

# European Social Fund 2013-2023

## A Summative Evaluation Report

October 2023



Providing Inspection services for:  
Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
and other commissioning Departments



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## Introduction

The Department for the Economy (DfE) is the designated Managing Authority (MA) for the European Social Fund (ESF) for Northern Ireland (NI); previously it had been the then Department for Employment and Learning (DEL). The DfE (and previously the then DEL) identified the need to have assurances about the quality of ESF provision. From 2007 to 2013, there had been a total spend on ESF provision of £189 000 000 but no means by which to identify the quality or impact of the provision in the round. At that time there were 97 ESF projects (the projects), with a wide range of provision and overall, between 8000 and 10000 participants per year.

*Throughout the report, where text is accompanied by an asterisk, this indicates that additional information can be found in Appendix 4: Notes.*

The project promoters (the promoters) were mostly community and voluntary sector organisations; few of them had prior experience with a formal education and training inspection process. A small number of promoters were also work-based learning providers, and a smaller number again were within the further education sector or district councils. All of these projects were extended until March 2015, with a tendering process beginning in 2014 for the new round of funding, for the **first call\*** of the ESF Programme 2014-2020 in NI (the programme). Inspection was not part of the contract for those projects but was built into all ESF contracts from 2015 onwards, with a stronger emphasis on sharper performance outcomes and the quality of the provision.

The strategic aim of the programme was to: combat poverty and enhance social inclusion by reducing economic inactivity; and to increase the skills base of those currently in work and future potential participants in the workforce. Contracts for the programme were awarded across three calls to promoters and the projects were part-funded through the programme and the DfE.

The programme was aligned to the European Union 2020 Strategy for Jobs and Growth; its main focus was to contribute to the attainment of inclusive growth. The promoters monitored required performance data against set targets agreed with the DfE, namely: number of enrolments; number of participants into employment upon leaving; number of participants into education/and or training upon leaving and retention. The DfE appropriately adjusted recruitment and other targets to reflect the ongoing changed circumstances resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic (the pandemic).

The provision of the programme's projects was targeted at young people (16-24 year-olds) not in education, employment or training (NEETs), people of all ages who were unavailable for work due to illness or caring responsibilities, families affected by economic inactivity and participants with a disability and who were out of work. Each project made a distinct contribution to the overall aims and ethos of the ESF agenda and the wider DfE agendas, namely inclusion, participation, achievement and progression.

## ETI's role

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) was commissioned by the DfE to provide the required assurances about the legacy projects and thereafter, the quality of provision for the programme's projects (see Appendix 1: Timeline summary of inspection activity; and Appendix 2: Published ESF inspection reports).

From 2013 to 2015, visits were conducted by the ETI to the 95 legacy projects and these initially focused on the organisations' capacity to self-evaluate the quality of their own provision, in order to lay the foundations for the commencement of a formal inspection process. This was the first time ESF projects had undergone any type of inspection activity by the ETI. The main findings of the evaluation of the projects were shared with DfE officials in July 2015, and with the sector at a quality event in October 2015.

From 2015, ETI worked collaboratively with the ESF sector and DfE officials to implement a phased inspection process. For the 62 projects involved in the first call, this consisted of initial structured support visits by inspectors, followed by baseline inspection visits and then formal inspection which commenced in late 2016, with **published reports\***. Ahead of the formal inspections, the ETI also facilitated two capacity building events, in March and May 2016, to share the main findings of the completed baseline inspection visits and to contribute to an improved understanding of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning (QIP) processes. This phased approach assisted in capacity-building around key aspects of the provision and was largely successful. The inspection outcomes were very positive, reflecting the attention given by the promoters to the feedback they received during the support and baseline visits. Almost all of the projects had strengths in relation to the strong commitment to meeting the needs of the participant groups, with a significant focus on the personal, social and employability needs of the participants and the development of the relevant skills, qualities and attributes needed to enhance employability.

However, all of the projects needed to improve further their self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes. The issues identified included: sharing their own good practice, using performance data more effectively to demonstrate clearly the impact of their project, developing further the participant personal action plans and related review documentation, and reviewing their safeguarding arrangements, policies and procedures in line with best practice. The enhancement of self-evaluation and QIP was fundamental to ensuring that the projects developed their capacity to improve and ensure that the progression of participants was developed and sustained.

Most inspectors in the ETI take responsibility for a group of organisations, operationally referred to as a District. The ETI identified the necessity of inspectors being deployed to take responsibility for groups of the projects as pivotal to the promotion of necessary improvement work. The role of each District Inspector in working with a group of projects over the duration of the programme, was to:

- encourage and support progress towards improvement;
- undertake regular visits, which typically included discussions with participants, meetings with senior and middle leaders, the observation of sessions and the scrutiny of relevant documentation;

- be aware of, and keep up to date with, any significant factors in a promoter's context;
- support promoters' arrangements for self-evaluation;
- lead on the annual scrutiny of the promoters' QIP processes, including any follow-up inspection activities;
- identify and affirm effective practice;
- identify and discuss wider issues impacting on the work of a promoter, including the outcomes achieved by the participants;
- provide regular feedback to promote improvement;
- liaise with DfE officials; and
- be involved with any inspection activity involving the promoter.

From September 2018 to March 2020, as part of the second call, the ETI undertook a full inspection of three projects, and carried out inspections of the QIP processes in a further 19 projects with published **inspection reports\***. Twelve baseline inspection visits to new promoters were also completed.

The effectiveness and impact of the more established promoters remained strong. All three of the projects that underwent a full inspection demonstrated the capacity to identify and bring about improvement. Of the 19 projects inspected as part of a risk-based, proportionate QIP inspection model, 79% of them were evaluated as continuing to demonstrate a high level of capacity, or the capacity, to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of provision. Overall, the promoters continued to make steady progress in the embedding of more robust and impactful processes for self-evaluation and QIP. The more effective quality improvement plans were characterised by: systematic self-evaluation processes involving almost all staff and functions; an insightful use of the available data to identify strengths and weaknesses; inclusion of key aspects of the provision such as the curriculum offer, impact of leadership and management, and an evaluation of the quality of learning, teaching and training; an evaluation of the arrangements for safeguarding; and the drawing out of sharp action plans with prioritised, appropriate and largely measurable targets for improvement.

The completion of the 12 baseline inspection visits for the promoters new to ESF provision proved challenging; for almost all of them, it was their first experience of external inspection evaluation. As a result, around one-half of them struggled to come to terms with the rigour around the external inspection process, including: the robust evaluation of their internal quality improvement planning; their use of data for monitoring and evaluation; and the evaluation of the arrangements for safeguarding participants. There was a need for promoters to review and contemporise policies and procedures to safeguard and protect young people and adults, and to demonstrate more clearly their understanding of current legislation and practice. They needed to ensure that designated staff at all levels received appropriate training, and work to raise the capacity of all staff to respond appropriately to safeguarding matters, including clarifying the arrangements for reporting and recording safeguarding issues.

For almost all of these promoters, the concept of internal self-evaluation leading to robust QIP was not yet strongly enough embedded. Consequently, the baseline visit inspection model was appropriate and provided the promoters with incisive feedback, delivered sensitively, on the areas that should be a focus for improvement. The ETI had just commenced a full inspection process for these 12 new promoters when inspections were paused in March 2020 as a result of the pandemic.

When ESF inspection activity resumed, monitoring visits were conducted to nine projects during July and August 2021, for which letters were issued by the ETI to the organisation, copied to the DfE. From January to April 2022, 31 Call 2 visits were completed and inspection reports published. For the third call, from September 2022 to February 2023, four baseline visits were conducted to new promoters and 34 Call 3 visits were completed and inspection reports published, with QIP scrutiny integrated into the inspection activity and reported on. All of these projects demonstrated the capacity to identify and bring about improvement, with just over two-fifths (14) demonstrating a high capacity. In 22 out of the 34 projects inspected (65%), the arrangements for safeguarding were identified as reflecting broadly current legislation and practice and areas for improvement were identified. The arrangements for safeguarding were evaluated as reflecting current practice and legislation in 12 of the 34 projects inspected.

Overall, during the duration of the inspection activity for the second and third calls, participants consistently gave positive feedback to the ETI about what they valued highly: the wide-ranging support received from project staff, with the important focus on emotional wellbeing; the high quality learning activities and social engagement, friendships, confidence and growth in their self-esteem; and opportunities to develop their employability skills and where appropriate, gain qualifications.

Key features of sessions of practice observed included well-planned activities which were appropriate and meaningful, and supportive working relationships between staff and participants, which were motivational, purposeful and focused on progression. The addition of appropriate online delivery was observed, with very good examples of innovation and creativity in the use of technology. There was also clear evidence of how the curriculum in projects had evolved and developed and become even more relevant and meaningful to the participants.

During the third call, common challenges were experienced by all promoters, against the backdrop of uncertainty about whether or not the programme would continue beyond March 2023: recruitment; targets for quarter three and quarter four; staffing; and planning for sustainability and participant progression.

Over the duration of the programme, the ETI evaluated and reported on the effectiveness and impact of the projects' self-evaluation and QIP processes. For all of the projects in the first two calls, QIP scrutiny was completed and the ETI summaries of findings were shared with the DfE Quality Improvement Team (QIT) and the DfE ESF MA Team in 2017/18, 2018/19, **2019/20\*** and 2021/22. A risk-based, proportionate approach was taken to QIP scrutiny for 31 of the projects as part of the third call in 2022/23, with the ETI summary of findings shared with the DfE QIT and the DfE ESF MA Team.

## Impact

It has now been six months since the third Call ended on 31 March 2023. The ETI has reflected on the commissioned work delivered over the duration of the programme.

### Required assurances

Throughout the duration of the programme, the ETI provided the required assurances to the DfE about the quality of provision and the capacity of each promoter to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of provision through QIP and underpinning self-evaluation processes. The promoters' arrangements for safeguarding were also evaluated and reported on.

The extensive evidence base which informed these assurances by the ETI included scrutiny of the annual Quality Improvement Plans, session observations, focus group meetings with participants and other key stakeholders (such as employers and collaborative partners) and discussions with key staff (to include quality improvement and safeguarding arrangements). A participant questionnaire was introduced as part of the inspection methodology from July 2021, with an enhanced focus on engagement with participants following on from the pandemic lockdowns of 2020/21.

### Necessary improvement work

The ETI had a pivotal role in the promotion of necessary improvement work over the duration of the programme, supporting and challenging the projects to deliver impactful practice. The QIP processes became embedded, with priorities identified through increasingly robust self-evaluation and this led to improvement in key areas of provision. Promoters engaged positively and pro-actively to address the areas for improvement. There was an improved focus over the duration on tracking and monitoring the distance travelled by participants, from their various starting points and to better demonstrate the development of their softer and **transversal skills\***.

Importantly, the promoters were very receptive to developing their organisational safeguarding culture and practices and engaging in relevant and appropriate continuous professional development, such as restorative and trauma informed practices.

### Social, educational and employability benefits

A high level of commitment was shown by the promoters to support the marginalised in NI. The provision met well the complex needs of the participants by addressing their social isolation and raising their confidence, employability, self-esteem and self-worth. The projects provided practical support, assistance and advocacy on behalf of all participants and in particular the more vulnerable. Notably, the provision of the Community Family Support Programmes by a number of the projects impacted on the life chances, and health and wellbeing not only of the individual participants, but also their families and their communities.

The high quality of the provision for care and welfare impacted positively on the participants' readiness for learning, development and ultimately sustained employment. In the impactful practice observed, key features were: sensitive, participant-centred provision underpinned by high expectations and a strong caring ethos; well-planned sessions, with good use of a range of appropriate and tailored learning approaches; high quality interventions; and a clear focus on participant progression.

Participants on the projects consistently gave positive feedback to the ETI about: the wide-ranging support received from project staff; the high-quality learning activities and social engagement; and the good opportunities to develop their employability skills and where appropriate, gain relevant qualifications.

### **Flexible, tailored provision**

With the exception of those participants with a disability, the flexible, tailored and bespoke context specific provision and delivery was largely at level one or below, and focused on developing participants' personal, social and employability skills in preparation for work. While no two projects were the same, provision included mentoring, 1:1 support, and, on the job training. Informed by the ETI's inspection and evaluation findings, over the duration of the programme, the promoters appropriately reviewed the curriculum to better match provision to the learning and development needs, and aspirations of participants.

### **Appropriate, accredited qualifications**

Over the course of the first two calls, a wider range of appropriate and accredited qualifications and courses became available to participants. These supported well the learning and development needs, and aspirations of participants. For the most marginalised participants, those who are the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society, the progression pathway from the projects to the **DfE Skills for Life and Work programme\***, for example, was notable. However, during Call 3, the ETI found the curriculum was contracting due to the impact of funding uncertainties, with some promoters providing only non-accredited qualifications and courses.

### **At the heart of communities**

A particular, successful feature of the projects was strong networking and working collaboratively across boundaries, agencies and sectors, including with the health and social care trusts, the prisons, other community and voluntary organisations and a wide range of employers.

The promoters were responsive to the changing and unforeseen context of the pandemic, and appropriately, in the first instance projects were focused on supporting the participants' health and wellbeing. Many of the promoters provided practical support for participants, including help with essential food, heating and access to mobile devices.



Experienced staff working with participants on projects during the third call reported that the previously understood “profile” of 16–24-year-old “NEETs” has shifted. They reported that, following on from the pandemic lockdowns, there were increasing numbers of young people presenting as lacking in motivation and a sense of purpose, who did not recognise any need or indicate a desire to act on being a “NEET”. They found that “NEETs” presenting to the projects during the final call did so because they were mandated to do so by a Jobs and Benefits Office and were typically older than in previous calls, aged 21 years+. They also reported that participants had a wide range of challenges and barriers, including addiction, anxieties, mental health, and previously negative experiences of education.

## Dissemination

Through its reporting, over the duration of the programme, the ETI identified and affirmed effective practice in self-evaluation leading to improvement. Subsequently the ETI and the DfE showcased examples of effective and impactful practice through a number of sector events.

## And now

For promoters, the political vacuum at Stormont, the lack of an Executive and Assembly and Brexit, all had a significant adverse and negative impact, in particular the protracted uncertainty over post-Brexit funding and replacement programmes. Inspection evidence from the third call had shown that larger organisations were better placed for sustainability going forward.

A United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) economic inactivity (EI) competition sought project applications to deliver EI support projects (see Appendix 3; also, [NI list of successful EI projects](#)). Eighteen EI projects have been contracted from April 2023 to March 2025 to deliver on the investment priority, People and Skills, with a total investment value of £57.6m, £15.6m more than originally allocated. These projects are being delivered by 101 organisations and bodies, ranging from community and voluntary sector organisations to work-based learning providers and enterprise agencies, to a small number of the further education colleges, a district council and a health and social care trust.

Of the 18 EI projects, nine involve promoters from the third call of the programme; seven are leads for collaborative projects and two of the nine have been contracted to deliver discreet EI projects. A further 21 promoters are partners in a number of the contracted collaborative EI projects. Seven of the contracted EI projects involve eight organisations which as work-based learning providers are contracted by DfE to deliver a range of programmes (Training for Success, ApprenticeshipsNI, Apprenticeships21 and Skills for Life and Work); one of the eight organisations is currently in the inspection follow-up process in respect of the quality of its work-based learning provision. Of the six further education colleges in NI, Southern Regional College and South West College are the contracted leads for two EI projects.

## Conclusion

Provision for the most marginalised and vulnerable in our society demands coherent and cohesive policy across government. The ESF programme had been delivered across the most disadvantaged communities in NI, communities where the intergenerational impact of the 'Troubles' remains most evident. However, the dependency on cyclical contractual funding impacted negatively on the continuity of quality provision for participants and the retention of key, skilled staff who knew well the communities in which they work.

The development of quality improvement processes demonstrated by the ESF sector in NI during the programme illustrates clearly that such quality assurance processes, and the rigour of an external inspection process are imperative for the benefit of participants. There was an increasingly close match between findings of self-evaluation and the findings of an inspection. Crucially these processes went beyond monitoring more sharply progress against performance targets, to the crux, the quality and impact of the provision.

Lessons learnt from 2007 to 2013, when there had been no means for identifying the quality or impact of the ESF provision in the round and which were applied, to provide assurances about the legacy projects from 2013 onwards and thereafter the programme's quality of provision, from 2015 to 2023, should be considered carefully in setting out reporting and other requirements to contracted UKSPF EI projects.

The UKSPF EI projects are expected to maximise alignment and complementarity with the Department for Communities' funded programmes, as well as other funded activity available for people in NI. In the pursuit of a more equitable society, it is vital that the participants on these EI projects, and in particular the most marginalised, have continued access to impactful quality education and training opportunities and experiences.

Given the collaborative working and wide geographic spread of many of the UKSPF EI projects, evaluation of the consistency in the delivery and the quality of the provision is crucial, to identify and affirm where there is impactful practice, with a clear focus on participant progression and embedded opportunities for education and training and also, to effect necessary improvement should it arise. Account must also be taken of the impact on wider funding and strategic policy.

## Appendix 1: Timeline summary of inspection activity

2013-2015	Visits conducted to the 95 ESF legacy projects.
2015-2016	Support visits and baseline inspection visits to the 62 ESF Call 1 projects.
2016-2018	62 inspections with published reports, ESF Call 1 projects. QIP scrutiny of all ESF Call 1 projects.
2018-2020	22 inspections with published reports, ESF Call 2 projects. 12 ESF Call 2 baseline inspection visits, new project promoters. QIP scrutiny of all ESF Call 2 projects.
* Inspections were paused in March 2020 as a result of the pandemic.	
2021	Monitoring visits to nine ESF Call 2 projects. QIP scrutiny of all ESF Call 2 projects.
2022	31 inspections with published reports, ESF Call 2 projects.
2022-2023	Baseline inspection visits to four ESF Call 3 projects. 34 inspections with published reports, ESF Call 3 projects. QIP scrutiny of 31 ESF Call 3 projects.

## Appendix 2: Published ESF inspection reports

Below are the published inspection reports for the ESF Programme 2014-2020 in NI.

### Call 1

#### 2017

[European Social Fund provision in START360 - Switch Onto Employment \(SOE\)](#)  
(February 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Fermanagh and Omagh District Council - Access to Success, Progression, Inclusion, Recognition and Employment \(ASPIRE\)](#)  
(February 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Access Centre Northern Ireland \(NI\) Limited - The Skills to Succeed 2 project](#) (February 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in The Women's Centre, Derry - PROSPER 2](#)  
(February 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Springboard Opportunities Limited – Jobworks](#)  
(February 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Acceptable Enterprises - Hands on Training](#)  
(February 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in GEMS Northern Ireland - CO-MENT project](#)  
(February 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Women's Tec - Supporting People - Empowering Communities \(SPEC\) Project](#) (March 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Triax - Skills 2020 project](#) (March 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in The Conservation Volunteers - Training for Employment project](#) (March 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Rural Area Partnership in Derry \(RAPID\) Limited - SoFarm Project](#) (March 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in EXTERN - Externworks project](#) (March 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Compass Advocacy Network - WE CAN Project](#)  
(March 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Action Deaf Youth - Supporting Deaf Young People into Employment](#) (March 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Ulster Supported Employment Limited - Support and Training to Realise Individual Development and Employment project](#)  
(March 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in The Royal National Institute for Blind People - Eye Work Too project](#) (March 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in RCD/4Rs Reuse Workshop - Active Inclusion Project](#) (March 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Include Youth - Give and Take Scheme](#)  
(March 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Action on Hearing Loss - Specialist Employment Programme](#) (March 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Women in Business - The Connect Programme](#)  
(March 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Extern Group Northern Ireland - Moving Forward, Moving On Project](#) (March 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Something Special - Diverse Ability](#) (April 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in The Cedar Foundation - Inclusion Works](#)  
(April 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Association for Real Change, Northern Ireland - OPTIO Project](#) (April 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Workforce Training Services - Get Connected](#)  
(May 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Ashton Community Trust - Local Employment Intermediary Service \(LEMIS+\)](#) (May 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Ashton Community Trust - Creating Opportunities and Real Experiences \(CORE\)](#) (May 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Workforce Training Services - Path 2 Employment \(P2E\)](#) (May 2017)

[European Social Fund Provision in Reed in Partnership - Work Routes NI](#)  
(May 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Belfast Metropolitan College - Manufacturing Skills for Industry](#) (May 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Barnardos - Dr B's Kitchen](#) (May 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in YouthAction Northern Ireland - GET SET for Work](#) (May 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in The NOW Group - Workforce III Project](#) (June 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Derry City and Strabane District Council - Kickstart to Work](#) (June 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Stepping Stones - The Gatelodge Training and Employment Services](#) (June 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Stepping Stones - Youth Service](#) (June 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Enterprise Northern Ireland - Exploring Enterprise Programme](#) (June 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Upper Springfield Development Trust - Community Family Support Project](#) (June 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in First Steps Women's Centre - Women Towards Education and Employment](#) (June 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Disability Action - Job Match](#) (July 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in South West College - Step Up To Sustainable Employment \(SUSE+\)](#) (December 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in The Appleby Trust - The Print Room](#) (December 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in The Appleby Trust - Employment Preparation Service](#) (December 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Network Personnel - Up for Work](#) (December 2017)

[European Social Fund provision in Network Personnel - Jobmatch project](#) (December 2017)

## **2018**

[European Social Fund provision in Network Personnel - Community and Family Support Programme](#) (January 2018)

[European Social Fund provision in Bryson FutureSkills - Young Persons Employment Initiative](#) (January 2018)

[European Social Fund provision in Bryson FutureSkills - Belfast Step Into Employment Programme](#) (January 2018)

[European Social Fund provision in The Orchardville Society – Ignite](#) (January 2018)

[European Social Fund provision in DFPF Ltd trading as People 1st - Community Family Support Programme](#) (January 2018)

[European Social Fund provision in The Prince's Trust - Exploring Enterprise](#) (March 2018)

[European Social Fund provision in Mencap – EmployAbility](#) (March 2018)

[European Social Fund provision in The Prince's Trust - Journey to Success](#) (March 2018)

[European Social Fund provision in Clanrye Group Ltd - Positive Directions](#) (March 2018)

[European Social Fund provision in Clanrye Group - Family Foundations Community Family Support Programme](#) (March 2018)

[European Social Fund provision in Triangle Housing Association Ltd - Progression to Employment Service 2020](#) (April 2018)

[European Social Fund provision in Derry Youth and Community Workshop - LEMIS North West](#) (April 2018)

[European Social Fund provision in Derry Youth and Community Workshop - Learning North West](#) (April 2018)

[European Social Fund provision in Derry Youth and Community Workshop - Learning North West](#) (April 2018)

[European Social Fund provision in Customized Training Services - Pathways for Urban Learners to Succeed in Employment \(PULSE\)](#) (April 2018)

[European Social Fund provision in Action Mental Health - Working it Out](#) (April 2018)

[European Social Fund provision in Customized Training Services - Community Family Support Programme](#) (May 2018)

## **Call 2**

### **2018**

[Quality Improvement Planning Inspection - The Conservation Volunteers - Training for Employment](#) (October 2018)

[Quality Improvement Planning Inspection - Stepping Stones NI - Youth Service](#) (October 2018)

[Quality Improvement Planning Inspection - Stepping Stones NI - Stepping Stones to Employment](#) (October 2018)

[Quality Improvement Planning Inspection - Springboard Opportunities - Jobworks +](#)  
(October 2018)

[Quality Improvement Planning Inspection - Fermanagh and Omagh District Council – ASPIRE](#) (October 2018)

[Quality Improvement Planning Inspection - The Cedar Foundation - Inclusion Works](#)  
(December 2018)

[Quality Improvement Planning Inspection - GEMS Northern Ireland - CO-MENT project](#) (December 2018)

## **2019**

[Quality Improvement Planning Inspection - RCD/4Rs - Active Inclusion](#)  
(February 2019)

[Quality Improvement Planning Inspection - TRIAX - Skills North West](#)  
(November 2019)

[Quality Improvement Planning Inspection - Compass Advocacy Network - WE CAN Project](#) (November 2019)

## **2020**

[Quality Improvement Planning Inspection - Start360 - Switch Onto Employment](#)  
(January 2020)

[Quality Improvement Planning Inspection - Rural Area Partnership in Derry \(RAPID\) Limited - SoFarm Project](#) (January 2020)

[Quality Improvement Planning Inspection - Action on Hearing Loss - Specialist Employment Programme](#) (January 2020)

[Quality Improvement Planning Inspection - Access Employment Ltd - Hands on Training](#) (January 2020)

[Quality Improvement Planning Inspection - Belfast Metropolitan College - Skills for Industry Project](#) (January 2020)

[European Social Fund provision in Access Centre Northern Ireland \(NI\) Limited - Skills to Succeed 3 project](#) (January 2020)

[Quality Improvement Planning Inspection - Workforce Training Services - Path 2 Employment](#) (February 2020)

[Quality Improvement Planning Inspection - Workforce Training Services - Get Connected Project](#) (February 2020)

[Quality Improvement Planning Inspection - Ulster Supported Employment Limited – STRIDE](#) (February 2020)



[European Social Fund provision in Roe Valley Community Education Forum - Causeway Learn to Earn \(March 2020\)](#)

[Quality Improvement Planning Inspection - Include Youth - Give and Take Scheme \(March 2020\)](#)

[European Social Fund provision in 4Rs Reuse Workshop - Active Inclusion Project \(March 2020\)](#)

## **2022**

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit – Job Directions – Social Engagement Employability Destinations \(SEEDS\) \(March 2022\)](#)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit – Job Directions – A Wee Job \(March 2022\)](#)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit – Kilcooley Women’s Centre – STEP UP \(March 2022\)](#)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - Belfast Active Communities Network - Generating Opportunities and Learning Through Sport Plus \(GOALS Plus\) \(March 2022\)](#)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - Limavady Community Development Initiative - Empower, Qualify, Upskill and Learn \(EQUAL\) \(March 2022\)](#)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - NIACRO - Working Well \(March 2022\)](#)

[European Social fund Call 2 Visit – Poleglass Community Association – Building Your Future \(April 2022\)](#)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - Mencap - EmployAbility2 Project \(May 2022\)](#)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - The Women's Centre Derry - PROSPER 3 Project \(May 2022\)](#)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - The Royal National Institute for Blind People - Eye Work Too \(May 2022\)](#)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - Upper Springfield Development Trust - Community Family Support Programme - Family First Belfast \(May 2022\)](#)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - Network Personnel - Community Family Support Programme - Mid-Ulster, Mid and East Antrim, Antrim and Newtownabbey \(May 2022\)](#)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - Network Personnel – Jobmatch \(May 2022\)](#)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - Network Personnel - Up for Work \(May 2022\)](#)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - YouthAction Northern Ireland - Get Set for Work](#)  
(June 2022)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - South West College - College Connect](#)  
(June 2022)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - Extern Group - Moving Forward, Moving On](#)  
(June 2022)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - Clanrye Group Ltd - Positive Directions](#)  
(June 2022)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - The Appleby Trust - Employment Preparation Service](#) (June 2022)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - The Orchardville Society - Ignite 2](#) (June 2022)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - Disability Action - Job Match](#) (June 2022)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - Extern NI – Externworks](#) (June 2022)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - Clanrye Group - Family Foundations](#) (July 2022)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - Derry Youth and Community Workshop - Learning North West](#) (July 2022)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - Derry Youth and Community Workshop Limited - Local Employment Intermediary Service \(LEMIS\) North West](#) (July 2022)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - Specialisterne NI - Recruit+](#) (July 2022)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - Specialisterne NI - Recruit++](#) (July 2022)

[European Social Fund Call 2 Visit - Action Mental Health - Working It Out](#) (July 2022)

## **Call 3**

### **2022**

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - Ashton Community Trust - Creating Opportunities and Real Experiences \(CORE\)](#) (December 2022)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - Fermanagh and Omagh District Council - Access to Success, Progression, Inclusion, Recognition and Employment \(ASPIRE\)](#)  
(December 2022)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - Rural Area Partnership in Derry \(RAPID\) Limited - So Keep Farming](#) (December 2022)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - The NOW Group – Verve](#) (December 2022)

## 2023

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - The Conservation Volunteers in Northern Ireland - Training for Employment](#) (January 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - South West College - Step up to Sustainable Employment +](#) (January 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - Bryson Energy - Step into Employment](#) (January 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - RCD-4Rs - Active Inclusion](#) (January 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - Enterprise Northern Ireland - Exploring Enterprise Programme](#) (January 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - Twenty One Training Limited \(21 Training\) - Community Family Support Programme](#) (January 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - The Prince's Trust in Northern Ireland - Reaching Further](#) (January 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - The Prince's Trust in Northern Ireland - Journey to Success](#) (January 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - Springboard Opportunities Ltd - JobWorks+](#) (January 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - Twenty One Training Limited \(21 Training\) - Pathways for Urban Learners to Succeed in Employment \(PULSE\)](#) (January 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - Stepping Stones NI - Stepping Stones to Employment 2](#) (January 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - Training for Women Network Ltd - Promote, Advance and Support for Success \(PASS\)](#) (February 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - Training for Women Network Ltd – Pathways](#) (February 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - The Bytes Project - Launch Pad - STEM, Youth Work and Personal Development](#) (February 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - Workforce Training Services - Path 2 Employment](#) (February 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - Workforce Training Services - Get Connected Project](#) (February 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - First Steps Women's Centre - Women Towards Education and Employment](#) (February 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - The Cedar Foundation - Inclusion Works](#) (February 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - Springvale Employment and Learning – YouthStart](#) (February 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - Roe Valley Community Education Forum - Learn2Earn](#) (February 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - TRIAX - Skills North West](#) (February 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - Start 360 - Switch onto Employment](#) (February 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - DFPF Limited \(trading as People 1st\) - Build a Career in Construction](#) (February 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - Compass Advocacy Network - WE CAN Project](#) (February 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - Ulster Supported Employment Limited \(USEL\) - Support and Training to Realise Individual Development and Employment \(STRIDE\) Project](#) (March 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - GEMS Northern Ireland Ltd - CO-MENT Project](#) (March 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - Access Employment Limited - Hands On Training](#) (March 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - Access Centre Northern Ireland Limited - Skills to Succeed 4](#) (March 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - The Advantage Foundation Ltd - QUEST](#) (March 2023)

[European Social Fund Call 3 Visit - Include Youth - Give and Take](#) (March 2023)

## Appendix 3: United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund

The UKSPF EI competition sought project applications to deliver the EI support as identified in the [NI Investment Plan](#) (the plan) designed by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) working with NI partners, for the period 2023-25.

DLUHC is managing the UKSPF in NI and the plan “sets out proposed routes to market, scale and scope of delivery, and timing of interventions we plan to support across the 3 investment priorities of Communities and Place, Supporting Local Business, and People and Skills”. It has been indicated that the drafting of the plan has “considered wider funding and strategic policy across Northern Ireland, as well as local authority and City and Growth Deal geographies. These include policies and plans such as the Northern Ireland Programme for Government Draft Outcomes Framework 2021, Community Plans and Skills for an 10x Economy, among others”.

The key aim of the investment priority People and Skills is: *By 2025, we aim to see people supported through our interventions gaining and sustaining employment and an increase in their skills levels. This will allow more people across Northern Ireland to fulfil their potential and progress in their careers.*

Projects may deliver against the following intervention:

### **NI33 – Employment support fo economically inactive people:**

Intensive and wrap-around one-to-one support to move people closer to mainstream provision and to gain and retain employment, supplemented by additional and/or specialist life and basic skills (digital, English, maths and ESOL) support where there are local provision gaps.

This provision can include projects promoting the importance of work to help people to live healthier and more independent lives, alongside building their future financial resilience and wellbeing.

Expected cohorts particularly include, but are not limited to people aged over 50, people with a disability and health condition, women, people from an ethnic minority, young people in education, employment or training and people with multiple complex needs (homeless, care leavers, ex-offenders, people with substance abuse problems and victims of domestic violence).

Where relevant, one or more of the following interventions may also be delivered for economically inactive people as part of a holistic package of support:

NI43 - Courses designed to increase confidence with numbers for those needing the first steps towards formal qualifications.

NI44 - Courses for parents wanting to increase their numeracy skills in order to help their children and help with their own progression.

NI45 - Courses aimed at prisoners, those recently released from prison or on temporary licence.

NI46 - Courses aimed at people who can't apply for certain jobs because of lack of numeracy skills and/or to encourage people to upskill in order to access a certain job/career.

NI50 - Courses designed to help people use numeracy to manage their money.  
NI51 - Courses aimed at those 19 or over that are leaving, or have just left, the care system.

NI52 - Activities, courses or provision developed in partnership with community organisations and other partners aimed at engaging the hardest to reach learners – for example, those not in the labour market or other groups identified locally as in need.

DLUHC indicated the following at application stage:

*“We are particularly interested in **collaborations between delivery organisations**, which can achieve scale efficiencies, enhance value for money outcomes, provide flexibility benefits for deliverers and reduce duplication/complexity for end users. We would also encourage new collaborations with employers/sector bodies.”*

*“Delivery in community settings and with trusted intermediaries will be critical to accessing and supporting economically inactive people. This will require **close working with the dedicated community and voluntary sector**, which has delivered significant activity in this field.”*

*“We expect there to be **a range of holistic approaches to addressing the barriers that people face in becoming economically active**, with approaches tailored to the skill level, barriers and economic potential of individuals supported. Delivery models should reflect the needs of the cohort or cohorts supported. **A mixed model of face-to-face and online provision will be appropriate in many circumstances and may be preferred by some service users, for access or other reasons.**”*

*“Alongside this, **we also see a clear opportunity to deliver adult numeracy support** for these cohorts, in community settings and as an integral part of the economic inactivity offer. **This recognises that while colleges are a key delivery route, community-based numeracy interventions widen the reach, connecting with the hardest to reach learners.**”*

## Appendix 4: Notes

- Page 2**                    **first call\*** - Call 1 ran from 01 April 2015 to 31 March 2018; Call 2 ran from 01 April 2018 to 31 March 2022; Call 3 ran from 01 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.
- Page 3**                    **published reports\*** - See Pages 108 -113: [Chief Inspector's Report 2016-2018](#).
- Page 4**                    **inspection reports\*** - See Page 6: [Further Education, Work-based Learning and European Social Fund Phase Report \(etini.gov.uk\)](#).
- Page 5**                    **2019/20\*** - Submitted October 2020 due to the pandemic under interim arrangements agreed by the DfE and the ETI, usually submissions were in June of an academic year.
- Page 6**                    **transversal skills\*** - UNESCO defines transversal skills as: "Skills that are typically considered as not specifically related to a particular job, task, academic discipline or area of knowledge and that can be used in a wide variety of situations and work settings (for example, organisational skills)."
- Page 7**                    **DfE Skills for Life and Work programme\*** - DfE introduced the Skills for Life and Work programme in September 2021 to replace Skills for Your Life and Skills for Work Level 1 of Training for Success. It is a DfE programme designed for young people aged 16-17, or under 22 years for those with a disability, and under 24 years for those who qualify under the Children (Leaving Care) Act (NI) (2002).

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