



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

European Social Fund provision in  
Bryson FutureSkills

Belfast Step Into Employment  
Programme

Report of an Inspection in  
November 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
and other commissioning Departments

CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE



CSE



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## **1. Context**

Bryson FutureSkills is a one of six social business units within the wider Bryson Charitable Group and is contracted by the Department for The Economy (Department) to provide the Belfast Step into Employment European Social Fund Project (ESF). The main aim of the project is to provide sustainable and quality employment opportunities for participants over the age of 25 who are long-term unemployed, economically inactive and furthest removed from the workforce. The project aims to support participants to combat inactivity, whatever the underlying cause, improve employability and reduce barriers to work. The project provides tailored training, personal support, advice, and mentoring, work-experience and job opportunities, in order to achieve employment outcomes and qualifications for participants on leaving the project.

This project includes a range of work-based activities designed to improve opportunities for employment. These include the development of wider employability skills, including CV preparation and interview skills, access to accredited level 1 employability qualifications, one-to one support, job search techniques, work-experience placements and signposting to further education and training.

The project is led by a project manager, supported by an employment officer and a part time administrator. The project can also access the employability and professional and technical tutors from Bryson's other programmes if required. The project operates out of three office sites in the Greater Belfast and Newtownabbey areas. At the time of the inspection, 6 participants<sup>[1]</sup> were registered on the Belfast Step into Employment project. The programme duration ranges from a minimum of one day to a maximum of ten weeks, and the participants attend from 5 hours to a maximum of 21 hours each week depending on their needs. There are currently five (83%) participants in a work-experience placement.

## **2. Views of participants**

The inspection team met with a sample of participants individually in their workplaces. All of them reported that they value the guidance and support provided by the project staff. They also stated that the project was beyond their expectations, quickly providing them with work-experience and a supported progression pathway to employment in a job role that matched their experience, aspirations and for some their personal circumstances.

## **3. 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;
- quality of provision; and
- effectiveness of the leadership and management.

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<sup>[1]</sup> All performance data in this report was provided by the ESF project promoter at the time of the inspection.

#### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
<b>Quality of provision</b>	Very good
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Very good

#### KEY FINDINGS

##### 5. Outcomes for learners

At the time of the inspection, the project was slightly below its overall recruitment target with 152 participants registered to date, against the three year target set of 207 (2015-18). To date, 126 participants have completed their programme and 6 remain on programme. It is very good that 62 of the completers (49%) have achieved their employment goals to date, against a three-year target of 28. It is good practice that all of the participants have the opportunity to develop their wider employability skills, including CV building and interview techniques on entry to the programme and this has been the main factor in their ability to secure employment. The participants working in office administration and stores and warehousing are demonstrating good standards in the workplace, appropriate to their work role, these include communicating with customers, working effectively with others and applying specialist skills.

The retention rate on the project was outstanding (100%) in 2015-16, good (63%) in 2016-17, and to date in 2017-2018 is outstanding at 100%. Of the 20 early leavers in 2016-2017, just over half of them (55%) left the programme early to secure employment.

The project provides effective supportive progression for participants into a wide range of employment areas, and while there are good opportunities to achieve relevant level one employability qualifications, almost all of the participants join the programme to get work as quickly as possible. The lower than expected progression rate into further education (33%) and training (53%) is in part due to the success of participants gaining employment. However it is appropriate that the project promoter has identified this as an area for further improvement. Employers comment positively on the progress the participants are making in the workplace as they gain experience and confidence, progressively becoming more independent in their work.

The provision of very effective one-to-one support and assessment on entry to the project, leading to the development of an individualised personal development plan with clear agreed actions and expected outcomes, is a key strength of the programme. All of the participants report that the project has helped them to increase their confidence and self-esteem, particularly for those who were unemployed for several years.

## **6. Quality of provision**

The Belfast Step into Employment project offers up to 10 weeks of tailored support to enable participants to access employment. While the curriculum offer is narrow it is appropriate for the short duration of the project and meets the needs of most participants. This is supplemented for most participants by good quality specialist on the job training provided by their employer. There is a well-planned induction process which includes the completion of good quality individual career pathway plans and initial self-assessment to measure the distance travelled by the participant in their personal, social and employability skills. Almost all of the participants, on entry to the programme, identify their main objective as securing employment which meets their interests, aspirations and their personal circumstances. The impact of this is that the project promoter has only achieved approximately one third (36%) of the target for the achievement of level 1 employability qualifications.

At the first interview, all of the participants receive a structured and effective initial self-assessment through a bespoke tool devised by the project promoter. This tool works well and provides the opportunity for the individual participant, supported by the employment officer, to identify their barriers across their personal circumstances, their current employability skills, qualifications and experience as well as wider barriers. A very good quality personal development plan, that accurately identifies their barriers to employment, is devised with agreed actions to address the barriers. Very good quality individualised support is provided to address, for example, identified barriers such as CV building, application form completion and/or interview skills. The employment officer provides excellent individualised support, and acts as an advocate with employers to secure work-experience placements and employment opportunities which meet the needs and interests of the participants. The initial interviews are effective in developing a trusting relationship between the participant and the employment officer and in gaining key information on the participants' prior experience, qualifications and career aspirations.

There are regular structured review meetings at the start, middle and end of the work-experience placement which allow the participants, employer and employment officer to reflect on progress made and any actions which need to take place. At all stages in the process, the employment officer encourages employers to consider paid employment opportunities. The participants can access job fairs and career conventions through the organisation's wider provision. Participants receive good quality careers education information and guidance that is particularly helpful in enabling those who need it, to progress to further education and training.

Care and welfare impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes for participants. The project staff are very caring, respectful and supportive and they have developed very positive relationships with the participants. There is a strong emphasis on meeting the participant's wider needs in the one-to-one mentoring sessions.

## **7. Leadership and management**

The Bryson FutureSkills senior management team have a clear vision for the development of the Belfast Step into Employment project which complements well its other programmes. There is participant focused strategic planning and a strong commitment to invest in staff, accommodation and resources.

The project promoter has made good progress in developing their management information system to better inform the managers about the support and services that are being provided to the individual participants, and to track the progress they are making towards achieving employment.

The Belfast Step into Employment project staff have developed very effective links with a wide range of employers across the office areas. These links are used well to provide progression pathways to employment. There are equally strong links to other internal provision and if appropriate, participants are referred to another project that would better suit their needs.

There is an organisation wide self-evaluation process and quality cycle and while the process needs to be refined further, the Belfast Step into Employment team are highly reflective and have accurately identified almost all of the main areas for improvement. The project team have appropriately identified the need to make better use of data and other evidence including feedback from stakeholders to better inform self-evaluation and to make more evidence based evaluations of the quality of provision and the standards achieved by the participants. While the quality improvement plan identifies clearly almost all of the key areas for development there is a need to provide more consistently specific, measurable targets against which progress can be more easily monitored.

## **8. Safeguarding**

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

## **9. Overall effectiveness**

Bryson FutureSkills demonstrates a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interests of all the participants.

**A. Project registrations**

Programme	Numbers of enrolments	% against target
European Social Fund Belfast Step into Employment 2015/2016	74	100%
European Social Fund Belfast Step into Employment 2016/2017	54	68%
European Social Fund Belfast Step into Employment 2017/2018	24 to date	53%

**B. Inspection methodology and evidence base**

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website [www.etini.gov.uk](http://www.etini.gov.uk).

Two ETI inspectors observed four participants in the workplace. Discussions were held with Bryson FutureSkills management team, employment officer and key stakeholders, four employers in the workplace. The management information systems, including the tracking and monitoring systems, samples of the participants' work and personal training plans and review documentation, and planning documents were examined. The project promoter's self-evaluation report, quality improvement plan 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 project promoter:

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

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



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