

# EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND CALL 2 VISIT

European Social Fund provision in  
Kilcooley Women's Centre

STEP UP Project

Report of a Call 2 Visit in January 2022



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



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## Context

Kilcooley Women's Centre is contracted by the Department for the Economy (DfE) to deliver the STEP UP European Social Fund (ESF) project. This project is part funded through the Northern Ireland European Social Fund Programme 2014-2020 and DfE. The strategic aim of the Programme is 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. It is aligned to the European Union 2020 Strategy for Jobs and Growth.

In January 2022, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a Call 2 visit to Kilcooley Women's Centre on behalf of DfE to evaluate the capacity of the project promoter to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of the provision. The Call 2 visit was informed by the quality improvement plan which has been scrutinised by ETI.

## Views of participants

At the time of the Call 2 visit, 63 participants<sup>1</sup> were registered on the project.

ETI met and spoke with a sample of participants during their learning and development sessions, in focus groups and through one-to-one telephone conversations. Thirty-three percent of the participants completed the online questionnaire.

Almost all of the participants found their courses challenging and interesting, and reported that both face-to-face and online sessions (where applicable) were well planned and engaging. They also stated that they have developed new skills and self-confidence, as well as gaining valuable friendships and support networks as a result of their experiences with the project.

## Focus of the Call 2 Visit

The Call 2 visit focused on evaluating the extent to which the project promoter is able to demonstrate its capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of provision for the STEP UP ESF project.

The arrangements for safeguarding were also included.

Two of the key areas which the organisation has prioritised for improvement through its self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes are to:

- review and extend its blended learning and online activities; and
- improve the quality of provision and increase the outcomes for participants.

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<sup>1</sup> All performance data in this report was provided by the ESF project promoter.

## Key Findings

The Call 2 visit identified the following key findings.

- The curriculum offer for the participants is good; the further development of a range of blended learning programmes and online activity has improved flexibility and accessibility for participants in both accredited and non-accredited courses. This has appropriately resulted in the introduction of new learning models with positive outcomes across a number of curricular areas; in accounts, payroll and counselling, as well as a range of personal development opportunities.
- Engagement through blended and online activity has promoted positive learning and contributed well to the participants' achievement of accredited qualifications during periods of lockdown. All of the outcomes on the project are very positive; the project has exceeded its overall enrolment target for Call 2 and almost all of the participants have been successfully retained on the project. Progression to further education and training is high, while progression into employment has exceeded overall targets.
- Recent challenges with staff vacancies on the project have resulted in a small core team extending their job roles to ensure that the delivery of the provision to participants has not been negatively impacted and that participants' needs continue to be well met. The wider senior management in the Kilcooley Women's Centre have effectively supported the staff and used the opportunity to review and identify further areas for development, for example, staff roles and responsibilities on this project.
- Since the baseline visit in January 2019, Kilcooley Women's Centre has relocated to new premises which are bright and modern, with additional space to engage participants more productively in their learning. Appropriate actions have been taken to address the areas for development identified in the baseline visit in relation to: enhanced monitoring of outcomes and data trends across the provision and improved arrangements for on-going self-evaluation and quality improvement planning. There remains a need to ensure the quality improvement plan contains more specific, measurable targets and actions.
- While the centre staff have identified the need for standardisation in completing the participants' individual learning plans, there is also a need to develop further the format of the individual learning plan and link it to the participant tracker system in order to capture more effectively the participants' profile on entry to the project and their soft skills development and distance travelled through participation on the programme.
- Effective planning and continued investment is ongoing to further develop: the Information Technology infrastructure and capability of the centre; online activity across more curriculum areas; tutors' skills to deliver a wider range of programmes online; and the ability of more participants to access and engage more effectively with the programmes.

## Safeguarding

Based on the evidence available at the time of the Call 2 visit, the arrangements for safeguarding the participants of the STEP UP ESF project reflect broadly current legislation and practice.

The project promoter, however, needs to:

- update and contemporise its safeguarding policies to ensure that there is a consistent and current definition of adult safeguarding across all policies;
- amend reporting procedures to ensure that they include clear guidance to all staff members in relation to both child protection and adult safeguarding; and
- provide all staff members with updated adult safeguarding training appropriate to their role and level of responsibility.

## Overall outcome

At the time of the Call 2 visit, and in the areas evaluated, Kilcooley Women's Centre demonstrates capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of provision for the STEP UP ESF project.

# APPENDIX

## A. Call 2 Performance Data

European Social Fund – Step Up Project	Over the four-year period <sup>2</sup>
Numbers of enrolments and % against target	663 (130%)
Numbers of participants into employment upon leaving and % against target	81 (114%)
Numbers of participants into education and/or training upon leaving and % against target	179 (94%)
Retention - Numbers and % against target	643 (97%)

## B. Methodology and evidence base

The arrangements for this face-to-face visit included: observations of two sessions of practice (face-to-face); a number of focus group meetings with participants; one-to-one telephone calls with participants; discussions with key staff (to include quality improvement and safeguarding arrangements); and the opportunity for all participants to complete a confidential questionnaire. Inspectors also scrutinised relevant data and documentation provided by the ESF project promoter.

ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the [ETI website](#).

## C. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75% - 90%
A majority	-	50% - 74%
A significant minority	-	30% - 49%
A minority	-	10% - 29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

<sup>2</sup> From April 2018 to December 2021.

## Overall outcome

ETI use one of the following outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the project promoter:

At the time of the Call 2 visit, and in the areas evaluated, xxxx demonstrates a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of the provision for xx ESF project.

At the time of the Call 2 visit, and in the areas evaluated, xxxx demonstrates capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of provision for xx ESF project.

At the time of the Call 2 visit, and in the areas evaluated, xxxx has not demonstrated sufficient capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the quality of the provision for xx ESF project. ETI will continue to monitor how the project promoter brings about improvement and the Department may consider further action.

## Safeguarding outcome

ETI use one of the following outcomes when evaluating the project promoter's arrangements for safeguarding the participants:

Based on the evidence available at the time of the Call 2 visit, the arrangements for safeguarding the participants of the for xx ESF project reflect current legislation and practice.

Based on the evidence available at the time of the Call 2 visit, the arrangements for safeguarding the participants of the for xx ESF project reflect broadly current legislation and practice.

The project promoter, however, needs to: ....

Based on the evidence available at the time of the Call 2 visit, the arrangements for safeguarding the participants of the for xx ESF project are unsatisfactory. <DN insert detail>.

ETI will return to the provider within six working weeks to monitor progress in addressing the unsatisfactory arrangements for safeguarding.

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