

Transport Training Services – making technology work for them

Based at Nutts Corner, Transport Training Service (TTS) offers a wide range of motor vehicle training for the retail motor industry across Northern Ireland. Originally constituted as the Motor Vehicle NTO, its principal area of work now is to provide Modern Apprenticeships to young people entering the motor vehicle industry.

TTS works closely with the major franchised garage groups in Northern Ireland and currently has 103 apprentices working on a programme lasting 206 weeks. The programme is structured so that apprentices spend 6/8 weeks with their employer followed by one week based at the well equipped TTS centre at Nutts Corner. This enables TTS to provide a strong combination of practical and theory based training.

'E-assessment and e-learning are unstoppable. The industry needs people with specialist IT skills to be able to progress with a career in the motor vehicle industry. If they update their skills in the workplace, it benefits them and it benefits the dealership.'

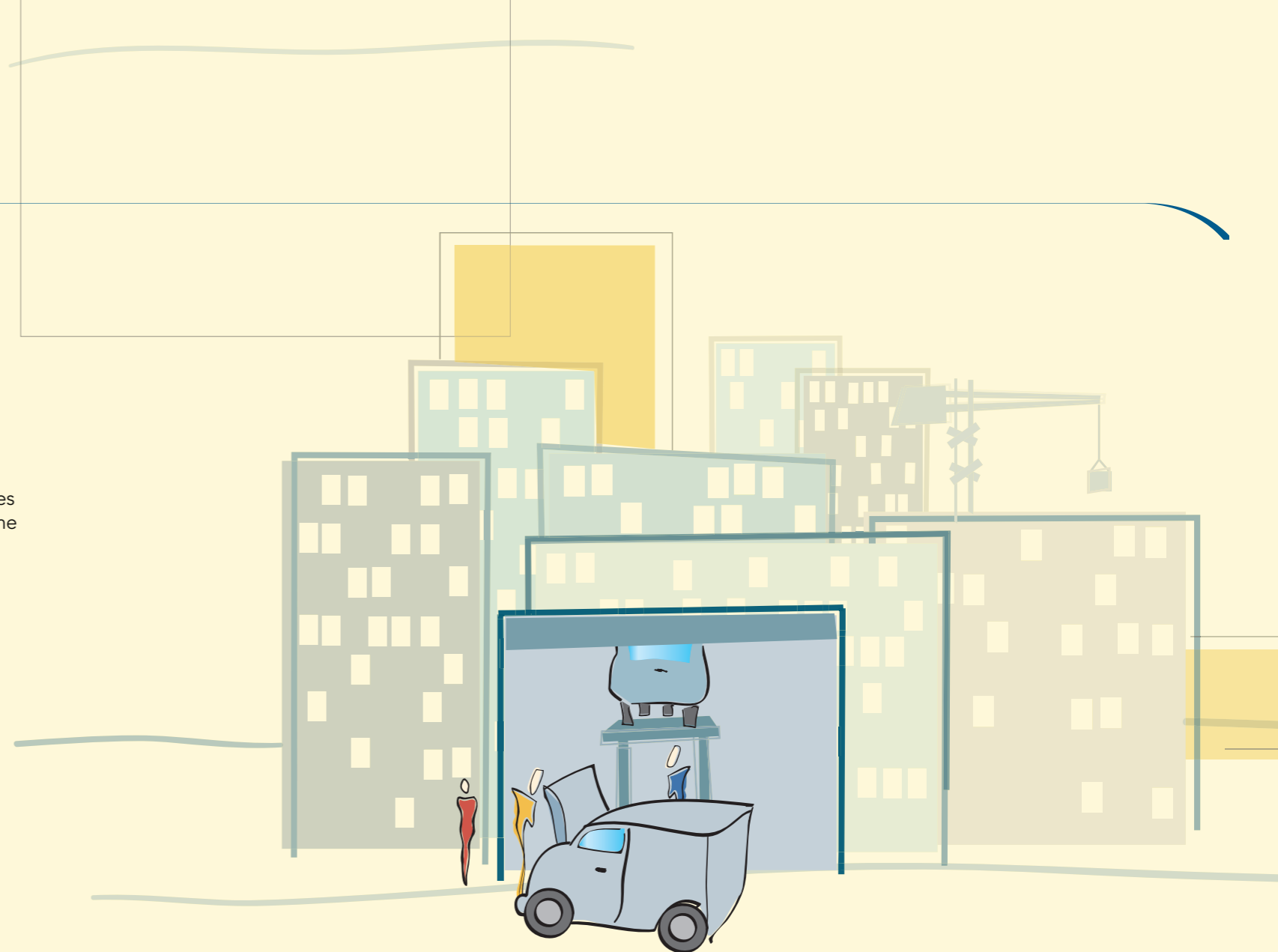
Jim Spence
JKC Specialist Cars

The Modern Apprenticeship (MA) programme is comprised of an NVQ and Key Skills at an appropriate level. The apprentices also undertake the City and Guilds level 2 and level 3 Progression Awards in Automotive Vehicle Servicing and Repair which form the Technical Certificate requirement of the MA. Providing the necessary assessment for the awards had become a real issue for TTS since, understandably, their employers were reluctant to have the apprentices away from the workplace for long periods simply to undertake tests.

Flexibility came in 2004 when the centre introduced on-line testing for all the Progression Award unit tests. These tests are externally set by the awarding body and computer marked. At the same time, TTS was encouraged to move towards using the same on-line test system for Key

Skills. Having transferred all their testing on-line TTS, the apprentices and their employers are reaping the benefits of the more flexible and responsive system:

- Short lead time to register apprentices for tests
- Apprentices entered for tests when they are ready
- Immediate results with more feedback on performance
- Tests available 24/7.



'Don't be afraid of e-assessment, get involved and use it, it's the way things are going to go.'

Brian Shields
Transport Training Services

In addition to these benefits, feedback from apprentices suggests that they prefer doing tests on-line rather than on paper.

'At first I thought it would be harder than the written test was, but in fact, it was easier.'

David Hyndman
Apprentice

Looking ahead

With cars becoming ever more reliable, the opportunities available for apprentices to be observed undertaking some activities become rarer. In this scheme, all the assessment is undertaken by TTS assessors and they now use mobile phones to enable apprentices to advise them when vehicles requiring particular work are available. They are then able to get out to the apprentice quickly and observe them undertaking the necessary work. TTS assessors are really making technology work for them, their apprentices and their employers.

In the near future the next step will be the use of e-portfolios. TTS are hoping that the introduction of new national occupational standards in late 2005 will enable them to reduce the current level of paperwork. Storing evidence electronically will reduce the need for multiple signatures, improve levels of authenticity and enable the apprentice and the assessor to access the electronic evidence file wherever they have access to the internet.

TTS also plans to introduce more CD-ROM/IT based learning. Already there is a significant amount of material made available by the sector and this is set to increase as the training on modern motor vehicle technology becomes increasingly sophisticated.

