresses any additional needs and learning barriers that trainees and apprentices may face.

As a board, we are very proud that the Education and Training Inspectorate continues to view Workforce as a very effective training organisation with high expectations and aspirations for our trainees and apprentices. We set high standards and achieve excellent outcomes, which are delivered within a caring and supportive environment, ensuring the trainees and apprentices feel nurtured and safe, and are able to engage, learn, achieve and progress on the next stage of their journey. It is very important to us that our staff enjoy coming to work and take pride in making a real difference to the lives of the young people in our community.

Employment Academies

The Labour Market Partnership (LMP) is a province-wide approach developed by the Department of Communities and aims to address issues with jobs and training by combining resources and delivering a collaborative and flexible approach to employability support in each council area. The LMP focuses on improving labour market conditions and addressing issues with employers, training providers, as well as community and voluntary organisations.

Through this initiative, Workforce has developed a strong strategic relationship with five local councils including Belfast City Council, Mid & East Antrim Borough Council, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, and Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council. The organisation delivers a range of skills and employability programmes which include the Customer Service Sector (Hospitality, Leisure & Retail) Academy and the Practical Sector (Transport, Construction, Green Economy & Manufacturing) Academy.

This year we have worked with 609 participants, mainly adults (a 34% increase on the previous year), on the Councils' Employment Academies which breaks down as follows:

Transport Academy	No. of participants
HGV	265
Bus	73
Construction	74
General Operative Construction	14

Leisure	19
Hospitality	24
Community	12
Warehousing	43
SIA Licence	49
Manufacturing	10
Retail	26
Total	609

While we are approaching the final year of these contracts, we fully intend to retender for these and additional contracts should LMP funding be extended for a further period.

STEP UP

The STEP-UP programme, a partnership between the Department for the Economy and Further Education Colleges, offers additional tailored, individualised and mentor led support to priority groups of individuals who are often under-represented within skills and education opportunities. These include people with disabilities, care leavers, the unemployed, economically inactive, and areas with significant gender disparity. Workforce is contracted as one of six 'partners of choice' by Belfast Metropolitan College to deliver the programme in Belfast.

In year 1 of the programme, we enrolled 58 participants, 20 of which were women returners and 38 participants who were over the age of 24 and either unemployed or economically inactive. In addition to 1-to-1 mentoring and effective employability support, the programme offers participants a range of accredited, industry-specific courses aimed at enhancing their skills and expanding their career prospects. Among the courses on offer were customer service, food hygiene, CSR, COSHH, manual handling and forklift training, along with emergency first aid and mental health first aid. This broad spectrum of training opportunities provides participants with a comprehensive skillset, opening up a wider range of employment possibilities. The programme is proving to be very successful with a 90% retention rate across all cohorts in year 1.

School Partnership Programme

Workforce's School Partnership Programme, a core part of its education provision, collaborates annually with four different educational institutions, reaching 150 pupils. The main objective of this initiative is to equip Year 11 and Year 12 pupils with vocational skills through the attainment of CEA's Occupational Studies qualification, equivalent to a GCSE. This proven pathway has seen many pupils successfully transition into relevant training programmes at Workforce upon finishing their schooling, reaffirming the effectiveness of the School Partnership Programme.

Other Youth-Led Programmes

Despite facing significant reductions in funding for youth-led initiatives from Belfast City Council, Workforce has continued its provision of two key youth programmes. Workforce, in collaboration with Work West, has successfully delivered the youth component of the Social Enterprise programme for a third consecutive year. This initiative engaged 48 young people, ages 14 to 16, in the creation and management of small business projects. This hands-on experience aims to foster their entrepreneurial talents, offering a foundation to cultivate these skills as they transition into further education, training or employment.

Furthermore, Workforce successfully completed the final year of the 'Bridges to Progression' programme, an initiative designed to support young people on the Skills for Life and Work programme into employment. The programme's cornerstone was the comprehensive mentoring support tailored to the unique needs of each participant. This direct support addressed specific challenges and barriers, equipping participants with the confidence and skills necessary to secure an apprenticeship. Workforce continues to be dedicated to equipping our learners with the necessary resources and support they need to succeed, even in the face of substantial obstacles to their learning and development.

Community

Workforce is committed to fostering and enhancing partnerships within the local community. As part of our ongoing efforts, this year has seen our joinery trainees build planters and outdoor furniture that have been donated to various local community organisations. Additionally, our dedicated young people have actively engaged in community service by participating in neighbourhood litter picks and resourceful cooking on a budget projects. Our construction trainees and apprentices have also shown compassion and craftsmanship by repairing the home of a local resident tragically affected by fire. Moreover, our trainees have constructed practical sheds for the Windsor Women's Centre, demonstrating their growing expertise. Beyond these hands-on projects, they have also demonstrated a commitment to social responsibility by organising and contributing to fundraising efforts for Foodstock, a vital local community foodbank. These activities represent a snapshot of the meaningful contributions our trainees and apprentices have made over the past year.

Quality Awards

Workforce has once again secured Gold accreditation for the Investors In People Award, surpassing our previous performance in 2020. Our efforts have seen us progress from one indicator at a high performance and eight at an advanced level to four indicators at high performance and five at an advanced level. This achievement places us in the top 17% of IIP accredited organisations. While we celebrate this accomplishment, as it affirms our continuous efforts to improve, enhance and innovate in our people practices, we remain focused on our goal to achieve the platinum level.

Following April's accreditation audit, our management system has yet again upheld its exemplary performance in accordance with the ISO:9001:2015 standard. This confirms our consistent delivery of intended outcomes and allows us to maintain our ISO:9001:2015 accreditation for another year.

Workforce Training Services was honoured to be awarded Belfast Media Group's prestigious Aisling Award for Excellence in Education 2023. This recognition is a testament to the relentless dedication, hard work, and passion of the entire Workforce team which strives to empower its trainees, apprentices and course participants by equipping them with the necessary skills and training for their futures. Furthermore, the award is testimony to the power of education and lifelong learning and the transformative impact they can have on individual lives and the community as a whole. It's an acknowledgment of the importance of providing people with the tools, guidance, and support they need to unlock their potential.

Plans for the future

Workforce is focused on ensuring its financial security and sustainability in the future. Currently, the Department for the Economy's Skills For Life & Work and ApprenticeshipsNI contracts are coming to an end within the next year. It is a strategic and critical priority for our organisation to actively pursue and secure the renewal of these contracts. These programmes are vital to our mission and service offerings. Successfully negotiating new contracts will enable us to continue providing these essential services, thereby maintaining our commitment to fostering skills development and apprenticeship opportunities in our community.


Our current collaboration with Belfast Metropolitan College in the delivery of the STEP UP programme has proved to be very successful this year. We aim to build on this partnership and explore the possibility of establishing effective working relationships with other like-minded local learning providers to create opportunities to bid on a host of education and training tenders. Collaborative efforts of this kind offer a wider pool of knowledge and skillsets, subsequently enhancing the likelihood of Workforce successfully obtaining larger contracts, particularly those that necessitate a comprehensive range of specialist expertise. This diversity of training opportunities would provide us with an avenue for the establishment of partnerships across a wider range of industries that will broaden education pathways and employment opportunities.

Going forward, Workforce is committed to seeking additional funding, particularly for health, a growing focus for the organisation. This funding would enrich and benefit our core contracts like Skills for Life and Work and ApprenticeshipsNI. These programmes are crucial to our operations and extra funding would greatly improve their effectiveness. This strategy of securing additional funding is key for our organisation's success and growth. It is not just about maintaining our current status, but about progressing and achieving more. We believe that with this strategy, we can continue to flourish and make an even bigger impact on our young people.

Finally, Workforce is in the process of developing a comprehensive strategic plan that will serve as a blueprint for all our activities, initiatives and decisions over the next three years. The aim is to align all our operations with the core mission and

values of our organisation and to enhance our capacity to serve the community needs more effectively. We believe that by fostering partnerships with different stakeholders such as industry associations, employers of all sizes, government departments, local councils, and various community groups, we can ensure our continued relevance and effectiveness. This collaborative approach is not just about immediate success, but also about building a strong and sustainable future.

The annual report was approved by the trustees of the charity on 29th November 2024 and signed on its behalf by

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Paul Boyle (Secretary)

WORKFORCE TRAINING SERVICES LIMITED
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2024

STATEMENT OF DIRECTORS RESPONSIBILITIES

The directors are responsible for preparing the Directors' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company Law requires the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year. The Trustees, who are also directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31st March 2024. The Trustees confirm that they comply with the requirements of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice which applies to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015).

Under company law the directors must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of the surplus or deficit of the company for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the directors are required to:

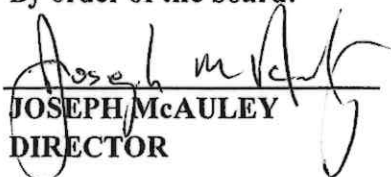
- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

The directors are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In so far as the directors are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the company's auditor is unaware; and
- the directors have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

By order of the board:


JOSEPH MCAULEY
DIRECTOR

DATE 8th June 2024


JULIE MAGUIRE
DIRECTOR

DATE 8th June 2024