

Research and Library Services



Northern Ireland Assembly

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TRAINING IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Research and Library Service

This is a brief overview of Tourism and Hospitality in Northern Ireland using written evidence from different organizations who responded to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee. The training infrastructure and delivery within the industry are also briefly described.

Library Research Papers are compiled for the benefit of Members of The Assembly and their personal staff. Authors are available to discuss the contents of these papers with Members and their staff but cannot advise members of the general public.

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Background

In 2002, the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment at the Northern Ireland Assembly embarked on an inquiry into tourism, but it had not completed its work when the Assembly was suspended in October 2002. The main findings of the survey were:

- 16% of employers reported that they had at least one vacancy for which they were trying to recruit and the vast majority of these vacancies were posts for waiting staff, kitchen assistants, porters and bar staff.
- 20% of employers reported difficulties retaining staff
- 13% of employers felt that their staff lacked the skilled needed for their business - largely because they were not staying long enough in post
- 61% of vacancies for managers in the sector are proving hard to fill
- There are approximately 5269 people working as chefs and cooks in Northern Ireland. (1230 chefs and cooks do not have any qualifications and 1150 chefs and cooks are only qualified to Level 1)

The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee decided to undertake an inquiry into Tourism in Northern Ireland and its economic impact and benefits on 29 March 2006¹. A number of organizations within the industry were asked to respond by providing written evidence to the Committee and a report was published by the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee on 16 May 2007.

The Committee report provides an overview of tourism and hospitality in Northern Ireland with written evidence from different organizations within the industry. The following contributions were particularly relevant with regards to training in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Employment in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry in Northern Ireland² (Written evidence from People 1^{st3})

- There are approximately 42,980 hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism employees in Northern Ireland.
- Hospitality industries dominate the sector (restaurants (28%), hospitality services (29%), pubs, (18%).
- The sector's qualification's profile is low (no qualifications (29%), Level one (21%), Level two (23%), Level three (16%), Level four (10%).
- 11% of workforces are International workers.

¹ House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee "Tourism in Northern Ireland and its Economic Impact and Benefits, Third Report" May 2007

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmniaf/119/119we04.htm>

² Written evidence 18 to Northern Ireland Affairs Committee

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmniaf/119/119we21.htm>

³ People 1st is licensed by the 4 UK governments as the employer led Sector Skills Council for the hospitality, leisure, travel & tourism industries. The 14 sector industries People 1st represents are: Hotels, Restaurants, Pubs, Bars & Nightclubs, Contract food service providers, Hospitality Services, Membership Clubs, Events, Gambling, Travel Services, Tourist Services, Visitor Attractions, Youth Hostels, Holiday parks, Self catering Accommodation. People 1st provides the strategic focus for the development and implementation of standards, training and qualifications and it represents the interests of the hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism related businesses, to Governments and partners on these and other education and training issues.

- 46% of the workforces in Northern Ireland work in elementary occupations, such as kitchen assistants, waiting staff and bar staff.
- A skills shortage across specific occupational areas is high-particularly for Managers and Chefs.
- The sector is also suffering from a high number of hard to fill vacancies.
- Indifferent human resource practices leading to poor image & perception of industry as an employer.
- Low appeal of sector—not perceived as a career of choice.
- Lack of customer awareness -customer feedback is limited.
- Fit for purpose qualifications required
- No mechanism for accrediting or recognising the skills of international workers in the hospitality industry, many of whom come from accession countries. Consideration should be given to the use of the skills passport as a means of tracking training, recognising qualifications and encouraging further training
- Growing reliance on international workers to fill vacancies.
- Low take up and achievement rate of Modern Apprenticeship Programmes - especially for key occupations of chefs & managers.
- Training undertaken by businesses in the main is focused on meeting statutory requirements such as health & safety & food hygiene.
- Limited awareness among employers and impact to date of foundation degrees.

Effectiveness of Government and Tourism Agencies⁴ (Written evidence from Northern Ireland Hotels Federation)

- The most important initiative undertaken by government was the air access fund which gave the province increased air infrastructure and better access to Europe.
- Appropriate training to international standards is imperative
- Government also needs to recognise and support events & attractions
- Tourism Ireland has an all-Ireland remit promoting the island internationally. Part of their responsibility is to promote the catch up of Northern Ireland in the tourism sector. This catch process needs to continue in order to ensure we reach our full tourism potential.
- The introduction of tax breaks for redevelopment and an equitable VAT structure would greatly help with this process of increasing the level of tourism activity.

Strategic Framework and Strategic Data⁵ (Written evidence from the Northern Ireland Tourist Industry Confederation⁶)

- Disappointed at the lack of action under the current framework

⁴ Written evidence 12 to Northern Ireland Affairs Committee

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmniaf/119/119we15.htm>

⁵ Written evidence 8 on 19 May 2006

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmniaf/119/119we09.htm>

⁶ The Northern Ireland Tourist Industry Confederation (NITIC) is a membership organisation which was established to represent the views of the industry. The broad range of views represented by NITIC include ports, airports, accommodation, pubs, carriers, tourism training, and tour operators.

- The industry feels the current structures are unnecessarily complex and over bureaucratic causing confusion and duplication. There are a large number of public sector organisations involved and the distinct role of individual organisations is not clear
- The current lack of transparency of financial information within Government Departments and relevant agencies has led to the perception within industry that funding is not being adequately directed
- There is a need for improved quality of information to allow the industry to respond to the needs of tourists. Much of the current data is not received quickly enough and does not adequately recognise the overall contribution of tourism

Tourism and Hospitality Services for the disable people⁷ (Written evidence from Disability Action)

- There is a total lack of information relating to the accessibility of tourist accommodation in Northern Ireland, in terms of places to stay, places to go and events or attractions to visit.
- Staff may be highly trained in a range of tourism issues but do not demonstrate good service and appropriate approach to disabled tourists. It is critical therefore that all staff training includes disability awareness and disability equality training
- The seasonal and part time nature of jobs in the tourist industry may prove very attractive to some disabled people and to older workers and it is important that the opportunity to tap into this workforce is not missed. This is often the case as employers; particularly small employers often see the employment of disabled people as more trouble than it is worth
- There is no single source of information which a tourist, whether indigenous or from overseas, can tap into in order to advise on a trip to or within Northern Ireland
- Mainstream tourism information rarely if ever refers to accessibility and when it does disabled people do not trust the information provided
- Confusion reigns in relation to which standard should be applied to a new build accommodation project, a service provider does not know which regulation takes precedent or to whom to turn for advice

The challenges within the industry⁸ (Written evidence from the Tourism Training Trust)

- too low overall level of work relevant qualifications
- low uptake and success rates of Modern Apprenticeships, especially in the key occupation of chef;
- persistent hard-to-fill vacancies, experienced by around 17% of businesses;
- significant skill shortages, especially in key occupations such as chefs;
- as in most other regions, a growing dependence over the last two years in particular on international recruits

⁷ Written evidence 37 to Northern Ireland Affairs Committee

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmniaf/119/119we40.htm>

⁸ House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee "Tourism in Northern Ireland and its Economic Impact and Benefits, Third Report" May 2007 written evidence 3 by Billy Nelson Chairman 18 May 2006.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmniaf/119/119we04.htm>

- A report for the NI Skills Task Force (2002) concluded that these issues require a significant step up in the industry's Human Resource Management capacity. However, as in many other sectors of the Northern Ireland economy, the great majority of tourism and hospitality businesses are small, owner-managed concerns with no dedicated HR management capability.

Other issues for consideration⁹

(Written evidence from the Causeway Coast and Glens Regional Tourism Partnership)

NITB Strategic Framework and Signature Projects: there is a need for the development of both short and long term goals and actions to ensure that objectives are achieved

- "Joined up Government": NITB appear to have little influence on "Departmental Tourism Spend"
- Statistical Information: There is a need for robust, timely data to allow the tourism sector to make plans and respond to changes in the marketplace.

HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM TRAINING INFRASTRUCTURE AND DELIVERY IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The FE colleges serve as the major providers of education in tourism and hospitality skills training at various levels. Courses provided in FE colleges are Foundation Degree¹⁰ or National Vocational Qualifications Level 1-3 based. It consisted of updating and upskilling in the areas of Reception, Accommodation Services, Bar Service, Restaurant Service, Food Preparation and Cooking, Kitchen and Larder, Restaurant Supervision, Patisserie & Confectionery, and Training and Development.

Ulster University, School of Hospitality and Tourism Management offers a range of hospitality and tourism training courses at NVQ level, Honours Degree and Masters Degree levels as follows:

- Associate Bachelor Degree on International Travel & Tourism Mgt
- BSc (Hons) International Hospitality Management
- BSc (Hons) International Hotel and Tourism Management
- BSc (Hons) International Travel and Tourism Studies with Languages (French, German or Spanish)
- MSc/PGD International Hotel & Tourism Management
- MSc/PGD International Tourism Development

Welcome to Excellence Northern Ireland¹¹

The Welcome to Excellence series of Customer Service Training Programmes are currently run by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to assist individuals and organizations in the tourism, leisure and hospitality industry to provide standards of service on a consistent basis to both visitors and local residents.

⁹ Written evidence 28 on November 2006

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmniaf/119/119we31.htm>

¹⁰ Department of Employment and Learning "FE means business"

http://www.femeanbusiness.com/documents/Further_Education_means_Business_Strategy_Review.pdf

¹¹ Welcome to Excellence website <http://www.welcometoexcellenci.com/index2.htm>

There are now 3 one day training programmes available in Northern Ireland. They are designed for new and more experienced employees working in Serviced or self-catering accommodation, Holidays caravan and camping parks, Visitor attractions and Leisure, arts and entertainment centres.

- Welcome Host one day course: involves group work and discussion to ensure skills learnt are relevant to each participant. Topics covered such as the value of excellent customer service, the benefit of tourism, communicating effectively and meeting specific needs.
- Welcome Host Plus: involves group work and activities and discussion. Topics such as the service challenge, customer and competitors and service encounters.
- Welcome All: aims to provide employees with practical advice to help those customers with disabilities and special needs. The course focuses on recognition of the benefits of an accessible service, the ability to communicate effectively and awareness of current legislation.

Sector specific versions of Welcome Host (New one day course) use the Welcome Host course as a basis with additional information and materials focusing on Pub, Clubs and Bars, Visitor Attractions, Arts and Entertainment, Sport and Leisure, Transport, Retail, Golf and Conferences and Exhibitions.

Free Training Courses in Fáilte Ireland¹²

Fáilte Ireland offers free training courses for all Irish and EU citizens who registered as unemployed or adults (at least 17years of age, 18 for bar) who have an interest in the Tourism Industry. The courses are run by skilled instructors in the following 6 different training programmes:

- National Bar Skills
- National Catering Assistant
- New Professional Restaurant and Bar Service Programme
- Certificate in Bar Operations
- Advanced Certificate in Bar Management
- Return to Work

Participants require 10-13 weeks' full-time attendance plus two weeks work practice. Regardless of previous background all participants begin at the same level. Each participant also will receive:

- A training allowance and travel allowance
- Lunch and refreshments
- EU recognised qualification
- Uniform

¹² Fáilte Ireland is National Tourism Development Authority in the Republic of Ireland. It supports and helps the Tourism industry in Ireland to meet the challenges facing the entire global tourism market and to sustain, or increase, the level of activity in the sector.
<http://www.failteireland.ie/getdoc/db2818f9-79ed-47cb-98f4-237980b4eaf2/about.aspx>

Global Travel Training (GTT) ¹³

Global Travel Training Ltd offers a range of courses for the travel industry Northern Ireland. The courses are recognised by the International Air Transport Association and course materials are compliant with Joint Aviation Requirements. The students require approximately 50-80 hours study time with a Tour Operator or in an Airline Reservation Department.

¹³ Global Travel Training Ltd was established in September 2003 in response to an increasing demand for high quality, flexible home-study training courses for the travel industry. The travel courses are internationally recognised by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and course materials are compliant with Joint Aviation Requirements (JAR-OPS). GTT works in association with The International Academy of Travel who are partnered with Galileo Ireland and The World Travel Centre <http://www.globaltraveltraining.com/index.asp>