



Education and Training
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in
Action Deaf Youth

Supporting Deaf Young People into
Employment

Report of an Inspection in
January 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

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1. Context

Action Deaf Youth is a charitable organisation contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the Supporting Deaf Young People into Employment European Social Fund (ESF) project. The project works with 16 to 24 year olds who are deaf, not in employment, education or training, across Northern Ireland to provide a progressive pathway towards sustainable employment and further education. Each participant is assigned a personal mentor and the participants have the opportunity to undertake a range of employability focused qualifications up to and including level two. These include the essential skills in literacy and numeracy, employability and the European computer driving licence. The participants can also avail of job clubs, work sampling activities and work-experience placements.

The project is led by a manager and supported by a co-ordinator and an administrator. In the past year, there have been considerable changes to the staffing of the project; almost all of the operational staff have changed since the start of the project.

The Supporting Deaf Young People into Employment project is based in Belfast and at the time of inspection, eight participants¹ were registered. The participants attend for a minimum of two hours per week, and although there is a work-experience option, only one participant was placed.

2. Focus of the inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all participants, the inspection linked internal and external approaches to evaluate the:

- outcomes for participants;
- effectiveness of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes;
- quality of provision for learning and development; and
- quality of the leadership and management.

3. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Important areas for improvement
Outcomes for learners	requires significant improvement
Quality of provision	important areas for improvement
Leadership and management	important areas for improvement

¹ All performance data in this report was provided by the ESF project promoter at the time of the inspection.

KEY FINDINGS

4. Outcomes for learners

Recruitment to the project in year one was 81% of the target set by Action Deaf Youth, 13 against a target of 16, and while most (85%) of the participants were retained none of them have achieved any qualifications to date. In year two, the impact of organisational and staffing changes has led to low recruitment (24% of the target set, eight against a target of 34). While essential skills provision for literacy and numeracy did take place in year one of the project, few participants completed and no-one achieved a full outcome. Two participants did complete their portfolios but did not pass the desktop task; plans are currently in place for these two participants to undertake re-sits.

Overall progress in learning and training is slow, for example, five of the participants currently enrolled, will not be able to commence their essential skills and employability training until January 2017. In year one, only 17% of the participants progressed into positive destinations, which is significantly below the target set by the project promoter, three against a target of 18.

The participants interviewed by the inspection team were positive about the levels of support provided by the staff on the project to date, and in particular, reported their continued commitment to engage with the programme, to begin their formal training and to make further progress in developing their personal, social and employability skills. The participants have valued the ongoing mentoring support and contact with the co-ordinator which in many cases provided an important external contact for them. The personalised mentoring and Job Club provision has impacted positively on the personal and social well-being of almost all of the participants. The participants have also benefitted socially from their weekly involvement with Action Deaf Youth's youth club provision.

5. Quality of provision

At the time of the inspection, the curriculum was too narrow and not matched well enough to the participants' needs. To benefit fully from the project, the participants need to be able to access a wider range of good quality work-experience placements. In addition, sampling opportunities need to be improved to support the development of their employability skills and to provide appropriate progression routes. The impact of these experiences needs to be monitored and tracked more effectively.

While the participants' personal action plans identify appropriately the key areas for progression, the associated reviews are in need of improvement and would benefit from more specific and measurable targets against which progress could be measured more effectively. In addition, the initial assessment information needs to identify more clearly the participants' barriers to employment and inform more effectively their career planning, training and personal and social development needs. The employability self-assessment, which is used regularly to review progress for each participant, could be used more effectively to demonstrate the distance travelled by each participant across the project. Initial assessments have been completed for the five participants who are due to commence essential skills training, and the associated classes and tutors have been assigned and timetabled.

The learning and development session observed was participant-centred and engaged them well in developing their thinking about future career paths. A bank of suitable resources has been collated by the previous essential skills tutor to support the new tutors in the delivery of the provision to deaf participants.

The care and welfare provided for the participants impacts positively on their development. There is effective individualised support, regular contact and communication with young people many of whom have few social outlets. There is a strong rapport between the staff and the participants and positive relationships have been maintained between staff, participants and parents despite the many changes which have taken place.

6. Leadership and management

Action Deaf Youth has recently undergone a number of important organisational and staffing changes and is in a period of transition; this has included a move to improved premises in Belfast and the closure of an office in Omagh. The management team did attempt to put in place interim arrangements for the provision of essential skills which were unsuccessful due to the specific delivery needed to support deaf young people, for example sign language requirements for some of the participants. In response to the challenges faced, the management team have implemented a three year strategic plan for the organisation which includes a new marketing strategy for the employment service. Plans are in place to recruit two outreach mentors to further ensure provision is accessible province-wide and two part-time essential skills tutors have recently been appointed and will take up post in January 2017. The new accommodation in Belfast greatly enhances the quality of resources to support delivery, including for example, the tech-zone equipped with computers for the delivery of the training.

Links and partnerships with employers are underdeveloped, there is a need to improve employer engagement to increase the number of relevant work-experience placements available to participants. The project is developing further links with colleges, schools and youth organisations in order to promote recruitment and to raise awareness of the services they provide province-wide. It is planned that the two outreach mentors will have a role in developing these links further.

There are good working relationships between the project team and the participants and the newly appointed co-ordinator has experience of working and delivering programmes in both statutory, and the community and voluntary sectors. A basic management reporting system is used to monitor recruitment and attendance, which provides reports to the board every three months. The overall information and tracking of the participants on the project needs to be further strengthened to more effectively record the project's progress towards achieving targets, and monitoring the progress of participants.

Whilst the organisation demonstrates a commitment to quality improvement and there is a cycle of meetings and monthly operational reports in place, it needs to implement more effective processes to quality assure all aspects of the provision and to collate more effectively stakeholder feedback. The processes used for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning needs to be strengthened to include the better use of a range of performance data, and the inclusion of feedback from participants and all stakeholders to further demonstrate the impact of the project.

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding participants reflect the guidance issued by the Department.

7. Overall effectiveness

Action Deaf Youth needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all of the participants. The areas for improvement include the need to:

- increase recruitment to the project;
- commence urgently the delivery of the essential skills and employability training;
- develop further planning to meet the progression needs of each individual participant;
- increase the number of work-experience placements available for participants;
and
- strengthen the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes to include the use of performance data and stakeholder feedback.

The ETI will monitor and report on the project promoter's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection within 12 months.

A. Project registrations

Programme	Numbers of enrolments	% against target
European Social Fund Supporting Deaf Young People into Employment 2015/2016	13	81%
European Social Fund Supporting Deaf Young People into Employment 2016/2017	8	24%

B. Inspection method and evidence base

Two ETI inspectors met with a total of four participants in focus group meetings and in a learning and development session. Discussions were held with the manager and co-ordinator of the project, the previous essential skills tutor, an employer and a parent. Tracking systems and samples of the participants' work, personal action plans, and programmes of work were examined. The project promoter's self-evaluation report and other relevant documentation were scrutinised.

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%

Performance levels

The ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on Outcomes for learners, Quality of Provision and on Leadership and Management.

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the organisation:

The organisation has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.
The organisation demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.
The organisation needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The organisation needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the participants. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

Key Performance Indicators and Definitions	
Retention	The percentage of enrolments measured over the full duration of their programme.
Achievement	The percentage of participants who completed their targeted individual outcomes.
Progression	The percentage of successful completers who achieved positive progression.

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