

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND CALL 2 VISIT

European Social Fund provision in Network Personnel

Jobmatch

Report of a Call 2 Visit in March 2022



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



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Context

Network Personnel is contracted by the Department for the Economy (DfE) to deliver the Jobmatch 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 March 2022, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a Call 2 visit to Network Personnel 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, 181 participants¹ were registered on the project.

ETI met and spoke with a sample of participants in a focus group and individually. They commented very positively on the effective advice and guidance provided to them by all of the staff, including practical, financial and personal support. They spoke positively about how the staff encourage and motivate them to progress and achieve.

Ten percent of the participants completed the online questionnaire. Almost all of the participants who responded to the online questionnaire reported that the project was preparing them well for their next steps in findings a job or progressing to further education and/or training. Overall, they report that their programme was both interesting and challenging.

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 Jobmatch 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:

- increase the number of level 1 qualifications achieved; and
- develop further the effectiveness of the curriculum offer.

¹ 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 provided for the participants is very good. The range of level 1 qualifications on offer has been reviewed and extended to reflect the increased number of participants presenting with mental health and wellbeing issues. They can now avail of a broad range of wellbeing workshops such as coping with stress, resilience, anxiety, pain management and complimentary therapies. These workshops are supplemented with one-to-one support sessions. More recently, a wider range of short online courses leading to vocational qualifications, including in cyber security or communication, have also been introduced to very good effect. The participants report that the flexibility of the online courses allows them to progress at a pace and time that meets their family, volunteering and work commitments. They also have good opportunities to access work and volunteering placements and, on progression to employment, in-work support.
- The organisation moved swiftly to remote and online support sessions and delivery of its courses at the start of the pandemic. Communication was maintained with the participants through telephone, email and by post. An online learning platform was introduced and it is populated with a good range of resources to support learning. During the lockdowns, it enabled participants to continue to engage successfully in learning and achieve their qualifications.
- A bespoke electronic Participant Information Management System (PIMS)² has been developed, to comprehensively record, monitor and track the participants' progress in addressing their barriers to education, training and employment. Participants undertake an initial assessment across three zones: life, learning and work. This assessment is highly effective in identifying the participants' barriers to progression. As a result, a detailed action plan is produced which provides a clear road map for each participant to develop and progress across all three zones. Well-matched intervention and learning programmes are developed for the participants which are individualised to meet their specific needs. Their progress is reviewed at regular intervals and captured within PIMS. The participant action plan evolves to reflect progress and where applicable, changing circumstances.
- The directed training and mentoring sessions observed were effective. The staff skilfully and supportively encouraged and motivated the participants to engage in training and workshops to address their barriers to employment and learning. They displayed empathy and sensitively explored with the participant their life and prior learning and work history, while keeping a strong focus on developing and preparing them for employment. Reviews were progressive, reflecting well participants' achievements and progress towards achieving their short term and long term goals.

² The zones within PIMS are based on a Life Zones model developed by [GEMS NI](#).

- 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. The project has been particularly successful in progressing the participants into employment and to further education and training. Overall, significant progress has also been made in realising the ambitious target for the achievement of qualifications.
- The project promoter has continued to deliver provision in a most challenging operating environment. Its senior management team live out their values of social responsibility to make a difference by putting people first. The project is well-led and managed; the staff have clear roles, responsibilities and reporting structures and work very well together to support the participants. They demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering high quality learning and development opportunities for the participants.
- The staff are well supported and encouraged to undertake well-targeted and relevant professional development opportunities, including for example, teaching and supporting remote learners online, mental health, suicide prevention and autism training.
- Effective partnerships have been established with a wide range of stakeholders to: facilitate recruitment to the programme; provide a range of volunteering and employment opportunities; and, support and enhance delivery of the project. For example, there are well-established relationships with the Jobs and Benefits Offices who refer participants across the five local council areas covered by the project. The staff also engage with and refer participants to a wide range of specialist support agencies, such as counselling, mental health and addiction services.
- The quality improvement planning process is well-embedded into the work of the project. The plan identifies clearly the areas for improvement and development. Appropriate actions are identified and targets are specific, measureable, achievable and realistic. Since the previous inspection³, the areas for development have been acted upon and the impact of the actions taken are regularly evaluated and reviewed. A comprehensive quality cycle is in place and importantly includes audits of action plans and reviews and a programme of session observations, including the opportunity for new staff to observe the work of more experienced peers. The staff report that the organisation regularly seeks their feedback on the provision which is incorporated into the quality improvement plan. Detailed analysis of the impact of the project is also facilitated through the wide range of reporting tools available through PIMS, and the findings are used effectively to inform the provision going forward.

³ [European Social Fund provision in Network Personnel - Jobmatch project \(etini.gov.uk\)](https://www.etini.gov.uk/european-social-fund-provision-in-network-personnel-jobmatch-project)

Safeguarding

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

Overall outcome

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

APPENDIX

A. Call 2 Performance Data

European Social Fund – Jobmatch	Over the four-year period ⁴
Numbers of enrolments and % against target	1614 (104%)
Numbers of participants into employment upon leaving and % against target	706 (201%)
Numbers of participants into education and/or training upon leaving and % against target	51 (121%)
Retention - Numbers and % against target	1535 (95%)

B. Methodology and evidence base

The arrangements for this face-to-face and remote visit included: the observation of five sessions of practice (face-to-face and remote); speaking with a sample of participants (nine) during their sessions and in focus group meetings; discussions with key staff (including the quality improvement and safeguarding arrangements); and, the opportunity for 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%

⁴ 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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